

"The time has come," he concluded, "to hang that picture once more on the wall, to see if we can learn any message from the eternal eyes." Surely a great inspiration will come from a picture so beautiful and so stainless. There is nothing left, my brethren, to direct and sustain humanity except the perfect life of Jesus, His Gospel of peace and love, and his matchless and powerful leadership.

I quote in closing the words of scripture from the book of Revelation:

Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.

May we do so, I pray, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

ELDER JOSEPH F. MERRILL

Of the Council of the Twelve Apostles

Brethren, and radio listeners: And I am very glad to be able to say "Radio listeners," for of all the Conferences I have attended during my life—and they began when I was ten years of age—I have attended none that I have enjoyed to a greater degree than I have this one, up to the present moment of time.

It is my wish, brethren and sisters, to speak for a few minutes on and call attention, to some of our fundamental principles and their application to our daily lives. In doing this I desire to speak truthfully, wisely, and helpfully.

MAN INHERITS ATTRIBUTES OF GOD HIS FATHER

"We believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost"—three separate, distinct persons, who are united as one in purpose and attunement. Since in the world of life, like begets like, it must follow that in bodily form we are like our Father in heaven. Hence, it cannot be true that we are brutes or descendants of beasts; we are of the race of the Gods. It therefore follows that man did not, as the atheist asserts, create God in his own image. As a spirit child of our Father in heaven, man not only inherited His divine form, but also the divine attributes, even though it may be in minute quantities only.

Among these are intelligence, will-power, thinking-power, love, charity, mercy, patience, sense of justice, fairness, and right, etc. We believe in the wonderful doctrine of eternal progression, in accordance with which these inherited attributes and powers may be enlarged through effort and righteous living, until ultimately they may reach, in the hereafter, God-like proportions.

Is such a doctrine true, or is it fanciful, based upon eternal truth? In accordance with this belief, life in mortality has a purpose. We know the doctrine is true.

It is fitting here to mention another divine gift to all born into mortality—that of free agency.

Know this, that every soul is free
To choose his life and what he'll be,
For this eternal truth is given,
That God will force no man to heaven.

He'll call, persuade, direct aright,
And bless with wisdom, love and light,
In nameless ways be good and kind,
But never force the human mind.

FAITH A NECESSARY GUIDE

To achieve fully the purpose of mortal life, man must pursue the way of life which the Lord Himself has given, but the Lord will force no man to do this. As a result but relatively few mortal men make earnest attempts to follow the Lord's way of life. Why? There are many reasons, one of which is the lack of sufficient faith in the existence of a living personal God, who is really our Father in heaven, and functions as a loving, merciful, though just God.

We, that is multitudes of Latter-day Saints, not only believe that God lives, but we testify that we know He lives, and in doing so, we are in accord with Biblical teachings. We are reminded that on one occasion, Jesus, receiving various answers from His disciples to His questions, turned to Peter and asked: "Whom say ye that I am?" The ready answer was: "Thou art the Christ, the son of the living God." Then the Master replied: "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." (Matt. 16:15-17.)

On another occasion He said: "My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." (John 7:16, 17.)

And the apostle James, in harmony with the teachings of the Master, wrote: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him." But there was a condition named—"But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think he shall receive any thing of the Lord." (James 1:5-7.)

So this afternoon we have heard Brother Romney speak of the Book of Mormon, and of how we may know, if we fulfill the conditions that the prophet Moroni names in the last chapter in the book, of the genuineness of that book through the power of the Holy Ghost. It is through the power of the Holy Ghost that we are able to testify that we do know. It is not a matter of belief only, it is a matter of assurance that comes to us, enabling us to say as certainly as we live that we do know.

Brethren, and radio listeners, I myself can testify likewise that I know. But how do I know?

A PERSONAL EXPERIENCE IN ANSWER TO PRAYER

Now, may I say that I am too old, perhaps, to be too diffident to relate a little experience, and I believe that experiences are helpful. I shall here relate one.

Family prayer has been spoken of during these sessions by more than one of the speakers. I was reared in a family where prayer, night and morning was always the order. I have seen my father sometimes too busy to stop to eat his breakfast, but never too busy to kneel with his family in prayer before he left, to thank the Lord for the prospects of the day, for the rest of the night, and to ask his direction and help in the labors of the day. I was taught to pray at my mother's knee, and when I could say my own little prayers, I was taught that it was my prayer; it should be said in secret, or at least to myself.

So I knelt on one side of the bed, brother on the other side, every night. He never knew what I prayed for; certainly I did not know what he prayed for. But when I was about ten years of age, I began to pray for a special blessing. But I did not get an answer. Why? Father had taught us that there are three factors that must characterize every prayer that the Lord will answer: We must pray for real needs—and even grown-ups, he said, sometimes ask the Lord for things they do not get, because they ask foolishly—we must pray worthily, and we must pray with faith.

In answer to my first prayer, no answer came. The faith was there, I felt, to the extent that I could exert it. The need was there, I felt certainly no doubt about that, but was the worthiness? I could always think of something, as I prayed night after night without an answer, that I had done that I should not have done, and so I continued to pray, feeling that when I could make myself worthy of an answer, I would get it.

It was after I had been praying nightly for five years that the whole family went, one Wednesday evening, in the month of February, into town and attended a Sunday School entertainment. My class rendered its number, followed by another that sang, and I remember some of the words of that song: "Keep on asking, God will answer by and by." To me that was a revelation. I kept on praying.

Some four years later, in the latter part of the month of August, 1887, in my nineteenth year, after I had been praying nightly for nine long years with all the earnestness of my soul for this special blessing, I was alone in the bedroom, and I said, half aloud, "O Father, wilt thou not hear me?" I was beginning to get discouraged.

Then, brethren, something happened. The most glorious experience that I have received, came. In answer to my question I heard as distinctly as anything I ever heard in my life the short, simple word: "Yes." Simultaneously my whole being, from the crown of my head to the soles of my feet, was filled with the most joyous feeling of elation, of peace and certainty that I could imagine a human being could experience.

I sprang from my knees, and jumped as high as I could, and shouted: "O Father, I thank thee." At last an answer had come. I knew it.

Why did it not come before? I have thanked the Lord many times since that He withheld the answer. A few days after that, father said to me: "Would you like to go to Salt Lake City and attend the University of Deseret?"—a secret wish of which I had said nothing. I had finished, the spring before, what is equivalent in this day to a junior high school course, nothing more in the town. I wanted to go on and now I could. And as it turned out, after graduating at the University of Deseret, I went east and completed nine years of work in the field of science in four of America's leading universities.

Had I gone without an answer to my prayers at that critical moment in my life I might have forgotten to pray. But I think that I am here today—I think that I have been preserved in the Church, perhaps, because the answer to my prayer came at that critical moment, since which time never has a day passed that I have forgotten to pray. And as long as memory lasts I cannot forget the thrilling experience of that night.

Now, brethren and sisters, that answer to my prayer was a revelation. What did I want to know? I had learned that Joseph Smith, a fourteen-year-old boy, went into the woods to pray. Fulfilling the conditions necessary to get an answer, he had received the most glorious vision that records give us any knowledge of. He knew that God lives; he saw Him; he heard him. He knew that Christ, whose resurrection the Christian world celebrates today, also lives. He saw the Christ, his Redeemer; he heard His voice. There was certainty in his soul.

I wanted to know, too, of my own self whether God lives. I believed He would give me a testimony. I have had many testimonies since. Brethren, I do know.

RESPONSIBILITY FOLLOWS A TESTIMONY

Now, brethren, all of you who are here, doubtless could relate experiences similar to what I have related. You know, all of you. You are the key men in the Church of God. You come from all over America, you are the leaders. Every one of you knows, and you can testify. That is one characteristic of the membership of this Church—we know we know! And therein lies the strength of the Church.

But because we know, brethren, we are bound. There are obligations imposed by our certain knowledge that we cannot logically escape. Obligations to do what? Keep the Lord's commandments is the answer. We have heard it said in this conference of the leadership in the Church that the Lord's way of life, if followed by the people, will bring peace to the earth. Wars will cease, and contention will end; but when are we willing to follow the Lord's way of life? Until we do, we shall not have peace; because the evil one is here, and he has under his power the great majority of our Father's children, and through the exercise of that power he is leading them away.

We have heard about some of the delinquencies of youth; and we have also heard it stated here, a correct statement, that youth is delinquent, boys and girls are delinquent, because grown-ups are delinquent. Boys and girls see what their elders do, and naturally they follow in their footsteps. We have heard references, here, in this session, to the violation of the sanctity of the Sabbath day. What must we do in these modern times to keep holy the Sabbath day? The law of the Sabbath was given to ancient Israel, when conditions were vastly different. What does it mean to keep holy the Sabbath day in our times? Well, we may not only read the answer in the Doctrine and Covenants, but a century later than this revelation we may also read a signed statement by the presidency of this Church in the editorial columns of *The Deseret News* of a few years ago what it means to keep holy the Sabbath day in our times. We grant to the First Presidency the right and duty to interpret our doctrines and indicate what our practices should be in harmony with them. According to that declaration, we may not go to movies, or any other kind of commercial entertainments on Sunday; we may not go hunting, we may not go fishing, we may not do multitudes of things that even our people do. And why do they do them? Let each individual ask himself that question.

How can one who knows that God lives and can testify that he knows, think of getting his gun and hunting trappings and go out on the Sabbath day into the mountains to hunt deer, or out into the fields to shoot pheasants? How can he think of getting the fishing tackle ready and go out onto the streams and spend the day of the Lord in fishing and in pleasure?

Well, we do many things, brethren, violative of divine commandments. Why do we do them? In the light of our testimony we cannot do them guiltlessly, can we? Are we not obligated by those testimonies to live the Lord's way of life? What shall we do?

Love the Lord our God with all our might, mind, and strength. But can we do this really without striving to the extent of the will power that the Lord has given to us to keep His commandments?

And the second great commandment is like unto the first: we must love our neighbors as ourselves; which, as we know, rightly interpreted means our fellow men. But if we are going to love our neighbors as ourselves, we must treat our neighbors as we would like to be treated were the circumstances reversed. In other words, we must live the Golden Rule. And until men are willing to live the Golden Rule far more completely than they are living now, we shall not have peace in our nation or in the world.

Yet we talk of winning peace after we have won this global war. We won the first World War, but we did not win the peace, it is said. We may win the second World War, but we will win the peace only when we are willing at least measurably, to live the Lord's way of life. The Lord help us that we may be able to do that, I pray, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.