

ELDER RICHARD L. EVANS

Of the Council of the Twelve Apostles

WITH YOU, my brethren and sisters, I have been moved and sobered and satisfied by the opening address of our beloved President, and his utterance as to the inescapable importance of personal responsibility.

Beyond all that our Savior did for us in his saving grace, without which there would be no hope of salvation for any of us, beyond all this, it is clearly up to each of us, in the freedom God has given us, and in the right and responsibility of choice which he has placed everlastingly before us, what we will do with our lives.

Our President's remarks call to mind a sentence from, I think, Viscount John Morley, in which he said that "no man can climb out beyond the limitations of his own character." It is everlastingly and basically true: No man can rise above the limitations of his own character.

Sometimes we would like to believe that there is less responsibility upon us than there is for the outcome of our lives. I am reminded of the story of a small lad who came home from school and accosted his father, saying: "Dad, here is my report card. It's bad again. What do you think is wrong with me? Heredity or environment?" There are some other alternatives that he had not thought of! (He might have thought of studying!)

There are some considerations that all of us must soberly think of in accepting personal responsibility for the keeping of the commandments, for the choices we make, for how we use the freedom God has given us, for he will not force any of us to become what we are not willing to pay the price of becoming.

Some days ago I spent some time with a young man who was troubled. He did not like the way our Father in heaven was running the world. He said, "We need to *know* more."

Well, I agreed with him. We do need to know more. I should like to know all the answers. I am sure we all would. But, I said, "Let us begin with what we know. I think we can agree

that there are some things we do know. What are we doing with them? Let us begin with the Ten Commandments, and also the two great commandments:

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. (Matthew 22:37-39.)

Do you know anyone who is keeping them in their fullness? Just for example, do you know anyone who literally and always loves his neighbor as himself? I agree we need to know more, but also we need more to use more of what we do know."

The Lord has set up the objectives. He has given us a few simple rules. He has given us freedom; he has given us the right of choice, and what we shall become will depend, beyond his saving grace, on what we do with what we know.

And in replying to this young man, I could not refrain from observing that even though I were to agree with him that there are some things I would do differently from my point of view. I reminded him that we—he and I—cannot make a worm, and we cannot make a blade of grass, and who were we to dictate to the Creator in our small wisdom?

One thing he was troubled about was the necessity for faith: Why could he not know by sight or sound of the existence of God himself. "Why can't I see him? Why doesn't he tell these things to me? Why do I have to live by faith?"

There are people who have not had to live by faith, who have found themselves in serious trouble. There are those to whom the Lord God has spoken, who have made grievous errors.

Let us take the case of Lucifer, who lived with his Father. He did not have to have faith as to the existence of his Father in heaven, but what did his knowledge do for him? He was brilliant, but he lacked humility. He was

arrogant and overly ambitious. He wanted to usurp his Father's power, and he wanted to do things in his own way. He wanted to change the commandments, to change the rules, and to run the kingdom according to his own pleasure and convenience, and his own view of things. So it is not always just not knowing that gets in our way. With his brilliance, humility would have saved Lucifer, but that he did not seem to have.

Now President McKay has invited our attention to some things specifically concerning the use of which we have been cautioned against, and concerning certain practices and dangers, and concerning the commandments which have been given to us plainly and clearly, all of which bring before all of us the question, often disputed, as to what is right and what is wrong:

Often we hear it argued that if a person does only those things which harm himself, he has a perfect right to do so, since there is no harm done except to himself.

Specifically with reference to the use of some things—some of which President McKay has mentioned this morning—I think we can lay down a line of right and wrong quite clearly, more clearly than we sometimes suppose. I think that whatever is detrimental to health and happiness, or whatever impairs effectiveness or efficiency, is clearly wrong, morally wrong, spiritually wrong, as well as physically wrong, and I do not believe that a person harms only himself in the use of what he calls his right to live his life as he pleases.

In the first place, if he impairs his own efficiency he is robbing his loved ones, and the world, of some things that he might have produced or done for them. Secondly, if he impairs his health, he is placing a burden on others, or the possibility of that burden—and no man can know that he is not going to place that burden upon other people. So, I say again, the line seems to be rather sharply drawn, or can be: that when we do those things that are harmful to us or to others, or which impair our efficiency or that of others, clearly we are doing that which is wrong. It is more than just a personal choice. It becomes a concern for everyone. It does

become a moral matter—a matter of commandment—and rightly so.

The glory of God is intelligence, and I cannot conceive of man's being accounted as being intelligent if he does that to himself or to others which impairs health and happiness and effectiveness and efficiency. Indeed, all the commandments are designed to bring about these very things: our health and happiness, and peace and progress, and effectiveness here and hereafter, limitlessly; and we need to keep that humility which is ever called for in the making of our choices and the living of our lives.

And even if we sometimes think we would run the world differently, in our limited understanding, we know so little with all we know. We still cannot answer most, if any, of the questions asked of Job many centuries ago, when the Lord God answered Job out of the whirlwind and said,

Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding. . . . Hast thou entered into the springs of the sea? . . . Have the gates of death been opened unto thee? or hast thou seen the doors of the shadow of death? . . . declare if thou knowest it all. Where is the way where light dwelleth? and as for darkness, where is the place thereof, . . . Who hath put wisdom in the inward parts?

We might ask it another way. Who has given the body the wisdom to heal itself?—or who has placed instinct in animals—

Who hath given understanding to the heart?

. . . Who provideth for the raven his food?

. . . Gavest thou the goodly wings unto the peacocks? or wings and feathers unto the ostrich?

Which leaveth her eggs in the earth, and warmeth them in dust,

. . . Hast thou given the horse strength?

. . . Doth the hawk fly by thy wisdom, and stretch her wings toward the south?

Doth the eagle mount up at thy command, and make her nest on high?

Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct him? He that reproveth God, let him answer it. (See Job 38-40.)

Life is short at best. Even if we should live twice as long as our present expectancy, it would still be short. We

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should have our minds and hearts and the whole intent of our souls on the things that give us health and happiness and effectiveness here, and which will lead to limitless progress hereafter, and there are clear-cut ways of discerning the difference between right and wrong. I pray that we may find them and live by them, and that our Father's purposes and promises concerning each of us may be realized by the wisdom of our choices and by the acceptance of this personal responsibility of which President McKay has spoken. For beyond our Savior's saving grace no one stands between us and our own salvation—or exaltation. I pray that we may find it, and that we may be part of that glorious homecoming which it is our Father's hope and purpose to bring about for the whole human family.

God bless you and be with you, and with us all in the use of our freedom, and in the acceptance of the challenge and trust which our President has given

unto us this day in meeting and living by this personal responsibility, and making our choices wisely so that all that our Father intends for each of us may be ours in his presence and in his kingdom with our loved ones. In Jesus' name. Amen.

President David O. McKay:

You have just heard Elder Richard L. Evans of the Council of the Twelve. The Choir and Congregation will now sing "High On The Mountain Top," two verses. Following the singing, Elder LeGrand Richards will speak to us.

The Combined Choruses and the congregation joined in singing the hymn, "High On The Mountain Top."

President David O. McKay:

Elder LeGrand Richards of the Council of the Twelve will now address us.

ELDER LEGRAND RICHARDS

Of the Council of the Twelve Apostles

I AM SURE OUR hearts have all been stirred this morning with appreciation for being privileged to be members of this great Church, for our great leader and the power of his leadership, and for these our Brethren, and I rejoice in being with you, in being a part of this great latter-day gospel movement.

The President referred in his talk this morning to the great progress that is being made and has been made in the world scientifically, the comforts that we enjoy, the powers that have been harnessed, and as I think of that—electricity and the sound waves that have brought us all these modern conveniences—I wonder if the world realizes that there are other unseen powers that are operating in the world, the power of darkness seeking to destroy the work of the Lord, and the power of God in the hearts of the honest who find the way of eternal truth.

I would like to predicate the few words that I say this morning on an experience that I had a few weeks ago in attending a stake conference in a neigh-

boring state. One of the fine men of the community, through the efforts of our stake missionaries, had recently joined the Church. He was happy in his membership in the Church. It brought a change in his life, a change in his thoughts, a change in his habits, a change in his desires and interest in his fellow men. He had a neighbor with whom he had been very friendly. They lent each other equipment from their farms, but as soon as this man joined the Church his neighbor turned against him.

The new convert ran for a position on the school board, and his neighbor went out and gathered people from far and near to bring them into the polls to defeat this former friend and neighbor. After the election was over, the new convert went to his neighbor. He said, "What have I done that would change your attitude toward me as it has been changed?" The answer was, "I do not like the Mormons."

If he had been living in the days of the Savior, his answer would have been,