

## ELDER ANTOINE R. IVINS

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My very beloved brethren and sisters, it is always with trepidation that I stand in this position. I pray that while I stand here this morning I may enjoy your faith and prayers, that perhaps some word that I may drop may be of comfort or blessing to you or to me.

I have been more than pleased with the wonderful spirit of this conference. I bear testimony that the things that have been said are true; that they pertain to the greatest thing in the world, the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and that if we will but adhere to those principles, observe them, and put them into practice in our daily lives, we will benefit by them.

You are the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The officers who sit here upon the stand are not the Church. They, of course, are a part of it; they are the guiding element in it, under the direction of the Spirit of God, but they are not the Church. They are only people who have been selected from the great body of the Church, to be your servants, to do the things that God desires done for your benefit and for the benefit of mankind. Perhaps none of them occupies his position through his own solicitations, and certain it is that none of them pretends to any superhuman or unnatural ability in the guidance of these affairs. They rely upon the Spirit of the Lord, just as any member of the great body of the Church would have to do, when called as men are from time to time to these positions; and it is my testimony that they do enjoy the Spirit of the Lord.

It seems to me that any member who begins to find fault with the things that are done would better first put himself in this position and ask himself if he could do better. It is most certain, I think, that almost without exception such a person would retreat from his position, and would immediately fall in line and sustain and uphold those in authority. Now, unless the body of the Church does that, the leaders of the Church are helpless. God himself, through revelation, told the Church in early days that his great purposes in certain respects could have been accomplished if the people had sustained the leaders.

Every man comes into the world with his free agency, and every man exercises it: sometimes to his advancement, sometimes to his disadvantage. Every man is entitled to the Spirit of the Lord to direct him, and if he lives as he should, he enjoys it. If he does not live as he should, he never has its companionship. I am certain that the body of this Church, the great majority of them live so that they enjoy this Spirit, and that they, with me, in holding up their hands to sustain these officers, mean just exactly what they say, that they will back up the authorities of the Church in the things they do for its benefit and blessing.

I pray that we may enjoy, as the days and years advance, a greater outpouring of this Spirit, that we may expel from our midst the spirit of criticism and fault-finding that we are told is extant, that it may be replaced by a spirit of love and affection and esteem, and that under

the influence of that spirit this great organization may go forward to its natural and normal fruition.

I stand before you, as some of the other speakers have done, representing the missionary work of this Church. We have an obligation. You have an obligation. We are your servants in attempting to guide that work in the nations of the earth.

It is only a few days since I had the pleasure of talking with a young man who had recently returned from Brother Sloan's mission. He said: "It is our duty to warn the world, but when can we say that the world is warned? Can we stand up and preach a sermon to a congregation, and retire and state that they have been warned? By no means. A man is never warned until he understands and appreciates the truth of the message you give him." It is for that reason that we go into the world, and go over and over and over again the same territory, endeavoring to impress the people with the truth of our message, to bring them to an understanding and a knowledge of it.

My particular work, as you know, is with a foreign people. They are a numerous people and it is a great obligation. Believing as we do in the Book of Mormon, we have a special interest in the native peoples of the American continent. The other day I made a short census computation, to see if I could determine, perchance, how many of those people there are with whom we would like to make contact.

In the first place, our immediate labors are limited to the United States of America, so I was interested in knowing how many of these people we have in the United States. I find that the city of Los Angeles has more than 75,000 Mexican people living in it and its immediate neighborhood. I find that the state of Texas has more than 800,000 people of Mexican extraction. I find that in Arizona and New Mexico there are large numbers of them, though the number I did not learn.

Then I went on to figure the population of Mexico, Central and South America. I find that in those nations there are nearly 100,000,000 people, and perhaps one-fourth of them are of almost pure Indian blood, with another fourth or more, perhaps, that we would call *mestizos*. That figures a tremendous population. That figures a tremendous obligation. When will we ever be able to warn 50,000,000 people in that great expanse of territory; teach them the history of their ancestors; bear testimony to them that the Book of Mormon has been restored; bear testimony to them that the Church of Christ has been organized in the earth, and that they are to receive its benefits and blessings?

This is a tremendous obligation, and now we have just twenty-four young men and women endeavoring to spread that truth among them, aside from a few of their own blood who are laboring with us. I say that it is a tremendous obligation, and one that only the aid and Spirit of the Lord will enable us to carry on successfully.

I would like to see the time come when we could put into the mission field a large force of men and women who would go into these nations and teach them intelligently the basic principles of Christianity, teach

them of the restoration of the Gospel, and give them its benefits and blessings.

We have as fine a group of young men and women as exists in the Church. I am sure they are doing a wonderful work. They are infatuated with it. They dislike to see the day come when they must be released, but come it must, especially now in view of these trying times. They almost invariably leave us with tears in their eyes, and say that they would like to stay, and will come back at the first opportunity.

We are extremely thankful to the Lord for the testimonies he has given us in this great work, for the aid and assistance that he gives to his missionary emissaries in the field.

I was reading, the other day, in a Spanish tract or pamphlet that is issued by the Mexican government, dealing with the early history as developed from archaeological studies of Mexico. There was a statement in it which interested me very greatly. This particular writer was dealing with the religion, as they think they have worked it out, of these early peoples, and of course it carried him on to a generalization of religion. In it he said that in all peoples and among all nations there are only a few who appreciate the abstract principle of Deity, and can understand it, and because of that the clergy necessarily is limited to those very select few who become the priests of the nation; and then for the people, the general people not so well indued with these peculiar powers, they raise up idols for them to worship, so that they may have some tangible vision of the thing they worship. It appealed to me as a strange and peculiar doctrine, so different, so far from our philosophy of life, so far from the philosophy of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

If there is anything about our religion that we should appreciate it is its tangibility, it is the fact that it is a philosophy which man has reached, and puerile as he is, can understand. It is that, perhaps, that makes it so popular with the people, that gives them the great and satisfying enthusiasm for it. It is that which gives me comfort, the fact that I seem able to understand it; that I do not have to go to a select few for interpretation of its meaning, because the Gospel, after all, is only the plan that God laid down for the sojourn of man in the earth, in the short time that he should spend here, to gain the experiences and advantages of mortality. It has to be simple, because it is just that plan, the plan of life, and if it were not simple we would not be able to benefit by it.

I trust that God will give us his Spirit, that we may understand the Gospel, that we may live it, that it may be the vitalizing element of our life, that it will give us the comfort, the peace and the joy that we should enjoy through the companionship of the Spirit of God.

I pray his blessings upon us, that he may guide us constantly, in the name of Jesus, Amen.