

selfishness and to devote themselves with greater sacrifice to the well-being of their brothers and sisters, their fathers and mothers, their neighbors, and the nation at large. I wish that God would give us this Spirit. If all of us who are here and if all who are listening to the sound of the radio waves that go forth would devote themselves to that one purpose, then this conference would fill the measure for which it was called together. The world would be better, and God would reign in the hearts of men. That he may help us to do this, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

### ELDER SPENCER W. KIMBALL

#### *Of the Council of the Twelve Apostles*

My brothers and sisters: This is an inspiring experience. I have listened with great interest to the testimonies and the remarks of my brethren. I am sure that today there are many hundreds of thousands of Latter-day Saints throughout the world represented by you and who, with you and us, are today bearing testimony of the divinity of this great work.

Some of the bretheren have mentioned our great heritage and our ancestors who have left us that heritage. Brother Widstoe mentioned members running into the many thousands who crossed the plains at great personal sacrifice. There were thousands of that number who died between Nauvoo and the Salt Lake valley and sealed their testimonies with their blood. They were martyrs to a great cause, as was their prophet, seer and revelator.

#### *Martyrs for a Great Cause*

I wish to say a few words about martyrs. Webster says a martyr is one who voluntarily suffers death for refusing to renounce his religion.

About one hundred fifty years before the birth of Christ, there came among the descendants of Lehi, a prophet named Abinadi. Fearlessly he preached repentance to King Noah and his faithless people who were guilty of all the crimes known to men. He boldly denounced their immoralities, and called them to repentance. ". . . Away with this fellow," the king had commanded, "and slay him; for what have we to do with him, for he is mad." (Book of Mormon Mosiah 13:1.) They attempted to lay hands on him, but he warned that God would not let them harm him until his message was delivered.

And he spake with power and authority from God. (*Ibid.* 13:6.)

Then Abinadi prophesied the coming of the Messiah, his life, ministry, and death. The king commanded that he be bound, cast into prison, and threatened:

. . . thou shalt be put to death unless thou wilt recall all the words which thou hast spoken evil concerning me and my people. (*Ibid.* 17:8.)

Abinadi answered that he would recall nothing and, having been sent of God to deliver a message, he would continue until his mission was finished. When his testimony had been fully borne, they beat him and burned him at the stake, a martyr for a great cause.

Then there was Stephen, one of the seven men called by the apostles to look after the welfare work of the church. And he was "... full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people." (Acts 6:8.) But he was arrested. "And (they) set up false witnesses" who testified against him with all kinds of accusations. He spoke at length a warning, quoting scripture, calling to repentance and testifying of his Redeemer and Lord, reminding them of their part in his betrayal and crucifixion. Men cannot stand to be denounced for their sins. They cast him out of the city and stoned him.

There was Paul, who had given consent to the martyrdom of Stephen, who was also to seal his testimony with his blood for, tradition has it, that he was mobbed at Iconium; stoned at Lystra; dragged through the streets and left for dead; imprisoned and whipped at Philippi; abused at Thessalonica, arrested at Jerusalem and sent to Rome where he was in prison for two years. In the Mamertine prison he languished for nine months with Peter, and finally was beheaded with the sword, at the command of Nero.

Peter, who witnessed much of the Lord's ministry, his transfiguration, his death and resurrection, and became the leader of the church, was also to seal his testimony with his blood. Imprisoned many times and subjected to much physical abuse, writers say that he was crucified in Rome after nine months' imprisonment there and that he chose to be crucified with his head down since he felt he was unworthy to meet death in the same posture as did his Lord.

### *The Martyrdom of Jesus the Christ*

The martyrdom of Jesus the Christ is well established—it followed closely the pattern. His life was the perfect life. His enemies, failing to find any guilt in him, resorted to mobocracy to end his life. He answered their every question, performed miracles which astounded them, did good everywhere, but chastised and rebuked them for their adultery, insincerity, drunkenness. He threatened their vainglorious way of life; he called them hypocrites, vipers, and murderers of prophets. He had restored the gospel and established his kingdom. It was inevitable that he should die to witness eternally of its divinity. His every word was criticized; he was accused of being a deceiver, a glutton, a winebibber, a common person associating with publicans and sinners. They called him a Sabbath breaker, a usurper of authority, a tax evader. They charged him with heresy and sedition. He was said to be an ignoramus, a blasphemer, and accused of being born of fornication. He was arrested, spat upon, torn with thorns, mocked and beaten. He was seized by a vile mob led by one from his inner circle who had maliciously planned to betray him.

Chief priests and elders took "counsel against Jesus to put him to death." Magistrates found no fault. The governor examined the prisoner but washed his hands saying:

. . . I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it. (Matthew 27:24.)

And Judas had finally repented and cried:

. . . . I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. (*Ibid.*, 4.)

The Savior had told his followers of his approaching death. He must die for the sins of the world and to seal his testimony. This he knew. His hour had come. They crucified him, the Son of God, on Calvary.

### *Joseph Smith's Testimony Sealed with His Blood*

Another day dawns—a new dispensation; the heavens are opened. The Father and the Son bear witness again to earth. Other heavenly visitors restore priceless blessings to men, and another martyr gives his precious life to testify to a faithless, skeptical, and unbelieving world that a personal God lives; that Jesus his Son is the Redeemer; and that truth is again restored. The details of the life of Joseph Smith are familiar to us. He announced at once his glorious vision of the Father and the Son and was immediately oppressed and persecuted. Modern scribes and Pharisees have published libelous books and articles by the hundreds, imprisoned him some forty-odd times, tarred and feathered him, shot at him, and did everything in their power to destroy him. In spite of their every effort to take his life, he survived through more than a score of years of bitter and violent persecution to fill his mission, until his hour should come.

Twenty-four years of hell he suffered but also twenty-four years of ecstasy he enjoyed in converse with Gods and other immortals! His mission was finished—heaven and earth were linked again; the Church was organized; Brigham Young and other great leaders were trained to carry on; and he had conferred upon the heads of the Twelve every key and power belonging to the apostleship which he himself held, and he had said to them:

I have laid the foundations and you must build thereon, for upon your shoulders the kingdom rests.

And his hour had come to seal with his blood his testimony, so often borne to multitudes of friends and foes. His Judas came from his own circle—Governor Ford was his Pontius Pilate, Nauvoo was his Gethsemane, and Carthage his Calvary. There were also modern Pharisees to goad the mobs—and another martyr testified.

### *Martyrs Lived to Complete Their Work*

Someone has said, "Anyone can found a religion," and Talley-

rand answered: "Yes. If he is willing to die for it." And the martyr is willing to do exactly that. But the powers of earth and hell cannot take him 'till "the hour is come."

Abinadi when threatened by Noah's soldiery, cried out:

Touch me not, for God shall smite you if ye lay your hands upon me, for I have not delivered the message which the Lord sent me to deliver; . . . therefore, God will not suffer that I shall be destroyed at this time. (Book of Mormon, Mosiah 13:3.)

Ye see that ye *have not power to slay me*, therefore I finish my message . . . and then it matters not whither I go, if it so be that I am saved. (*Ibid.*, 13:7-9. Italics author's.)

Life had been pleasant, but even death was not bitter, for as God has said:

. . . those that die in me shall not taste of death, for it shall be sweet unto them. (D. & C. 42:46.)

It will be recalled that Peter was released from prison by an angel and protected in many ways 'till his work was finished. And Paul likewise. No violence could take his life until he had borne his testimony to Rome and Greece and other lands. But finally he made the prophetic statement to Timothy:

For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. (II Tim. 4:6,7.)

There was no fear in his approach to eternity—only assurance and calm resignation to the inevitable martyrdom which he faced. He did not want to die but was willing thus to seal his testimony of the Redeemer.

Though the Savior had numerous times been in most hazardous situations, it was clear that his life could not be taken until his work was finished. A large crowd of people had surrounded him, and there was much tumult in the temple.

. . . they sought to take him: but no man laid hands on him, because his hour was not come. (John 7:30.)

And again:

. . . Jesus walked into Galilee: for he would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill him. (*Ibid.*, 7:1.)

His brethren dissuaded him and said:

. . . Depart hence, and go into Judea, that thy disciples also may see the works that thou doest. . . If thou do these things, shew thyself to the world. For neither did his brethren believe in him. Then Jesus said unto them, My time is not yet come. (*Ibid.*, 7:3-6.)

But when the work was established, the Church organized, the keys delivered, the apostles trained, he had said to his brethren:

. . . Go into the city to such a man, and say unto him, The Master

saith my time is at hand. I will keep the passover at thy house with my disciples. (Matthew 26:18.)

Then the Lord had gone into Gethsemane to pour out his heart to God. Here he had said again to his beloved Peter, James, and John who sleepily sat by while he had prayed:

. . . Sleep on now, and take your rest: behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. (*Ibid.*, 26:45.)

Joseph Smith had also recognized the inability of his enemies to end his ministry prematurely. He said:

All the enemies upon the face of the earth may roar and exert all their power to bring about my death, and they can accomplish nothing, unless some who are among us, who have enjoyed our society—called us brother, saluted us with a kiss—and by falsehood and deceit, stir up the wrath and indignation against us—we have a Judas in our midst.

His hour had come, his ministry finished. Now his enemies might prevail.

### *Lives of Martyrs Given Voluntarily*

Into the pattern of martyrdom comes the voluntary phase. In every instance the martyr could have saved his life by renouncing his program. Abinadi had been told he would be put to death. But he answered:

. . . I will not recall the words which I have spoken . . . for they are true; and that ye may know of their surety I have suffered myself that I have fallen into your hands. Yea, and I will suffer even until death, and I will not recall my words, and they shall stand as a testimony against you. And if ye slay me ye will shed innocent blood, and this shall also stand as a testimony against you at the last day. (Book of Mormon, Mosiah 17:9, 10.)

The Savior had said:

. . . I lay down my life for the sheep. . . . No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. (John 10:15, 18.)

When Peter in the garden had smitten off the ear of one of the servants of the high priest, Jesus said to him:

. . . Put up again thy sword into his place. . . . Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? (Matt. 26:52, 53.)

### *Closing Events in Life of Joseph Smith*

Joseph Smith did not want to die. He had so much to live for, with his family, his friends, with his interest in the expanding kingdom, and he was still a young man, but though he hoped and prayed that the cup could pass, he knew it was inevitable. He said:

I am going like a lamb to the slaughter. But I am as calm as a summer's morning; I have a conscience void of offense toward God and

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all men. I shall die innocent and it shall yet be said of me—"he was murdered in cold blood."

How he wanted to live! He lingered as he passed his farm and said plaintively:

If some of you had such a farm and knew you would not see it any more, would you not want to take a good look at it for the last time?

And as he left Nauvoo, his longing eyes surveyed the city beautiful.

This is the loveliest place and the best people under the heavens—little do they know the trials that await them.

His farewell to Brother Wells was full of pathos: "I wish you to cherish my memory." And while waiting the foul blow in Carthage jail he had said:

Lay your head on my arm for a pillow, Brother Fullmer— I *would* like to see my family again—I would to God that I might preach to the Saints in Nauvoo once more.

This was his Golgotha; he seemed to know. He had said:

Boys, if I don't come back, take care of yourselves. I am going like a lamb to the slaughter.

And a slaughter it was! The shots rang out! And freely flowed the blood of martyrs, for Hyrum, his older brother, had chosen to remain with him. This precious blood soaked into the earth, sealing an undying and unanswerable testimony which continued to ring in minds and hearts.

He bore record:

I had actually seen a light, and in the midst of that light I saw two personages and they did in reality speak to me. . . . I have actually seen a vision, and who am I that I can withstand God, or why does the world think to make me deny what I have actually seen? For I had seen a vision; I knew it, and I knew that God knew it and I could not deny it, neither dared I do it.

He approached and actually confronted his tragedy. His dying words were: "O Lord, my God!"

#### *Testament Made Effective by Death of Testator*

In the final hours of the life of the martyr comes a calm serenity that baffles all human explanations. It is an unanswerable challenge to those who would rationalize and explain away.

Abinadi faced his enemies triumphantly:

. . . [they] durst not lay their hands on him, for the spirit of the Lord was upon him; and his face shone with exceeding luster, even as Moses' did while on the mount of Sinai, while speaking with the Lord. (cp. *cit.* 13:5.)

They bound him and "scourged his skin with faggots" and when the flames began to scorch him he prophesied concerning them and cried:

"O God receive my soul!" He died and sealed the truth of his words by his death. (*Ibid.*, 17:13-20.)

And as the death sentence fell upon Stephen,

... all that sat in the council, looking steadfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel. (*Acts* 6:15.)

As the bestial mob viciously hurled stones to take this guileless life, the young martyr looked up and saw the heavens opened and saw

... the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God. (*Ibid.*, 7:55.)

and as his bruised and bleeding body had reached the limit of physical endurance he fell to his knees and cried with a loud voice: "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge!" and another soul had sealed his testimony with blood.

The Savior stood the humiliation, the mockery, the physical pain with patience and tolerance, but he did not want to die. He loved life in spite of his persecutions. He prayed,

... O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt. (*Matt* 26:39.)

And then had come his betrayal, his trials, mockery though they were, and his execution.

Though his precious life was being taken by the unscrupulous degenerates yet,

... said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. (*Luke* 23:34.)

As his life ebbed out he cried aloud:

Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit. (*Ibid.*, 23:46.)

Paul said later:

For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth. Whereupon neither the first testament was dedicated without blood. (*Heb.* 9:16-18.)

But they had borne witness; truth was established; blood had been spilled; and the testimony would stand eternally against those who rejected the truth and were the villains in the tragedies.

### *Blood of Martyrs the Seed of the Church*

But martyrs do not die. They live on and on. When the Savior said, "It is finished," he referred to his mortal experience; for his crucifixion marked but a milepost in his ever-expanding power. Hundreds of millions have been influenced for good by this perfect life and martyr's death. He had said himself:

And whoso layeth down his life in my cause, for my name's sake, shall find it again. (*D. & C.* 98:13.)

His work continues to spread to this day.

The blood of martyrs is the seed of the Church.

Stephen *dead* is greater than Stephen *alive*. His sermons continue to inspire his readers.

When Nero sends the other Christians to the lions, it is said, he sent Paul the Roman citizen to the headsman and the block. Perhaps, but it is unimportant. Paul walks and talks in every house in Christendom. (Book of Courage.)

And Joseph Smith, our Prophet:

He could have yielded and perished, but standing resolute, he lives forever.

His work was not lost. His testimony goes steadily forward, on to infinity. As Alma had carried the torch for Abinadi, the apostles for the Savior, now came Brigham Young and the Twelve to continue the work of restoration.

Men do not give their lives to perpetuate falsehoods. Martyrdom dissipates all question as to the sincerity of the martyr. Personalities do not survive the ages. They rise like a shooting star, shine brilliantly for a moment and disappear from view, but a martyr for a living cause, like the sun, shines on forever. Great characters, students, businessmen, scientists, followed the youthful prophet to his death. They were not deceived. They lost him in martyrdom but inspired with the divinity of the Cause went forward without hesitancy. Thousands gave lives they could have saved, in Missouri, Illinois, and crossing the plains, and today a great people hailed for their education, practicability, and virtue, stand to bear witness that the martyrdom of Joseph Smith, like that of the martyrs before him, is another of the infallible proofs of the divinity of the gospel of Jesus Christ, restored in its fulness through that humble prophet.

I bear testimony, my brethren and sisters, that this is the gospel of Jesus Christ, that Joseph Smith is a prophet of God, and that he will continue to live on eternally. This testimony I bear in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

#### President George Albert Smith:

We have just heard from Elder Spencer W. Kimball of the Quorum of the Twelve. Elder Elbert R. Curtis, former President of the Western States Mission, will be our next speaker. While he is coming to the stand I want to call attention to one or two things.

I have a telegram here. This telegram is sent to Brother Harold B. Lee, who has been identified with the program of the Government in looking after our servicemen. It comes from a long distance—from Korea, and says:

"Greetings to all the Saints at home on this 116th anniversary of the restoration of the Church of Jesus Christ. We always shall think of being