

ELDER STEPHEN L. RICHARDS

Of the Council of the Twelve Apostles

The burden of my thought today is that of gratitude. My heart is mellowed and deeply touched by the great blessings which I enjoy.

GRATITUDE FOR BLESSINGS

I am thankful for the privilege which I now have to be once again in the councils of my brethren; to be associated in general conference with the Church; to stand where I can look into the faces of men whom I have come to love and honor and respect. I cannot contemplate my membership in the Church, the testimony of the divine authenticity of the work in which we are engaged, the high privileges which have come to me, to labor in the advancement of the great cause, these blessed associations with my brethren in the priesthood, without rendering to God, my Father, the gratitude and thanks of my heart.

I am grateful for the kindness which on every hand I have met, at the hands of my brethren and my sisters. God has been good to me, and I now thank you, my brethren in the holy priesthood and my sisters in the Church, for your kindness and consideration.

JOY THAT PASSES UNDERSTANDING

I am glad once again to be able to engage in the activities of the Church. I want to let my voice be heard in proclamation of the holy Gospel. I want to bear my testimony to all mankind that God's work is established, and that within the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are to be found the principles of eternal life, the satisfactions that are enduring and the joy that passes understanding.

I have had some time for contemplation and reflection. I have had opportunity of introspection and the analysis of my thoughts and feelings, and I have definitely reached the conclusion that there is no happiness for me except in the philosophy and high conceptions which the Gospel of Christ brings to me. I enjoy the pleasant things of life. I enjoy and appreciate the beauty of the earth and that which it provides; but I prize above all these a contentment of mind, a peace of heart, brought to me in my testimony of the truth. I know that God lives. I know that my God is my Father—more than a mere principle; more than an irresistible, dominating force in nature. He is my eternal parent. I am his child. My spirit was begotten of him. I know that the Savior of this world is the Son of the living God. His existence is a reality to me. The example and the teachings of his earthly life constitute the ideals to which I aspire. I ask for no higher nor more comprehensive philosophy.

THE INSPIRED OF GOD

I know that the Prophet Joseph Smith was divinely called. I know that his mission in life was to restore the everlasting Gospel, and

I believe in the revelations which God, in his mercy, gave to the Church and to mankind, through him. I honor the name of the Prophet Joseph Smith. I feel that no greater and higher honor could come to me than to win some day, when my ministry shall have been completed, his approval for my labors, because I look upon him as the earthly head of the kingdom, the beginner of it, the inspired of God, to receive the initial revelations for the restoration of the Gospel. I prize my knowledge of him, as I prize my knowledge of the very Lord of the universe. And all the men who in proper order have succeeded him are prophets of the living God. Their place in the kingdom has been won and established.

It is so with our present prophet, standing at the head of the Church today. We honor and respect and love him for his devotion to the work of God, and for his integrity, his absolute integrity to the Lord, to the work, to the people, and to the world. I cannot understand how the word of Heber J. Grant can be questioned by any living person who knows his life and his record. No more honest, aggressively honest man have I ever known, and our confidence in his word and in his honor should be supreme.

CONSIDERATION FOR ONE ANOTHER

I am grateful for the kindness that the Gospel of Jesus Christ brings. All the words of our Savior are kind and considerate. The very plan of life and salvation is of the essence of charity and kindness and love. There is no compulsion, and one of the most grievous errors, in my judgment, into which the creeds and sects of religion have almost universally fallen is that of dogmatism, and such rigorous ritual as to deprive their proponents of these elements of kindness, and mercy, and tolerance, and consideration. Every man is an individual. He is entitled to be treated as a separate entity. Into his human tabernacle has come an individual intelligence of eternal life and duration, and I can conceive of no higher principle, no more salutary conception than that of the recognition of the individual differences of men and of women. Of these the Gospel, when properly understood and interpreted, takes note, and every man, in his place and circumstances, is given adequate and individual consideration. We are not all expected to be cast in one mould. We are as different in our thoughts and thinking, in our capacities and abilities, in our receptiveness, as we are in appearance. But the Gospel makes allowance for all of these. It gives to each one the opportunity of activity as his capacities and abilities may warrant, and it brings to each one a tolerance and compassion commensurate with the weaknesses and frailties of each individual.

THE FRUITION OF GOD'S PURPOSES

We are not perfect. We make no such pretensions, but we are striving to do good. We are striving for betterment and progression, and we are offering to the world the most progressive of all the phil-

osophies and programs which have been offered for the advancement and improvement of individuals, as well as nations and groups.

I believe that God is blessing this great work. I believe that faster, perhaps, than we know, there is being brought to fruition the great purposes which he has announced for the human race. I see on every hand the evidences and the testimonies which we are told are to follow the testimonies of his chosen witnesses. We do not know how soon the ultimate consummation of his work will be effected, but we do know that we are moving forward, and it is ever my hope that all of us may be in the line of progress, that our service may ever be at the disposal of those who preside over us, and of the great cause. I feel that as every man gives his best to this high endeavor, he will grow in stature; he will grow in goodness; he will grow in love of God and love of the work.

I desire to give my best. I desire to unite with you in an effort to preach the true conception of the Christian doctrine. I desire to serve my God to the best of my meager ability. And now I praise his holy name for his great and glorious work, for these high conceptions that he has given to us to feed our very souls, to enliven us with love and reverence and worship, and the desire for goodness.

THE SUPREME CHARITY

I apprehend that the adversary of truth is at work in the world. I believe that he is touching and influencing the lives of many men, and that their conduct is inimical to the progress of our work, and yet I almost hesitate to call them enemies. After all, mankind are of one great brotherhood, some weaker than others, and it would seem some are vicious and malicious, and intentionally do great harm. Thank God I am not the judge of my brother and my sister. I am persuaded sometimes to believe with him who says that the supreme charity in all this world is to judge not, but to leave the judgment of our fellow men in the hands of him who is the great and just judge of all. As I desire mercy for myself, I plead for mercy for all mankind. "God forgive them. They know not what they do."

I pray that the spirit of love and tolerance and mercy, which the Gospel brings, may ever abide in our hearts, in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

The hymn, "Redeemer of Israel," was sung by the congregation.

The closing prayer was offered by Elder Anthon E. Anderson, President of the Logan Stake.

The Conference adjourned until 2 o'clock p. m.