

ELDER SAMUEL O. BENNION

Of the First Council of the Seventy

I sincerely trust, my brethren and sisters, that I may enjoy the Spirit of the Lord this afternoon, for no one can hold this position and address an audience without that Spirit which will bear testimony to all of us that this is His work.

RESPONSIBILITY FOR OPPORTUNITIES

In the day and age in which we live the many complicated situations which arise bring us more than ever face to face with the fact that we are all individually responsible for our acts. I believe that I have an individual responsibility as well as an opportunity to do what the Lord would have me do, and that I have also the duty to encourage others to do likewise. They in turn have the same privilege.

I do not believe as many do that the grave is the great common leveler, but rather that as we live and journey through this life, so shall we begin on the other side; that we shall begin where we left off here; that we cannot change the life that we have established; that it will take time for men and women to change their methods of living. I believe in the Prophet Alma's words, that this life is the time for men and women to prepare to meet God:

Yea, behold, the day of this life is the day for men to perform their labors.

Alma continues:

Ye cannot say contrary to this, for that same spirit which doth possess your body at the time of death, at the time that ye go out of this life, that same spirit shall possess your body in the life to come.

It is a mistake for men and women to believe, as many are taught in the world, that when we pass away we will go immediately into the presence of the Lord, there to remain. It is not so written, but it is written that we shall go into that spirit world, and that the life that we have lived, the knowledge that we have acquired, will be with us there, and shall be with us and for us in that life where we shall go.

EARTHLY LIFE A MISSION

We came into this world and took upon ourselves these bodies of flesh and bones willingly. We came here, away from home, to perform a work, and to test our strength. The Lord sent us on this mission. I have always felt that this experience in mortality is more or less a missionary experience. He governs and controls the destinies of the human family, according to their faith in Him and according to their work, and that training they received, and that obedience which they yielded in that eternal world from whence we all came, had much to do with the shaping of their destiny here.

I do not place credence in the thought that things come by chance

or by luck. I doubt very much if there is any such thing. I think the Lord's plan is an orderly one, which He made before the foundation of this earth was laid. I believe with all my heart in the testimony of the great prophets, that we were in that world, and that we shouted for joy at the time when the Son of Man was selected to go into the world and preach the Gospel of peace among the children of men, that men who would might have a chance to prove themselves while they were in mortality.

I repeat that I am strong for individuality. I believe in it in business and in government. I believe in it in my Church relationships. I am fully converted to Alma's statement that this is the time for men to prepare to meet God, and that that same spirit which possesses our bodies when we go out of this world, that same spirit and experience and training, will go with us into the world to come. It will be there as an asset unto us. If we have not kept the commandments of God and made good use of our time, then we have failed that much, and we have to that extent retarded His plan, for after all that plan is based upon the faith and works manifested by the sons and daughters of God.

THE KEYS OF AUTHORITY RESTORED

The Lord has established in your day and mine the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He gave it to the Prophet Joseph Smith, who was divinely appointed to become the great Prophet of this dispensation of the fulness of times. It was through him the Gospel was to be taught in all the world. The Lord brought into the world the authority that He gave to Joseph the Prophet, and He established it through those men who appeared unto the Prophet and gave the keys to him. This is the authority to act in the name of God. This is the Holy Priesthood, and to know this and to live in accordance with it is life eternal for the children of men.

There are thousands and millions of good men and fine women in this world. They can only be reached by those who know the truth. A man who does not have a testimony of this Gospel cannot bear it to others. He cannot establish faith in the heart of another man or woman unless he possesses that faith himself. He must have a knowledge that God lives, that Jesus is the Christ, that this divine plan called Mormonism, was instituted by our Father in Heaven, and that it is the work of God. He must feel this and know it. Then he can have influence with the children of men, and by the power of his example, which often precedes precept, he can establish faith in the hearts of the children of men.

This is the mission of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. If men procrastinate, if they continue to be wicked, they cannot hope to inherit these blessings. Let me read what Alma further says about this:

For behold, if ye have procrastinated the day of your repentance even until death, behold, ye have become subjected to the spirit of the devil, and he doth seal you his; therefore, the Spirit of the Lord hath withdrawn from you, and hath no place in you, and the devil hath all power over you; and this is the final state of the wicked.

EVIL HABITS LEAD MEN ASTRAY

My brethren and sisters, let us look well to the habits we form. If they are evil habits, and if we do not repent of them and put them from us, they become a great part of us and it is not easy to shake them off or to forget them. It is not easy for men and women to get away from the vices of sin. The drinking of alcohol, for example, leads them into terrible conditions, often into destruction. That same principle will apply to every habit or form of sin that a man or a woman may acquire here in mortality. That is the thing I think that our great prophet Alma had in mind.

ADVICE GIVEN BY THE PROPHET ALMA

Alma offers some very encouraging advice in these words:

Counsel with the Lord in all thy doings, and He will direct thee for good; yea, when ye liest down at night lie down unto the Lord, that he may watch over you in your sleep; and when thou risest in the morning let thy heart be full of thanks unto God; and if ye do these things, ye shall be lifted up at the last day.

That is the promise that He offers to men and women who will follow the Lord and counsel with Him, who will attend to prayer, who will attend to their offerings, who will walk uprightly, as carefully as men and women may in mortality. And he said: "Ye shall be lifted up at the last day."

A GREAT PROMISE

As I read these words my mind was drawn, and has been drawn many times to a passage of scripture in the Doctrine and Covenants, in the 93rd section, the first verse. I heard President Joseph F. Smith read it once when I was in Conference, and I believed it was directed to me. I read it to you:

Verily, thus saith the Lord: It shall come to pass that every soul who forsaketh his sins and cometh unto me, and calleth on my name, and obeyeth my voice, and keepeth my commandments, shall see my face and know that I am.

I want to say to you, my brethren and sisters and friends, that is one of the greatest promises the Lord could offer. It is a wonderful thing for us to know that, and to know that it will absolutely come to pass. It fills us with joy to know that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world, and that He is our Father's Son; that He established faith among the children of men and raised up a righteous heritage here in the earth, to establish His Cause in the great world in which we live, and that if we are worthy we may one day look upon His face.

THE VALUE OF TRUTH

It is a glorious thing to know the Truth. It is a glorious thing to live it. It is a fine thing to meet men, regardless of where we may travel, and to let them know and feel in their hearts that we believe in the Gospel

plan and that we teach it and live it. By it we may bring souls unto Christ.

I have lived in the shadow of the prophets for many years. I have heard their testimonies. It is a marvelous thing to hear the testimony of President Grant. I talked to a person who heard his voice this morning over the radio. He said it was inspiring and that he was deeply touched when, in his humility, the President manifested emotion. The testimony of Jesus was there. What more could men and women ask for or hope for than to know these things? "For this is life eternal," said the Savior in His day, "to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou has sent."

Brethren and sisters, we are living in a day of great trouble and distress, but we have the power to use our free agency, stand for the things we know are right, and to establish faith among the children of men. Let us not be fearful of saying "No" when we ought to say it. Let us stand for the truth and uphold the hands of the prophet of the living God and those who are associated with him, for this is the work of God. The Lord bless you. Amen.

The Choir sang "Jesu, Word of God"—Mozart.

ELDER JOSEPH FIELDING SMITH

Of the Council of the Twelve Apostles

This is a most wonderful sight, and this is a most important position which I occupy. In looking into your faces I feel very much my weakness and dependence upon the Spirit of the Lord, and I trust that I may have your faith and prayers in what I may say.

There are a great many principles that concern us very deeply, the principles of the Gospel. We have assembled here for the purpose of being instructed, guided and built up in the faith. It is impossible for one individual, in the limited time, to attempt to cover many of these principles of eternal truth. I have been delighted in all that we have heard. We have heard much already of the greatest importance, which I humbly hope we will put into practice, if we have not already been practicing these principles of righteousness which have been mentioned here this afternoon.

I am inclined, at this particular moment, to continue something along the line of the remarks that were made by Brother Ivins, for I believe that he touched upon one of the most important things that concern the Latter-day Saints—marriage.

KEEPING THE COMMANDMENTS IMPORTANT

We have a great many people in the Church who would not think for a moment of stealing. They would not lie. They would never think of purposely injuring a neighbor, and they might be considered, of course, to be good citizens, because in all their acts they show the spirit of honesty and integrity so far as their dealings with their fellow men are concern-