

THE WORD OF WISDOM GIVEN AS THE WILL OF GOD

He has given us the Word of Wisdom as a revelation to the Prophet Joseph Smith, whom he raised up to be the mighty prophet of this dispensation, and in that revelation he has said that it is his will that we abstain from the use of tobacco, intoxicating and strong drinks, and some of our people have taken the ground that it is no commandment of God, therefore they are not under the obligation to observe it as they would be had it been a command.

I want to call your attention to what we find in the 89th Section of the Doctrine and Covenants, where the Lord by direct revelation to the Prophet Joseph Smith said that we are to live by every word that proceedeth forth from the mouth of God. And that is given as a commandment; the Word of Wisdom did proceed from the mouth of God to us as a people, and as the will of the Lord, and therefore we are under command to observe it.

Some of our people quibble over the matter of tea and coffee, and say there is no mention of tea and coffee in the Word of Wisdom. I want to say to you that from the beginning of this Church, in the days of the Prophet Joseph, down to the present time, the leaders of this Church have interpreted that Word of Wisdom to include tea and coffee and all drinks that are habit-forming because of the caffeine and drugs they contain. We, as Latter-day Saints, who by our uplifted hands sustain the prophet in our day and time, President Grant, are under obligation to accept the interpretations that are made by him and by his predecessors with respect to this matter, that the Word of Wisdom that has come to us from the Lord includes tea and coffee among those things which we should not partake of. This is the will of the Lord.

Brethren and Sisters, may God help us to live by the word and will which he has expressed in various revelations, then will we be happy, and we will be saved and exalted, and what more can the Lord say, what more can he offer us as inducement.

God bless us, brethren and sisters, and help us to be faithful I pray, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

ELDER MARVIN O. ASHTON

First Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric

I do not think I feel as calm as a summer's morning as I occupy this position. If humility were the only requisite at this particular moment, I would not be worried at all about what I was going to say. The fact of the matter is that when I thought of this responsibility I mentioned to President McKay that I thought there were certain meeting houses that should be examined and that it was very important that the investigations be made the latter part of this week. He reminded me of what took place with Jonah when he disobeyed and failed to be in the proper place.

I want to repeat in part what has been said by Bishop Richards,

and that is, that I have appreciated very much the last few weeks of visiting the different stakes, in a regional capacity, if you please, throughout the Church. And lest I forget, I want to express my deep appreciation for the kindness which has been bestowed upon us brethren who have been visiting in the Bishopric capacity. I want to say further, I have appreciated very much the faith of these people. By your outward expressions I know what you want to think of us, and the courtesies given; but I want to emphatically say to you that we appreciate your kindness. Your faith and your integrity builds us up. I am not forgetting, by any means, the good sound judgment of you men who are leaders in the stakes of this Church. And I do not want to forget for one minute the kindness of the wives of these men, who open their homes, let their other work go while we are entertained.

I believe that sometimes to test anything you must have something happen of an unusual character. Now I think that peculiar thing has happened to the Church so far as this welfare work is concerned. I think that this thing coming upon us has been the means of testing us.

One man wrote this little story: A certain king years ago stretched some wires over his castle, and the only time that the tunes would play and the chimes sound on those wires was in times of storm. I believe that we play the best tunes individually and collectively when the storms come. This storm has not been as severe as it might have been, or maybe as severe as we may face later, but it has been a test to us. I wonder sometimes—and I am not forgetting the fine work that has been done by the bishops and by the presidents of stakes, and people of the wards, and I am not forgetting by any means, last but not least, the Relief Society and what valiant people they have been in this work,—but I have noticed this, that some of our people have not taken this thing as seriously as they might. They simply have not functioned.

When we were going up to Canada we noticed on the road that a certain washout had hit a mountain side, and there was, hanging from the air, a telegraph pole suspended by the wires of the system. I said to Bishop Richards, pointing to the pole hanging up there: "I wonder if some of us are not just like that pole, instead of sustaining we are being suspended." I have thought of that many times since.

I am afraid sometimes we get in ruts and some of us who have been the most valiant sometimes are most susceptible to ruts. Some one has said the only difference between a rut and a grave is that one is a little deeper than the other. Now I say this respectfully, but sometimes men who have won their spurs, who have cut their furrows, rest while the world goes on. The Church is of such a nature and such magnitude that whether you do your duty or not, it pretty near sustains you. And you stay there, and you just hang on by virtue of the tremendous system that is over your head.

Now I believe this: We play our best tunes when the storms rage, but we ought to be very careful that the storms do not get under us and lift us up so that we hang there. I believe that some men get it into their heads that they ought to be original, and they can not be original

unless they stand off and criticise. It reminds me of a story that I learned in Scotland of a man speaking on the street to some people. He said: "The only trouble with you is that you are like the fellow who is running a relay several times around the race track. You actually get so far behind at times that you think you are ahead."

You often hear the expression, especially by the Genealogical Society people—and by the way, I saw this particular phase dramatized, and it impressed me very much—you hear them speak of people as being in prison, and the doors will not be unlocked if someone fails to do his duty. I wonder sometimes if there are not thousands and thousands of living people here on the earth who are locked up and cannot get through because somebody lacks leadership. It is the saddest thing in our Church sometimes to go to a ward or stake and find a lack of leadership. People are behind the bars, trying to get through,—and I am not forgetting our young people at all—and because of lack of leadership they simply do not get through.

Now, as far as I am concerned, somebody has something to answer for in leadership. I do not care if a man has won his spurs or who he is, if he is dead on his feet, it is just a sad situation. Sometimes you can go to a ward or a stake and just as soon as you step over the threshold you can feel that death, or slumber, or something of that nature, stalks thereabouts, because they are standing on a reputation, and fail to function as they should. No truer philosophy is in the scriptures than that you cannot put new wine into old bottles.

One of the most notable things in our Church as I see it—it has been mentioned many times before—is the dilapidated condition of our buildings, not forgetting our meeting houses and not forgetting our homes. It is a sad situation. We sometimes speak of the "outward signs of an inward grace." Now, if our homes are the outward sign of an inward grace, we are in awfully sad shape, it seems to me. Now, I am not losing sight of the people who are struggling to keep out of debt, and building a shanty temporarily to bridge over. I think we ought to respect them; I take my hat off to that kind of people. But I am not taking my hat off to the people who through laziness and indolence live in a shabby, barn-like abode until "kingdom come." We must not be too severe, but people who come into our midst notice these things, and we are judged accordingly. I am not overlooking the item of charity and kindness to others who are making a struggle. It seems to me the biggest thing in our lives is charity. "Though you give your body to be burned, if you have not charity, it availeth you nothing."

I want to say here that I hope in this system of welfare work where it is our purpose to organize ourselves, rather intensely, a little pocket for this situation, a little "pigeon hole" for that circumstance, that in all this settling up of a system we do not forget honest-to-goodness charity and kindness to one another. That man is still taking a trip from Jerusalem to Jericho. That man may be sitting next to you right now. He may pass you as you go out. You may meet him on the street, but he is still here. We need charity in our souls. He is begging for a tear

of sympathy and a kind expression from you—not altogether your money, but the milk of human kindness. Some people who build up nice bank accounts and shake hands with themselves for the wonderful position they are in financially; the ray of charity sometimes fails to get through for them. I wonder sometimes (to play on someone's expression) if that same fellow who always wants the spiritual blessings to come to the other fellow, how he would appreciate it if, when he got around the table Thanksgiving Day, he would have a *spiritual turkey*, that was "without body, parts, or passions."

Some of us are just naturally—as one man puts it—"tight." Our pores are closed, and we do not let charity break through.

I must not say very much more. But I do want to say this in closing. Across the street from here to the east some of those men who are sweeping up the leaves in these paths are executives. I have yet to be convinced that all the virtues are inside of a white collar. Just as often they are in a flannel shirt as they are in a white shirt. Sometimes a man who has been a clerk or an executive will come on his hands and knees and beg for a job at three or four dollars a day. He may bring his little kit of clothes in a satchel lest he meet some of his friends in his overalls. He will go through this humiliation and live on bread and water to keep a boy or girl on a mission. This is something some of us do not dream about, and we forget all about the man's sacrifice.

May the Lord help us to keep charitable and kind, to be on our toes, and as someone has expressed the "eleventh commandment,"—"If there is anything going on, be thou in it." May the Lord bless us. Amen.

ELDER RULON S. WELLS

Of the First Council of the Seventy

If there is anything that I am grateful for it is for my standing in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, that I have fellowship with the Saints of God, that I have part in this glorious work which the Lord has established for the salvation of mankind. I am always conscious of the fact that the Lord is carrying on a great work, that he has stretched forth his hand to perform a marvelous work and a wonder, and that we are among his chosen people, the chosen people of God.

I rejoice in this fact. The people who have embraced the Gospel of Jesus Christ, who have been members of his Church in the various dispensations of the past have always been designated "his covenant people." Why should we be called a "covenant people?" For this reason: That we have entered into covenant with God, in the new and everlasting covenant.

The everlasting covenant has been so frequently referred to in the scriptures that I marvel that people do not interest themselves sufficiently to find out just what that covenant is. Have we made a covenant with the Lord? Has he made a covenant with us? What is a covenant? If we will examine our dictionaries we will find that a covenant is "an