

ELDER GEORGE ALBERT SMITH

Of the Council of the Twelve Apostles

I trust that I may have the benefit of your faith and prayers, that I may be led to say something that will be helpful, for I realize that the time is very precious when as many men are assembled as are here tonight.

There are thousands of things that might be talked about, but if I am blessed by our Heavenly Father the few things I may speak about will be those that are given to me while I stand upon my feet.

THE SERIOUSNESS OF WAR

The world is in a terrible condition. The references that have been made tonight and during this conference to the fact that many of our young men are away, some of whom may never come back, and some of our young women, too, naturally stirs in us a feeling that we want to **do our best**—not only that we determine that we will, but that we have the strength to do it. About a month ago we checked on my relatives in the Smith family, and there were more than seventy that were already enlisted, and since that time there are quite a number of others that have gone. We have been told here that we have approximately twenty-five thousand members of the Church that are now at the front or are preparing to go. This is serious for us, and while the papers are full of the successes of the allied forces, and we are told of the powerful guns and bombs that are being utilized against those who are opposing us, the fact remains that we are involved in a terrible struggle and that the implements of war on the other side may be equally powerful and equally effective against us. I do not feel the assurance that some have due to our physical strength when I realize that only one-third of the people of the world are likely to be on our side because of being Christians or believing in the divine mission of Jesus Christ. Two-thirds of the world have never accepted Christianity, and it wouldn't take very much to swing nations that are now quiescent, if I may use that word, to the side of those who are seeking to destroy the liberty that mankind is enjoying.

FAITH OF LAMANITE YOUTHS

I am thinking of the experience of the Nephites, when they were having their perilous troubles, and how just two thousand and sixty boys, striplings as Helaman called them, were brought face to face with men of experience and training in warfare, and they went forward without any question, and when they were gathered from the battlefield, everyone of them having been wounded, after a series of battles, two hundred of them having fainted from the loss of blood, not one had lost his life. When the question was asked, "How could you do it? How could you have the faith?" those boys, like the ones that are going out now, no doubt, eighteen years and a little older, smilingly remarked, "We knew, our mothers knew." (See Alma 57:19-22.)

I think that is one of the greatest tributes that has ever been paid to

motherhood—that in circumstances such as they were experiencing, when they were surrounded by enemies, they could train their children to have that faith in God that would carry them through and would bring them home without losing their lives.

I have been asking myself the question, "Have the mothers of Israel been preparing their sons?" Have they been teaching these boys that must represent us on the battlefield, that they too, can be preserved; that God will take care of them if they are in the line of their duty, and I want to say that if our mothers have, the fathers have much to be grateful for, because some fathers do not take much time to teach these children things like that in these days.

DUTY TO MOTHERS AND WIVES

Tonight as I look at this great audience of men, more than 5,000, I realize the strength of the holy Priesthood; knowing that we are the representatives of divinity and that the men in this room have the power that comes from God to represent Him upon the earth. I know that, and at the same time I realize that there is a force in the Latter-day Saint homes where our wives and mothers and daughters are, and when it comes to faith in God and prayer it is equal to anything that the men may be able to muster. I fear that sometimes we neglect them. I wonder tonight if the men who are here, who have come to this great conference to worship God, who are here to be instructed under the influence of the spirit of the Lord—have left homes, left households in which there is a family of children besides the wife. I am asking myself the question, "How many of you who are here tonight, before you came here to wait upon the Lord, put your arms around the woman who stood by your side, the mother of your children, and told her that you were grateful that she would keep the home-fires burning when you couldn't be there?" I wonder if we appreciate the daughters of God as He appreciates them. Do we treasure their virtues and their faith and their devotion and their motherhood as our Heavenly Father does?

Recorded in the Book of Mormon is the statement that He took a whole race of men to task because the hearts of their wives were broken by their carelessness, and their children who had grown up in their homes had lost confidence in them. These were the men of the Church that I am talking about, and the Lord reproved them and gave them to understand that unless they repented of their carelessness they need not hope for His blessings. So I want to say to this group of Priesthood tonight, praying is one thing and prayers are important, but living is the thing that will bring us power with our Heavenly Father. Living the gospel of Jesus Christ will give us influence with our fellows among the children of men. Keeping the commandments of God will give us strength and assurance that not anything else can give us.

I am glad that so many of the brethren can come to this conference, and I hope that when we go home from the meetings that are being held here, that each of us returning to the home that is so precious to us, and is all that many of us possess, that we will do so determined that with

the help of the Lord we will honor His daughters. We will treasure their love; we will be true to them and help them to do the things that they have to do when fathers and husbands and brothers are away.

I think that tonight there are no people in all the world who have such reason to be grateful as we. Realizing our privileges and opportunities I am thankful for my own experience, raised in a Latter-day Saint home; taught to pray at my mother's knee. My father spent years in the mission field; my mother eleven times offered her life to bring us into the world, and she gave her life day by day to train us that we might be real Latter-day Saints. And that's only one family. I am thinking of all these families that we represent—thinking of your parents and grandparents who came out of the world for the gospel's sake, who were willing to give all that they possessed that you and your children and your children's children might not be betrayed by the cunning craftiness of the adversary, to turn away from righteousness and partake of the things that our Heavenly Father has forbidden us to touch.

COMMENDATION FOR TABERNACLE BROADCAST

These are some of the thoughts that have been going through my mind during this great conference as I sat here upon the stand and listened to the voices of these servants of the Lord who have been commissioned divinely by God to represent Him and who have been teaching us and feeding us the bread of life while we have listened to their words. I am grateful for the great Tabernacle organ and choir that broadcast from this building each Sabbath day. For years they have been delighting the world with hymns of praise that our Heavenly Father has blessed us to enjoy, and along with it have gone sermonettes that have touched many hearts. I have had many people ask who is that man who makes the announcements at the Tabernacle broadcast? And I suppose Brother Evans has received hundreds of letters of commendation for his contribution. What he says is brief, but it is what he thinks the Lord would have His servant speak on His holy day.

RIGHTEOUSNESS GIVES STRENGTH

Now, brethren, we will soon be away from here. You will go to your field of labor and I to mine. We will mingle with the Latter-day Saints and with those who are not members of the Church, and I say to you that, if we would have influence with those that we are going to see when we leave here, we must have the power of God to witness unto them that we are what we pretend to be. Being a member of the Church and holding the Priesthood will not get us anywhere unless we are worthy. The Lord has said that every blessing that we desire is predicated upon obedience to His commandments. We may deceive our neighbors, and we may deceive ourselves with the idea that we are going through all right, but unless we keep the commandments of our Heavenly Father, unless we bear worthily this holy Priesthood that is so precious, we will not find our place in the celestial kingdom—we will not find our association and companionship with the wives and daughters who have

not had the Priesthood, but who have measured up and have kept the commandments of God and lived righteous lives.

There are many men in this Church who have no male representatives. Our beloved president who sits here tonight has no sons, but God has blessed him with wonderful wives and daughters, and they have honored him and have held up his hands and supported him and sustained him. Other men on this stand have been blessed with large families who have joy in doing the things that the Lord wishes them to do and bring honor and credit to the Church with which they are identified. They are your brothers and sisters and mine. How grateful we ought to be that our lot has been cast under such favorable conditions. It doesn't make any difference how strong our armies, if we are outnumbered by those who do not believe in God. It doesn't make any difference how powerful the engines of destruction we prepare, they might be destroyed by that which may be brought against us by the enemy, but if we have the confidence of our Heavenly Father, if we have His love, if we are worthy of His blessings, all the armies of the world cannot destroy us, cannot break down our faith, and cannot overcome the Church that is named for the Son of God.

Read in the nineteenth chapter of II Kings how Sennacherib the Assyrian king sought to overthrow Jerusalem. Hezekiah, the king who represented Israel pleaded with the Lord for deliverance while Sennacherib mocked him, saying, "Don't think that your prayers to your God can help you. Every place that I have been and taken already, they have been praying. You are helpless," and the next morning a large part of the Assyrian army was found dead upon the ground, and Jerusalem had been preserved by the Lord. He is our strength, brethren, your Father and mine, the Father of all; if we will only be worthy He will preserve us as He did Helaman's sons, and as He preserved Daniel from the lions, and the three Hebrew children from the fiery furnace, and six hundred thousand of the descendants of Abraham when he brought them out from Egypt under the leadership of Moses and drowned Pharaoh's army in the Red Sea. He is the God of this universe. He is the Father of us all. He is all-powerful and He promises us protection if we will live worthy of it. Let me read you a paragraph of the very first section of the Doctrine and Covenants wherein He says:

For I am no respecter of persons, and will that all men shall know that the day speedily cometh; the hour is not yet, but is nigh at hand, when peace shall be taken from the earth, and the devil shall have power over his own dominion.

What a pitiable thing it would be if that ended there, for we can see the power of the adversary in the world and the destruction that is being wrought by those who are his emissaries; but, continuing, the Lord says:

And also the Lord shall have power over his saints, and shall reign in their midst, and shall come down in judgment upon . . . the world.

What a promise, but it is all conditioned upon our righteousness,

not on anything else, not upon our wealth nor our strength in numbers, not upon our isolation from the world, but upon our righteousness.

A TESTIMONY OF GOD'S BLESSINGS

In conclusion, I want to bear my testimony to you, my brethren. First I thank the hundreds of you who have made it possible for me to carry on as I have, while standing at the side of my associates in the leadership of the Church to encourage our people and their neighbors to keep the commandments of God, and tonight, when I think of the condition of the world and realize that the only place where there is any semblance of peace is the land that we live in, and with the promise of God that He will be with—not the members of the Church, I don't interpret it that way; not the men who hold the Priesthood necessarily, I don't interpret it that way—He will be with His Saints who are worthy to be called Saints, and His power and protection will be over them until their life's labors are completed. I know that God lives. I know that Jesus is the Christ. I know that Joseph Smith was a prophet of the living God as I know that I live. I know that the Priesthood that is held by you brethren is divine; that you are representatives of Deity and that if your lives conform to the desires of our Heavenly Father concerning His Priesthood, all power in heaven and earth cannot prevent you from gaining the blessings that God has said He would bestow upon those who keep His commandments. Let us love one another. Things have been said here about kindness during this conference. If there ever was a time when we needed to be kind, it is now. If there ever was a time when we needed to be patient, it is now, and if we would keep one of the commandments of God that He said was second to the greatest, we will love our neighbors as ourselves. When we do that, they will not be made sorrowful because of any conduct of ours. I am thankful to you for your companionship. I thank my brethren of the General Authorities of the Church, with whom I am so closely associated, for their kindness to me. I thank our beloved President, who, in his advancing years, continues to encourage us to be faithful and bear witness of his knowledge that God lives, that Jesus is our Savior and Joseph Smith was a prophet raised up by the Lord. You have heard these testimonies many times and the testimonies of others who are here. You have heard the testimonies of those that have already gone to their reward. These are true my brethren. These testimonies are not idly spoken or carelessly given. They are the truth.

Knowing that in the not-far-distant future the man who is talking to you now will have to stand before God and answer for the deeds done in the body and the words spoken here, knowing that, and realizing the seriousness of misinterpreting or misrepresentation, with joy and gladness and with love I bear you my testimony, that the Gospel as taught by the Latter-day Saints is the power of God unto salvation. This is my witness and I bear it in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Men's Chorus of the Tabernacle Choir sang "Jesus, Lover of My Soul."