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*Of the First Council of Seventy*

My dear brethren and sisters, I humbly ask an interest in your faith and prayers, and the Spirit of God to rest upon me on this occasion.

## PREACHING OF GOSPEL

Shortly before the ascension of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Master, he gave his Apostles their final commission, saying unto them:

... Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. (Mark 16:15-16.)

After the ascension of the Lord, the Apostles went forth humbly, faithfully, diligently, from town to town, from village to village, from city to city, declaring the good message which the Lord had given them; preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ; establishing Christian communities. Gradually, one Christian community after another arose in the Mediterranean world. The gospel spread from land to land.

But also as time passed, the Apostles received very severe persecutions, which resulted in the death—the martyrdom—of all of them except John the Beloved. They sealed their testimonies with their blood, dying for the eternal truths which they had embraced.

## FALSE TEACHINGS

As time went on, and as Paul the Apostle and others of the great prophets had predicted, heresies crept into the Christian Church. False teachings and false doctrines came into Christianity. Especially is this true toward the end of the fourth century A. D. At that time the Roman government made the Christian Church the state religion and outlawed all pagan religions. This resulted in thousands and thousands of pagans flocking into the Christian Church, naturally without being converted. They brought with them their choice pagan ideas, practices, religious rituals and doctrines, bringing about an adulteration of the gospel of Jesus Christ, which resulted in what is known as the Great Apostasy.

If the Savior had come back to earth at the beginning of the fifth century A.D., I doubt whether he would have recognized the Christian Church as the one that claimed descent from that which he had established, so far had it gone astray. Christianity had actually become a composite of Christian beliefs, practices, and doctrines; Jewish teachings and rituals; Greek, Roman, and Egyptian pagan philosophies; and pagan religions of various brands. The Holy Priesthood had been withdrawn from the earth. The power of godliness was no longer present in the Christian Church. Thus there was a complete falling away from the gospel which had been estab-

lished by the Son of Man. The Church lay in darkness, and the darkness enveloped the earth. This spiritual darkness continued for hundreds and hundreds of years.

#### GOSPEL RESTORED

Finally, during the early part of the nineteenth century, Jesus Christ, the God of heaven and earth, stretched forth his hand again to reveal once more the gospel plan of salvation to the human family and to establish his Church upon earth. This great and marvelous work came about in fulfillment of the prophecies made by many of the ancient prophets. They had predicted that there would be a restoration of all things in the latter days and that all the rights, rituals, doctrines, powers, priesthoods, and ordinances necessary for the salvation and exaltation of the human family would be restored. (See Acts 3:21.)

From heavenly beings this gospel was restored to the Prophet Joseph Smith, and the promise given by the Lord that it would never be taken from the earth again nor given to another people. (See D. & C. 27:13.) As part of that restoration, the Holy Melchizedek Priesthood was brought back to earth again. The Savior, as he had done in the Meridian of Time, established offices in that priesthood. In this dispensation they consisted of a First Presidency, Twelve Apostles, seventies, elders, and others to carry forward the work of the Lord.

#### COMMANDMENT IN PRESENT DAY

The commandment from Jesus Christ, our Savior, came to the Twelve in modern times, just as it did to the Apostles in his day:

Therefore, go ye into all the world; and whatsoever place ye cannot go unto ye shall send, that the testimony may go from you into all the world unto every creature.

And as I said unto mine apostles, even so I say unto you, for you are mine apostles, even God's high priests; ye are they whom my Father hath given me; ye are my friends;

Therefore, as I said unto mine apostles I say unto you again, that every soul who believeth on your words, and is baptized by water for the remission of sins, shall receive the Holy Ghost. . . .

Verily, verily, I say unto you, they who believe not on your words, and are not baptized in water in my name, for the remission of their sins, that they may receive the Holy Ghost, shall be damned, and shall not come into my Father's kingdom where my Father and I am.

And this revelation unto you, and commandment, is in force from this very hour upon all the world, and the gospel is unto all who have not received it. (*Ibid.*, 84:62-64, 74-75.)

#### ASSIGNMENT TO THE TWELVE

Acting in accordance with this revelation and also several others, such as the one which appointed the Twelve Apostles to hold the keys of opening the doors of the gospel of Jesus Christ to every nation throughout the earth; the revelation to the effect that the

gospel should be taken to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people, preparatory to the coming of the Lord, and other similar pronouncements, the Twelve Apostles did go forth throughout the world. During the past one hundred and twenty-one years, they have opened the doors of the gospel to most of the nations.

The history of the work of the Twelve in carrying forward their missionary assignment presents a marvelous story. In addition to the great work that they have done, the Apostles also have sent many other gospel messengers to the places where they could not go.

#### OTHERS CALLED

Now, the Lord, in establishing the gospel on the earth in the latter days, did not give revelations entirely to the effect that the Twelve were to be the only ministers of the restored truths. He also gave revelations to the seventy, designating them as "especial witnesses" of Christ, and calling them to be ministers of the restored gospel. ". . . first unto the Gentiles and then to the Jews." (*Ibid.*, 107:25-26, 34, 38, 93-97.) And again, he also gave a revelation to every faithful elder in the Church, commanding him to proclaim the message of salvation. He said unto the elders:

Go ye into all the world, preach the gospel to every creature, acting in the authority which I have given you, baptizing in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

And he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned. (*Ibid.*, 68:8-9.)

During the past hundred years, thousands upon thousands of elders have gone forth in harmony with this divine command. I believe there is no time in the history of the human family where a Church has put forth a greater missionary effort in accordance with the command of God than has the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints during the past one hundred and twenty-one years.

The Lord not only commanded the elders to go forth and preach the gospel, but he also gave a command in a revelation to Joseph Smith to the effect that every person who is baptized into the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is morally obligated in the sight of God to do missionary work. In other words, he is to proclaim the words of eternal life to the honest in heart. In fact, the commandment of the Lord to every baptized member of the Church of Jesus Christ is as follows: ". . . and it becometh every man who hath been warned to warn his neighbor." (*Ibid.*, 88:81.)

If every Latter-day Saint would take that revelation seriously, thousands and thousands of the honest in heart who live among us would gladly receive the words of eternal life and affiliate themselves with the true Church and kingdom of God.

#### LIVING OF GOSPEL

If all Latter-day Saints would live the gospel in every detail, as

it has been revealed from the mouth of Jehovah through the prophets, our lights would so shine to the world that multitudes of good people would actually ask to join the Church of Jesus Christ. Our neighbors would see the light shining forth from Latter-day Saints, because the gospel had made them live such good lives, and they would readily accept this Church as being "the only true and living Church upon the face of the whole earth." (*Ibid.*, 1:30.) Certainly the gospel would then roll forth throughout the world, as Daniel predicted it would, like a great "stone cut out of the mountain without hands." (See Daniel 2:27-49.) It would roll forth until it "filled the whole earth."

One of the obstacles we meet in our efforts to spread the gospel message is the fact that so many Latter-day Saints do not live the gospel. And, on the other hand, many members of the Church do not take the time to tell their neighbors about the gospel. They do not invite their neighbors to attend Church with them nor to come in contact with Church influence in other ways. I sincerely believe that there are many honest in heart who would like to investigate the gospel truths and later on probably join the Church if they were invited to participate and were encouraged to do so. God will hold us accountable to do our share along this line. We must warn our neighbors.

#### MISSIONARY ASSIGNMENT

When the Lord established the gospel through the Prophet Joseph Smith, he gave the members of the Church many great assignments. I believe that there is no assignment that the Lord gave to the Church greater than that of missionary work.

If one should read the Doctrine and Covenants through and tabulate the various subjects that the Lord revealed information on, he would find that missionary work holds a dominant place. In my study of modern revelation, I have found that there is no subject that the Lord revealed more about, that he talked on more times and in more ways than the missionary assignment. In fact, the gospel of the kingdom must be taken unto every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people preparatory to the coming of the Lord; and after this great assignment has been successfully completed, according to the words of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, ". . . then shall the end come." (D. & C. 133:37; Matthew 24:14.)

Not only must the gospel be taken "to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people" here in mortality, but it must also be preached to all of our departed ancestors in the spirit world. A great missionary campaign must go forward until all who have died without the law of the gospel will have the opportunity to accept or reject it. Temple work will not be completely effective without missionary work. In fact, the people in the spirit world have to learn the various gospel truths, receive the gospel plan of salvation, repent of their sins, and prepare themselves to receive the temple ordinances which

have been performed for them vicariously before that great work reaches a fulfilment and gives to the people the blessings that they should receive.

Therefore, it is very evident that missionary work is one of the greatest assignments which God has placed upon the Church. In fact, the Prophet Joseph Smith on one occasion said, "After all that has been said, the greatest and most important duty is to preach the gospel [of Jesus Christ]." (Joseph Fielding Smith's *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 113.)

#### THE THING OF MOST WORTH

When the gospel was being restored to earth during the early part of the nineteenth century, a number of brethren came to the Prophet Joseph Smith and asked what the Lord would have them do in this great work. Their concern was to learn what would be the most important thing for them to do. The word of the Lord came to the Whitmer men as follows:

And now, behold, I say unto you, that the thing which will be of the most worth unto you will be to declare repentance unto this people, that you may bring souls unto me, that you may rest with them in the kingdom of my Father. (D. & C. 15:6; 16:6.)

I believe that that revelation applies as aptly to you and me as it did to John and Peter Whitmer, Jr. I know of no way whereby we can help to bring salvation to our own souls better than by doing all that we can to bring salvation to the souls of others. In other words; we save our own souls in proportion to the service we render to the honest in heart who are seeking after truth by giving to them the gospel of Jesus Christ, or the plan of life and salvation.

There are many other revelations that could be cited which indicate the importance of the missionary assignment, but we haven't time on this occasion to quote them.

#### ENCOURAGEMENT TO SEVENTIES

As a member of the First Council of the Seventy, the duty rests upon me and others of the Council to help carry the message of salvation to the honest in heart and to do our utmost in promoting missionary work. I would like to take this opportunity, therefore, to encourage all the seventies throughout the Church to engage in missionary work that they might magnify their callings as seventies. If we fail to do this, we may stand under condemnation at the judgment day for not having magnified our priesthood.

The First Presidency has asked for three seventies from each quorum—a thousand seventies—to go into the mission fields this fall. I should like to encourage the stake presidents, the bishops, the seventies, and all who are concerned, to cooperate on this great assignment and to respond to the call of the First Presidency.

The call from the First Presidency is a call from the Lord, because these men are the duly authorized servants of God here upon the earth. They hold the keys of the kingdom; and God the Eternal Father and his Only Begotten Son accept all that they do in the office of their calling as if these acts had been performed personally by Jesus Christ.

#### STAKE MISSIONARY PROGRAM

Also, I would like to encourage all of us as Church members to take greater advantage of the stake missionary program. I am sure we have done a good job in the past, but I feel confident that we have hardly scratched the surface. I am of the opinion that there are thousands and thousands of seekers after truth who live among us who would receive the gospel of Jesus Christ if they had a fair chance. If we would spend more time in doing missionary work, great would be our joy in this life, and eternal should be our reward in the world to come. The Savior made this point clear and definite wherein he said:

Remember the worth of souls is great in the sight of God; . . .

Wherefore, you are called to cry repentance unto this people.

And if it so be that you should labor all your days in crying repentance unto this people, and bring, save it be one soul unto me, how great shall be your joy with him in the kingdom of my Father!

And now, if your joy will be great with one soul that you have brought unto me into the kingdom of my Father, how great will be your joy if you should bring many souls unto me! (*Ibid.*, 18:10, 14-16.)

My dear brothers and sisters, I do humbly trust and pray that God will bless us to the extent that we will not only continue with the great missionary spirit that we have shown in the past, but that we shall also catch a fulness of the spirit and greatness of this assignment and vigorously carry it forward until we do prepare the world for the coming of the Savior, that he may reign as Lord of lords and King of kings.

#### TESTIMONY

I bear testimony that this is the true gospel of Jesus Christ. I know this fact as I know that I am alive. I know that Joseph Smith is a prophet of God and one of the greatest prophets that has ever lived on this earth. I know also that if you and I will live according to the teachings of the commandments that we have received in the Church of Jesus Christ, someday we shall come back into the presence of God and receive exaltation, which he has declared to be the greatest gift that he has in store for those who love him and keep his commandments.

May God bless us in carrying forward this great missionary assignment and in all of our walks of life, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.