

BISHOP LEGRAND RICHARDS

Presiding Bishop of the Church

I am very happy, brothers and sisters, to have the privilege of attending this conference with you. I am sure we have all rejoiced in the testimonies and the instructions of our brethren, and I thank the Lord for them and for my association with them, and I am very grateful, as you are, that he has permitted President Smith to be here with us today and to instruct us as he has done.

I humbly pray that, in the few moments that are mine, I may leave some thought with you that will help inspire you and help you feel compensated for the great work you are doing in the Church of our Father in heaven.

THE THINGS THAT MATTER

It has been said that there are two kinds of things in this world, the things that matter and then the other things, and I believe that if any people have learned to know the things that matter, it is the Latter-day Saints.

You will recall that a teacher among the Jews went to Jesus by night, the Great Teacher, to learn from him the things that matter, and when he met the Savior, he said:

... Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.
(John 3:2.)

Jesus did not reply with some great philosophy of men, but said to Nicodemus: "... Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

And of course Nicodemus did not understand, and said: "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?"

And Jesus replied: "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

A great many people, as Jesus instructed the teacher of the Jews, have been born again. Take as an illustration the Apostle Paul.

There was a man who did not understand the truth. On the way to Damascus, our Savior appeared to him and informed him of the mistake he was making, and said: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?"

"... it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." (Acts 9:4-5.)

PAUL AND PETER

And you know the life of Paul, from that time forward until he went to Rome and there appeared before Festus and King Agrippa. When he bore his testimony to them he told them how he had seen

a light and heard the voice of the Savior speak unto him, but they just could not understand it. And Festus said with a loud voice: ". . . Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad." (Acts 26:24.)

To which Paul replied: "I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness."

And then Agrippa said: "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian."

And while Paul stood before them in chains, he said: "I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds."

Paul had found the thing that mattered in this world, and he was willing to give his life for it.

And Peter, that great exponent of truth, after he had received the gift of the Holy Ghost, was commanded that he should no longer preach Christ and him crucified in the streets of Jerusalem, but he replied: "Whom shall men obey, God or man?"

And he went on about his work as he had been commanded, because he had been born again and he knew the thing that was really worth while.

ALMA'S CONVERSION

Now consider Alma, the son of Alma, who went about persecuting the Saints, until the angel of the Lord appeared to him and told him of his error, and the earth trembled as the angel spake to him, but after that, when Alma went forth to preach the gospel, he just could not take unto himself the power that he would like in order that he might be able to cry repentance to all the world. And he said: "O that I were an angel, and could have the wish of mine heart, that I might go forth and speak with the trump of God, with a voice to shake the earth, and cry repentance unto every people" (Alma 29:1), because he knew that when the angel spake to him it literally did shake the earth.

And so Alma found the thing that was really worth while, the thing that mattered, and that was the thing to which he devoted his life; and so it was with the prophets of that day and this day.

JOSEPH SMITH'S TESTIMONY

When the Prophet Joseph wrote his own story he said that he marveled that a boy, obscure as he was, a farmer boy without education, should become the subject of such discussion and concern by the great men of his community, and he said:

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; and though I was hated and persecuted for saying that I had seen a vision, yet it was true; and while they were persecuting me, reviling me, and speaking all manner of

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evil against me falsely for so saying, I was led to say in my heart: "Why persecute me for telling the truth? 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; at least I knew that by so doing I would offend God, and come under condemnation.

And so, being born again, as the Prophet was, and learning the thing that mattered and was really worth while, his whole life was devoted to his testimony, until he sealed his testimony with his blood.

BRIGHAM YOUNG

It took Brigham Young about two years to make up his mind to join the Church after he first heard the gospel, and then for the next ten years, we are told, he spent almost his entire time in the missionary service of the Lord. And when he went on his first mission he did not even have an overcoat, and he took a quilt from the trundle bed, and his wife made him a cap out of a pair of old pantaloons, and at the end of ten years, he said, all he had ever had as a reward of his service was the half of a small pig that the Prophet Joseph had received from one of the brethren and divided with him. And then, in this great Tabernacle later he said that he had studied the gospel as any student of science had studied any branch of science for thirty years as he traveled by day and by night, by land and by sea, and he had only reached the ABC's: his study led him into the eternities.

That is what it does for a man when he finds the thing that matters and is really worth while in this life, and it marks the life of that man just as the lives of you, my brethren, have been marked because of the testimony that has come to you.

I like the statement that President Clark made from this stand, I think about a year ago, when he said that a testimony is the mortar that holds this Church together, and if we did not have a testimony we would not be doing the things we are doing today.

All of you, as you look back over the history of your own people and your own families, are no doubt proud of your forebears and the sacrifices they have made, and their integrity and devotion to the faith, and if you will pardon me for being a bit personal, I would like to refer to some of mine.

FAITH IN OWN FAMILY

My grandfather, Franklin D. Richards, recorded in his diary, after he had been a member of the Church for nine years, that he had come up in that time through the grades of the priesthood to the office of high priest, that he had received his endowments in the Nauvoo Temple, that he had filled five missions in the United States, and he was then serving as counselor in the Presidency of

the British Mission with a membership of over sixteen thousand. Then he states:

Most of all things, this day, I desire the Holy Spirit, which giveth life, yea life more abundantly to both body and spirit.

He traded his home in Nauvoo, as many of the other brethren did, for a team of horses and a wagon; loaded on it all his possessions he could take with him; took his two wives (that was permissible in those days) and one little girl, and went to join the Saints at Winter Quarters. When he arrived there, the Prophet Brigham Young sent him back to England. And while he was there again in the mission field, one of his wives died, his little girl died, and his brother who was with the Mormon Battalion died. Previously he had lost a brother in the Haun's Mill Massacre, and he wrote in his journal something like this:

I hope that no matter what sacrifice may be required at my hands that God will give me the strength to stand so that when the battle is fought and the race is run I may come out not one whit behind my brethren.

You know, that is when we know the things that matter and the other things, when we have been born again with the spirit of this great latter-day work.

I would like also to refer to Grandfather Willard Richards, cousin Stephen L's grandfather. He was in jail in Carthage with the Prophet Joseph and his brother Hyrum, and John Taylor. Grandfather Willard did not have to go there, there was no subpoena for him or warrant of arrest. The Prophet Joseph turned to him and said: "If we go into the cell, will you go with us?"

Dr. Richards replied: "Brother Joseph, you did not ask me to cross the river with you; you did not ask me to come to Carthage with you; you did not ask me to come to jail with you. Do you think I would forsake you now? I will tell you what I will do. If you are condemned to be hanged for treason, I will be hanged in your stead, and you shall go free."

The Prophet replied: "You cannot do that."

Dr. Richards replied: "But I will."

That is the kind of faith and testimony that has built this kingdom of God, because they have known the things that matter, and the other things have been of little consequence to them.

I would like to be pardoned for referring to my own father who is deprived of the privilege of being here today because of illness, President George F. Richards of the Council of the Twelve. A few weeks ago I sat by his side when he was in great pain and distress and I sympathized with him and he said: "My son, it does not matter what happens to me as long as the kingdom of God can go forward."

And I felt grateful for a father with that kind of faith.

To these testimonies, many of you brethren can add experiences of your own and your forebears. I remember when I was a boy I said to my father: "Father, how is a person to know when he gets a testimony?"

"Well," he said, "my boy, you just keep going the way you have been; you will not need to worry about that."

There is not time today to relate my own experiences but I want to tell you that a testimony of the divinity of this work is the most treasured gift of my life, and I would rather have it burn in the hearts and souls of my children and my grandchildren than any other thing in all the world.

TESTIMONY OF INDIAN SISTER

Could I be excused for reading a testimony of an Indian sister, that appeared in the Church section of *The Deseret News*, a few weeks ago, to show you that the Lord gives to the poor and the humble of the earth just as well as he does to any others:

I joined the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and I have never had any doubt in my heart but that I have joined the right Church. Before I joined the Latter-day Saint Church, everything that was pure and sweet seemed so far away, as if there were a deep gap, and I could never get the edges together. But when the elders came and I heard the real truth, everything seemed so clear and beautiful. I wanted to be sure, and I would pray nights for God to guide me and show me the right thing to do. He showed me the right way, and I just cannot explain the wonderful feeling I had. I was at peace with the world. I keep thanking God for the privilege of being able to be a member of the true Church. I want to bear my testimony in the name of Jesus Christ.

I had the privilege of meeting that dear sister not long ago, and she was just like an angel from heaven to me. I learned that she had taken the beads and little trinkets that her mother bequeathed to her, amounting in value to a few hundred dollars, and sold them in order that she might erect a room in which the elders could hold meetings in the vicinity where she lives.

In closing, I would like to read the words of Nephi:

And the angel said unto me: Behold the Lamb of God, yea, even the Son of the Eternal Father! Knowest thou the meaning of the tree which thy father saw?

And I answered him, saying: Yea, it is the love of God, which sheddeth itself abroad in the hearts of the children of men; wherefore, it is the most desirable of all things.

And he [the angel] spake unto me saying: Yea, and the most joyous to the soul. (1 Nephi 11:21-23.)

I bear you my testimony, my brethren and sisters, that there is nothing in this world to compare with the love of God and the testimony of the truth that comes through being born again and knowing the things that matter and are worth while, and then you will not need to worry about the other things.

God bless you all, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.