

BISHOP LEGRAND RICHARDS*Presiding Bishop of the Church*

Brethren, I feel that this is a wonderful privilege to be associated with you fine men, leaders in Israel, and the better I become acquainted with you, through my visits to the various stakes of Zion, the more I feel the strength of this great Church. As long as I can recall, the Church has meant more to me than anything else in the world. I have always rejoiced in the words of Isaiah when he told of a day when a marvelous work and a wonder should come forth among the children of men, and there has never been a question in my mind but what I have been privileged to live in that day and this is the work to which the prophet referred.

THE SAINTS MANIFESTING FAITH

It seems to me that there has never been a time when the Church was achieving such fine results as at the present time. Recently I heard a statement purported to have been made by one of our worthy patriarchs in his eighties. One of his friends asked him if he would not like to pass on to the other side, calling attention to the fact that his wife had already died and that many of his friends were there, and he replied, "I should say not. I have lived to see the Lord accomplish so much in my lifetime. I would like to remain as long as I can and see what else He is going to do. I have always believed in the words of the prophets, and I believe they will all be fulfilled, literally, as the Savior has indicated, and that we are engaged in the greatest movement this world has known since the days of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

To me, one of the greatest accomplishments in the Church is the marvelous faith of the Saints as evidenced in the payment of their tithes and their offerings. Sometimes we look upon this as merely a temporal matter but it is a marvelous gauge of faith. In the third chapter of Malachi, the prophet indicates that the Lord would send his messenger to prepare the way for his coming and there is a very peculiar thing: that entire chapter, relating to the preparation of his coming, deals with the calling back of Israel to the remembrance of the Lord in their tithes and their offerings, indicating that the whole house of Israel had departed from him in this great commandment. So far as I know, there was no religious body in the world observing the law of tithing when that great law was revealed again to the Prophet Joseph Smith. In my position I am privileged to know of the faith of the Saints in the payment of their tithes and their offerings, and the great increase evidencing their faith is a marvelous thing to me.

We take the report to our meeting with the First Presidency weekly, and when President Grant is there, and the report is handed to him, he invariably remarks, "Isn't it wonderful!" And it is wonderful because it evidences the faith of the Saints in the work of the Lord who plants in the hearts of His people a love for the work so that it makes it easy for them to pay their tithes and their offerings. I am sure we all rejoiced this morning in the wonderful report read by President Clark, and I find

myself trying to look into the future and visualize what may yet be accomplished by the Church through such faithfulness.

RESPONSIBILITY OF LEADERS

About two years after the Church was organized, the Lord gave a revelation to the Prophet Joseph in which He indicated that Zion was to increase in beauty and holiness; that her borders were to be extended; that her stakes were to be strengthened; that Zion was to arise and put on her beautiful garments. In the hands of this body of men rests the responsibility of that great achievement, and I feel that Zion is increasing in beauty and in holiness.

In my work with the young people of the Church, I feel proud of the marvelous things they are doing in the midst of the temptations surrounding them today. I am proud of the work that is being done in the stakes of Zion, in the wards throughout the Church, and I believe that this Church is literally fulfilling its great destiny. We should realize, brethren, that ours is the responsibility to carry on. I think of these words so often, for Zion must increase. It must extend its borders. It must strengthen its stakes. There is no backward trek in this Church, and every man called to responsibility of leadership ought to be sure that the work under his direction is being strengthened, that as the years come and go, each year finds us farther along the way, and that we are not slipping in the great responsibility that is ours. Then I try to visualize the accomplishments of the future made possible through the continued faithfulness of the Saints in the payment of their tithes and their offerings.

INCIDENT REGARDING THE PURCHASE OF A BOOK

My father, Elder George F. Richards, has referred to the great missionary work of the Church. When this great conflict is over and our young people return to us, I hope the Church will be able to carry on a missionary movement such as it has never known and such as the world has never known, because I believe there are many who are honest in heart waiting to know the truth.

When in California recently, I heard of an experience of one of our brethren. He went into a bookstore to purchase *The Life and Travels of Parley P. Pratt*, one of the early apostles of the Church. He had previously ordered this book and while he was looking at it, a distinguished gentleman, a former vice president of one of the largest banks of Los Angeles, stepped up to him and calling him by name said: "What are you buying?" He replied, "A Church book." "Is it interesting?" "Surely it is interesting." "Well, I believe I will buy a copy." "No," said the good brother, "if you will promise to read it from cover to cover, I will give you a copy." He made the promise—took the book home. That was on a Saturday afternoon. He commenced reading the book that evening, and he couldn't put it down. He stayed up all night and read it through, and Monday morning he was at the brother's office door when he arrived, to tell him that he had been figuring for some time that he ought to do some-

thing in a religious way; that he had gone in and out of various churches but seemed to come out as empty as he had gone in and thought it was all his fault. But he said, "I was fascinated by that book. I believe every word that is in it. But why have you kept these things from us? Why haven't you told us of these marvelous things that the Lord has done?"

TESTIMONY OF A CONVERT

We called a prominent attorney, a recent convert to the Church, to speak in one of our conference meetings in Los Angeles when I was serving as president of the stake, and I said to him, "Will you tell this congregation what there was about Mormonism that appealed to you?" And he stood up and in a rich, deep voice said, "If you have hunted for something all your life and you couldn't find it and you therefore decided it did not exist, then you just happen to stumble onto it, you do not need anybody to tell you that you have found it, do you?" He said, "That's what I found when I found Mormonism. The thing about it is that the more I learn, the greater it seems to be."

HELPS IN MISSIONARY WORK

Through the continued faithful payment of tithes by the Saints, it should be possible to provide the branches of the missions with suitable places in which to meet, which will be a great help to the missionaries in their work. Sometimes I feel that the development of the radio is primarily to make possible the preaching of the gospel to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people before the end shall come, as the prophets have declared. I believe the Savior must have visualized this when he declared the message should be proclaimed from the housetops. This is our responsibility, and the Church must not fail.

Then there is the great temple work of the Church. We have, as you know, recently completed a temple in Idaho Falls and have acquired land for two temples in California. While in Europe years ago, I heard President Joseph F. Smith tell the Saints there that the day would come when temples of the living God would dot that whole land of Europe; and I look to see, through the tithes of the faithful Latter-day Saints, temples erected all over this world where the Saints of God are gathered.

Another of the great achievements of the Church, causing it to put on its beautiful garment, is the Welfare program of the Church. We have come a long way in our production program, I dare say much farther than many had anticipated. President Clark made that clear in his report this morning. In a Welfare meeting in one of the stakes recently, the president of the stake turned to me and said, "Bishop, any day you want to treble our assignment, we will accept it and deliver it to you." Such a spirit as this should enable us to care for all our worthy members, and to remove them from all forms of public relief, and thus become a light unto the world and an ensign to the nations. I am sure the Lord will provide the resources to do this through the faith of the Latter-day Saints.

BLESSINGS FOLLOW THE PAYMENT OF TITHING

Now, I would like to add a few thoughts on the practical phases of tithing. I want you to know that I believe the Lord has in mind to reward adequately every Latter-day Saint for his faithfulness. In the third chapter of Malachi the Lord promises to rebuke the devourer and open the windows of heaven. What a marvelous promise! Then in answer to their disputations He tells them He will prepare a book of remembrances and when He comes to claim His jewels "then shall ye return and discern between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not."

When I was in a stake of Zion recently, a good brother asked me a question about paying tithing. He said, "I pay my tithing on that which I draw out of my business to live on. Is that right?" "Well," I said, as I am able to read between the lines, "I would imagine that you have accumulated an estate worth at least a hundred or a hundred fifty thousand dollars." He said, "You are right, Bishop." I said, "And that to date is untithed. If you were to die tonight, would you like to pass that estate on to your wife and children knowing that you had never tithed it?" He said, "I never thought of it quite that way before."

We have many inquiries at our office, constantly, about the matter of deducting taxes, income taxes, etc., before paying tithing, and we are told that in some cases the Saints are advised to do this, by their bishops. I think the bishops are being pretty liberal with the Lord's money. Taxes are no different from what they have always been except in amount and manner of payment. We have never expected to pay our taxes out of the Lord's tenth. That is what we are investing in the future security and freedom and liberty of the great nation in which we are privileged to live while our boys are out on the battlefield.

For some time I have felt that some farmers do not figure their tithing the way I think it should be figured. One good farmer said to me, "Bishop, I know just how to figure my tithing. I have a jar in my kitchen cabinet and every time I sell anything I put a tenth of it in the jar, then I pay it for tithing." I said, "Is that all you pay?" He said, "Yes, isn't that enough?" "Well," I said, "your brother who lives up here a few miles earns a hundred dollars a month and pays ten dollars tithing; he buys his groceries, his milk, his meat, and his eggs with the money he has left after paying his tithing. Should a farmer not figure his tithing on all he consumes and his surplus and the gain of his land?"

I pray God to bless you, brethren. I am proud of your faith. I think it is marvelous in the sight of the Lord, and I leave you my love and blessing and pray that the Lord will bless the good people over whom you preside, for their integrity, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

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In following Bishop Richards, I feel very much like a still small voice. [Laughter.] Before the days of microphones and public address