

—members of this Church—that we might bring them back to a full understanding of the gospel. Is it true that some among us have an idea that it matters not that we sin so long as it is not a grievous sin, a deadly sin, that we will yet be saved in the kingdom of God? Nephi saw our day. He said that people would be saying that. But I say unto you, we cannot turn away from the path of truth and righteousness and retain the guidance of the Spirit of the Lord.

May the Lord bless the Latter-day Saints. May he bless all people. Oh, I wish that we would all humble ourselves and seek the truth which the Lord has declared to us by his own word in this day in which we live. The Lord bless us all, help us to be true and faithful and keep his commandments, I pray, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

The Relief Society Singing Mothers and the congregation joined in singing the hymn, "O Ye Mountains High," J. Spencer Cornwall conducting.

ELDER BRUCE R. McCONKIE

Of the First Council of the Seventy

President George Albert Smith said this morning that it was not enough for people to have their names on the records of the Church in order to be saved in the kingdom of God, but that it was necessary to keep the commandments.

Then Elder Joseph Fielding Smith said the same thing and read to us the covenant of baptism, that is the covenant which we take in the waters of baptism.

A COVENANT PEOPLE

We are a covenant-making and a covenant-taking people. We have the gospel which is the new and the everlasting covenant: new in that the Lord has revealed it anew in our day; everlasting in that its principles are eternal, have existed with God from all eternity, and are the same unchangeable laws by which all men in all ages may be saved. The gospel is the covenant which God makes with his children here on earth that he will return them to his presence and give them eternal life, if they will walk in the paths of truth and righteousness while here.

We are children of the covenant which God made with Abraham, our father. To Abraham, God promised salvation and exaltation if he would walk as the Lord taught him to walk. Further, the Lord covenanted with Abraham that he would restore to Abraham's seed the same laws and ordinances, in all their beauty and perfection, which that ancient patriarch had received. "For as many as receive this gospel," the Lord said to him, "shall be called after thy

name, and shall be accounted thy seed, and shall rise up and bless thee, as their father." (Abraham 2:10.)

Now we have this same everlasting covenant. We have the restored gospel, and every person who belongs to the Church, who has passed through the waters of baptism, has had the inestimable privilege of making a personal covenant with the Lord that will save him provided he does the things he agrees to do when he enters into that covenant with God.

ALMA'S EXPLANATION

Alma recited this personal covenant of salvation at the waters of Mormon in language like this—all of it is, of course, summed up in the promise to keep the commandments of God—but Alma gives these particulars: He says that when we go into the waters of baptism we covenant that we will come into the fold of Christ and be numbered with his people. We covenant that we will take upon ourselves the name of Christ and be Saints in very deed. We covenant that we will bear one another's burdens, that they may be light. We covenant that we will mourn with those that mourn. We covenant that we will comfort those that stand in need of comfort. We covenant that we will stand as witnesses of Christ and of God at all times and in all things and in all places that we may be in, even until death. Then, by way of summary, Alma says we covenant that we will serve God and keep his commandments.

THE LORD'S PART

In return, that is, if we do all these things, the Lord on his part promises us that we will come forth in the first resurrection and be redeemed of him; that he will pour out his Spirit more abundantly upon us while we are here in this life; and that we will have eternal life in the world to come.

I don't suppose that the Lord is making any useless covenants with any individual; and so, any person who will keep this covenant, and do all the things required by it, can have in his heart the assurance that he will go to the presence of God and have eternal life in the mansions that are prepared.

RENEWING OF COVENANT

So important is this covenant in the eyes of the Lord that he has provided for us a means and a way to renew it often. The ordinance whereby we renew this covenant is the ordinance of the sacrament. Every time we partake of the sacrament worthily, with humble hearts and contrite spirits, we agree again that we will take upon ourselves the name of Christ, always remember him, and keep his commandments which he has given us. And the Lord agrees with us again that we will always have his Spirit to be with us; and further, that we

will have eternal life in his kingdom in accordance with the revelation which says,

Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. (John 6:54.)

To be saved is to go to the celestial kingdom of heaven. To be exalted is to gain the highest heaven or degree within that glory. Not only have we been permitted as Latter-day Saints to take the covenant of salvation, and to renew it from time to time, but we have also been privileged to enter into covenants which will give us exaltation in our Father's kingdom. After a man has taken the covenant of baptism and has pressed forward in righteousness and steadfastness before the Lord, and has desired to keep his commandments, and manifested by his works that he places the things of the kingdom of heaven first and will let the things of this world take care of themselves, there comes a time when he is called and chosen and ordained to the higher priesthood. Ordination to the higher priesthood includes a covenant of exaltation.

The Lord revealed this covenant to Joseph Smith in this language:

For whoso is faithful unto the obtaining these two priesthoods of which I have spoken, and the magnifying their calling, are sanctified by the Spirit unto the renewing of their bodies.

They become the sons of Moses and of Aaron and the seed of Abraham, and the church and kingdom, and the elect of God.

And also all they who receive this priesthood receive me, saith the Lord:

For he that receiveth my servants receiveth me;

And he that receiveth me receiveth my Father;

And he that receiveth my Father receiveth my Father's kingdom; therefore all that my Father hath shall be given unto him.

And this is according to the oath and covenant which belongeth to the priesthood.

Therefore, all those who receive the priesthood, receive this oath and covenant of my Father which he cannot break, neither can it be moved.

But whoso breaketh this covenant after he hath received it, and altogether turneth therefrom, shall not have forgiveness of sins in this world nor in the world to come. (D. & C. 84:33-41.)

FULNESS OF BLESSINGS

Now, according to the revelations which we have received, the fulness of the priesthood, meaning, I suppose, the fulness of the blessings of the priesthood, is had only in the temples of God. There is an order of the priesthood which is named the new and everlasting covenant of marriage. When people enter into that order of marriage, administered in the temples of the Lord, by the Lord's servants, having the Lord's authority, they make a covenant of exaltation, a covenant that will bring them up in the resurrection as husband and wife. The family unit will continue, and they will gain the highest reward and the greatest honor and glory that our Father can bestow

on any of his children. They will be gods, even the sons of God, and all things will be theirs, for they will receive of the fulness of the Father.

These covenants which we take in the waters of baptism and when we partake of the sacrament, if we keep them, will guarantee us a place in the celestial world. These covenants which we take when we are ordained to the higher priesthood, and when we enter into that order of priesthood which is the new and everlasting covenant of marriage, if we keep them, will guarantee us a place of exaltation in eternity.

And as with the covenant of baptism, so with the covenant of marriage: I don't suppose the Lord is making a useless covenant with us or offering us something that we are not able to obtain. In each instance, if we keep our part of the bargain and do the things we know we should, the Lord has promised to do his share and keep his part of the bargain and give us the promised reward.

BAPTISM A GATE

Sometimes someone will say: "Well, I have been baptized into the Church; I am a member of the Church; I'll just go along and live an ordinary sort of life; I won't commit any great crimes; I'll live a reasonably good Christian life; and eventually I will gain the kingdom of God."

I don't understand it that way. I think that baptism is a gate. It is a gate which puts us on a path; and the name of the path is the straight and narrow path. The straight and narrow path leads upward from the gate of baptism to the celestial kingdom of heaven. After a person has entered the gate of baptism, he has to press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, as Nephi expresses it, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men; and if he endures to the end, then he gains the promised reward.

And so it is with marriage and exaltation. Sometimes people think they can enter into the ordinance of celestial marriage and then be indifferent or lukewarm or even commit iniquity and sin, and yet figure that eventually, in the eternities that are prepared, after they have paid the penalties for their sins, they will come up as husband and wife and enter into their exaltation. Such is not the case. The same principles apply to marriage and exaltation as apply to baptism and salvation. There is no such thing as gaining salvation or exaltation except by obedience to those laws upon which the receipt of these blessings is predicated. Salvation never has been and never will be the fruit of sin.

COVENANTS TO BE KEPT

After we have been baptized, after we have been married in the temple, after we have taken all these covenants, we have to keep

them. Every promise that we receive is conditioned upon our subsequent faithfulness. It is expressly so stated in the marriage covenant itself. We have to be obedient, faithful, and diligent, valiant in the testimony of Christ, walking by every word that proceedeth forth from his mouth. By such a course we will sanctify our souls. When we become sanctified and pure, we are capable and eligible and worthy to stand in the presence of our Father. No unclean thing can dwell in his presence. The whole process of salvation, this whole probation that we are undergoing in mortality, is to permit us to cleanse and perfect and purify our souls. It is to permit us to take evil and iniquity and carnality and everything that leads away from God out of our souls, and replace those characteristics with righteousness and virtue and truth and obedience, which, if we do, degree by degree, will perfect us until eventually we are clean and spotless and pure and are able to stand the glory of the celestial world. If we can't stand the glory of the celestial kingdom, we won't be able to go where God and Christ are.

BLESSINGS TO FOLLOW

We get the greatest blessings that it is possible for men to get here in this life by living the gospel. The world may be in turmoil, torn and disheveled; there may be blood and carnage on every hand, but if we keep the commandments of God, we will get the Holy Ghost for our companion and guide. Those who have the Holy Ghost get the peace which passeth understanding. Now, that is the greatest gift that a person can get while he dwells in mortality.

And then by having kept those same commandments and having walked in that same path, having kept those same covenants, we get the sure promise that we will be inheritors of a celestial exaltation in the mansions that are prepared. The gospel gives us the greatest blessings it is possible to receive in time, and assures us of the greatest inheritance it is possible to gain in eternity. How grateful we ought to be for it! How anxious we should be to keep the commandments of God, and the covenants that we have made, so that we may have all the choice and rich things the Lord promises the Saints. It is my prayer that we may so do, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

ELDER JOSEPH L. WIRTHLIN

First Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric

I sincerely trust, my brethren and sisters, that I might enjoy an interest in your faith and prayers during the few moments that I shall stand before you. I have the high honor and privilege of laboring with the youth of the Church; and it is a distinction and an honor to associate with Bishop Richards and Bishop Isaacson, who have the welfare of the young people at heart.