

sions of Europe, and in such a short time.

Thank the Lord for his blessings. May his choicest blessings be upon us, his people, with ever increasing faith and trust in him, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President David O. McKay:

Elder Eldred G. Smith, Patriarch to the Church, has just addressed us. We shall now hear from Bishop Thorpe B. Isaacson, of the Presiding Bishopric.

BISHOP THORPE B. ISAACSON

First Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric

PRESIDENT MCKAY, President Richards, President Clark, and my beloved brothers and sisters, I am very grateful and thankful for the opportunity of being in attendance at this great conference of the Church, where we can be spiritually built up and strengthened in our faith, for surely we have felt the Spirit of the Lord here in every session of the conference, and we have been built up in our faith, and strengthened in our testimony.

We are here to receive instructions and to listen to the words of the prophets, seers, and revelators and servants of God, our Father.

The Lord said in the Doctrine and Covenants, 88 and 63:

Draw near unto me and I will draw near unto you; seek me diligently and ye shall find me; ask, and ye shall receive; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.

It is my humble and sincere desire and prayer that my Father in heaven will draw near unto me while I speak to you today, and I shall be grateful for an interest in your faith and prayers. This is always a very difficult assignment for me, and I am grateful to the Lord for his sustaining influence on previous occasions. The Spirit of the Lord has been here in rich abundance. Before the conference started, the General Authorities met together, and with the beautiful prayer offered by Brother Lee, surely we felt the Lord's influence. We are meeting in his name. We are meeting to bear testimony as to the truthfulness of his work.

Before I say more, I should like to pay tribute, as suggested by Brother

Stayner Richards and Brother Cowley yesterday, to my wife. I am one of that type of men who have a hard time saying the things I ought to say as often as I ought to say them. It is her birthday today, and I want her to know that I am grateful for her. I am grateful that she took me by the hand, as Brother Cowley so beautifully portrayed to us. I am grateful that she has given me encouragement when she has known that I was discouraged and down. I am grateful for her faith. Everything that I do of any consequence, I must credit in a large measure to her and to my Father in heaven.

Sometime ago I had in this great Tabernacle a man and his wife and a boy from the East, a man with whom I have been associated in business but who had never been here before. As he came in here and stayed awhile, after the recital, he said, "There is something different here. What is it?" I gave him a Book of Mormon, and then we walked around, and he asked me again, and I said, "It is a little hard to explain, but I would like to tell you what I think it is. This is a house of worship, and if you could read the prayer that was offered at the dedication, you would know that this is a sacred building, and the thing that makes it different is that the Spirit of the Lord is here." It was not long until he spoke and said: "Well, it has to be something like that."

I want to say just a word to the youth of the Church, the young men and women, the young married couples. I would like to say a few words with reference to the value of your personal

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testimony, probably your most precious possession.

I realize there is great stress being placed on education, and rightly so. This Church has always sponsored and fostered education. Ever since the Pioneers came here, this Church has supported and sustained schools and universities, seminaries and institutes. The authorities have believed in education, but they have also stressed greatly spiritual, religious education in the hearts and souls of our young people.

Education has brought great credit to the Church and to this state. Just recently, there were four educators making a survey, an educational efficiency survey, on one of our great institutions in the state. They were all from the eastern part of the United States; none of them are native sons; and they have studied the trend of education in this state. They made great research, and the chairman of that committee came to me a while ago and said, "We have discovered two very unusual but very prominent factors about the education in the state of Utah." We are a small state and a poor state, and as we learned this morning from Dr. Woodward, speaking to the welfare workers, only three percent of the soil in this state is tillable, so we are not a rich state. The two factors that this great educator said astounded him were: (1) there is a greater percentage of the population in the state of Utah twenty-five years of age and over who have a high school education than in any other state in the union; and (2) there is a larger percentage of the people of Utah twenty-five years of age and over who have a college education than any state in the union. That is a great tribute to our pioneer fathers and to this Church and to this state.

But I would like to tell you, also, another word from Newton N. Riddell, when he made this comment, speaking of spiritual, religious education:

He who knows books knows much; he who knows nature knows more; but he who

knows God has reached the goal of human wisdom.

To the young people, your personal testimony will give you great happiness; a testimony as to the divinity of the Savior of the world, born as a babe in Bethlehem, a testimony as to the teachings of the Savior, the life of the Savior, his crucifixion on Calvary, the actual resurrection of the Savior from the tomb. What for? So that you and I could have eternal life.

Yes, a personal testimony as to the restoration of the gospel in this dispensation, the visit of the Father and the Son to Joseph Smith, the Prophet, as so beautifully given to us by President Joseph Fielding Smith. He was truly God's servant. Then he sealed that testimony with his life's blood as did that marvelous brother of his, Hyrum. Young people, you do have a testimony that this is true, and it will be a source of comfort to you in the hour of need.

Yes, the object of all gospel teachings is to promote faith and build a testimony. Without a personal conviction or without a personal testimony, our teaching may lack warmth and light. Testimony inspires testimony; conviction begets conviction.

A personal testimony after we have received it, I have learned, and I am grateful that I have learned it, needs to be constantly reinforced. We may have had some faith-promoting experience in our lives, and many of us have; we may have even witnessed a miracle, and some of us have. Some one has said our testimony may be a dynamic concept based upon evidence, proof, and revelation. It may have been acquired through study and prayer, but if our testimony ceases to grow, it may finally cease to be.

Therefore, it requires each of us daily to try to improve our lives, strive to discipline ourselves and properly to conduct our behavior.

Our testimony needs to be constantly cultivated and strengthened to remain forceful and alive. A testimony of the

gospel of Jesus Christ, a testimony as to the mission of the Prophet Joseph is a blessing earnestly to be desired, to be prayed for, and to be lived for. When once obtained, that testimony will shine as a beacon to others, and its flame will burn that other torches might be lighted; but if our testimony ceases to glow, it may be lost.

In the New Testament, we read of the experience of Saul of Tarsus. He was contending against the truth; he was persecuting the saints. He denied the divinity of Jesus, and then as he was en route to apprehend them and imprison them, he was suddenly confronted by the Master. He saw a blinding light, and he heard the Master say, "Saul, Saul why persecutest thou me?" And Saul said, "Who art thou, Lord?" And the Lord said, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." (See Acts 9:4-5.) Saul was stricken blind and led away, but later he was miraculously healed of that blindness. Surely, if any man had had a testimony to justify the feeling of having arrived, if any one experience would seem sufficient to entitle anyone to say, "This is enough, I need no more" Saul had that experience. He had been made to see, but if he had been content to relate his experience to his friends or if he had stopped growing, he would never have become the great Paul the Apostle. Saul of Tarsus was the acorn, and Paul the Apostle was the oak.

During the balance of his life he taught as a great missionary. In bonds he bore his testimony to kings, and on the ship, and in the dungeons. He was inspired by his testimony, and he bore that testimony the rest of his life.

The youth of the Church may sometimes wonder if they have a testimony. They may ask how it may be obtained. Some young people may be discouraged, and they may compare their knowledge and testimony with that of others, but let me plead with the young people never to become discouraged. Always remember that the full-bloom rose was once an unopened bud and that the ripened fruit was once just a blossom

and that all great things came from small beginnings.

Yes, it is our individual problem, and probably a continual one, for all of us to make sure as best we can that our lives are such that we can hear the promptings of the Holy Ghost which we have received, that great Comforter, the whisperings of the still, small voice.

The Lord once said,

But he that believeth these things which I have spoken, him will I visit with the manifestations of my Spirit and he shall know and bear record. For because of my Spirit he shall know that these things are true; for it persuadeth men to do good.

And whatsoever thing persuadeth men to do good is of me; for good cometh of none save it be of me. I am the same that leadeth men to all good; he that will not believe my words will not believe me—that I am; and he that will not believe me will not believe the Father who sent me. For behold, I am the Father, I am the light, and the life, and the truth of the world.

Come unto me, O ye Gentiles, and I will show unto you the greater things, the knowledge which is hid up because of unbelief.

Come unto me, O ye house of Israel, and it shall be made manifest unto you how great things the Father hath laid up for you, from the foundation of the world; and it hath not come unto you, because of unbelief. (Ether 4:11-14.)

Prayerful, humble seeking will give you the answer, young people. I would say to all of you whenever you are in doubt, you need never hesitate to know where you can go and get the answer. The Lord will hear you; he will remove those doubts from your mind.

Oh, a testimony does not all come at once, but if continually developed and cultivated, it is a power and a strength that will be felt forever.

As Latter-day Saints our own personal testimony is not alone sufficient. Once acquired and reinforced, it is our duty as individual members of the Church to bear that testimony constantly to the world, to preach the gospel, and to bring salvation to the souls of men.

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The Savior said:

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! (D. & C. 18:15.)

Oh, the Master must have placed great value on every soul; precious are they in his sight.

An ancient philosopher once said:

Unless you bear with the faults of a friend, you thereby betray your own.

Young people, do not lose your testimony. You may discover sometimes that you are in doubt. I think we all have. You may sometimes wonder if your testimony is waning, but let that be a signal to you, let that be the time that you come to one of your brethren, one of your friends; that is the signal for you quickly to associate yourself with the Church and become very active in the Church, that is the time that you must confide in God your Eternal Father.

The person whose fate is most distressing is he who has lost his faith and his testimony. He may live near you or me—he may go about performing his daily work, yet he is very much alone. He is unhappy, and he lacks a sense of belonging. Life seems to have no purpose to him; he is the man who having had a testimony has now lost it, but faith and prayer can return him to us and bring about a renewal of that testimony. It has happened to many, and it will happen again.

I want to plead with my friends and my associates, my brothers, my acquaintances, and with all men, to put aside those things which may be keeping you inactive in the Church. I would say to all men, repent of that which you have done that is wrong, go to your Father in heaven, go to your brethren whom you love. There is no reason you cannot go to your brethren. We love you; your bishops love you; you can come to us about anything; and

we will treat you truly as our brothers. Do not live longer on the outside, no matter what is keeping you inactive in the Church, whether it be your profession, whether it be your habits, whether it be that somebody has hurt your feelings; no matter what it is, put it aside. Come back into the pales of the Church, and receive those blessings that the Lord has in store for you. Great will be your joy; great will be your happiness.

It ought not to be hard for us to repent. None of us feel good when we do wrong. All of us feel better when we can go to the Lord and ask his forgiveness and when we can go to our brethren and put our hands in theirs and tell them of our shortcomings. Surely no man will take advantage of that kind of confidence. That is the feeling that exists in this Church. That is the brotherhood that is intended between us as brethren in the priesthood and brothers and sisters in the Church.

God grant that we can each have a strong testimony to pull us over those rough spots in life. I am satisfied the happiest men I know of are these men, and I know why they are happy and you know why they are happy, because of the great testimony they have, because of their living close to the Lord, and partaking of his wonderful and sweet spirit.

May God grant that we may always have that brotherhood that President Stephen L. Richards often talks about. Just the other day I heard him say something like this: "All great men are engaged in some great cause," and what greater cause is there than the cause that we are engaged in, the cause of bringing salvation to the souls of men, and eternal life?

God grant that we may be strong, that we may stay close to the Lord, and when he says, "If you will draw near unto me, I will draw near unto you," (see D. & C. 88:63); may that be our happy lot, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.