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Of the Council of the Twelve Apostles

MY BRETHREN AND SISTERS: Tomorrow I shall officially celebrate my first birthday. The only thing now I can tell you for sure is that one year does not make much difference in your feelings as you face this undertaking. But it has been a wonderful year—the most challenging, the most enriching, the most satisfying year in my life. I come to you with a new witness, blessed beyond any hope I ever had. I come to you with the assurance that leaves no doubt in the soul.

Each week end we have gone out to some stake to meet the people who constitute the membership of this Church. It is a singular thing that you are not in a stake thirty minutes but you feel as if you might have been born there—as if you had lived there all your life. The people of this Church are a wonderful people, and I express my gratitude for their thoughtfulness, their hospitality, their friendliness, and their kindness. I am grateful, too, that we are remembered in their prayers, and I want to assure them that they are remembered in ours.

I have been sitting here today thinking that this great audience in the kindness of soul that I know is yours, might this day and this night remember in your prayers three wonderful women, among the many, who may stand in need. These three I know about.

Brother Lee in the eloquence of his witness did not confide in you the sorrow that is in his heart. Sister Lee lies critically ill as the result of a fall and a broken hip. Knowing her as we do, I bid you good people to remember her in your prayers.

There stands alone today, the little woman who has gone around the world and stood at the side of Elder Matthew Cowley, one of the finest witnesses this Church has ever had. May God put it into your hearts to remember her.

The third woman is the wife of our beloved President. This heroic soul, who carried on through thirty-five thousand miles, with all kinds of traveling, day and night, and who never flinched, has given out of her devotion the reserve of strength which is the difference between full enjoyment of health and the struggle to bear up against the load that comes to the helpmate of one whose burden is so tremendous. And so, out of the love that I know you bear both of them, I am sure you will remember them, that there shall be built back into their bodies the strength that was spent on that, one of the greatest missionary trips ever taken.

It is good to be with you. This has been a wonderful conference. To come into this Tabernacle and listen to these testimonies is to know in your heart that this is God's work. I bear you that witness.

Last October, I made the suggestion that perhaps you could have an unusual Christmas in '53 if you read a chapter from the New Testament each day between that conference and the Christmas holidays. I want to thank those who have written in their letters, some of them signed by entire families. I am grateful to your children who caught the spirit of your suggestion. It has been wonderful to me—so much so that I am going on with that reading. I do not mean to replace it or substitute for it, but I resolved when I came into this calling that, among other things, I would read into two fields very fully:

1. The New Testament, and try to catch the spirit of Him in whose service we are engaged; and,

2. The history of our forefathers through whom we have received the blessings of the restoration of this glorious gospel.

And so in the spare time—that we do not have—I have been trying to find a few minutes regularly for Church history. I want to commend it to you.

And all the time I have been reading, I have come to two convictions, and they constitute the burden of what I want to say this afternoon. As you read the history of the pioneers, it becomes increasingly clear with every page that you read, that they endured *adversity* and *hardship*. They could stand persecution; they could bear up under abuse; they could recover from the infliction of all kinds of harmful hatreds. That record is clear. The question before our generation is: Can we and our children endure *prosperity* and *ease*?

I have not the time this afternoon to compare the two struggles. I sometimes wonder which is the harder. It sounds very much easier to slide along in complacency, with everything that we need. But such a course has never yet been the route followed by God's chosen people.

To go in upon any scene in Church history fully would take more time than I have, and yet I want you to pause with me all too briefly at five spots along the way. As you read the history, you become impressed first that God was moving his people west all the time; from New York to Salt Lake City, his hand was in their moving; and as he moved them, he seemed to be preparing them for that greater trek which was still ahead.

The second conviction that must attach to any such reading is that Satan at every turn in the road was trying to block the program. You remember, from the very beginning, when the Prophet went out to the Sacred Grove to pray. . . . Let me quote:

After I had retired to the place where I had previously designed to go, having looked around me, and finding myself alone, I kneeled down and began to offer up the desire of my heart to God. I had scarcely done so, when immediately I was seized upon by some power which entirely overcame me, and had such an astonishing influence over me as to bind my tongue so that I could not speak. Thick darkness gathered around me, and it seemed to me for a time as if I were doomed to sudden destruction.

But, exerting all my powers to call upon

God to deliver me out of the power of this enemy which had seized upon me, and at the very moment when I was ready to sink into despair and abandon myself to destruction—not to an imaginary ruin, but to the power of some actual being from the unseen world, who had such marvelous power as I had never before felt in any being—just at this moment of great alarm, I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head, above the brightness of the sun, which descended gradually until it fell upon me.

It no sooner appeared than I found myself delivered from the enemy which held me bound. When the light rested upon me I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other—"This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!" (Joseph Smith's Own Story in Pearl of Great Price, 2:15-17.)

From that moment of assurance the Prophet Joseph knew in every fibre of his being that his destiny would be fulfilled in the earth.

Let us make a second pause just for a few minutes in Jackson County to catch the spirit of the expulsion of our people.

At the order of Lieutenant Governor Boggs the state militia marched into Jackson County and disarmed the Mormons. Concerning the brutalities that followed, B. H. Roberts writes: "The Colonels in command—Pitcher and Lucas—were known as the bitter enemies of the Saints. . . . From such a militia, officered by such men as Pitcher and Lucas, the Saints could hope for no protection. . . . The agreement made by Colonel Pitcher, to disarm the mob was never executed; but as soon as the brethren had surrendered their arms, bands of armed men were turned loose upon them. . . . The men who had made up the rank and file of the militia on the 5th of November, the next day were riding over the country in armed gangs threatening men, women, and children with violence, searching for arms, and brutally tying up and whipping some of the men, and shooting at others. The leaders of these ruffians were some of the prominent men of the county; Colonel Pitcher and Lieutenant Governor Boggs being among the number. The Priests in the county, it seems, were determined not to be outdone by the politicians, for the Reverend Isaac McCoy and

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other preachers of the gospel were seen leading armed bands of marauders from place to place; and were the main inspirers of cowardly assaults on the defenseless."

Throughout the first two weeks of November, 1833, men, women, and children fled in confusion from their burning homes. Lyman Wight gave testimony in court that "one company of one hundred and ninety—all women and children, except three decrepit old men—were driven thirty miles across a burnt prairie. The ground was thinly crusted with sleet, and the trails of these exiles were easily followed by the blood which flowed from their lacerated feet."

Before the Jacksonites ceased their wholesale depredations, they had killed Andrew Barber and wounded several other brethren; had burned 203 homes and one flour mill; had driven the owners—twelve hundred in number—northward to the bleak bluffs of the Missouri River, where the refugees in wind and rain made camp, awaiting their turn to ferry the river barrier into Clay County, seeking needed protection and shelter.

Elder Parley P. Pratt leaves this vivid picture of the exiles along the Missouri River: "The shore began to be lined on both sides of the ferry with men, women, and children; goods, wagons, boxes, provisions, etc., while the ferry was constantly employed; and when night closed upon us the cottonwood bottom had much the appearance of a camp meeting. Hundreds of people were seen in every direction, some in tents and some in the open air around their fires, while the rain descended in torrents. Husbands were inquiring for their wives; wives for their husbands; parents for children and children for parents. Some had the good fortune to escape with their families, household goods, and some provisions; while others knew not the fate of their friends, and had lost all their goods. The scene was indescribable and, I am sure, would have melted the hearts of any people on the earth, except our blind oppressors." (Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*, I:426-440; B. H. Roberts, *Missouri Persecutions*, pp. 105-107.)

Did we have the time this afternoon, I should ask you to go into Carthage Jail with me, where I have stood, stirred by the bloodstains on the floor, to ponder the deaths of the Prophet Joseph and his brother, Hyrum; the inspired

friendship and faith and trust of Willard Richards and John Taylor. But tarry with me just a minute and try to imagine the impact of the martyrdom:

"He has jumped the window," shouted the rabble, and they rushed pellmell downstairs. Willard Richards, hurrying to the window, looked down upon the Prophet, surrounded by frenzied men. He then started for the stairway, but a distressed call from John Taylor stopped him, "Take me." Happy that John was not dead, Willard dragged him from under the bed and into another room. While hiding him under an old mattress, he admonished gravely: "If your wounds are not fatal, I want you to live to tell the story." Brother Richards expected to be shot momentarily.

The excited mob, believing that they had killed all four of the prisoners and hearing a shout, "The Mormons are coming," fled from Carthage in terror, followed by most of the frantic citizens. It was this false cry, no doubt, that saved the lives of Willard Richards and John Taylor.

To report the terrible disaster and to obtain aid George D. Grant and David Bettisworth hurried on horseback toward Nauvoo. Within three miles of the city they were stopped by Governor Ford and his staff, who carried them back to Carthage. After warning the remaining citizens of the town that the Mormons would be coming, he and his men galloped off at midnight for Warsaw. He later testified that he fully expected that Carthage would be laid in ashes before morning.

On the morning after the martyrdom, Willard Richards and a few friends, having dressed as best they could the bleeding wounds of Elder Taylor at the Hamilton House, put the bodies of Joseph and Hyrum in two boxes, which they placed on two borrowed wagons and started for Nauvoo, the "City of Joseph."

Describing the sorrowful scene of that tragic day, Dr. B. W. Richmond, a non-Mormon reports that the two wagons were met near the temple grounds by a "vast concourse of citizens. The officials formed around the bodies, while the masses silently opened to give them way, and as the mournful procession moved on, the women broke out in lamentations at the sight of the two rude boxes in the wagons, covered with Indian blankets. The weeping was communicated to the crowd, and spread along the vast waves of humanity extending from the Temple to the residence of the Prophet.

The groans and sobs and shrieks grew deeper, and louder, till the sound resembled the roar of a mighty tornado, or the low, deep roar of the distant tornado." (*D. H. C.*, VII:102-112; Andrew Jenson, *Historical Record*, pp. 572-576; B. H. Roberts, *Rise and Fall of Nauvoo*, pp. 330, 312, 404-456.)

Pause four is a brief glimpse at the exodus across Iowa, February 1846:

On February 22, 1846 a raging blizzard, leaving twelve inches of snow, struck the Mormon pioneers huddled in their temporary camp at Sugar Creek, Iowa. Following this terrible storm, the weather turned frigid, "12 below Zero," even sealing the great Mississippi River from shore to shore. On one of these nights nine babies came into camp, born under almost every variety of frontier camp life imaginable. Eliza R. Snow tells of one birth that occurred in a rude improvised shelter, the sides of which were formed of blankets fastened to poles stuck in the ground. The owner of the hut had peeled bark from cottonwood trees and had made a sort of a roof covering through which the water leaked, but helpful sisters held pans over the newborn child and its mother.

It was during these adverse conditions that an unknown camp poet penned this prayer:

"God pity the exiles, when storms come down—

When snow-laden clouds hang low on the ground,

When the chill blast of winter, with frost on its breath

Sweeps through the tents like the angel of death!

When the sharp cry of child-birth is heard on the air,

And the voice of the father breaks down in his prayer,

As he pleads with Jehovah, his loved ones to spare!" (Edward W. Tullidge, *The Women of Mormonism*, pp. 307-309; *Memoirs of John R. Young, Utah Pioneer*, 1847, p. 14.)

And for pause five, let us live all too briefly with the handcart companies of October 1856:

Contrary to the anticipation of these poorly clad people, the fall and early winter of 1856 were unusually stormy and merciless. A winter blizzard broke upon Willie's Company at the Sweetwater, and it struck

Martin's group that was struggling across the alkaline waste lands above the last crossing of the Platte.

The frigid, two-day storm, covering the country with more than a foot of snow, smashed tents and wagon covers. Ten, twelve, and sometimes as many as fifteen deaths came in a day. Shallow graves were scraped out. At night packs of marauding wolves howled or fought at the burial places. From all appearances these two companies were doomed to perish on the eastern slopes of the Rockies, three hundred miles from Zion.

When the storm subsided, the companies made a fresh start, but moved only a few miles a day. It was under these trying conditions that two horsemen, riding ahead of the rescue parties from Salt Lake City, met Willie's Company October 28, 1856 on the Sweetwater River.

John Chislett, a member of Willie's Company, expressing his overwhelming joy, exclaimed:

"More welcome messengers never came from the courts of glory than these two young men were to us. They lost no time, after encouraging us all they could to press forward, but sped further to convey their glad news to Edward Martin, the fifth handcart company, who had left Florence about two weeks after us, and who it was feared were even worse off than we were. As they went from our view, many a hearty 'God bless you,' followed them."

Dan W. Jones, one of the rescuing party, gives a distressing picture of Martin's company: "The train was strung out for three or four miles. There were old men pulling and tugging at their carts, and children, six and eight years of age, struggling through the snow and mud. As night came on the mud and snow froze to their clothing."

After Martin's Company had lost almost one fourth of its number in "Martin's Ravine," it moved forward to the Sweetwater River—a hundred feet wide, waist deep, and filled with floating ice. At the sight of this barrier, many Saints sank by their carts. In this helpless condition they were found by three sturdy young men who had pushed ahead of the supply wagons. These brawny rescuers heroically waded the river and began carrying the sick and feeble across. This human fording continued back and forth, trip after trip through those chilling waters until every person and his cart had been safely landed upon the opposite shore.

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President Young, upon learning of this valorous service, wept freely. And while reporting it to the Saints in General Conference, predicted: "That act alone will insure David P. Kimball, George W. Grant, and C. Allen Huntington an everlasting salvation in the Celestial Kingdom of God, worlds without end."

With the coming of 104 relief outfits from Salt Lake City, the emigrants abandoned their carts. Those who were unable to walk were loaded into the wagons. Death from freezing and exposure, nevertheless, continued daily. Before the last survivors arrived in Salt Lake City, Sunday, November 30, 222 of these valiant pioneers had found graves by the roadside. (Joseph Fielding Smith, *Essentials in Church History*, p. 489; Levi Edgar Young, *Founding of Utah*, p. 148; Solomon F. Kimball, *Life of David P. Kimball*, p. 9; Roberts, *Comprehensive History*, IV:100-107.)

Under the spirit of achievements like these, it is inspiring to hear these fine young people of Brigham Young University put their hearts, as well as their voices, into "Come, Come, Ye Saints."

How fitting it is to be able to turn to that classic volume of President Clark's *To Them of the Last Wagon* and *The Pioneers* for a tribute and a challenge.

One thing in common all these peoples had in their search for freedom to worship God—a schooling in hardship, persecution, sacrifice, that burned out from their souls the dross, leaving in them only the pure gold of loftiest character and faith, fully tried, tested, refined. God has never worked out his purposes through the pampered victims of ease and luxury and riotous living. Always He has used to meet the great crises in His work, those in whom hardship, privation, and persecution had built characters and wills of iron. God shapes His servants in the forge of adversity; He does not fashion them in the hot house of ease and luxury. (*The Pioneers*, p. 41.)

In living our lives let us never forget that the deeds of our fathers and mothers are theirs, not ours; that their works cannot be counted to our glory; that we can claim no excellence and no place, because of what they did; that we must rise by our own labor, and that labor failing we shall fall. We may claim no honor, no reward, no respect, nor special position or recognition, no credit because of what our fathers were

or what they wrought. We stand upon our own feet in our own shoes. There is no aristocracy of birth in this Church; it belongs equally to the highest and the lowliest. For as Peter said to Cornelius, the Roman centurion, seeking him: "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: "But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him." (Acts 10:34-35.) (*To Them of the Last Wagon*, p. 28.)

What of us? Can we keep and preserve what they wrought? Shall we pass on to our children the heritage they left us, or shall we lightly fritter it away? Have we their faith, their bravery, their courage; could we endure their hardships and sufferings, make their sacrifices, bear up under their trials, their sorrows, their tragedies, believe the simple things they knew were true, have the simple faith that worked miracles for them, follow, and not falter or fall by the wayside, where our leaders advance, face the slander and the scorn of an unpopular belief? Can we do the thousands of little and big things that made them the heroic builders of a great Church, a great commonwealth? (*The Pioneers*, p. 45.)

Confident, as I am, that the blood of the pioneers still flows in the veins of their grandchildren and great-grandchildren, I give you in witness the young men and women of this chorus. I have already caught of the spirit of these youths at their university. I give it as my judgment, that called upon to face Carthage, or the trek across the continent, they would heroically meet both challenges. I honor this new generation.

On the fifteenth of March I was in Los Angeles. There had gathered there some 1600 fine young people, and the next night we had a thousand at San Diego. Then it was that I learned that 1700 grand young people, every morning of the school week, go from three to twenty-three miles to attend a seminary class that meets at seven o'clock in the morning, for which work they get no high school credit. The young girl, Janie Kimball, who pinned an honorary seminary pin on me, was given that privilege because her father had driven her fifteen miles every morning and then had driven her back

to her high school, and she had not missed a class all year. She reported to me they might have to miss high school, but they never would miss the class where they learned the word of the Lord.

To you parents, as you dream dreams for the children you cherish, may I offer these suggestions:

1. Make sure that your children know our pioneer story. Let it not be said in any Latter-day Saint home that the children grow up in ignorance of the achievements of their forebears. Both you and they will stir to the materials in the books already quoted in this address and in such other publications as:

Family Journals and Diaries

Major Howard Egan, *Pioneering the West Autobiography*, Parley P. Pratt

William Clayton's Journal

Leaves from My Journal—Wilford Woodruff
The L.D.S. Church, Its Doctrines and Achievements, to be published—by Carter E. Grant.

2. Give them responsibility; let them do some work. It is an ungracious thing for the lovely daughter who is studying the piano to be led to believe that she cannot do any work which might interfere with the softness of her fingers. God bless her. Her hands will take care of themselves. Nature will do that, if she will do a little something to take the bend out of the back of the mother who has been caring for her these many years. Give your children tasks to do. The Pioneers were never made on an easy trail. They gloried in hardship, and the parent who would spare his child in the interest of kindness, does the unkindest thing possible to a child when he saves him from work and responsibility.

3. Be careful about what your children do at night—what their program is, who their companions are—and have them in at a reasonable hour. Try to see that they go with young men and women who inspire them to higher ideals, rather than with those who make the rounds at glittering night spots, rich in temptation and low in appeal.

The Pioneers survived hardship and

adversity. With careful training our children will endure prosperity and ease and will grow up in the spirit of this chorus today to be an everlasting honor and credit, not only to themselves, to their families, and to the Church, but to their Father in heaven. May they do so, I pray humbly, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President David O. McKay:

Elder Adam S. Bennion of the Council of the Twelve, has just spoken to us.

The Brigham Young University Combined Choruses have furnished the music this afternoon and this morning. We commend this group of young people for the service they have rendered this day. We would like to say to them that the greatest joy that comes to the human heart is found in the happiness that we give to others and in the service that we render our fellow men. We hope, young folks, that the happiness that you have awakened in the hearts of thousands this day will come back into your own, and God bless you in all the service that will be offered to you to render in your future lives. "He that loseth his life for my sake shall find it." You will find your joy in making others happy. God bless you.

These Choruses will sing, "The Hallelujah Chorus," under the direction of Elder Crawford Gates.

The benediction will be offered by Elder J. Orval Ellsworth, formerly President of the Central States Mission, after which this Conference will be adjourned until 10:00 o'clock tomorrow morning.

A meeting devoted to the work of the stake and foreign missions will be held in the Tabernacle this evening at 7:00 o'clock. Mission Presidents in attendance at the General Conference, all stake mission presidents, and stake missionaries, and the presidencies of stakes are requested to attend this meeting. An invitation is extended, also, to members of High Councils, bishoprics, presidents of seventies' quorums, and general boards of auxiliary organizations.

To the members of the choirs we