

ELDER ELDRED G. SMITH

Patriarch to the Church

I, LIKE THE other brethren, am in need of your faith and prayers, and I appreciate your faith and prayers in my behalf, especially while I stand before you.

As I look at this vast audience and think of the hundreds of thousands listening over television and radio, the responsibility is frightening in the extreme. There is only one consolation for me: even though you do not remember all that is said here today, there is more to be gained than from the words you hear or than your memory can hold. This is true when you are attending any meeting. You leave the meeting encouraged, your faith renewed, your testimony quickened, the spiritual uplift is beyond measure.

I am reminded of the story which is so often told, and which you all know, of the bishop who visited a member who had become inactive in the ward. They sat in front of an open fire in the fireplace in silence, and, presumably, the bishop thinking about how he could approach the subject, reached forth with the tongs and lifted a hot live coal from the fire and set it on the hearth in front of the fire. They sat in silence and watched the hot, live coal gradually turn cold and black and lifeless. Then the bishop picked up the coal with the tongs again and set it back into the fire with the other living coals and watched it again regain its life and its fire and its heat and its warmth. Still nothing was said. Finally the man said, "Bishop, I see what you came here to tell me."

Through meeting together the fire of our testimony is kept alive and glowing. It is through meeting and working together that we grow in faith and in knowledge. When we withdraw from Church activity, we become as the lone coal on the hearth, cold and lifeless.

We are fulfilling a commandment of the Lord by attending meetings, but to

grow in the Church, that alone is not enough. If we stop there, we would not differ much from those of other churches. James tells us:

Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.

For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass:

For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.

But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed. (James 1:22-25.)

Now the perfect law of liberty referred to here is the law of free agency. So if we were to say,

But whoso useth his power of free agency and chooses the right way, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.

So exercising our free agency and overcoming evil we become heirs to the blessings of the Lord, not just passive hearers of the word, but active doers of the word.

James also says,

For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also. (*Ibid.*, 2:26.)

Many have expressed the thought that if they receive a written patriarchal blessing it will be fulfilled to the letter without any effort on their part.

Which reminds me of the young woman who declared that she was going to be married in the temple when she got married and that was very certain and all her friends understood her attitude, yet when she was married, she not only married out of the temple, but she married a non-member of the Church. When one of her friends said to her afterwards, "Why, Mary, I thought you, of all people, were going

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to marry in the temple," she answered, "Well, my patriarchal blessing promised me that I would be married in the temple, so I guess I will someday."

We must serve the Lord diligently and intelligently, keeping all his commandments, if we expect to receive his blessings.

When the question arises if the blessings come from our efforts in righteousness in fulfilling the law upon which the blessing is predicated, why have patriarchal blessings? We will get our blessings anyway, if we live for them. And that is very true, because "we must live for our blessings if we get them, but there comes great comfort and consolation from having our blessings both promised and sealed upon us by authorized servants of the Lord in obedience to his word and law, for the Lord has placed authorized agents on the earth to bear his power and his authority, not only to pronounce, but to seal these blessings, that the Lord may have an anchor upon the souls of men and women forever, for neither death nor the destroyer will end these blessings, but the receiver will possess and enjoy them forever and ever."

A patriarchal blessing gives us courage to live as we know we should live.

It helps to keep us from yielding to temptation, to do the things we have been taught to do.

Quoting James again,

Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin. (*Ibid.*, 4:17.)

After he has received a patriarchal blessing, after he has been taught the Word of Wisdom, the law of tithing, been taught to attend sacrament and priesthood meetings, and been taught the law of celestial sealings, and then he does contrary to those teachings, to him it is sin. After he has been taught honesty, and there is no truth in him, for him it is sin. If he has been taught charity, and he has no charity in his heart, to him it is sin. He who has covenanted to devote his time and talents to the service of the Lord and does not do it, to him it is sin. He who has the gospel and teaches it not to others by example as well as by precept, to him it is sin.

Let us live worthy of the blessings of the Lord, by living the gospel every day. Let us show our faith by our works, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

ELDER LEVI EDGAR YOUNG

Of the First Council of the Seventy

MAN'S ENDOWMENT

The Lord created man of the earth,
He endued them with strength by themselves,

And made them according to his image,
And put the fear of man upon all flesh,
And gave him dominion over beasts and fowls.

Counsel, and tongue, and eyes,
Ears, and a heart, gave he them to understand.

Withal he filled them with the knowledge of understanding.

And shewed them good and evil.
He set his eye upon their hearts,
That he might shew them the greatness of his works,

He gave them to glory in his marvellous acts for ever,

That they might declare his works with understanding.

Beside this he gave them knowledge,
And law of life for an heritage,
He made an everlasting covenant with them,
And shewed them his judgments.
Their ways are ever before him;
And shall not be hid from his eyes.
(Ecclesiasticus 17:1,3,4,6-9,11,12,15.)

SO MANY words in holy writ will create within us the Spirit of the Lord as we hear them today, for it is the Easter time. All of the Evangelists write beautifully of the resurrection. We read the words of Mark:

And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James