

ELDER LEGRAND RICHARDS

Of the Council of the Twelve Apostles

I FEEL GRATEFUL, my brothers and sisters, for the privilege of attending this conference with you. I have been built up and strengthened; and as I have counted my blessings before the Lord, for which I thank him, I realize that most of them are because of my membership in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I do not know what the Lord could add more than he has. I believe I am one of the happiest men in all the world. I thank him for membership in his great Church. I thank him for the Holy Priesthood that I bear. I thank him for the hope of obtaining eternal life with my loved ones, my wife and children, my father and mother, and brothers and sisters, and with these my brethren of the General Authorities, and you the Saints of Zion, through obedience to the laws and the ordinances of the gospel. Of that I have a positive assurance in my heart. I know we have the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I thank the Lord for these, my brethren, for President McKay and his Counselors. I know they are prophets of God, and I know the Lord is inspiring them in their work. They are great leaders, and I thank the Lord for them and for the Twelve, and for all the General Authorities, and while I feel the least among them, I feel grateful for their companionship. I honor them, and I revere them, and I thank God for the many gifts they possess for the building of his kingdom, and I testify to you that they are men who have consecrated their lives to this great work in which we are engaged.

And I thank him for you, the Saints of Zion. There are many noble leaders in the stakes and wards, the auxiliaries and the boards of this Church, and I love you. You are wonderful. I can best express my regard for you in the words of Peter of old to the Saints of his day. He said:

But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises

of him who hath called out of darkness into his marvellous light. (I Peter 2:9.)

And it is because we have then called out of darkness into his marvellous light that we can be so happy and enjoy the blessings that are ours.

I thank the Lord for the great missionary system of this Church, that is sharing with the honest in heart the world over the blessings that are ours, when they are willing to heed the voice of the servants of God who are sent unto them. At the present time the Church is probably engaged in its greatest missionary effort in its entire history. That is because of the great leadership we have. Only a few conferences ago President Richards invited all men everywhere, in and out of the Church, to unite in building the kingdom of God in the earth. What more could He ask from righteous men and women the world over?

When the Christ was asked to teach his disciples to pray, after duly saluting the Father, the first thing he taught them to pray for was, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." (Matt. 6:10.) And that is what we pray for daily, and that is what we work for, and we have the positive assurance through our faith and through the testimony of the Holy Ghost that we are not praying nor working in vain, for the kingdom of God has been set up in the earth, and we are privileged to lend our strength to help establish it among men and carry it to the nations of the earth.

In giving the dream of Nebuchadnezzar and its interpretation, the Prophet Daniel said: "But there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days." (Daniel 2:28.) And then he saw the establishment of this work that we are engaged in and that it should become ultimately as a great mountain and fill the whole earth. I know that is true. There is a God in heaven that made known that secret,

and we know it by the power and the testimony of the Holy Ghost.

Then I think it was in our last conference, or the one before, that President McKay invited all of us as members of the Church to be missionaries for the Church. We just could not have the Church of Jesus Christ without the spirit of missionary work.

After the Savior was resurrected and appeared to his Apostles, he sent them into all the world to preach the gospel, to every creature, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. He said,

Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. (Matt. 28:20.)

The missionary work was not to end back in those early days, because when his disciples asked for the sign of his second coming, he told them of the wars and the rumors of wars and pestilence, and earthquakes and the fall of nations, then he added, "... this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." (*Ibid.*, 24:14.) So the preaching of the gospel unto all nations is an evidence that the end is near at hand. Because Jesus knew that his Church would continue this great missionary work, he told his disciples, "... and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." (*Ibid.*, 28:20.)

The Saints of Zion have responded to the call of these, the Presidency of the Church, as they have never done before. We find from our records that during the first eight months of this year we have baptized 10,929 converts, those who have come to know the truth. That does not include the baptisms of the children of members. That is a tremendous growth and increase in the work of the Lord.

And then when you go among the Saints and interview the prospective missionaries and go into the mission fields and interview the missionaries and find the spirit that God is endowing them with, you just know that this cannot be the work of man. It is the

work of God; no man could do what the Lord has done.

To me, the missionary system of this Church is one of the greatest institutions the world has ever known. In no other way has there been such evidence of sacrifice and devotion and love and loyalty to God and to his work as in this great missionary work of his Church. We find it difficult at times to turn members down who want to go on missions. One of my good friends was getting up in years and I tried to persuade him he was too old to go on a mission, and he said, "Well, Brother Richards, what could I do that would be more wonderful than to die in the service of the Lord?" Another good brother came to me who had been on a mission with his wife and said, "If I sell my home and automobile, we can go on another mission"—willing to give the last that they had in order to accomplish this missionary work, and that is the spirit we find wherever we go.

A young man reporting his mission in Oregon a short time ago, who was himself a convert to the Church, came down with his fist on the pulpit and said, "I would not take a check for a million dollars for the experience of my mission."

And the brethren made a call for the Saints who could afford it to send in some of their surplus funds to help carry on the missionary work with some of these young people in foreign missions where they are not prospered and blessed as we are here in America, and the response has been wonderful, and every time a remittance comes you feel to thank the Lord for the faith of him who sent it.

While I was still the Presiding Bishop, following a general conference, I received a letter from a lady school-teacher in Nevada. She said, "It was said in conference that fifty-five dollars a month was the average cost of a missionary. I am enclosing my check for that amount, and I will send a like amount for each month for the next two years to keep a missionary in the field, because it is not possible for me to go myself."

As long as the Lord will put such

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feelings in the hearts of the members of his Church, no one can stop his work from growing.

A few years ago I had a conversation with a man who came to the office while I was Presiding Bishop to interest the Church in a business proposition. We drifted into a discussion of religion. I said, "Do you love the Lord?" He said, "I do." I said, "Do you love him enough that you would be willing to join the Mormon Church, if you knew the Lord wanted you to?" And he thought for a few minutes, and said, "I do." Then I said, "As one of his servants, I want to promise you that if you will investigate our message and get down on your knees before the Lord, you can know that this is the work of God, just as much as you know anything in this world."

A few weeks ago he was in Salt Lake City and called to see if my wife and I would take lunch with him and his wife. He is now a high priest in the Church, and he said, "But, Bishop, why couldn't I have heard the gospel thirty years ago, so that I could have had the joy of service in the Church all through these years?"

Such a testimony makes one realize what the gospel means to a new convert.

I had a man sit in my office not long ago, and some of the brethren know him. He served for over thirty years as a minister of the gospel in a sectarian church, and then through contact with our missionaries he joined the Church, and he said, "When I think of how little I had as a minister of the gospel to offer to my people as compared to what I now have in the fullness of the gospel as it has been restored, I want to go back and tell all of my friends what I have found. But now," he said, "they won't listen to me; I am an apostate from their church." But such was the joy he had found in his membership in the Church.

I was visiting in a stake of Zion not long ago, and the president told me this story. And he is here today. He said a Jewish boy came into the stake during the war, serving in the armed forces, and he fell in love with a Mormon girl, and he married her; she converted him, and he joined the

Church. Then he went back to see his people in the east, and they disinherited him, and he said to his father and mother, "You can't disinherit me. What I have found out there among the Mormons is worth more than all the money this family ever owned." And then he said to the president, "How long will I have to wait to get into the temple with this lovely wife of mine, so I will be sure she is mine forever?"

Such is the joy the gospel brings to the new convert.

I had a man come to my office when I was in the mission field. He said, "When I think of who I was and what I was when the gospel found me and what I am today," he said, "I just can't believe that I am the same person. I do not think the same thoughts; I don't have the same habits; I don't have the same ideals in life." He said, "I have literally been born again."

And that is what Paul meant when he said,

Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. (Rom. 6:4.)

And I knew that man walked in a newness of life.

I received a letter while I was Presiding Bishop from a young man converted while in the armed forces, then living in Kansas. He sent a check for his tithing, and then he added, "Bishop, do you think we are doing all we ought to do to try and tell the world of the marvelous work and a wonder the Lord has established in the earth in our day?"

They do not all come too easy. We have to break through the walls of many a missionary away, and then I happened to make a friend of him and got into his home, and when he could prejudice. One of my friends turned not handle the situation and his minister would not, he went to the plant where he was the foreman and said to the employees, "If any of you know any ministers who are not afraid of the Mormon elders, I would surely like to get in touch with them. I don't

care what church they belong to," and so for the next few months we had a different minister every week. It was one of the most interesting experiences of my entire life. But every time they would leave, he would say, "Well, you have made me nearer a Mormon than I was before," and one day he put his feet up on the table, smoking his big cigar and said, "Brother Richards, I would give all I own if I could prove that you are wrong." I said, "I know you would. You have never wanted to prove that we are right. But," I said, "I want to thank you for bearing your testimony that we have brought you the truth. If you have tried with all the help you have had through these weeks to prove we are wrong, and you have been unsuccessful, there is only one other answer, and that is you have proved that we are right. Now," I said, "there are just two things: You are either going to decide that you will accept the Lord's work and help build his kingdom or you are going to kick against the pricks and I remind you what the Savior said to Saul on the way to Damascus: '... it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.'" (Acts 9:5.) Well, he told me when we first commenced visiting him that he had all the religion he wanted, he knew he had faith in God, and he believed in God, and the only way I could get him to understand that there might be truths he did not have, was to tell him that if he had never seen a light greater than a candle, he would not believe that he was in the darkness, but when he saw real light, then he would know that the candle was not sufficient. Well, he joined the Church right after that and came and visited me—I had been transferred—he was old enough to be my daddy, and he took me in his arms and said, "Brother Richards, I didn't think a man could be as happy as I am." I said, "I thought you had plenty before." "Oh, but I didn't know," he said.

Now I want to say to you Latter-day Saints, and President McKay has called all of you to be missionaries for the Church. I hope you will not be afraid. I hope you know that this is the work of God and not the work of man. I

hope you know that if your neighbors and your relatives and friends will hunger and thirst after righteousness, that you can promise them that if they will investigate and get down on their knees, I care not what church they belong to, they will find in the message you have for them the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, and I tell you you ought not to be afraid to promise them that, because I know that if they are sincere, your promises will be fulfilled.

Before I close, I want to read to you a few excerpts from letters from a lady who wrote to the Bureau of Information. The first letter was in November of 1953:

"Will you please inform me about your Church, its origin, its history, and present-day aims, enterprises, and ideals? I would appreciate this information first-handed and believe you will be better to supply it than vague and often misleading hearsay can. If your Church is the one I have been seeking for fifty-three years and never found, so far, in any Christian Church or 'off color' religious societies—from theosophy to free thought, I might be able to contribute, as well as receive benefits. I am not a chronic, curiosity seeking person nor an habitual joiner." The brethren sent her some literature to read, and then she wrote back under date of December 18, 1953. I am just quoting parts of her letter:

"I do not want to appear 'gushy,' but I will say this for your religion. I find it interesting; it quickens within me a feeling—what shall I call it—a gladness? Like a beautiful song I might have known long, long ago, and had lost and forgotten, in a way both sublime and sorrowful." What did Jesus say? "These things have I spoken unto you, . . . that your joy might be full," (John 15:11) and the gospel quickens something within the soul of man such as he has never known before. She said, "I had investigated, studied, and discarded Protestant creeds by the time I was fifteen. I unconsciously turned to pantheism, love of nature, therein finding God, for I perceived life in all elements and things. I even studied Catholicism, but backed off when I was told that unbaptized infants,

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though they did not go to hell, went to their special limbo, but never saw the face of God. Agnostically, I asked, "Is a God that merciless and cruel worth having his face looked upon?" I am glad to find a Church courageous and sensible enough to teach the absurdity of infant baptism." And then last July after having been baptized a member of the Church, she wrote: "I now have a serenity and composure, and inner strength, and an inward joy which I never before possessed. Do all souls receiving enlightenment exclaim within their silent hearts, feeling compassion for a blind groping and grieving world: 'Oh, suffering world! I come, . . . I come! . . .'"

Each of us should be ready and willing to answer such a call. We ought to be ready to go and give all we can to bring these people to a knowledge of the truth that they might share with us the joy that is ours.

When you read a statement like that of how this woman sought without finding the truth, it makes you understand the words of Roger Williams who gave up his pastorate in the oldest Baptist Church of America and gave this as the reason:

There is no regularly constituted Church of Christ, on earth, nor any person authorized to administer any Church ordinance, nor can there be until new Apostles are sent by the great Head of the Church, for whose coming I am seeking. (*Picturesque American*, page 503.)

ELDER LEVI EDGAR YOUNG

Of the First Council of the Seventy

PRESIDENT MCKAY; brethren and sisters: We have had a number of visitors today, many of whom were Methodists who came from Australia. They seemed to be pleased with their visit to this building and what they heard. There is now in the congregation the superintendent of schools of Copenhagen, Denmark. With him are others from that country. We remember well of being in your city and visiting the university that you represent. You graduated from there, you tell me,

Isn't it marvelous that He has come, that the great Head of the Church has given us again Apostles and Prophets and that the Church of Christ is in our midst, built upon the foundation of Apostles and Prophets with Christ our Lord as the chief cornerstone?

I bear you solemn witness that I know that this is true and the power of God is in this work for the blessing of every honest soul in the world who is willing to come and to pay the price by keeping his commandments.

God help us to do our part, and God bless all who are doing it, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President David O. McKay:

The congregation will arise and sing, "Redeemer of Israel," conducted by Richard P. Condie. After the singing we shall hear Brother Young.

Singing by the Combined Choirs and the congregation, "Redeemer of Israel," Richard P. Condie conducting.

President David O. McKay:

The speaker to whom you listened just before the singing, was Elder LeGrand Richards of the Council of the Twelve. President Levi Edgar Young of the First Council of the Seventy will now address us. He will be followed by Elder Alma Sonne.

and we recall that above the gates of your campus there is a great eagle done in bronze, something like our eagle on the Eagle Gate, just east of here. Underneath your bronze eagle is a Latin expression which I recall. It runs *coelestem adspicit lucem*. The eagle is looking toward the celestial light and this recalls the real motive, why the Latter-day Saints are meeting in this building today. I may say to you that we are looking toward the celestial light and this expression comes