

ELDER OSCAR A. KIRKHAM

Of the First Council of the Seventy

I trust that I may enjoy the blessings of the Spirit of the Lord. It is indeed a great inspiration to meet with the Saints at this General Conference. Only a few days ago I met with eleven hundred young people, and then it was a great delight to see them stand in a testimony meeting, not one at a time, but five at a time, seeking the opportunity to bear their testimonies. Their testimonies were thoughtful. They were the answers to prayer, that they might express themselves before their brothers and sisters in a way that might be acceptable and that might express their deepest emotion and thinking.

Conference of Service Men in Korea

I was delighted yesterday to know that from far-off Korea we received a cablegram that our young men were meeting there in conference. I feel personally that this spirit is abroad in the land; that people are hopeful. They want the truth. They want the word of God. The great challenge to us is that we might be humble servants, laboring under the influence of the Spirit of God, to bring to thousands—yea, to perhaps millions, the blessed testimony of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Answers to Vital Questions

Recently, I was travelling with a group of eight men from Salt Lake City to San Francisco. They came from different parts of the United States. We had many things in common, and we agreed that each man might propound a question and talk for a half hour or so on each question. When my opportunity came, I asked the question of the group of men:

"Why is the church? Why the religious life?"

I want to read to you the answers these men gave which expressed what was really, seriously, their desire in relation to a religious life and in relation to a church. As I read these statements, which I copied down as best I could, exactly as they were given, you may in your meditation see how the gospel of Jesus Christ answers their desires. Said one man:

I want something beyond me, for strength—spiritual strength.

Said another:

I want a true moral code which I may live by.

Still another said:

I want an opportunity to give service on high levels.

Another said:

I want the company of people with like ideals.

I want something that will truly satisfy what I feel in my life as a definite basic urge.

I want an opportunity to study spiritual values. . . . I want to know God and put myself in harmony with his will. I want to give satisfying purpose to my life. I want it to give me a chance to develop my talents and to give expression to the best within me.

Another said:

I want a safe, continuous tie, an anchorage in the hour of need. I want help that I might have greater faith, to connect life with eternity; to practice a real brotherhood of man; an opportunity where I can truly repent, feel forgiveness, and make high resolve. To enjoy and feel the strength of prayer. To know God's will, and live in harmony with it.

If men and women, across our land and across the world, have these desires, then we may look for a glorious tomorrow.

I have faith that they have them. Some apparently, by reckless living, or by conditions which have been brought upon them, by the great things that have recently happened, may be disturbed. But I feel it is only disturbance—that the realities still abide. They are waiting for the word of God. They are waiting for you and for me to come in humility to give them the simple truths, the gospel of Jesus Christ as revealed by the Prophet Joseph Smith. They do not say it exactly that way, but in their heart of hearts they are seeking for it. Each one of these queries might be taken one by one to show how the gospel has answered them.

Complete Satisfaction in Gospel of Jesus Christ

Let me just refer to one or two: This first great fundamental question that was asked: "Something beyond me for strength—spiritual strength." Well, we know the answer to that longing. When the Lord revealed himself to the Prophet Joseph Smith, and made known and declared again through the testimony of that great event, the truth of a personal God, a Father in heaven, one that could speak and understand the voice of a boy, then came new testimony that this is "something beyond man." We know how real and how helpful that glorious truth is, and what a great comfort it brings to all of us.

One said, "company of people with like ideals." One of my friends said recently that he had an opportunity to go to the University of London after he had graduated from one of our universities in the United States. But said he, "Oscar, I want to go back home; I want to go back and live with my people. I want to be with them, and enjoy with my children life with them." Where we, in our community life, are living in accordance to the gospel's teachings, there we have a lovely social order; there is a lovely neighborhood; there is that lovely companionship of friends, true friends, where they come to us and we go to them, in the hour of need.

Another one wanted "opportunity to develop his talents." I thought just a moment ago, when the Manti Choir was singing, and

I would not in any way disparage the fine talents and abilities of this choir, but just think, we could multiply this choir a hundred times throughout this Church. There is opportunity for men and women in many, many different ways, to develop the talents within them. It takes two hundred and fourteen people in leadership capacity of one type or another to run even a ward, *one ward*. Think how the Lord has provided in his plan a chance for men and women, if they take the opportunity and do their best, how it develops them.

An Illustration—The Lamplighter

May I say just this word in closing. I stood one day in far-off France with a group of boys about me. The colorful old lamplighter came with his interesting cape and his stiff-brimmed hat. He started to light the lamps. He lit this one; then he crossed the way and lit another. Then again, and this one did not burn very easily; he had to go up the post and clean it out. He was patient, and finally, the light came on. We smiled, and he crossed the way again. By and by down the highway he went, and over into the city, and came again on the distant hilltop. We watched with great interest to see this great pathway of light—one man lighting the highway. And so it may be with us in our missionary service. It may be difficult here or there. The light may not come on very easily, but with patience, with constant striving and with prayer in our hearts the highway will be made light, a safe place to travel.

God help us with the great task before us in our missionary service, that we may go forward in humility and with devotion and with thanksgiving, with a prayerful heart. May we study the word of God, to be prepared, that joy and light may come again to a heartsick world, then into our own hearts will come more and more the strength to give and help.

I humbly pray for these blessings in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

President George Albert Smith:

President Richard L. Evans will be our next speaker. While he is coming to the stand I shall read a message to you from Stockholm, Sweden, dated April 6:

"Saints assembled at conference today, Stockholm, Sweden, sustain their beloved Prophet and leaders. Rejoice in having missionaries from Zion. Greetings to all."

Eben Blomquist, President of the Mission."

President Evans will now address us.