

I trust that we may have the power of discrimination, the gift of discernment, that we may know the spirits with whom we have to deal, that we may not forget the voice of the Shepherd but that we may know him, and follow him, and be true to our profession, looking to those whom we sustain as being our representatives before the Lord, for through them will come whatever is necessary that this people, as a people, that this Church, as his Church, shall receive. I hope that none of us shall be defiled through dallying with the evil gift, the devil's gift, the unclean thing, which is abominable in the sight of the Lord. I so pray, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

### ELDER GEORGE ALBERT SMITH

#### *Of the Council of the Twelve Apostles*

Sixty-one years ago today I first beheld the light, here in this valley, and I am informed there was deep snow upon the ground. How different from that is the beautiful weather we have today for the commencement of our Conference, and how joyful it causes us to feel that we can meet together in the name of the Lord without animosity toward any soul, but with kindness in our hearts for all people. We have come into this sanctuary to worship our Heavenly Father, to listen to his servants as they speak to us under the inspiration of his Spirit.

#### HUMBLE BUT GREAT MEN

It is a wonderful blessing that we enjoy in these times of stress and uncertainty to feel sure of divine guidance, to have absolute faith in a personal God who is interested in us and who hears and answers our prayers.

I have been thinking today of the humble but great men who have led this Church from its organization. I have known personally all the Presidents since Joseph Smith, the Prophet. Although a small child when Brigham Young passed away I knew him; I have sat upon his knee and I remember with deep appreciation his kindness to my mother and to me when father was in England as a missionary. I have been well acquainted with the other Presidents and believe that they were all men of God. It is inconceivable that our Heavenly Father would choose any other kind to preside over his Church.

I have known the members of the Quorum of the Twelve since I was a small boy, and since I became of age I have been intimate with all of them. They have been a remarkable group of men. I can testify that those who have remained faithful have indeed been servants of the Lord.

I have been acquainted with most of the First Council of Seventy, and they have been good men, of exceeding humility.

The two Patriarchs of the Church who have served in my time have been exceedingly faithful and have indeed blessed the people.

I have known all the members of the Presiding Bishopric since

I was a youth and have been on intimate terms with most of them. They have certainly honored their bishopric and have sought to be what the Lord would have them be.

It has been my privilege to be personally acquainted with most of the Stake presidents during the last forty years and they have certainly presided over the people in a way that I am sure the Lord is pleased with their service.

While I have not been personally acquainted with all the bishops of the Church since my youth, I have known most of them. They have indeed been fathers of the flock, a wonderful group of men.

The auxiliary leaders of the Church, both men and women, have been faithful and true and have ministered for the blessing of our Father's children whom they have been appointed to serve.

#### UPHELD AND SUSTAINED BY RIGHTEOUS MEMBERS

In addition to these leaders, I have known thousands of the rank and file of this great Church, men and women of many nations who in humility and faithfulness have accepted the Gospel to become identified with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints both here and in other lands. These, too, have prayed for and sustained their leaders during the past century, and during my experience in the Church I have yet to know of one person who has been observing the commandments of the Lord who has raised his or her voice against those who were called to preside over this Church. That is really remarkable because all have had their agency and could have refused to sustain their leaders had there been evil in the men who have been called to direct them. Surely if they had not been good men some of this great army of people who are living near to the Lord would have discovered wrongdoing and would have made it public. As it is only those who have been cast out because of their unworthiness or who have transgressed the laws of the Lord have raised their voices in condemnation of the leaders of the Church.

One of the greatest testimonies to me of the divinity of this work is that a multitude of people—not only those who assemble here in these great General Conferences but all Israel—having the opportunity in Stake Conference four times a year to express themselves by voting either to sustain or refuse to sustain those who preside over them (every one exercising free agency) continue to uphold their leaders. Surely the Spirit of the Lord prompts the faithful, humble people to sustain his chosen servants.

I am grateful to know that the Lord has spoken and that this is his Church, and that he will continue to support those whom he calls to minister if they will be faithful in the future as they have been in the past.

#### EXPERIENCES OF EARLY LEADERS

Within the last few weeks I have been reading a journal of my grandfather, George A. Smith who, when a boy seventeen years of

age, was a member of Zion's Camp. He was large in stature and slept at the foot of the Prophet's bed at night to see that no one should enter the tent who did not belong there. I have read his personal experiences, some most painful and others miraculous. In his youth he was sent out to preach the Gospel of our Lord. His was the experience of other men who have been called to the ministry. Those of evil minds made false accusations against him and his associates but he continued faithful and the Lord vindicated them and magnified them in the eyes of the people and gave them a testimony of the divinity of this work that was so positive that no task was too difficult for them to undertake for the dissemination of truth. Grandfather was among the group sent to England to preach the Gospel in 1839. There the adversary sought to discourage them in every way. Their journals written at the time disclose the fact that they were misrepresented by evil men and attacked by evil spirits, but the Lord preserved them and they performed a great labor. Eight of the Quorum of the Twelve were there at that time. Among those called to go to England were men without means to pay their way but they started from their homes on foot. Due to prolonged illness one of these men was too weak to walk two miles to take a stage coach but was helped that distance by a friend. They had faith in God; they knew that this was his Church and so they went their way and friends not of the Church were raised up to give them money and pay their passage across the ocean, where they delivered their message and many faithful people accepted the truth as a result of their ministry.

#### TOOLS OF THE ADVERSARY

The journals of these men inform us that even in that early day there were those who became identified with the Church who were not thoroughly converted; they did not repent of their sins, and failed to keep the commandments of the Lord. While his desires were plainly manifested unto them they refused to do what he required at their hands. They did not pay their tithing, would not observe the Word of Wisdom and were immoral. These the adversary could use and he prompted them to criticize and oppose the servants of the Lord who were unselfishly laboring day and night to disseminate the truth.

We may not, therefore, expect the leaders of the Church in our day to escape the shafts of the adversary hurled by those who are in his service. Righteous people will have no desire to speak evil of those who are doing good but the adversary will use those who, having transgressed the laws of the Church and the laws of the land, are themselves in darkness.

#### WHILE IN A DUNGEON

I desire to read a portion of Section 121 of the Doctrine and Covenants. President Grant quoted from it this morning but he did not read that which I will refer to. This revelation was given to the Prophet Joseph Smith while he was a prisoner in a dismal dungeon in

Liberty, Missouri. In the anguish of his soul he prayed to the Lord:

"O God, where art thou? And where is the pavilion that covereth thy hiding place?"

"How long shall thy hand be stayed, and thine eye, yea thy pure eye, behold from the eternal heavens the wrongs of thy people and of thy servants, and thine ear be penetrated with their cries?"

He knew that the Lord could hear and would understand. He knew that the men he associated with were good men, that they suffered persecution and bondage, not because of wrong doing but because of enemies from without and evil men who were within the Church. The Lord answered his prayer as follows:

"My son, peace be unto thy soul; thine adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a small moment;

"And then, if thou endure it well, God shall exalt thee on high; thou shalt triumph over all thy foes.

"Thy friends do stand by thee, and they shall hail thee again with warm hearts and friendly hands.

"Thou art not yet as Job; thy friends do not contend against thee, neither charge thee with transgression, as they did Job.

"And they who do charge thee with transgression, their hope shall be blasted, and their prospects shall melt away as the hoar frost melteth before the burning rays of the rising sun;

"And also that God hath set his hand and seal to change the times and seasons, and to blind their minds, that they may not understand his marvelous workings; that he may prove them also and take them in their own craftiness;

"Also because their hearts are corrupted, and the things which they are willing to bring upon others, and love to have others suffer, may come upon themselves to the very uttermost;

"That they may be disappointed also, and their hopes may be cut off;

"And not many years hence, that they and their posterity shall be swept from under heaven, saith God, that not one of them is left to stand by the wall.

"Cursed are all those that shall lift up the heel against mine anointed, saith the Lord, and cry they have sinned when they have not sinned before me, saith the Lord, but have done that which was meet in mine eyes, and which I commanded them.

"But those who cry transgression do it because they are the servants of sin and are the children of disobedience themselves.

"And those who swear falsely against my servants, that they might bring them into bondage and death—

"Wo unto them; because they have offended my little ones they shall be severed from the ordinances of mine house.

"Their basket shall not be full, their houses and their barns shall perish, and they themselves shall be despised by those that flattered them.

"They shall not have right to the priesthood, nor their posterity after them from generation to generation.

"It had been better for them that a millstone had been hanged about their necks, and they drowned in the depth of the sea."

Brethren and sisters, history will continue to repeat itself and temptations will be presented to all of us. We should keep the commandments of the Lord that we may enjoy the discernment of spirits that we may be not led astray.

#### MARKING THE TRAILS

This is a beautiful valley in which we are now living but it was

a wilderness when the forebears of many of us came here. We are enjoying the fruits of their sacrifice and labor and we should remember them with deep appreciation.

Those early pioneers were a remarkable group of men and women, most of whom have gone to their reward. A movement has been started to mark the route of the pioneer, that those who now travel in comfort may have their attention called to the courage of those who blazed the trail and made it possible for us to live in this favored land. Opportunity is being offered that we may all make our contribution to a fund that is intended to mark the trail over which those heroes came, many of whom are buried in unmarked graves. Others struggled into this valley, footsore and weary but with undaunted courage, because of their faith in the Father of us all. A state-wide committee has been organized to plan, and we will be permitted to participate in erecting monuments and markers in different places, to call the attention of the passerby to those who preceded us, and we should determine that they will not be forgotten because of carelessness or indifference on our part.

#### GRATITUDE FOR BLESSINGS

All my life I have been associated with this Church and its faithful members and rejoice that I have been considered worthy to be identified with them. Men and women such as are sitting in this congregation today have been an inspiration to me. I thank you, my brethren and sisters, for the joy I have had in being your associate in this work, this work that the Lord has given to the earth for the last time, for we are assured that it will never again be taken from the earth or given to another people.

I thank my Father in heaven for the knowledge that this is his work and that I have enjoyed the benefits that have come to me as a result of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It has not been difficult for me to see how those who have observed all the counsels of the Lord as near as they could, have been happy because the more of his commandments that I have kept the happier has been my life. The most contented and the happiest people that I know are the members of this Church who are conforming their lives to the teachings of our Lord. Knowing this I am grateful beyond expression for my membership in his Church. I am thankful to be directed by men such as preside over us. I am grateful to these men who are the Presidency of the Church for the encouragement they give me. I pray that they may live long and be happy. I pray that the Lord will bless my associates in the Quorum of the Twelve, that he will reward presidents of Stakes, bishops of Wards, and mission presidents and all who are unselfishly giving their time and the very best portions of their lives to develop faith among the children of our Heavenly Father and give them a better understanding of his glorious truths.

This is his Gospel; it is the power of God unto salvation to all those who believe and obey it.

Knowing that in the not far distant future I must stand in the presence of my Maker to give an account of the days I have spent upon the earth and realizing how serious it might be to me if I did not speak the truth, I testify to you that I know as I know that I live that this is God's work, and I bear witness of it in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

### ELDER MELVIN J. BALLARD

*Of the Council of the Twelve Apostles*

There came a time, in the life of Paul, when he found the Church beset with just such difficulties as have been referred to as existing, in some instances, with some members of the Church today, and to his associate in the ministry, Timothy, he said:

"Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands.

"For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind."

On another occasion it is recorded in Matthew that:

"There shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect."

#### THE GIFT OF GOD WITHIN US

Christ regarded the bestowal of the Holy Ghost upon the membership of the Church, as the fundamentally important thing he could do for them after he had concluded his own personal ministry. He would not even allow the apostles to go forth and preach without that endowment from on high; but after the Holy Ghost was come he would fully qualify them to understand the truth, he would endow them with power to preach it. And what a marvelous change came over the lives of these men when they were endowed with this power from on high!

The membership of this Church have received that same companionship. How important it is for us today, as perhaps never before, to stir up the gift of God that is in us, that has been given us through the putting on of the hands of those authorized servants of God, that we, by the guidance of that holy inspiration, may be able in these troublesome times, as has been so well stated here this afternoon, to enjoy the gift of discernment, to see and understand the spirits that are in the world.

#### LEST YE BE DECEIVED

In the forty-sixth section of the book of Doctrine and Covenants I read the following:

"But ye are commanded in all things to ask of God, who giveth liberally; and that which the Spirit testifies unto you even so I would that ye should do in all holiness of heart, walking uprightly before me, considering the end of your salvation, doing all things with prayer and thanksgiving, that ye may not