

## THE MENACE OF INTOXICANTS

Just one more word in closing: In my observation, in going to and fro, including life on the boat, including conduct going to restaurants, it is my judgment that America never was going at such a pace as she is going right now in this liquor business. We are going fast and furious. It will take stamina of steel to stem the tide. I never was more impressed in my life. We are going drink crazy. The example we are setting the youth is criminal.

We members of the Bishopric are to be forgiven if we continually hammer on this youth question. Speaking again of the youth, I saw a sight that impressed me much. Will you please let me tell you about it? A good bishop was taking me on an inspection trip about the island. In the course of our travels he said, "I want to show you something. You probably haven't seen anything like this before." He was right—I had not. All over the islands everywhere were cocoanut trees. Everywhere they stood erect with their fruit to the sun. They were in most everyone's yard and on many of the highways. He repeated, "I want to show you something." He took me to a yard and there on the ground crawling as it were, like a great 50-foot python snake was a cocoanut tree. It did everything but cut the figure 8 in sprawling and looping the loop. Instead of keeping its head up and majestically filling its destiny in the world, that ten inch monster was crawling in the dust.

I thought to myself: Well, there is the way some of our youth are brought up. Somebody, when that plant was just taking root, gave it a kick. Even then, when yet tender if someone had only given it a kind touch, it would have gone straight. Instead of the tree facing the sun, its fruit toward the sun, there it was sprawled on the ground—too late, the day of correction past.

That is our great problem. It is going to take courage to stem the tide. The enemy are the millions. I often think of that story of the Greek at Thermopylae. When he was told that the arrows of the Persians darkened the sun, he said, "So much the better. We will fight in the shade." Yes, in this fight against this demon, liquor, we'll have to fight in the shade. Let's put on our shield and may we fight on with the same undaunted valor of the Greek youth, whose mother buckled on his shield and said, "Come *with* it or *on* it."

May the Lord bless us with courage—if we ever needed it, it is today. Amen.

## ELDER JOSEPH L. WIRTHLIN

*Second Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric*

I sincerely trust, my brethren and sisters, that I shall enjoy a portion of the Spirit of the Lord in the attempt to address you this morning.

## THE TEACHINGS OF A GOOD MOTHER

I am ever grateful to an angel mother for the many lessons she taught me with respect to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the inspired

leadership that stands at the head of this Church. I distinctly recall how she took me, as a small child, to her knee and impressed upon me the fact that Joseph Smith was a prophet; and furthermore, she impressed me with her burning testimony that the present leadership of this Church, and for all time, is and would be inspired men of God.

#### THE LEADERS OF THE CHURCH SERVANTS OF GOD

I am now grateful that I can testify to you that this great organization is being directed by our Heavenly Father through the instrumentality of prophets and apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ. Those of us who listened to President Grant yesterday, had in our hearts a burning feeling that he is, indeed, a prophet of the Lord, that there rests upon him the same mantle of authority that Joseph Smith and Brigham Young enjoyed, and all other Presidents of the Church who have succeeded them as the Lord's mouthpiece here upon earth.

It is a most wonderful privilege to covenant with the Lord periodically that we will sustain these brethren as servants of God and obey the counsel they impart to us. In following their counsel and advice, we will always be found doing those things which will be for our ultimate good and benefit.

#### OBEDIENCE A SAVING PRINCIPLE

There is one lesson the world needs to learn, namely, the lesson of obedience. Had the children of men been obedient to the commandments of the Lord, the terrible catastrophe that is now taking place in Europe could have been prevented. But through disobedience and the fact that men have forgotten the Lord and what He expects of them, calamity and ruin have come upon the nations.

I would that all of us could learn and understand the principle of obedience as Adam learned and understood it. He was commanded to build altars upon which to offer sacrifices. And upon one occasion, after having complied with this commandment, an angel of the Lord appeared to him and asked him the question:

Why dost thou offer sacrifices unto the Lord? And Adam said unto him: I know not, save the Lord commanded me.

And then the angel spake, saying: This thing is a similitude of the sacrifice of the Only Begotten of the Father, which is full of grace and truth. (Moses 5:6-7.)

In Adam's mind there was no question why he should render obedience, for he knew that whatever the Lord commanded him to do would be for his good and benefit.

It is interesting to note that after Adam had fulfilled the commandment of offering up sacrifices, the Lord rewarded him with a visitation from a divine being, imparting to Adam the knowledge why he was to offer sacrifices. And this applies to each and everyone of us when obeying the commandments of the Gospel. We may not understand them fully; but through obedience, the Lord will reveal to us the

reason and the knowledge which will give us a full, clear comprehension of the law or the commandment involved.

This point of obedience without a complete understanding is defined so beautifully by Montaigne. He declared:

The first law that ever God gave to man was a law of pure obedience. It was a commandment, naked and simple, wherein man had nothing to inquire about, after, or dispute for inasmuch as to obey is the proper office of a rational soul, acknowledging a heavenly, superior benefactor, from obedience and submission spring all victory, as all sin does from selfish opinion.

Carlyle declared, too:

Obedience is our uniform duty and destiny, wherein whoso will not bend must break.

The Lord through the Prophet Joseph Smith has plainly indicated that the achievement of any blessing is predicated upon obedience. In the 130th Section of the Doctrine and Covenants, we read:

And if a person gains more knowledge and intelligence in this life through his diligence and obedience than another, he will have so much the advantage in the world to come.

There is a law, irrevocably decreed in heaven before the foundations of this world, upon which all blessings are predicated—

And when we obtain any blessing from God, it is by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated. (D. & C. 130:19-21.)

Success, spiritually and temporally, will only be achieved to the degree that the laws involved are obeyed. The highest degree of success is accomplished by rendering the fullest degree of obedience to the fundamentals and the principles of the Gospel of Jesus Christ; and the same is true in any line of endeavor that we may choose to follow.

#### DISOBEDIENCE BRINGS ITS OWN PUNISHMENT

Disobedience represents that which is negative. It had its inception in the great council of heaven where one of the sons of God took a negative attitude and stand toward the Lord. Consequently, disobedience leads men away from the Lord and places them in the paths of sin, degradation, and failure. Brother Merrill indicated to us this morning that we should harken unto the affirmative spirit, that spirit being best expressed in obedience to the mind and will of our Heavenly Father.

The Prophet Jeremiah pointed out in unmistakable terms that in disobedience the people brought upon them their own punishment. He declared:

Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee: know therefore and see that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord God of hosts. (Jeremiah 2:19.)

This ancient prophet points out plainly that in disobedience the children of men always find a penalty involved, just as much so as there is

a reward for rendering obedience to the Lord. The Lord, too, has declared:

And my people must needs be chastened until they learn obedience, if it must needs be, by the things which they suffer. (D. & C. 105:6.)

Brigham Young declared:

Anything that is impure must sooner or later perish, no matter whether it is in the faith and practice of the individual, town, nation, or government. That kingdom, principality, power, or person that is not controlled by principles that are pure and holy must eventually pass away and perish.

Disobedience begets that which is impure and the penalty involved is that of destruction.

The children of Israel were a chastened people, The Lord harkened unto their cries for deliverance from bondage, and under the leadership of the Prophet Moses, led them out of Egypt across the Red Sea, and into the wilderness. They became disobedient. Unholy practices sprang up among them. They forgot God. They worshiped the golden calf. The penalty for this disobedience was one which forced them to wander for 40 long years in the wilderness before they finally understood the lesson of obedience.

#### OBEDIENCE SHOWN BY EARLY LATTER-DAY SAINT PIONEERS

Our pioneer fathers and mothers came into this valley, conquered the elements, and subdued the soil, achieving the highest place among American pioneers because they harkened unto the will and the mind of the Lord, made manifest through His servants, the prophets.

Brigham Young said:

The Latter-day Saints, in all their travels, have not been as rebellious as the children of Israel were.

One of the most interesting and intriguing bits of Mormon history is that which had to do with the group of pioneers who made the long, weary trek from the Missouri River to these mountains. Shortly thereafter many of them were called to settle the San Bernardino Valley in southern California. The terrain from the Salt Lake Valley to the San Bernardino Valley is one of waste and desert, particularly the great Mojave Desert. But they were under mandate to make the journey, and obeyed accordingly. This band of devoted Latter-day Saints remained in the San Bernardino district for six years. A large portion of the original purchase of 35,000 acres of land was cultivated, schools were established, store buildings and churches were erected, a flour mill and saw mills were placed in operation; and this area became a thriving, prosperous community.

The *New York Herald* gleaned from the *San Francisco Herald* that the Mormon settlement was in a valley—

. . . unsurpassed for fertility of soil, salubrity of climate, beauty of scenery, and general desirableness, by any portion of the State. Their agricultural interest is larger than that of Santa Barbara, Los Angeles, and San Diego Counties united, and the capabilities of producing are much better.

These people had a bright future. But one day, word was received from Salt Lake City that they were to return immediately. An invading army was on the boundaries of the State of Utah. Without question the members of the San Bernardino colony left their pleasant homes, farms, mills, schools, and once more traversed the barren wastes of the Mojave Desert. And what was their response? Willingly they rendered obedience to the word of the Prophet of God. This quality of obedience laid the foundations for this great intermountain commonwealth in which we live. And it was this type of obedience which made it possible for our Heavenly Father, through His servants, to restore the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ in the last days.

I have often wondered what became of these people after they returned to Utah. I wonder if they were blessed temporally. I have wondered what their attitude was. I am sure that if we could have an expression from them it would be phrased in the words of the Christ:

For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? (Mark 8:36.)

So, again, may I remind you of these words spoken by our Redeemer:

I, the Lord, am bound when ye do what I say, but when ye do not what I say, ye have no promise. (D. & C. 82:10.)

Our pioneer fathers leaned on the Lord and rendered obedience; and He has kept His promises in that they and we, their descendants, have been abundantly blessed.

#### A LAND BLESSED BY THE LORD

Making reference to the valleys of Utah, Brigham Young said:

Talk about these rich valleys, why there is not another people on the earth that could have come here and lived. We prayed over the land, and dedicated it and the water, air and everything pertaining to them unto the Lord, and the smiles of heaven rested on the land and it became productive, and today yields us the best of grain, fruit and vegetables.

The Lord blessed the people who were obedient. Their obedience has brought the blessings of heaven upon this fair land. It has become as a garden, blessed with a varied abundance of all that goes to make life pleasant and comfortable. We of today are the recipients of blessings literally wrought out of the obedience of our forefathers.

#### PROMISES OF THE LORD SURE OF FULFILMENT

The Lord definitely kept His promise at the time President Snow traveled up and down the State pleading with the people to be obedient to the command of tithing, promising them in the name of Israel's God that the windows of heaven would be literally opened and the blessings of heaven showered down upon them. The crops of the southern part of the State were parching and drying up because of a lack of moisture. The people harkened to the voice of the Prophet of the Lord. They obeyed the commandment of tithing. Rain fell. Crops were saved. And

from that day to this, the Church has rested on a strong financial foundation due to the obedience of many of its members to the financial law of God's Kingdom.

President Grant admonishes the membership of the Church to keep the Word of Wisdom, the promise of the Lord being that those who observe the Lord's law of health will be blessed with alert minds and strong bodies. More than that, He has promised to us revelations which will give to the world treasures of hidden knowledge. As a people, we should be the most obedient to the Lord in the whole world because we are a covenant people. We have entered the House of Jacob's God, which House was to be established in the tops of the mountains in the last days; and in this Holy of Holies we have covenanted with the Lord that we will contribute of our time, talents, and resources for the building up of the Kingdom. Like Adam of old we should be willing to obey, for we accept God the Eternal Father as our God, and Jesus Christ as the Redeemer.

#### OUR OBLIGATION TO THE WORLD

The world needs an example in obedience. The Lord has designated us as that example. Our destiny as a people is one of leadership. And the day is not far distant when the nations now engaged in this bloody struggle will finally come to the conclusion that war is futile, that it is entirely useless to kill men and destroy property. They will seek for a philosophy of life which will bring peace, harmony, and good will among them; and they will find it only in one place and among but one people—that place will be in the tops of these mighty mountains and among this people, the covenant people who call themselves Latter-day Saints.

A great responsibility devolves upon us, individually and collectively—an obligation to exemplify to the world in our lives and through obeying God's commandments, that the Restored Gospel of Jesus Christ is upon the earth in its fulness and simplicity, and obedience to it brings peace, joy, and good will. May we render that degree of obedience which will cause the Lord to say of us as He did the children of ancient Israel:

Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine. (Exo. 19:5.)

Through the Prophet Joseph Smith He placed upon us the following mandate in the 115th Section of the Doctrine and Covenants:

Verily I say unto you all: Arise and shine forth, that thy light may be a standard for the nations. (D. & C. 115:5.)

This is the destiny of the Church. This is the challenge of the Lord to His people.

May the Lord so strengthen us individually and collectively that we will willingly render the necessary obedience which will exemplify the principles of the Gospel to all men and to all the world, I humbly pray, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.