

## ELDER GEORGE F. RICHARDS

*President of the Council of the Twelve Apostles*

In listening to the reports this morning, notwithstanding there are a great many of us here, this building being filled to overflowing, having a variety of thoughts and reflections, I believe that we will be united upon this point, that this work in which we are engaged is a marvelous work and a wonder. As Elder [Clifford E.] Young has suggested, we should appreciate our membership in this Church with all that it means to us, and I believe the Latter-day Saints do. In fact, we have an abundance of evidence of that fact. But for the faithfulness of the Latter-day Saints in the payment of their tithes and offerings and answering the call of authority that comes to them, what has been reported of accomplishment during the past year would have been impossible.

## MANY OPPORTUNITIES FOR WORK IN THE CHURCH

As General Authorities of the Church, if I may speak for them, we regard it as an honor shown to us by your presence here in such great numbers. We appreciate your faithfulness as Saints in the living of your religion and as officers constituting the leadership of the Church and the ministry of the Lord. We pray for you, and you pray for the General Authorities of the Church, and there is harmony existing. I know of nothing to the contrary, and the Lord is blessing this people abundantly, and we have opportunity of showing our appreciation of his blessings. There is no person that can fear being shelved in this work if he is worthy to be used. There is ample opportunity for every member to work to his full capacity to the one end, the accomplishment of God's purposes, looking to the saving of souls of the children of men, the living and the dead.

I would offer a few words of caution to the Latter-day Saints. We are apt unwittingly to find ourselves, if we are not careful, deviating from that straight and narrow way that leads to life everlasting. Perhaps a few words of caution will not be out of place. I would like, if I could, to give to you, my brethren and sisters and friends, some of the real bread of life and have you take it with a relish and proper assimilation, or in the words of the Apostle James:

... be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. (James 1:22.)

## BEARING FALSE WITNESS COMES FROM THE EVIL ONE

I would call your attention to two important characters about whom I have something to say, the acquaintance of one to be cultivated, the other to be ignored. The one is the friend and Savior of men; the other is the enemy of God and of mankind.

Why did the Lord give the commandment?

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor. (Exodus 20:16.)

He gave it because of the subtle methods of the adversary in his effort to divide and tear asunder the love and the unity of the Lord's people! To bear false witness may not appear to be a very serious offense, but its results are far-reaching and cruel, hence, the use made of it by the instigator of evil. The Lord warns us against this evil practice. Bearing false witness, talebearing, slander, gossip, scandal, fault-finding, backbiting, and evil speaking are in the same category of evil practice and are some of the means employed by Satan to disunite us as a people and destroy brotherly love, kindness, and helpfulness toward one another.

. . . Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. (Matthew 22:39.)

We do not knowingly injure whom we love. No one loves a character assassin. By the Spirit of God one is led to love his fellow men and to speak well of them, magnifying their virtues. Such a one has the spirit and the kingdom of peace, the kingdom of God within. By the spirit of Satan one bears false witness and broadcasts the weakness of his neighbor. He becomes a talebearer, a character assassin. He robs his neighbor of that which greatly impoverishes his neighbor without enriching himself. He makes others miserable and unhappy and has within himself the kingdom of Satan.

. . . choose you this day whom ye will serve. . . . (Joshua 24:15.)

#### SATAN'S PLAN TO HINDER GOD'S WORK

Satan is an enemy of God and of man and is constantly working to defeat the purposes of the Lord in his efforts to save the children of men. We should be on the alert lest we be found rendering aid to Satan and hindering the work of the Lord. When we say anything bad about the leaders of the Church, whether true or false, we tend to impair their influence and their usefulness and are thus working against the Lord and his cause. When we speak well of our leaders, we tend to increase their influence and usefulness in the service of the Lord. In his absence our brother's character when assailed, should be defended, thus doing to others as we would be done by. The Lord needs the help of all of us. Are we helping or are we hindering? Quoting:

Cursed are all those that shall lift up the heel against mine anointed, saith the Lord, and cry they have sinned when they have not sinned before me, saith the Lord, but have done that which was meet in mine eyes, and which I commanded them.

But those who cry transgression do it because they are the servants of sin, and are the children of disobedience themselves. (D. & C. 121:16, 17.)

... All other sins are not to be compared to sinning against the Holy Ghost, and proving a traitor to thy brethren.

I will give unto you one of the *keys* of the mysteries of the kingdom. It is an eternal principle, that has existed with God from all eternity: That man who rises to condemn others, finding fault with the Church, saying they are out of the way, while he himself is righteous, then know assuredly that that man is on the highroad to apostasy; and, if he does not repent, will apostatize, as God lives. (Joseph Smith, *Compendium*, pp. 270-271.)

It is possible for us, by bearing false witness, to destroy the faith of others. It may be a child, a parent, a wife, or some other dear friend. We may later repent, but we cannot repent for them. We should be doubly careful not to do any injury we cannot repair. When we bear false witness, we injure at least four: ourselves, him about whom we speak, him to whom we speak, and the Lord.

... inasmuch as ye do it unto the least of these, ye do it unto me. (D. & C. 42:38.)

### THE WAY TO HAPPINESS

Are we sure that upon the screen of life there is no picture of which we would be ashamed to have exhibited? Or do we doubt the ability of God to record and reproduce at will what man can do, the voice, the actions, and even the thoughts and intents of our hearts?

George Eliot writes:

It is the glory of Christianity that it requires its followers to do good to men: to rejoice in their prosperity, not in their failures: to offer sympathy and not to make their position a terrible one in the sight of others.

We should so live and labor that our friends will not credit anything bad that may be said of us, so that it would require a preponderance of evidence to convict us, in their minds.

And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God. . . . (Eph. 4:11-13.)

Said the Lord:

... I say unto you, be one; and if ye are not one ye are not mine. (D. & C. 38:27.)

We would be lonely if we had to live alone on the earth. If we appreciate one another, we should show it by living together in love and sympathy and by making the association pleasant. This is done by sacrifice and service for one another. We should avoid those things which disrupt and tear asunder these finer feelings. As a people, the Latter-day Saints are well taught and know the course they should pursue in order to obtain happiness and the blessings

of salvation and eternal life. What we most need, it seems to me, is being impressed with the necessity of doing as well as we know.

The inspired words of the poet, in poetic form, are calculated to make the truth attractive and impressive, so upon the subject of bearing false witness and kindred evils, let me here use some of their expressions:

Don't look for the flaws as you go through life;  
 And even when you find them,  
 It is wise and kind to be somewhat blind,  
 And look for the virtues behind them.

Just stand aside and watch yourself go by,  
 Think of yourself as "he" instead of "I,"  
 Pick flaws, find fault, forget the man is you,  
 And strive to make your estimate ring true.

—"Watch Yourself Go By,"  
 by Strickland Gillilan.

There is so much good in the worst of us,  
 And so much bad in the best of us,  
 That it hardly becomes any of us  
 To talk about the rest of us.

—Author uncertain.

#### BEARING FALSE WITNESS A GRAVE OFFENSE

A small boy returned from Sunday School one morning and found his father reading the newspaper. He called to his father, "Daddy, Daddy, which is worse, to steal or to bear false witness?" The father raised his glasses and, looking over his newspaper, answered let's see, the Lord said, "Thou shalt not bear false witness." He also said, "Thou shalt not steal." What do you think about it, Sonny?" "Why, it's worse to bear false witness." "How do you make that out?" "Well, if I were to steal something from my neighbor and afterward be sorry for it, I could take back what I had stolen and ask forgiveness and thus make right what I have done, but if I were to bear false witness against my neighbor I might be ever so sorry afterwards, but I wouldn't be able to undo the wrong which I had done." An application of this principle is found in the poem entitled, "Scandal."

A woman to the Holy Father went,  
 Confession of sin was her intent;  
 And so her misdemeanors, great and small,  
 She faithfully rehearsed them all.  
 And chief in her category of sin,  
 She owned that she a talebearer had been—  
 Had carried a bit of scandal up and down,  
 To all the long-tongued gossips of the town.  
 The Father, for other sins granted the absolution asked him;

But, while for all the rest he pardon gave,

He told her this offense was very grave  
 And that to do fit penance, she must go,  
 Out by the wayside where the thistles grow,  
 And gather the largest, ripest one;  
 Scatter its seeds; and that when this was done,  
 She must come back another day,  
 To tell him. His command she did obey.

The woman, thinking this a penance light,  
 Hastened to do his will that very night,  
 Feeling right glad she had escaped so well.  
 Next day, but one, she went the Priest to tell.  
 The Priest sat still and heard her story through.  
 Then said, "There is something still for you to do.  
 These little thistle seeds which you have sown,  
 I bid you go regather, every one."  
 The woman said, "But Father, 'twould be in vain,  
 To try to gather back those seeds again;  
 The winds have scattered them both far and wide,  
 Over meadow, vale, and mountainside."

The Father said, "Now I hope from this,  
 The lesson I have taught, you will not miss.  
 You cannot gather back those scattered seeds,  
 Which, far and wide, will grow to noxious weeds;  
 Nor can the mischief once by scandal sown,  
 By any penance be again undone."

Those who have yielded to temptation and committed sin of a grave character may have done so because of the weakness of the flesh rather than through sinful desire. They are to be pitied rather than to be censured and condemned.

#### A PLEA FOR THOSE WHO ERR

Finally:

Think gently of the erring one;  
 O let us not forget,  
 However darkly stained by sin,  
 He is our brother yet.

Heir of the same inheritance,  
 Child of the selfsame God,  
 He hath but stumbled in the path  
 We have in weakness trod.

Speak gently to the erring ones;  
 We yet may lead them back,  
 With holy words, and tones of love,  
 From misery's thorny track.

Forget not, brother, thou hast sinned,  
 And sinful yet mayst be;  
 Deal gently with the erring heart,  
 As God has dealt with thee.

—Henry A. Tuckett.

**Quoting from James:**

If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, . . . this man's religion is vain. (James 1:26.)

We are benefited by a discourse of this character only as we make use of it in our course of life, being governed by its precepts. Is there anything of merit in this message, brethren and sisters, worthy of serious thought and reflection? If so, I shall be happy, and I pray the Lord will sanctify it to our mutual good and benefit, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

**President George Albert Smith:**

One of our brethren is here who acted as mission president of the Danish Mission during the war, Brother Orson B. West. We would be glad to have Brother West come quickly to the stand and tell us about his experiences over there and bear his testimony if he feels like it.

**ELDER ORSON B. WEST**

*Former Acting President of the Danish Mission*

My brothers and sisters, may I be excused if I am not able to express my thoughts in the way I really would like. I am very humble, standing before this vast congregation, and I pray that my Heavenly Father will be able to help me. You who have been on foreign missions know what it is to speak in a foreign tongue. I have addressed a congregation in English only a couple of times before and I hope that I may be able to express myself in a pleasing manner unto you.

I bring greetings from Denmark, from President Alma L. Petersen, the missionaries and the saints. I want to tell you that as far as I am able to determine I do not think there is a better or more loyal people to the Church than are the Danish saints. They pray for the General Authorities every day, morning and night, and they are very loyal to them. You know we were separated for about four years, and the saints managed, directed their affairs in a marvelous way, but still we were very happy to receive President Ezra Taft Benson of the European Mission and his secretary, Elder Frederick Babbel, in February last year. You can imagine our happiness and our joy to receive those two servants of the Lord and they made a wonderful impression upon the saints of Denmark. We had a very fine opportunity to have them speak in several branches of the Danish Mission, and wherever they went they made our saints happy and glad, and we even had the opportunity of an interview over the radio with President Benson, so that most of the Danish people heard this man of God.