

## ELDER GEORGE ALBERT SMITH

*Of the Council of the Twelve Apostles*

**T**HIS seems like old times. When I was a new member of the Quorum of the Twelve a group like this used to assemble in this building after every General Conference, and we listened to the instructions of the General Authorities of the Church. The presidents of stakes and associates went back to their fields of labor feeling that they had indeed waited upon the Lord, and not in vain.

I trust that this morning I may be led to say something that will be helpful, because it seems to me that some kind of encouragement is most desirable just now.

There are in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints today 892,080 members. They have been gathering from the nations of the world during one hundred twelve years, in the face of almost constant opposition and often during bitter persecution. We are representatives of those faithful souls who had the courage to face the wilderness and endure privation that they might worship God according to the dictates of their consciences. In 1846, when the Pioneers left Nauvoo, Illinois, and vicinity, they had been stripped of nearly all their possessions. They had been robbed and plundered by so-called Christians. In 1847 they came into this Indian country to find peace, believing that God would overrule their distresses for good, which He did, most wonderfully. In a few weeks the leaders went back to Winter Quarters for the main body of the Saints, and they left Patriarch John Smith, the uncle of the Prophet Joseph Smith, to preside over this section of the country, designated as "The Salt Lake Stake." He was not a strong man; he was rather frail, albeit a man of great faith.

Today, with the world in the condition it is, it seems a wonderful privilege to be called together here, you men who are presiding as the leaders in the stakes of Zion, you men who have been set apart to represent God in the

districts in which you labor, and to follow the leaders of the Church who preside over you.

These are perilous times, brethren, I have no doubt that many of you here have seen your sons depart to join the armed forces of the United States and have mourned that it was necessary for them to go. When they return, if they have kept the commandments of God, they will have witnessed His power and His strength in their preservation. This is not the Church of Joseph Smith or Brigham Young. It is not the Church of any man. This is the Church of Jesus Christ, our Lord. He has given rules to govern it and made them so plain that a wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err in following His teachings; yet there have been those in the Church who have failed, who have fallen by the wayside, who have come under the power of the adversary and surrendered to evil. But those who have kept the commandments of God, those who have stood in the places to which they have been called, those who have been the leaders in Israel from the beginning, who have kept the faith, have been magnified, honored, and sustained by our Heavenly Father until the time came for them to return to their Maker.

I say to you brethren this morning, I say to all of us, because we are all responsible, that here in this room today is the leadership of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. This group is the one that has been chosen by the Lord to carry on His work and to preside over the organized stakes and missions of Zion. We are permitted to assemble in peace and quiet notwithstanding the terrible conditions in the world. We have been chosen and set apart by those who have the authority to call us to serve. We are in this house that was erected many years ago by faithful Saints. We are here to worship God and to honor Him and to be instructed by Him through His faithful servants.

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**A**FTER these conference meetings are over, you brethren will go back to the stakes of Zion over which you preside. If we have sought the Lord we shall be strengthened, our faith will be increased, our power to direct will be increased, and we will not feel the weakness that possesses men when they are left alone. Rather we will feel the strength and power of our Heavenly Father, for He helps us.

The responsibility that comes to all of us when these honors have been bestowed upon us is tremendous. I hope that none of the members of the Church who have been called to preside in its various departments will feel that they can make it secondary in their lives. You who are here today must know that it is your duty first of all to learn what the Lord wants and then by the power and strength of His holy Priesthood to magnify your calling in the presence of your fellows in such a way that the people will be glad to follow you.

This is a day of proving ourselves, a day of trial. This is a day when men's hearts are failing them with fear. When the multitudes in the world are asking themselves what the end will be. A few inspired men know what the end will be. The Lord has told us what would occur, in these books that are upon this stand, this wonderful library that I hold in my hand. He has given us the information that we need to adjust our lives and to prepare ourselves that no matter what may transpire we will be on the Lord's side of the line.

When Moses led Israel from Egypt through the wilderness and into the promised land, Amalek attacked Israel at Rephidim. Moses directed Joshua to choose fighting men to protect Israel. Moses, Aaron, and Hur went to the top of a hill overlooking the battlefield. While Moses held the rod of God above his head, Israel prevailed, but when he let his hands down because of weakness, Amalek prevailed. A stone seat was provided and Aaron and Hur held up his hands in order that the blessings of God could flow to Israel that their warriors might prevail and

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the battle was won. The power of God was upon Moses and remained with him until he had finished his work. When he had the support of his people they too were blessed, and so it has been with every servant of the Lord who has presided over Israel.

How grateful we must all be to see the President of the Church stand here this morning, in spite of physical infirmities and advancing years, and yet with that testimony burning in his heart that God gave to him when he was a youth. He has here testified to us of the power of God which has been made manifest unto him. President Grant has been an example of devotion and a tower of strength in this Church. He has been a friend-maker among the gentiles of the world because the Lord has made him so.

We sit here this morning under the inspiration of his voice, and just as long as the Lord holds up his hands, just as long as he presides over this Church, it matters not how many years it will be, our Heavenly Father will give him strength, power, wisdom, judgment, and inspiration to talk to Israel as they need to be talked to. We, in following his leadership, must be like Aaron and Hur of ancient times; we must uphold his hands, that through him the Lord will let the blessings of heaven descend on us and this people.

His counselors will likewise be blessed, and they will be united together and they will carry on, and when they are united in the things pertaining to the gospel of Jesus Christ, they will be our leaders and our directors, and we will do well to listen to their voices and follow the example that they set us in all righteousness.

This morning hundreds of thousands of your associate members of the Church would like to be here. Yet out of our entire Church membership we are permitted to be present. But with this group rests the leadership of the Church, and if we wait upon the Lord as we should, if we have come here with the spirit of worship, if we have set aside our personal affairs to make first the kingdom of God and His right-

eousness, we will go from here renewed in strength and power; the assurance will increase in us that this is God's work, and we will have strength in the communities in which we reside and preside, to say, "This is the way of the Lord; walk in it," and the people will know by the spirit that we possess that we are really His leaders.

Brethren, it is no trifling affair. You cannot neglect the business of the Church, as the presiding officers of the stakes of Zion, and expect the Lord to carry on. He desires to do it through you. You have been given divine authority. It comes through only one source, and that is our Heavenly Father. He will expect each of us wherever we go, when this conference is completed, to hold the banner of righteousness aloft and teach by example as well as precept those to whom we minister, the gospel of Jesus Christ our Lord.

The world is in a serious condition, but we need have no fear if we do what the Lord has asked us to do. This is His world. All men and women are subject to Him. All the powers of evil will be controlled for the sake of His people, if they will honor Him and keep His commandments; He has told us that in the latter days conditions would be such that people will be in fear and doubt. He has told us that the time would come when the elements would not only threaten but also that men would hate one another and seek to destroy one another and that the wicked should slay the wicked. When we see the condition that is in the world today, how grateful we ought to be that our forebears were called from the midst of the nations and guided into the gathering place of the Saints in the tops of these everlasting hills. We should prepare to send forth sons and daughters, keeping the commandments of God, to preside in the various departments of the Church, not only in the organized stakes, but as missionaries in many parts of the world where stakes are not yet organized.

The missionaries of this Church should be as a light set upon a hill wherever they go, and they will be if

they keep the commandments of the Lord. They will be able to teach the truth if they are worthy of the companionship of that sweet spirit that comes from our Heavenly Father.

Upon us who remain at home, those that are holding positions among the organized stakes of Zion, who have been called to teach and guide not only by precept but by example, upon us devolves a responsibility that our Heavenly Father will hold us accountable for, and if we will but do our best, He will bless us in it.

No matter whether the clouds may gather, no matter how the war drums may beat, no matter what conditions may arise in the world, here in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, wherever we are honoring and keeping the commandments of God, there will be protection from the powers of evil, and men and women will be permitted to live upon the earth until their lives are finished in honor and glory if they will keep the commandments of our Heavenly Father.

When you return home from this conference, remember the things that have been said here by those who have been called to speak. Remember the testimonies of truth that have been borne in your hearing, and in addition, know that God has given to you a great library of scripture and instruction for your guidance that has accumulated during the ages and He will add to it in the future just as rapidly as we fulfill His desires in the things that are already revealed.

God lives. Jesus is the Christ. The Church of the Lamb of God is upon the earth. The power of the holy Priesthood is here, and no evil power can stay its progress. It remains for us to demonstrate whether or not we will do our part and merit exaltation.

As I stand here in humility before you, I realize the blessings that the Lord has bestowed upon me, one of the weakest of your number, frail in physical strength. When I recall the many blessings that have come to me through my forebears who have been faithful, I realize what they are expecting of

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me, honored as I have been, I feel my limitations and the necessity of drawing near to the Lord, I desire the fellowship of my brethren and sisters in this Church.

There are none of us but will make mistakes, not any of us but will fail to interpret some things properly; but if we will do our best, if we determine in ourselves to be what God would have us to be, if we will set our own homes in order, and then go forth to set in order the departments of the Church in which we are called to minister, our Heavenly Father will be with us to guard us, and the strength that we need will be with us, but without His guidance we will not succeed.

I pray that the Spirit that directs those who keep the commandments of our Heavenly Father may be with us always, that we may have power to understand, that we may have the strength to resist the temptations of the adversary, for we will all be tempted, that we may be able whatever the circumstances may be to place our all upon the altar, as many of our forebears have done, and say to our Heavenly Father, "Whithersoever thou desirest me to go, I will go."

In the stakes and wards in this Church, you men must be towers of strength among the people all the time. You must be what God intended you to be when He gave you the authority that has been conferred upon you. You must be willing to make the sacrifices; and when I say you, I mean all of us. That will be required of us in order that we may be worthy to hold our places among the children of men, and if we will do that, men and women everywhere seeing our good works will be constrained to glorify the name of our Heavenly Father. It is not the position that we occupy that gives us power; it is righteousness that gives us power; it is keeping the commandments of God that will give us understanding. Having been set apart for some particular duty, will not be sufficient; but having been set apart, if we are worthy, the Spirit of God will dwell in us, and we will be among the people as a light

to guide their footsteps, and they will know that the leadership that is with us is of our Heavenly Father.

I DESIRE with all my heart to be worthy of the position to which I have been called. I desire to be worthy of the companionship of my associates in the leadership of the Church. I here desire to thank my brethren, President Grant and his counselors, the members of the Quorum of the Twelve, the First Council of the Seventy, the Presiding Bishopric, and those who have been called to associate with these men. In these men I have seen the power of God made manifest, and I thank them for the privilege I have had of working with them—not to work out my own desires and ambitions, but to unite with them in carrying forth the program that God has given to the children of men, without which this world is condemned already. If this body of men cannot rise to the majesty of the power that God has given to them and build upon the foundation of faith and righteousness, there is little hope for the world; but if we do our part, if we will keep the commandments of God, if we will love one another and observe the commandment of the Savior that we love our neighbor as ourself, then will we have strength, and power, and wisdom, and might, among the children of men, and the people of the world will love us, and they will not hate us because they will see in us the riches of righteousness and the blessings which come from the power of our Heavenly Father.

I know that God lives. I know that Jesus is the Christ. I know that Joseph Smith was a prophet of the living God, and that the Church with which we are identified, was organized through him by our Heavenly Father and His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ. I know these things, and there is no other way under heaven whereby men may gain a place in the celestial kingdom but through the plan that God has given the children of men, of which we are made partakers. I know this as I know that I live, and knowing it, I desire that we may prove worthy. With all my heart I pray that we may be content to live in

the lowly brackets of life; not with all the riches that the world desires and clamors after, but that there may be in our lives a richness of love and hope and charity wherever we go.

I pray that our homes may be the abiding place of prayer, and that our sons and daughters may be worthy exemplars of the cause and represent us favorably wherever they may go.

Brethren, let us not think that this Church will go on just as well if we fail. The Church as a whole will, but I want to say to you that the department we are expected to direct will not go forward as long as we stand in the way, so let us adjust ourselves if necessary. Let us live so that every night when we kneel to pray and every morning when we bow before the Lord in thanksgiving, there will be in us the power to open the heavens so that God will hear and answer our prayers that we will know that we are approved of Him. We can do that, brethren, better than we have ever done before. If there ever was a time when it was needed, it is this particular period in which we are living.

I humbly pray that God may give us power and strength to resist evil and temptation and to put aside from us the selfish motives that characterize so many of His sons and daughters, that we may let our light so shine every day

that others observing our good works will see in us righteous leaders that they will be glad to follow. I pray that these men who preside over us, this Presidency, may have the joy of always being united in their leadership and that we may be united in our membership when they shall speak in the name of the Lord to the Church.

Again I say I know that this is God's work. I may not be with you very long, my brethren. I have passed the years of some of my forebears a long way, and I am amazed that I have been permitted to stand among you as long as I have with my many illnesses, but I desire that as long as I live that I may enjoy the Spirit of God, the spirit of fellowship, and brotherly love. When I think of your homes, I would like to know that there is love in every heart for one another; then I will know that there will be love in God's heart for us, and there will be an assurance that He will bless us as we need blessing.

That this conference may be notable for the spirit that will be distilled upon us, even as the dew from heaven, and when it is over that we may go to our various departments renewed and invigorated, and determined more than ever to be worthy of the high calling that has been made of us and conferred upon us, I humbly ask in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

## ELDER MARION G. ROMNEY

*Assistant to the Council of the Twelve Apostles*

I DESIRE to call your attention to the principle of loyalty, loyalty to the truth and loyalty to the men whom God has chosen to lead the cause of truth. I speak of "the truth" and these "men" jointly, because it is impossible fully to accept the one and partly reject the other.

I raise my voice on this matter to warn and counsel you to be on your guard against criticism. I have heard some myself and have been told about more. It comes, in part, from those who hold, or have held, promi-

nent positions. Ostensibly, they are in good standing in the Church. In expressing their feelings, they frequently say, "We are members of the Church, too, you know, and our feelings should be considered."

They assume that one can be in full harmony with the spirit of the gospel, enjoy full fellowship in the Church, and at the same time be out of harmony with the leaders of the Church and the counsel and directions they give. Such a position is wholly inconsistent, because the