

Monday, April 5

Third Day

if we should be so foolish as to set them loose, yet the power and the purposes of God as concerning us and all his creations are constant and ever surround us with their protection and their peace, if we will be partakers of these things.

God lives. He has eternal plans and purposes for his children. Jesus is the Christ. The gospel has been restored, and despite all the answers we do not know and all the areas where there may be differences of opinion, we know all we need to know for our everlasting salvation and exaltation and happiness—if we will use what the Lord God has given us. Truth will triumph; justice will be done; and there will be no good thing lost in the life of him who will live as best he knows how to live and will partake of these things which our Father has prepared for us.

May I close with the testimony of a beloved friend, who is not with us, Dr. John A. Widtsoe. In one of the closing sentences of his book, *In a Sunlit Land*, in which he looked back on his life as a scientist, as a convert, as an educator, as an Apostle, and as a great and humble servant of men and of God, as a man who had seen much of life from many

sides and who had come forth from it all with a sweet and simple faith—on the last pages of this book he wrote these words which he left for the record of posterity:

During this long life, I have had occasion to test, time and time again, the verity of the foundations of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The answer has always been the same: Joseph Smith told the truth. (*In a Sunlit Land*, pp. 243-244.)

I leave this with you as a witness of my soul this day, to you a choice and blessed generation of youth. God bless you and be with you; go forth and live your lives; rely on him; keep sweet and humble, and his blessings and guidance will be with you. May he bless you in all your decisions, I pray, in Jesus' name. Amen.

President David O. McKay:

He to whom we have just listened is Elder Richard L. Evans. Elder Eldred G. Smith, Patriarch to the Church, will now speak to us, and he will be followed by Elder Bruce McConkie.

ELDER ELDRED G. SMITH

Patriarch to the Church



WISH to express my gratitude for the prayer that was offered at the opening of this session, and I pray that I shall receive my share of the answer to that prayer.

Truly, these are great gatherings, gatherings of a faithful people, seeking spiritual food to buoy us up and give us courage and strength to carry us along the way a little farther.

In my mind I see a parallel in these gatherings to the young man who asked the Savior,

Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?

And he said unto him, Why callest thou

me good? there is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.

He saith unto him, Which?

Jesus enumerated a number of things to do and he answered,

All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?

Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasures in heaven: and come and follow me.

But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions. (Matt. 19:16-18, 20-22.)

Nevertheless the young man had been keeping the commandments. We who

are members of the Church are also the more righteous who are trying to keep the commandments.

The young man went away sorrowful. I wonder how many of us do a similar thing when we leave these conference sessions. President Smith called our attention to the fact that the Lord is pleased with the Church collectively but not individually.

The instructions from the Lord and from the prophets of all times comes down to us: "Say nothing but repentance unto this generation." (D. & C. 6:9.)

And such counsel is found in most of the addresses given at these conferences, and when we, who are trying to keep his commandments, are taught repentance, do we accept it as only something for the other person—the sinner—or as something done once as a prerequisite to baptism and then not needed any more?

After a spiritual feast such as we have in these sessions, it is natural to want to share with others what we have received, and surely we should do so. But do we accept the instructions for ourselves and put them into practice, each for his own benefit first?

As long as we are not perfect, we are in need of repentance, for all improvement comes as a result of repentance. Each should take daily inventory of himself and try to do better each day. Repentance is a daily affair.

Do we have pride to overcome? The Lord says, "Be thou humble; and the Lord thy God shall lead thee by the hand." (*Ibid.*, 112:10.)

One of the greatest pitfalls that we must watch is the pride of self-righteousness. Are we ever guilty—when we devote so much of our time and our efforts to activities in the Church—of being lifted up in the pride of our own importance?

There was a discussion recently between a member of a stake board and a ward officer over a roadshow that had just been presented. The stake officer was highly indignant because the daughter of the ward leader had a speaking part while her own daughter was only in the chorus.

Are we always wholeheartedly glad when others succeed, or is our praise lacking in sincerity—given grudgingly, or not at all?

Are you so self-righteous that you have neighbors on all sides of you who do not attend Church or are not members of the Church and you do nothing to assist them?

Another common fault for which many of us may have cause for repentance is repeating a bit of gossip we have heard. Whether it be true or not is beside the point. If it is not kind, it does not bear repeating.

Are you willing to forgive? Remember, in the Lord's prayer, Christ prayed, "Forgive our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us."

Do you refrain from passing judgment, or do you condemn others for the faults you see in them?

Understand, I am not condemning anyone. I just say, "If the shoe fits, wear it."

We become so involved in our various Church activities that sometimes we think we have "arrived," as it were—that we have no need for repentance. Leave that to the poor sinner.

Carlyle uttered a great truth when he said, "Of all acts, is not repentance most divine? The greatest of faults is to be conscious of none."

There are those also who are conscious of their mistakes, yet they do not try to change their habits.

The film we saw at the priesthood meeting the other night was a good example which shows that there are many of these people.

I have heard some say that they have been told that because of their past acts they cannot receive the blessings of exaltation anyway, even if they went to the temple, so why try?

They liken themselves to the prodigal son who returned only to be a servant. If one procrastinates the day of repentance until the day of his return to the Father, surely he cannot expect anything other than to become a servant.

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However, had the prodigal son repented earlier and regained his wealth and his birthright, he could then have returned to the father without being a servant. Likewise, if a man repents and restores his rights to the blessings, surely he shall receive all he has earned. "Repentance becomes more difficult as the sin is more willful; . . . as the time of repentance is procrastinated, the ability to repent grows weaker." (James E. Talmage.)

Alma tells us,

Behold, he sendeth an invitation unto all men, for the arms of mercy are extended towards them, and he saith: Repent, and I will receive you. (Alma 5:33.)

He says, "All men"; not just a few who are selected, but he says, "Repent, and I will receive you."

If you just stop and think of it, how wonderful the mercy of the Lord is. All manner of sin, except murder and blasphemy, can be forgiven through repentance. If we will try to do his will, his arm of mercy is outstretched toward us.

Not one of us is perfect now, but we are here to attain perfection. "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." (Matt. 5:48.) So as we overcome our weaknesses, and our sins, we grow and draw nearer our aim of perfection.

Let us not be so self-righteous that we think that we have no need for repentance, for the Savior himself preached repentance to the more righteous who were spared from the great destruction at the time of his crucifixion. At that time, on this hemisphere there was darkness for three days and great de-

struction; many cities and all their inhabitants were destroyed. Then the voice of the Lord was heard declaring that the more wicked had been destroyed, and the more righteous had been saved. To the righteous that were spared he declared as he might well say to us here today:

O ye house of Israel whom I have spared, how oft will I gather you as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, if ye will repent and return unto me with full purpose of heart. (3 Nephi 10:6.)

Then a warning—

But if not, O house of Israel, the places of your dwellings shall become desolate until the time of the fulfilling of the covenant to your fathers. (*Ibid.*, 10:7.)

Yea, verily I say unto you, if ye will come unto me ye shall have eternal life. Behold, mine arm of mercy is extended towards you, and whosoever will come, him will I receive; and blessed are those who come unto me. (*Ibid.*, 9:14.)

And ye shall offer for a sacrifice unto me a broken heart and a contrite spirit. And whoso cometh unto me with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, him will I baptize with the Holy Ghost. . . .

Behold, I have come unto the world to bring redemption unto the world, to save the world from sin.

Therefore, whoso repenteth and cometh unto me as a little child, him will I receive, for of such is the kingdom of God. Behold, for such I have laid down my life, and have taken it up again; therefore repent, and come unto me ye ends of the earth, and be saved. (*Ibid.*, 9:20-22.)

May the Lord's blessings be upon us, I pray, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

ELDER BRUCE R. McCONKIE

Of the First Council of the Seventy

MAY I INVITE your attention to a comparison between the Church of Jesus Christ, as it was organized and perfected in New Testament times, and the self-styled Christian churches that exist

in the world today? In order to do so I shall take the liberty of raising a number of queries, and shall assume that each of us has a sufficient working knowledge of the New Testament to recognize the basis upon which each query rests.