

Friday, October 3

First Day

activity. By your own acts, you can either promote faith or you can destroy faith. Which will it be? "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God."

May we follow that instruction, in my humble prayer, in Jesus' name. Amen.

President David O. McKay:

We shall now hear from Elder Marion G. Romney of the Quorum of the Twelve. Elder Romney will be followed by Elder Milton R. Hunter of the First Council of the Seventy.

ELDER MARION G. ROMNEY

Of the Council of the Twelve Apostles

MY BELOVED brethren and sisters, I ask for an interest in your faith and prayers, and I extend this invitation to the people who are watching over television and who are listening in on the radio.

I, too, would like to consider youth for a few moments, but I shall direct my remarks directly to them.

With the help of the Holy Spirit, for which I earnestly pray, I desire to encourage you young folk to put your trust in the Lord, and by keeping his commandments, live for his promised blessings. This I do because I know that no other course can qualify you to meet successfully the issues of life which lie ahead.

It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man.

It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes. (Ps. 118:8-9.)

In these lines the psalmist has voiced an eternal truth which every soul will recognize and acknowledge sooner or later.

Some people, like Cardinal Wolsey, to their sorrow, learn it later. You will recall that he gave a long life in the service of three English sovereigns and enjoyed, while he did it, great wealth and power. Finally, however, he was shorn of all his greatness by an impatient king. It was only then, as he stood disillusioned among the ruins of his life, that he said (so Shakespeare puts it),

Had I but served my God with half the
zeal

I served my king, he would not in mine
age
Have left me naked to mine enemies.
(*Henry VIII*, Act III, Sc. 2.)

Now, my beloved young brothers and sisters, in the words of Alma I testify to you that I do know, as I know that I live,

that whosoever shall put their trust in God shall be supported in their trials, and their troubles, and their afflictions, and shall be lifted up at the last day. (Alma 36:3.)

And I plead with you to determine now, in your youth, to trust in the Lord and live for his promises. For there are promised blessings which follow, as the night the day, obedience to each of the Lord's commands.

Take for example, the promises given in the Word of Wisdom. Says the Lord,

... all Saints who remember to keep and do these sayings, walking in obedience to the commandments, shall receive health in their navel and marrow to their bones;

And shall find wisdom and great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures; And shall run and not be weary, and shall walk and not faint.

And I the Lord, give unto them a promise, that the destroying angel shall pass by them, as the children of Israel and not slay them. (D. & C. 89:18-21.)

This reference to the destroying angel passing by the children of Israel brings to mind that to persuade the Egyptians to let Israel go,

... the Lord smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of

Pharaoh that sat on his throne unto the firstborn of the captive that was in the dungeon; and all the firstborn of cattle. . . . and there was a great cry in Egypt; for there was not a house where there was not one dead. (Ex. 12:29-30.)

But in his death-dealing mission the "destroyer" was to pass by, and did pass by, without slaying the firstborn therein, the homes of those Israelites who had marked their door lintels and side posts with the blood of a lamb, as directed by the Lord.

From this promise in the Word of Wisdom and other scriptures, it appears that there are destroying angels who have a work to do among the peoples of the earth in this last dispensation. The Lord told the Prophet Joseph Smith that because all flesh was corrupted before him, and the powers of darkness prevailed upon the earth, these angels were

waiting the great command to reap down the earth, to gather the tares that they may be burned. (D. & C. 38:11-12.)

That was in 1831. In 1894, President Woodruff said:

God has held the angels of destruction for many years lest they should reap down the wheat with the tares. But I want to tell you now, those angels have left the portals of heaven, and they stand over this people and this nation now, and are hovering over the earth waiting to pour out the judgments. And from this very day they shall be poured out. Calamities and troubles are increasing in the earth, and there is a meaning to these things. (THE IMPROVEMENT ERA, 17:1165.)

Now, my beloved young brothers and sisters, in view of this revealed knowledge and understanding which the Lord has given concerning what is transpiring about us, is it not a glorious thing to have the assurance that if we will clothe ourselves with bodies purified through observance of the Word of Wisdom, these destroying angels will pass us by, as they did the children of Israel, and not slay us? Well, this is one of the

blessings to follow observance of the Word of Wisdom.

The promised blessings for obedience to the law of tithing are many. One of them has to do with the productivity of the soil. I remember being impressed with this thought twenty-three years ago this conference as I listened to the remarks of Elder James E. Talmage. Said he,

Do you know that the soil can be sanctified by the tithing of its products? The land can be sanctified. There is a relationship between the elements and forces of nature and the actions of men. (Conference Report, October 1929, page 68.)

This statement is in harmony with the sentiments of President Brigham Young. Said he,

Talk about these rich valleys, why there is not another people on earth that could have come here and lived. We prayed over the land, and dedicated it and the water, air and everything pertaining to them unto the Lord, and the smiles of heaven rested on the land and it became productive. (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, p. 483.)

A companion reward for paying tithing sounds almost like crop insurance. Listen:

Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in my house; and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it.

And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruits before the time in the fields, saith the Lord of hosts. (III Nepht 24:10-11.)

President Grant's boundless faith that the Lord would prosper those who were liberal with their means in building his kingdom has had a distinct effect upon my life. Many of you will recall his account of attending a Thursday morning fast meeting at which his bishop

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made an appeal for donations. President Grant, though a very young man, had \$50.00 in his pocket which he intended to deposit in the bank. But he was so impressed by his bishop's appeal that he tendered the whole \$50.00. The bishop took \$5.00 and handed him back \$45.00, stating that \$5.00 was his full share. President Grant replied, "Bishop Woolley, by what right do you rob me of putting the Lord in my debt? Didn't you preach here today that the Lord rewards fourfold? My mother is a widow, and she needs two hundred dollars."

"My boy," queried the bishop, "do you believe that if I take this other forty-five dollars you will get your two hundred dollars quicker?"

"Certainly," replied President Grant.

Here was an expression of faith which the bishop could not withstand. He took the remaining \$45.00.

President Grant testified that on his way from that fast meeting back to work, "an idea popped" into his head, acting upon which he made \$218.50. Speaking on this incident years later, he said, "Someone will say that it would have happened anyway. I do not think it would have happened. I do not think I would have got the idea. . . . I am a firm believer that the Lord opens up the window of heaven when we do our duty financially and pours out upon us blessings of a spiritual nature, which are of far greater value than temporal things. But I believe he also gives us blessings of a temporal nature." (THE IMPROVEMENT ERA, 42:457.)

Another reward for paying tithing is a guarantee against being consumed in the burning to accompany the advent of the Savior. In the eighty-fifth section of the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord explains that his purpose in tithing his people is "to prepare them against the day of vengeance and burning," (v. 3) and in the sixty-fourth section he says,

Behold, now it is called today until the coming of the Son of Man, and verily it is a day of sacrifice, and a day for the tithing

of my people; for he that is tithed shall not be burned at his coming. (*Ibid.*, 64:23.)

Personally I have always considered tithing to be the law of inheritance in the land of Zion, for the Lord said when he gave the law that all those who gathered to Zion should observe it or they should not be worthy to abide among the inhabitants of that land. (*Ibid.*, 119:5.)

And now, the last specific commandment to which I direct your attention is, "Thou shalt not commit adultery." (Ex. 20:14.)

You will recall, of course, Alma's teaching his son Corianton that unchastity is the most serious offense there is in the sight of God, save murder only. You will remember, too, these words from Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians:

Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?

If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy. (I Cor. 3:16-17.)

Ten years ago the First Presidency said to the youth of the Church, "Better dead clean, than alive unclean."

I remember how my father impressed the seriousness of unchastity upon my mind. He and I were standing in the railroad station at Rexburg, Idaho, in the early morning of November 12, 1920. We heard the train whistle. In three minutes I would be on my way to Australia to fill a mission. In that short interval my father said to me, among other things, "My son, you are going a long way from home. But your mother and I, your brother and sisters will be with you constantly in our thoughts and prayers; we shall rejoice with you in your successes; and we shall sorrow with you in your disappointments. When you are released and return, we shall be glad to greet you and welcome you back into the family circle. But remember this, my son, we would rather come to this station and take your body off the train in a casket than to have you come home unclean, having lost your virtue."

I pondered that statement at the time. I did not then have the full understanding of it that my father had, but I remembered it every time I approached temptation. I understand it better now, and I feel the same way about my boys as he felt about me.

I can think of no blessings to be more fervently desired than those promised to the pure and virtuous. Jesus spoke of specific rewards for different virtues but reserved the greatest, so it seems to me, for the pure in heart, "for they," said he, "shall see God." (Matt. 5:8.) And not only shall they see the Lord, but they shall feel at home in his presence. Here is his promise:

... let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God. (D. & C. 121:45.)

The rewards for virtue and the consequence of unchastity are dramatically portrayed in the lives of Joseph and David.

Joseph, though a slave in Egypt, stood true under pressure of the greatest temptation. As a reward he received the choicest blessings of all the sons of Jacob. He became the progenitor of the two favored tribes of Israel. Most of us take pride in being numbered among his posterity.

David, on the other hand, though highly favored of the Lord—indeed, he was referred to as a man after God's own heart—yielded. His unchastity led to murder. The consequences—like Lucifer he fell; he lost his families and his exaltation. (*Ibid.*, 132:39.)

And now, my young brothers and sisters and friends, I shall not say more except to renew my plea that you believe in and live for the promises of the Lord. Don't be as the people were in the days of Malachi. They argued that it was unprofitable and vain to serve God because, as they saw it, the proud were made happy, the wicked set up, and they that tempted God were delivered. Have the good sense to realize and remember that today, as well as in the days of Malachi, a book

of remembrance is written before the Lord for those that fear him and think upon his name,

And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.

Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not.

For, behold, the day cometh that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble; and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.

Says the Lord in a glorious promise to the righteous,

But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall. (Mal. 3:17-18; 4:1-2.)

Oh, my beloved young folk, believe in and live for the promises of the Lord by keeping his commandments. If you will do this, even though you do not now have full confidence in those promises, I assure you that that confidence will come.

... never be weary of good works, but ... be meek and lowly in heart; for such shall find rest to their souls.

O, remember, ... and learn wisdom in thy youth; yea, learn in thy youth to keep the commandments of God.

Yea, and cry unto God for all thy support; yea, let all thy doings be unto the Lord, and whithersoever thou goest let it be in the Lord; yea, let thy thoughts be directed unto the Lord; yea, let the affections of thy heart be placed upon the Lord forever.

Counsel with the Lord in all thy doings, and he will direct thee for good; yea, when thou liest down at night lie down unto the Lord, that he may watch over you in your sleep; and when thou risest in the morning let thy heart be full of thanks unto God; and if ye do these things, ye shall be lifted up at the last day. (Alma 37:34-37.)

God grant that it may be so, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ, our Redeemer. Amen.