

YOUNG MEN'S MUTUAL IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION

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YOUNG WOMEN'S MUTUAL IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION

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ELDER GEORGE ALBERT SMITH*Of the Council of the Twelve Apostles*

I desire that I may have the blessing of the Lord, that the few moments I occupy will be profitable to us all. We have had a delightful time thus far. I have enjoyed the privilege of greeting so many of my brethren and sisters that I do not frequently see. Today I have come here with a prayer in my heart that we may continue to enjoy the favor of the Lord, bestowed upon us so richly in the past.

A MARVELOUS CHANGE

Sixty-nine years ago today a general conference of the Church was held in this building. The first to be enjoyed here. What a marvelous change has been wrought during the period of time that has elapsed since then! How the Lord has preserved this people! We have become somewhat popular with many of our Father's children in the world now, but in those days there were few, not members of this Church, who dared to even suggest that they were friendly to the Church. But the Lord promised those who came out from Nauvoo that if they would migrate into the tops of these mountains and live according to his teachings, they would be a happy people. That is the promise of our Heavenly Father to all who seek him and keep his commandments.

RECIPE FOR TRUE HAPPINESS

During these troublous times when so many are in distress, seeking happiness and not finding it, I think the finest recipe that I could give, to obtain happiness, would be: Keep the command-

ments of the Lord. That is easy to remember, and if we will do that we may be sure of success.

All down through the ages the Lord has inspired his choice servants and they have taught the people the Gospel, they have pointed out the way of true happiness. And yet, by his cunning craftiness Satan has persuaded the majority of mankind from walking in that pathway that will insure happiness, and he is still busy. That is one thing you may be sure of, that the adversary of righteousness never sleeps.

Yesterday reference was made to the fact that there are some of our brethren and sisters who may be influenced if they are not careful, into following unwise leadership in their efforts to obtain food, raiment, shelter, etc. Remember one of the oldest of the Lord's commandments, "Thou shalt not covet."

OLD AGE PENSIONS

A man this morning stopped me as I came down the street, and requested me to sign a petition. I asked "What is it?" He said: "You believe in old-age pensions, don't you?" And I replied: "Well, my brother, I have always believed in caring for old age, and I have been making contributions for old age ever since I was a wage-earner, in some form or another; but," I asked, "does your petition suggest \$200 a month for all those past sixty years of age?" He said: "Yes." I said, "Well, that appears to me to be excessive. I cannot see any justification for that."

"Now," I said, "do not misunderstand me. I am not complaining at anything that may be done for sixty-year-old people who, by reason of indigent circumstances and distresses, are not able to take care of themselves. I am not opposed to something being done to provide the means whereby they may live and be comfortable, but," I said, "this proposition of yours appears unreasonable to me." I hope I didn't wound his feelings. I had no desire to do so. I have always desired to be kind, especially to those in distress. We are likely, if we are not careful, to run off on a tangent, following some new idea, and if we will just pause long enough to consider and investigate, we will discover that it is not workable.

THE LORD'S WAY

The Lord, in his mercy, has told us much that we should do. He has instructed us to be industrious. During this conference reference has been made to the fact that we should go to bed early and arise early, after being refreshed. That is the Lord's advice to us. Among the things that come to my mind just now, that our Heavenly Father has suggested to us, is that we honor the Sabbath day and keep it holy; that we observe the Word of Wisdom; that we keep ourselves clean and pure and unspotted from the sins of the world; that we love one another; that we go about doing good. In fact, there are so many things that I will not take time to men-

tion them to you this morning, but you know what I mean,—the Lord's way, not man's way.

That is why this Church was organized, in order that we might be directed by the influences of our Heavenly Father. That is the purpose of it, to prepare us for eternal life in the celestial kingdom. When I think of the great and good men and women who have lived in this Church from the beginning, who have gone through all kinds of hardships, and have remained faithful to their trust and gone home, I think what a marvelous example has been set us!

We saw portrayed, last night, in the beautiful pageant presented here, some of the experiences of Wilford Woodruff, who lived to be 92 years of age, retaining his faculties; and almost the last thing that he did was to express his desire to those around him that they should honor God and keep his commandments.

OUR LEADERS TODAY

We are here this morning in a worshipping capacity, to wait upon the Lord. We are assembled under the presidency of the man who has been called to direct the policy of this Church, associated with his counselors and the other brethren. These are our leaders today. My heart is full of gratitude that I am permitted to be here. I regret that Brother Joseph F. Merrill, of the Council of the Twelve, cannot be with us, but he is in the line of his duty, performing a splendid service as president of the European Mission. I am grateful for the privilege that is mine to mingle my voice and associate with my brethren and my sisters in this, one of the great semi-annual conferences of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

SHOULD BE INDUSTRIOUS

We live in perilous times. We need the inspiration of our Heavenly Father. We can't expect it unless we keep his commandments. He said long, long ago there were idlers in Zion, and he complained at them, and he said, "He that is idle shall not eat the bread nor wear the garments of the laborer." I am assuming that he did not mean those who cannot find employment, and who are legitimately trying to take care of themselves. I am assuming that he referred to the habit some people get into of leaning upon their neighbor. Maybe that is the wrong interpretation, but that is the way I view it. I feel that there has been no justification given to any man in this world to feel that he can depend on somebody else to provide him a livelihood. I did not feel when I was a child that somebody would be compelled to provide me a means of living. The Lord gave me intelligence. He directed that I should work, and I began to work when I was twelve years of age, and I found joy in it, and have earned my living and helped others during more than fifty years.

I thank God for work, for the joy that comes from doing things in the world. I am not indicating any particular kind of employment except that it be honorable. But the Lord has indicated that

we should be industrious. In ancient times he said that we should earn our living by the sweat of our face. There are means available today whereby, if we were keeping all of the commandments of our Heavenly Father, there would be employment for every one of us that would occupy most of our time.

THE FAULTS OF OTHERS

This morning, not in criticism, not in a spirit of fault-finding I plead with you my brethren and my sisters, let us be generous with one another. Let us be as patient with one another as we would like others to be with us. Let us see the virtues of our neighbors and our friends and speak of those virtues, not find fault and criticize. If we will do that we will radiate sunshine, and those who know us best will love us.

I read some time ago, in one of the old records of the Church, that from this very stand a sermon was preached in which one of the brethren called attention to the fact that in a group of ten men and women, assembled together and examined each apart from the others, saying, "I would like you to tell me what you think of these, your associates," the first one explained that they were good people but each had an outstanding fault, and he said each one of them found fault with every other one of that group, but they forgot to criticize themselves. Out of the ten that had been assembled and given an opportunity to talk, nine people could find fault with all of the others, but the nine people did not find in themselves any fault at all. Now, let us think of that. That was right from this very stand years ago.

Aren't we rather prone to see the limitations and the weaknesses of our neighbors? Yet that is contrary to the teachings of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. There is a class of people who find fault and criticize always in a destructive way. There is a difference in criticism. If we can criticize constructively under the influence of the Spirit of the Lord, we may change beneficially and properly some of the things that are being done. But if we have the spirit of fault finding, of pointing out the weaknesses and failings of others in a destructive manner, that never comes as the result of the companionship of the Spirit of our Heavenly Father and is always harmful.

FOLLOWING THE NARROW WAY

If in our own homes we have family prayers and teach our children to pray and walk uprightly before the Lord, we are in the narrow way. If we teach our children to thank the Lord for the food that we have, and feel to appreciate our blessings, we are in the narrow way. If we, when we are called upon to do ward teaching, go into the homes of the Latter-day Saints as servants of the Lord, and call the family together and teach them the Gospel of Jesus Christ, point them to the pathway that leads to eternal happiness, we are in the line of our duty and pleasing the Lord.

So I might go on and enumerate many things, little things that we see around us every day, but they are important. We should attend to our secret prayers. We should live so near to our Heavenly Father that when we bow before him we may know that the thing we are asking will be pleasing unto him, and if it isn't granted in the way that we ask it we may know that the blessing will come to us that we are entitled to and that will really be a blessing.

IN THE HOMES OF THE LATTER-DAY SAINTS

I have shaken hands during this conference with a number of my brethren and my sisters. How happy I am to have this opportunity! I have been in your homes during the last few years, at intervals. I have had joy when I have stepped into the homes of the Latter-day Saints, and when I went in I found the inspiration of the Spirit of the Lord there. I found politeness and kindness among the children of the household. I saw cleanliness and good order in the house. I felt an influence of appreciation and gratitude for the blessings of our Heavenly Father. That made me happy. I have had joy and I am grateful for it, and this morning I thank you who have been so kind to me for your good care of me and my brethren.

IN THIS BUILDING

I have mentioned the fact that here, sixty-nine years ago, this building was opened, and from that time until now many marvelous instructions have been given to the Latter-day Saints. I have been in this house when the Spirit of God has been poured out upon us and there were few eyes not moistened by tears. Our souls were subdued. We felt to repent of our sins. When we possess the Spirit of the Lord we always have the spirit of repentance. Whenever our hearts are hard and we can't repent, we may know that we have not a proper spirit. So today I am thinking of the teachings that have echoed in this grand old building that is world-famous now because of what has been accomplished here.

The Tabernacle Choir has called the attention, I might say, of the entire world, by now, to the fact that there exists an excellent musical organization in the great "Mormon" Tabernacle, accompanied by this wonderful organ. They are preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and we are beneficiaries of that blessing.

THREE MIGHTY MEN

We have referred during this conference to three mighty men recently called home who have discussed the principles of the Gospel from this very pulpit and exhorted us to obey our Father in heaven, in preparation for life in his celestial kingdom. I am thinking of the praiseworthy things that have been said about our brethren who have just left us. We remember them and their virtues just as we remember the last conference, and we remember

the last conference as the best conference that we ever had because we are close to it. How fine it would be if we could remember all the truths that we have heard in the other conferences, not only remember them now, but if we could treasure them during life—retaining the teachings of the Lord which came to us through his servants.

LEADERS WHO HAVE GONE HOME

Here have stood some of the greatest men that have ever lived upon the earth, marvelous men, who have finished their work and gone home. I feel impressed to mention the names of some of those who from this pulpit have instructed the Latter-day Saints in the years gone by. Brigham Young, a mighty pioneer and leader of the Church; John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff, Lorenzo Snow, Joseph F. Smith. Think of these men who have passed on, these men that we love and venerate. Heber C. Kimball, George A. Smith, George Q. Cannon, John R. Winder, Anthon H. Lund, Charles W. Penrose, Daniel H. Wells, John Henry Smith, Orson Hyde, Orson Pratt, Ezra T. Benson, Charles C. Rich, Erastus Snow. These men were not ordinary men. They were super-men, that God called to lead the people to the valleys of these mountains and instruct them in those pioneer days. Franklin D. Richards, Brigham Young, Jr., Francis M. Lyman, George Teasdale, Marriner W. Merrill, Abram H. Cannon, Abram O. Woodruff, Charles W. Nibley, John Smith, Hyrum G. Smith, Joseph Young, Levi Hancock, Zebedee Coltrin, Albert C. Rockwood, Horace S. Eldredge, Jacob Gates, John Van Cott, William W. Taylor, Seymour B. Young, C. D. Fjeldsted, John Morgan, Brigham H. Roberts, George Reynolds, Edward Stevenson, Joseph W. McMurrin, Rey L. Pratt, Edward Hunter, William B. Preston, Orson F. Whitney, James E. Talmage and many others.

I will not take time to refer to more. The list is long but as I think of the men in the years that have passed, who have devoted themselves to the Church until the Lord summoned them home, I marvel at the strength of our leadership. I have missed the names of some of the leaders who have stood here, but these are those that have come into my mind.

OPPORTUNITY FOR PREPARATION

This is the Lord's work. This is not the work of man. If we desire to be identified with the kingdom of our Lord, the celestial kingdom, this is our opportunity to prepare,—with love unfeigned, with industry, with thrift, with perseverance, with a desire to do all that is within our power to bless others, to give—not to be always feeling we must receive, but desire to give, for I say to you: "It is more blessed to give than to receive." The Gospel of Jesus Christ is a gospel of giving, not only of our substance but of ourselves, and I thank my Heavenly Father that I belong to such an organization that has been so instructed.

SUSTAINING OUR LEADERS

I pray that the Spirit of God may be in your hearts and in your homes. Let us hold up the hands of these men who preside over us. Vacancies have occurred. They have been filled by servants of the Lord, men that he has chosen, and the vacancies that will be filled now and henceforth will be filled by men that the Lord has selected to be our leaders and our advisers and our counselors. I hope that we will be found in the line of our duty, praying for and sustaining our present leaders, blessing them by our kindness and our love, and presenting them before our Heavenly Father in our daily prayers, asking him that he will give them the richness of his love and blessing.

I am thankful again, from the bottom of my heart, for my membership in this Church. I know that this is God's work. I know that Jesus is the Christ. I know that Joseph Smith was a prophet of the living God. I know that the men that have succeeded him as presidents of this Church have been leaders by divine appointment. I bear you my witness of it and express to you again my gratitude to have been associated with this work of our Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord, Amen.

ELDER ALONZO A. HINCKLEY

Of the Council of the Twelve Apostles and President of the California Mission

My brethren and sisters, my soul is subdued. I had never dreamed of such a thing, never heard an intimation of such a thing as my being called into the Council of the Twelve. I stand before you as one who needs your supporting power for a few minutes.

I have thought in the last few minutes of my father, who is dead and gone. I have grown up in the Church, known all the Authorities since Brigham Young and loved them, sustained them, honored them, have been impressed by them, inspired by them. But my father, to him is the glory of having taught his family by a noble example, by devotion to the truth, by a humble reverence for the Authorities of the Church and loyalty to them all. To my father I give credit, leading his family, as man should lead, by the eloquent life that he led. His words were few but his example was true. No soul, in the presence of my father, was ever permitted to lift his voice and speak words against the Authorities of this Church, without my father offering an objection. I think of him in his teachings, in his prayers. My father prayed; he didn't say his prayers. We knew what was in his heart. We knew that for which he struggled, and we followed him.

May I pay a tribute to my mother, who, in the days when my father was called away from home, never permitted us to forget our