

IMPORTANCE OF MISSIONARY WORK

There never was a time in my experience, I think, when it was more opportune for us to do missionary work than at the present time. I have remembered all my life that little children, as well as older ones, have been taught to pray for the missionaries, that they might be able to seek and find those who were honest in their hearts. Today we have them coming into our midst by the hundreds. I do not know, and feel sure they do not realize, just why they have come here, but among them will be found many who will be led to investigate the gospel, and perhaps many of them will be baptized. It was only yesterday that I had the pleasure of riding with an officer at a nearby camp who is living in the city with a family of Saints. He said to me, "You know, when this war is over, and I am permitted to come back, I am going to move to Salt Lake City. I want to bring my wife here; I want to finish my time here in this country among this people."

I am sure an influence for good is being felt. The strength of this Church, brethren, does not rest upon the *number* of people in the Church, nor in the educational stand that it occupies, nor in its wealth; but is vested in the *quality* of its membership and in the individual testimony of its members. The desire to give of themselves for the good of others, to think and speak without fear, under the direction and power of God, and to live as they feel they should live, setting the right kind of example—this is the strength of the Church. Its members are proud to declare their position before the world. There is the power of God in this earth among His sons and His daughters, and its influence will be felt. It will be the thing that will prepare the world for the coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. This power and testimony will prepare the people to meet Him, for this is the Church and Kingdom of God on earth. I bear this testimony to you, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

ELDER JOSEPH F. MERRILL

Of the Council of the Twelve Apostles

First, brethren, may I make a brief report concerning the response to a request sent out to the chairmen of our No-Liquor-Tobacco committees in all the stakes of the Church late last summer and early in the fall.

PASSAGE OF SHEPPARD BILL URGED

Many thousands of letters and names attached to petitions went to Washington addressed to their respective senators and representatives, urging the passage of what was known as the Sheppard Bill, which, if it had been passed, would have brought prohibition to the military reservations and camps and other places where the armed men of this country were serving. The bill failed. The opposition was too strong, but a great deal of good, I am sure, was accomplished. In what way? In the little town of Hollingwood in New Jersey, there was an army encamp-

ment established. It was a dry community that felt outraged at what was going on; so by a search of the records they found that in 1901 Congress had passed a law prohibiting the sale or bringing onto the reservations and military establishments of this country alcoholic beverages in any form whatsoever. But in 1933 the Congress of the United States declared that beverages containing not more than three and two tenths percent alcohol were not intoxicating. This law that was found to be already in existence did not mention mild beer, but it touched everything else of an alcoholic nature, stronger than 3.2%. So you read a few months ago that the War Department had by proclamation banned liquor in all its forms except mild beer from military reserves and camps, etc. In other words, the agitation to try to get the passage of the Sheppard Bill succeeded in unearthing what had already been done. So we have in effect in the United States the very thing that it was hoped that bill would accomplish, except for mild beer.

APPEAL FOR CONTACT WITH MEN IN SERVICE

Another thing: I am reading now a brief quotation from an article in a recent number of *Good Health*, which magazine, in my opinion, is standing valiantly, continually, and persistently for the principles of our Word of Wisdom to an extent that is not exceeded by any other publication in this country. This magazine said, and I read:

Army life tends to break down moral principles, unless they are firmly established. Removal of the restraint of home and business association, evil companionship which would be avoided in civil life, abundant temptation, and the recklessness nearness to death may bring, are among the reasons for this.

I read this, brethren, so that you will be reminded that we have time and again requested our Priesthood quorums that have members in the armed forces of the United States to keep in touch with them, to write letters to them, to provide a set-up in the quorum that shall insure a letter going forward at least monthly to those in the armed services. We heard a report that in one of the stakes this is being done by another agency; but I want to say to the Priesthood authorities in that stake, brethren, that does not release you of your responsibility. That work is not being done by the Priesthood quorums, by you brethren who have members of your brotherhoods away from home. We can bless them for what they are doing, but will you, too, please do that.

I am not going to enter into a discussion of the good that these letters can accomplish when they are written, but I am making this appeal again, that they shall be written from every quorum of Priesthood in this Church that has any of its members away in the armed forces of the country. We have advised also, and urged, that they keep in touch, quarterly at least, with the members of their quorums who are away from home engaged in defense industries of the country.

PRESENT DAY REVELATION

Now, brethren, there is a word or two I would like to say on another

topic, and I will introduce it by relating a little incident. A few years ago as I was conducting a class in the mission home, a young lady missionary arose and asked: "Brother Merrill, why do we no longer have revelation in this Church?" It was of course a very surprising question, but I am sure it was sincerely asked, and my answer was: "Sister, there is no time to discuss this; the hour is nearly up, but I say to you if you will go on your mission and give yourself sincerely, wholeheartedly to it, obeying the mission rules and regulations, and be obedient to the authority that presides over you, and live near to the Lord, you yourself before you return will know there is revelation in the Church; besides, you will know that the message that you carry is divine, and you will get that knowledge not because you hear others testify to it, but because you will get it as all others get it, if they really have it, through the channels of revelation direct from heaven."

What authority, brethren, have we for that statement? May I say that for the last five and a half years, since the present policy has been in operation, it has been my great privilege and my delight to interview hundreds of returned missionaries, and I find out from those missionaries by direct questioning that they have a testimony. All but two of them have said, "Brother Merrill, when I bore testimony, particularly toward the end of my mission, to the divinity of this work I was not expressing an ardent hope or earnest wish that this is the work of the Lord, I was saying what I really knew; yes, I know this is the work of the Lord," or words to that effect.

And you, my brethren, who are here this afternoon, if given the opportunity could, I presume, stand up right now and say that you too know that this is the work of the Lord.

I am not going to discuss the fact that there is revelation guiding the Church, but I want to speak of your responsibility as having received a personal testimony divinely given of the truthfulness of this work. I think, brethren, that that testimony places upon us a very heavy responsibility. It has been mentioned here by other speakers. What is this responsibility? We have been urged to encourage missionary work; we do it all the time, in all of our quarterly conferences, in all our contacts; we do it wherever we go. It is one of the great obligations placed upon the Church—that of engaging in missionary work. But there are two methods by which we may do it, by precept, as those are doing who are called to devote their time to using that method, and by example. But we are all called to use the method of example. And so, since we know this is the Lord's work (we bear testimony to that), I feel that we are obligated, absolutely obligated—if reason governs, if we are going to act rationally, if we are going to be true to our convictions—to live it; and if we do live it, we are all missionaries, every one of us, all the time. I think our boys who are in the armed services to the extent of twenty thousand or more from this Church, particularly those who have returned from foreign missions for the Church, are finding every day of their lives an opportunity to preach this gospel in a way, and perhaps a more effective way, and to greater numbers than they have ever had before.

There is one here and one there in a company of hundreds, and if they live as they have been taught, if they will be true to their testimonies, their influence for good will certainly be very great. And perhaps their influence and their example will be more effective in inviting inquiries and in leading to investigation than they have ever been in the mission field.

SATAN'S POWER A REALITY

But now, brethren, may I say that while we are obligated to live worthily we must not feel that it is an easy thing to do. Why is it not easy? Because we inherit weaknesses; we are living in a sinful world; we are powerfully influenced by our environment; and the temptations of the evil one all impose handicaps. And the evil one—Satan—to us is not a mere name, as it is to a very great majority of our Father's children here in mortality to whom the word devil, the word Satan, is a term that personifies evil, and everybody knows there is evil in the world. But to us Satan, or the devil, is the name of a real person, a man with a spirit body, and he is here on earth, cast out from heaven. And he has a myriad of helpers who are other spirit beings in human form and they are here to bring sin, sorrow, distress, and suffering, and destruction into the world; and they are doing it. Wherever the Saints are, I think the devil will try to be also. If he can overcome the Saints, he has all the world. He is trying in every way with the aid of experienced helpers and according to the intelligence he has to overcome the Saints. Satanic influences are likely to tempt us more or less every day, and in respects where we are weak making it hard for us to resist. But, my brethren, we are bound, I feel, by our testimony to resist, to overcome, to live as we profess. If we do that, we will inspire confidence, we will inspire respect among all of those whom we contact. So let there be no hesitation, no faltering, no excuses in our efforts to overcome temptations.

OUR OBLIGATION TO LIVE RIGHTEOUSLY

I spoke of weaknesses. What weaknesses do we inherit? Many of them. I will name one that all of us inherit to a greater or less amount—selfishness. We may all find an excuse for slipping or failure, if we try hard enough. And we can find an excuse for selfishness, expressed in these words: "Charity begins at home." Yes of course, charity begins at home; we take that for granted. Accordingly, I think of myself; I take care of myself before I think of you or do anything about helping you. I have heard time and time again from representatives of the general Welfare committee of the Church attending our conferences that one of the objectives of that great plan is to help us overcome our selfishness. But, brethren, I repeat, by reason of our testimony of the divinity of this work we are obligated, if we are honest, if we are rational, if we are reasonable, if we are true, we are obligated to live according to our professions, to our teachings. That obligation rests heavily upon all of us because we are leaders in the Church, leaders in the stakes and wards and quorums and branches of the Church. We must try so to live that in the sight of our Heavenly Father at any rate we are free from justifiable

complaint and criticism due to our conduct. We must not yield to temptations for wrongdoing. Whatever the influence, whatever the temptation, whatever the circumstances, we must stand true so that our lives will be as lights upon a hill. Now the Lord has given each of us, I think, a will power great enough, if used with His help, to live acceptably. But we must have His help. We can get His help if we seek it worthily and persistently. But if we do not seek it, can we get it? There is no promise. In His great sermon on the mount Jesus said: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you" (Matt. 7:7). But suppose we do none of those things? Then what are we promised? There is no promise at all. Seek the Lord is what we are commanded to do; seek Him worthily; seek Him in everything we have to do to get the strength, the courage, and the will to live as we teach, and to meet our responsibilities as they have been placed upon our shoulders in the positions that we have accepted, all along the way in the organization and set-up of the Church.

Now, brethren, I feel that any man who accepts a position of responsibility in this Church has not only himself to think about and try to live as the Lord would have him live as a private in the Church, but he has the responsibility upon his shoulders of looking after the welfare of others, and that is a responsibility that everyone before me this afternoon has—the responsibility of looking after the welfare of those who are committed to his charge. You officers of Priesthood quorums are responsible for the activities and everything that you can do to help them.

INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY

In this connection I want to say, however, that while no officer can be relieved of his responsibility to do his duty to those committed to his care, yet failure to do so does not justify the members of his charge in their failure to live according to the teaching and standards of the Church. Each individual will be judged according to his works. No one can justify his failures by accusing another of dereliction of duty. Each man has his free agency. He may serve the Lord or otherwise as he chooses. And while officers are duty-bound by their official responsibilities, so also are individuals obligated by their opportunities. The misdeeds of another cannot justify me in wrongdoing. Careless adults among us should look within rather than without for the causes of their indifference.

Yet I want to make this point: you and I can help the cause of righteousness very materially, every one of us, if we will live as we teach, as we profess. Then our lives will be as lights upon a hill, and others seeing our good works will have their tongues of criticism throttled, if not tied. It is particularly important that we be careful of our personal conduct, avoiding insofar as possible the very appearance of evil, for Satan, the liar and deceiver, is ever alert to use every excuse to inspire criticism among our Father's children.

Brethren, may the Lord help us to be worthy of His blessings, and may we stand true and faithful to our testimonies, to our teachings, to

our obligations, that the Lord may use us to the extent of our abilities to promote His work among our fellows, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Elder Richard Condie sang a solo, "O My Father" (Eliza R. Snow).

ELDER ANTOINE R. IVINS

Of the First Council of the Seventy

My brethren: I crave an interest in your faith and prayers for the short time that I may stand before you this afternoon. I hope that some thought that I drop may be helpful to some of us, otherwise I feel I would be a trespasser in occupying your time.

SACRIFICE BRINGS COMPENSATIONS

There have been many references made during this conference to our many brothers and friends and relatives who are wearing the uniform of their country, we think, in the defense of a very righteous principle. I heard a talk the other night by a prominent man, the theme of which was, every good thing comes to us by sacrifice. I have been thinking of it some since; for a long while I have been thinking of these young men. We already know that some of them are not coming back to us, and we have reasonable assurance that others of them will not. I have been trying to work out some way to determine what makes a full and complete life for a man, and I find it a difficult thing to measure. Some of us live a long, long while, and some of us not so long. Some of us whose life ends early may perchance render a greater service to our fellows than those who live longer.

We remember if we will read back through our history that there have been some very important sacrifices required at the hands of people of this Church in this dispensation. I remember reading that when the Lord saw fit to organize the Council of the Twelve and the Council of the Seventy in the Church, that before doing so He had organized what was known as Zion's Camp, a service which asked of every man in it that he should place upon the altar of sacrifice, if required, his life. It is true that most of the men who went out on that trip returned. Some few however did not. They died of sickness, not in actual combat. You will remember that the Prophet in vision saw their state and reported it as glorious. Out of that group was organized the Council of the Twelve and the first quorum of Seventy, and the second quorum of Seventy in the Church, tried, true men, every one, men who had offered their lives for their brethren. Fortunately this sacrifice was not required of them.

The Prophet Joseph Smith likewise, knowing full well what he was walking into, gave his life for the testimony that he had of this glorious work.

Now we have out representing us thousands of young men, some