

I have read this letter because I feel the need for it is more evident today than it was ten years ago. The spirit of communism is unquestionably wholly foreign to the spirit of true Americanism. As seen in the country where it has long been dominant, it is wholly atheistic; it denies the existence of God; as frequently manifested, it is extremely cruel and inhuman. Confiscation and murder have been employed to reach its end. It should be impossible to get any Latter-day Saint to give the least degree of sympathy to communism as it is manifested in Europe.

Brethren and sisters, there is but one safe course for us—which is to be steadfast, loyal, and true to the Church and its leadership. May the Lord help us to be so, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

ELDER MARION G. ROMNEY

Assistant to the Council of the Twelve Apostles

My brethren and sisters: This is a tremendous experience for me. I know that the importance of this occasion is far above personalities, but I never get up to address you in general conference but what something happens to my voice, and my spirit, and my body.

RESPONSIBILITY OF ADDRESSING A GENERAL CONFERENCE

I know the gospel is true. I doubt if I shall know it better, that is, with more certainty, when I stand before my Maker and give an account of the deeds done in the flesh. So I am not frightened on that account. But somehow it seems that the enemy of all righteousness keeps suggesting to me, "You can't do it; you can't address this great congregation in conference assembled."

I suppose the reason why the responsibility seems so great is that I accept, without any reservation whatever, the truth that this is a general conference of the citizens of the literal kingdom of God. I know that the Redeemer is here in spirit today, and I know that the men through whom he speaks to all the rest of his brothers and sisters now on the earth, all of God's children, are right behind me on my right. I know that if the Savior should come to earth today, he would come here. I know that you know that, and I know that you have come here to get spiritual food and to be built up in your faith.

And since I am called to speak, I know that I have the responsibility of giving a message worthy of this occasion, and so I pray that while I stand here, you will support me with your prayers. I want to say something that will be worth your while and that will help to build up God's kingdom in the earth. The thing I have had in mind to say has been referred to in almost every sermon given in this great conference. President George Albert Smith mentioned it. He said, speaking of world conditions, that there is no way to improve them

other than by obedience to the plan the Lord has outlined. Brother Widtsoe talked about the way to peace, and as I understood him, he said there is no way to peace except through obedience to those principles upon which peace is founded.

THE PRINCIPLE OF OBEDIENCE

I want to say a word about the principle of obedience, and I pray that the Lord will bring the thoughts to my mind in organized fashion. We who are here have great hopes for peace in this world and exaltation in the presence of God in the world to come. That is our objective. We hope for something more than the rest of the world hopes for in this respect. We are no better than the rest of the world, let me say, except to the degree to which we accept the commandments of the Lord and obey them. But we have great hopes that we can gain an exaltation in the presence of our Heavenly Father.

It is my firm conviction, however, that the only saving hope we have in this matter, is that hope which is based upon a faith strong enough to impel obedience to the things which we know are right. I don't have very much respect for a man who testifies that he has faith in the principle of tithing, unless he lives it. Neither do I think his faith will do him any good unless he does pay his tithing. And I almost have contempt for the men who say they have faith in the leadership of this Church, who do not follow in their living the things which the leadership of the Church teach them. I refer, of course, to the men whom we sustain as prophets, seers, and revelators.

The principle of obedience to the laws of the gospel is fundamental. It lies at the base. The Prophet Joseph Smith learned it very early in his ministry. He learned it when he went that first morning, after the visits of Moroni, to the Hill Cumorah. He had gone there under the direction of the angel, who had told him that he should have no thought in mind other than to bring to pass the righteousness of God and the accomplishment of his purposes in the earth. Joseph's family was very poor, and as he walked toward the hill, he thought about the intrinsic value of the things that the angel had told him were buried there. He wondered if the plates, or something else to be found with them, could not be used to relieve the poverty of his parents and their family. When he uncovered the box and saw the gold plates, he reached to take them out and received a shock that set him back. He reached again and received a more severe shock. Then the third time, thinking all he needed was physical strength, he reached with all his might to take the plates and received still another shock which sapped his strength, and he cried out, "Why can I not obtain this book?" And unexpectedly to him, the angel said, "Because you have not kept the commandments of the Lord." And then Joseph received a great manifestation that I have not time here to tell you about, but it kept him reminded all the days of his life that he had to obey in order to receive the prom-

ised blessings. The angel told him that he could not get the plates then, and that he would not be able to get them until he was not only willing to obey the laws of God but also was able to do so.

OBEDIENCE BRINGS BLESSINGS

That is a great lesson we all must learn. The Prophet, later, through the inspiration of the Lord, stated the principle thus:

There is a law, irrevocably decreed in heaven before the foundations of this world, upon which all blessings are predicated—And when we obtain any blessing from God, it is by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated. (D. & C. 130:20, 21.)

Our obedience, brothers and sisters, must be self-impelled. We should not render obedience because we are forced to do it, or because the bishop is looking, or because the General Authorities are present. We must render obedience because we love righteousness and have a testimony of the truth in our hearts, and because we want to go back to our Father in heaven and help take all his children with us.

Furthermore, we ought to obey his commandments as they are given. We ought not to twist and turn and bend them to our will; we ought to obey them as they come from the mouths of these men who sit here on this stand, because they speak for God. If we do not, our faith is vain.

SAUL AND THE AMALEKITES

Now, I want to take an example from the Old Testament scripture to illustrate what I have in mind and to help drive this principle home. There was a very wicked clan of people, a nation, who lived in the days of Saul, known as the Amalekites. They had been wicked for a long time. Even back in the days of Father Abraham, they had persecuted the people of God, and he had said, through his prophets, on numerous occasions, that when they became ripened in iniquity, they should be destroyed.

That time came in the days of Saul. Through the Prophet Samuel, the Lord told Saul to go and destroy the Amalekites, every one of them and all their livestock. Saul went with his army and destroyed all the people except their king, Agag, whom he spared in violation of the commandment of the Lord. He likewise destroyed all the ordinary livestock, but when he came to the choice sheep, and the cattle, and the fatlings, and the lambs, the pressure of the people, who desired to possess them, was so great on Saul that he yielded and took them with him as he returned.

The Lord told Samuel what had happened, and Samuel went out to meet Saul, who greeted him with the salutation:

... Blessed be thou of the Lord: I have performed the commandment of the Lord. And Samuel said, What meaneth then this bleating of the

sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear? (1 Sam. 15: 13, 14.)

Then Saul began to justify himself. He argued that his partial performance was a complete performance, and that he had done what the Lord had asked him to do. Samuel called to his attention that when he was humble, "When thou wast little in thine own sight," he said, the Lord took you out of obscurity, and raised you up, and magnified you, and made you king over Israel, and now you have chosen to disobey the commandment of the Lord. (See 1 Samuel 15:17-19.) Saul hit on the best excuse he could find when he said that they had brought the cattle and sheep and lambs and fatlings back to offer as sacrifices unto the Lord. He thus claimed to be relying on the commandment to offer sacrifices.

And Samuel said, Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king. (1 Sam. 15:22, 23.)

That brought something home to Saul. He was being told by the prophet who had anointed him king, that he had been rejected because he had not obeyed the Lord. He then showed some regrets. But he did not exhibit that godly sorrow which worketh repentance, but rather the sorrow of the world which worketh death. He asked Samuel to pray with him that he might again prevail with the Lord. Samuel said he could not do that, but at Saul's persistent urging he did so without success, for the Lord did not again accept Saul. You know the sequel. Saul lost his kingdom, and David was chosen to take his place.

FULL OBEDIENCE REQUIRED

Now, there are a number of things in this incident which can be applied in our lives today. First, Saul received his directions through the prophet living in his day. We come to conference to receive directions from the living prophets in our day. Second, Saul used his own judgment as to whether he would perform the commandment given to him, and decided that he would not do it exactly as he was commanded. And third, when he was called to account, he prevaricated about it. He said, "I have done it."

There is another very interesting thing about this incident. When Samuel confronted Saul with what he had done, Saul said, "Because I feared the people, . . . [I] obeyed their voice." That reminded me of the statement of the Lord in the third section of the Doctrine and Covenants, where he told the Prophet Joseph that he should not have yielded to the persuasions of men. This revelation was given, you will remember, after Martin Harris had lost the one hundred and sixteen manuscript pages of the Book of Mormon

translation. With Saul, it was the fear of the people, and with the Prophet it was the persuasions of men. The Prophet learned never to yield again.

That is where our temptations come from, my brothers and sisters. The people around us do not believe what the prophets say, and we yield to their arguments. I know, of course, that there is great faith in Israel, and I suppose you do not need this talk, but there are many people who do need it.

The other day I was at a conference not far from here, and a man stood up to talk, a humble middle-aged man who had a house full of children to rear with only a limited amount of means with which to do it. He said, "I want to tell you about a letter I received from my mother." And this is about what she had written in that letter: "My son, for many years I have been looking forward to the time when I would reach my present age, in order that I might receive an old age pension so that I would not need to call upon you for support out of your limited income. And now, just as I reach it, the Church says, don't take it. I don't know that I understand all the reasons why the Church says don't take it, but I do know that the Church has always been right. Therefore, please continue to remit each month." And the man said, "I am glad to remit."

ADAM'S IMPLICIT OBEDIENCE

I liked that. I like that spirit and that action. It reminded me of the obedience evidenced by our great progenitor Adam, the first man. He was commanded by the Lord, you remember, after he and Eve had left the Garden, that they were to build an altar and offer sacrifice, and he did it. He built an altar and offered sacrifices, and after many days an angel of the Lord stood by Adam and said,

. . . Why dost thou offer sacrifice unto the Lord? And Adam said unto him: I know not, save the Lord commanded me. (Pearl of Great Price, Moses 5:6.)

What a lesson! Here was a man, a great man. In our understanding, he stands next to the Redeemer of the world. He built an altar and killed the offering and offered it on the altar without knowing why he did it. How men have changed! Had Adam been a modern, he would not have offered that sacrifice until someone had presented to him a human argument which to his mind justified sacrificing the animal rather than putting it in his cold-storage locker.

But, thank goodness, Adam was not a modern. He had faith, a faith which impelled him to obey the commandment of the Lord, and after he had obeyed he learned why the commandment was given. The angel told him that the sacrifice was in the similitude of the sacrifice of the Only Begotten of the Father, and he taught him the principles of the gospel, which Adam accepted and obeyed, thereby receiving all the blessings thereof which he never could have received without that obedience.

As Adam had to obey, so must we. God help us to listen to his living propets and get their messages and obey them as they are given, that we may gain the great rewards which the Lord holds out to us, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President J. Reuben Clark, Jr.:

We shall now hear from Elder Joseph Anderson, the Clerk of the Conference, one of the most loyal, devoted servants who work in the cause of the Lord.

ELDER JOSEPH ANDERSON

Clerk of the Conference and Secretary to the First Presidency

My brethren and sisters, this is truly a great honor; it is also a great shock. I have sat here in these conferences for now many years, in fact I think this is the fiftieth conference that I have helped to report. Many wonderful messages have been given to the people during that time. I have been inspired by them as you good brethren and sisters have been. However, this morning, I cannot think of a single word of any of those messages that I heard. I do feel sure that the spirit of the messages has continued with me]

It is a great privilege to serve in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It is a wonderful blessing to have a testimony that this is the true Gospel of Christ. It is marvelous to me, when I look back over the history of the Church, to realize the great progress and accomplishments that have been made. This Church which was started a hundred and sixteen years ago, with only six members of an average age of perhaps twenty-four years, just young men, today has nearly a million members on the rolls. During that time the Lord has inspired the leadership of the Church. The Prophet Joseph Smith gave to us the foundation of this Church, the fundamental doctrines, none of which we have had to change. While he, himself, was not an educated man in the sense that the world looks upon education, yet he drew to himself, to his aid, men of great education, men of great ability and men who had faith in his leadership.

Brigham Young, who succeeded him, was raised up by the Lord to perform the great work that he performed. He was truly a man of God. There were those who were willing to follow the Prophet Joseph who were not willing to follow Brigham Young. One man said of the Prophet Joseph, "I could follow that man to the ends of the world, but I cannot follow Brigham Young." He and some others led away groups from the Church, expecting to establish other churches, but they failed. The true and faithful and devoted members of the Church followed Brigham Young into these valleys of the Rocky Mountains. They were willing to lay down their lives for the Gospel and for the testimony that they had, for they knew that God had again spoken from the heavens. Many of them did lay