

BISHOP JOSEPH L. WIRTHLIN

Presiding Bishop of the Church

My brethren and sisters, it has been a great source of inspiration to have the privilege of attending this wonderful conference. As I listened yesterday to our prophet, I felt that we were receiving the same direction, the same inspiration, the same guidance, as did the members of the Church two thousand years ago when Peter and the apostles stood before them periodically and taught them the gospel. Yesterday we had that Spirit here. We have had it today. It is the Spirit of the Lord. Each and every one of us can feel it as we listen to what is said by our brethren.

It is a marvelous thing to belong to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and know that there stands at the head, a prophet who receives from on high the guidance and the direction that is necessary for the sons and daughters of our Heavenly Father, not only those here, but those all over the world. Our President in the years gone by has traveled to many lands for the purpose of preaching to the people that they can understand the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and have the privilege of living it and enjoying all the blessings therein.

I often think that I happen to be a member of the Church, not because I accepted it, but because I was born in the Church, and I assume most of you who are present this afternoon have membership in the Church because you were born in it. On the other hand, we have quite a number of our brethren and sisters who are converts, those who had the privilege of receiving the gospel from the missionaries in various parts of the country. You and I who were born in the Church have received it, brethren and sisters, without any great demands on our part, except that we live the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and set the proper example to those not of our faith.

I often think of my two grandfathers—one was born in England and the other was born in Switzerland. The one in England at the age of twenty-one was very anxious to find the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Yes, he belonged to another church, a great church, but he

was not satisfied. He could not understand the matter of baptism. He could not understand the matter of authority. He could not find it.

One Saturday evening on retiring to his bed, he made it a matter of prayer. He asked the Lord if the Church of Jesus Christ was upon the earth could he be directed to it. That night he had a dream, and in the dream he saw not too far from where he lived a road, and at the end of it was a little chapel. When he arose Sunday morning, he was so impressed with the dream he immediately dressed and went down the road, and there was the little chapel. In it two men were preaching the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, and who were they—two Mormon missionaries! My grandfather immediately joined the Church. There was no question about it in his mind.

I am positively sure that over the world where individuals have a desire to find the true Church, they can find it. They may find it in the way of a dream, or they may find it by the missionaries who may come to their homes and teach them the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

My grandfather finally made the long trip to America and came into this area with his family of ten children of which my mother was the youngest. It was a difficult thing to find the right kind of work. He worked in a coal mine, an experience he had never had. He labored there for some six months, then came to Salt Lake City to get his pay. He was paid for three months. He quit his job and finally settled on a little farm near Tooele, Utah, but there was no water and that created a problem. As I have read his history he had written day by day, there was difficulty on every hand, but not once did I ever find my grandfather finding fault or condemning the Church. When general conference was held comparable to this one, he used to hitch up his old team, and it was an old team, and drive into Salt Lake City, and here he remained for four days and attended all of the meetings. It is marvelous to read of the great inspiration he received hearing the Prophet Brigham Young at that time.

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When he attended conference, they were the best four days of the whole year, hearing the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ taught by the prophet. Brigham Young was a prophet to him, and is it not a wonderful thing to know, brethren and sisters, that from the days of the Prophet Joseph Smith until the present time, we have a prophet, seer, and revelator, so that through the direction of our Heavenly Father, we will be guided and directed wherein we will receive the blessings that we need.

President Clark told of conditions that might exist in the world because there is a great nation and a government which does not teach or permit its people to believe that Jesus Christ actually lives and is the Son of God. As President Clark said, some day that may create difficulties for us. Nevertheless, I hope and pray that each and every one of us will so live the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ that when that day of difficulty comes, we through prayer, faith, and divine direction from our Heavenly Father will be able to meet our problems and solve them.

We have a great responsibility of living the gospel because the world expects us to be a different people, which brings to mind the statement of an individual who had the privilege of visiting the Los Angeles Temple before it was dedicated. This individual said, "The temple is beautiful. It is a marvelous building, but the Mormons have something that is different." I do not know exactly what that individual had in mind, whether she thought the temple in and of itself was beautiful or something that was different, whether she thought we have the priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ, or whether or not she was giving consideration to the fact that we are doing work for the dead. Nevertheless, an impression was made upon that individual. So, in all of our lives, wherever we go, we are going to make an impression on those with whom we come in contact. As a people, we are indeed a "different" people.

It is a wonderful thing to know that in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, brethren and sisters, the choice young men at the age of twelve may receive the Aaronic Priesthood—the Aaronic Priesthood, a divine gift which was bestowed upon the Prophet

Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery by John the Baptist himself. I humbly pray that in your homes where your sons hold the office of deacon, teacher, or priest, there is going to be positive assurance that these young men realize that they have the most divine gift of God to his sons.

If we have any difficulty at all in connection with the Aaronic Priesthood, where some of them may become inactive and not as interested as they should be, I think it comes about many times because fathers and mothers are not giving consideration to the fact that their sons hold the Aaronic Priesthood, the priesthood that was held by John the Baptist.

It is a wonderful thing to sit down with your son—he may be a deacon, a teacher, or a priest—and say to him, "You hold the Aaronic Priesthood. John the Baptist held the Aaronic Priesthood. He was a priest. He baptized Jesus Christ."

Is it not wonderful to know that your son at the age of sixteen may have the same privilege of baptizing as did John the Baptist about two thousand years ago. It is so impressive, brothers and sisters, that these young men will come to the conclusion that holding the Aaronic Priesthood is the most important gift that God can bestow upon them at their particular age. So teach them, inspire them, and direct them in connection with their assignments in the Aaronic Priesthood work, that when the day comes for them to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood, they are going to feel in their own souls, "Now I hold the priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ," for the Christ himself is the Great High Priest, and everyone of these young men, if worthy, sooner or later is going to have the privilege of holding the office of an elder or a seventy or a high priest.

It is most inspiring and encouraging to me as I have the privilege of coming in contact with these young men who have a desire to go out and preach the gospel, as they may have been called by the President of the Church in connection with the bishop of the ward. In interviewing them, I always ask them the question, "Can you bear testimony that Joseph Smith actually saw the Father and the Son? That is the statement you will have to make because

we stand on that wonderful event as a Church, that Joseph Smith at the age of fourteen actually saw the Father and the Son."

It is most thrilling and inspiring to know that these young men at the age of twenty can say, "Yes, I can bear testimony that Joseph Smith actually saw the Father and the Son." They should be able to do that, brothers and sisters, because they have held the Aaronic Priesthood from the age of twelve until the age of twenty when they receive the Melchizedek Priesthood. They should have been taught and should have the knowledge that they can bear these wonderful testimonies which are so important.

In the final analysis, this Church is the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. That is the testimony, brothers and sisters, that we ought to bear to our sons, our daughters, and our grandchildren. This is the Church which is preparing the way for the second coming of Christ. That is our responsibility. It is one of the most important responsibilities that any group of people can have.

Now with reference to these other nations that do not have the privilege of hearing or understanding the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, it is my feeling that some day they will have that opportunity. They are going to have that privilege. Was it not said to whom the gospel was to be preached—to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. Whether or not we will be able to send missionaries into Russia to preach the gospel, I do not know, but I do remember President Clark said something about two years ago, and I have never forgotten it. He said that perhaps we will be able to preach the gospel to the people of Russia out of Salt Lake City over television or radio or something else. That day will come when the Russian people will hear and understand the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, not only the people of Russia, but also the millions in China and the millions in India. They are all the sons and daughters of our Heavenly Father, and I am satisfied that Jesus Christ is just as anxious that they hear the gospel and enjoy all the same privileges that we have. In some way and at some future time, these great events are going to take place.

We have a great responsibility, and I think of the words of Peter when he said, speaking to the people:

"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 you out of darkness into his marvellous light." (1 Peter 2:9.)

If we live the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, we are "a chosen generation." We are a chosen generation because through the wonderful revelations that were given to the Prophet Joseph, we have the commandments, we have the direction, we have the guidance that is necessary to so live the gospel that we indeed are going to be a chosen generation.

And "a royal priesthood"—the Aaronic and the Melchizedek—the Aaronic Priesthood coming, as I have already indicated, when John the Baptist appeared and bestowed it upon Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery. Then, Peter, James, and John, the apostles of old and the Presidency of the Church some eighteen hundred years before, appeared and bestowed upon Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery the Melchizedek Priesthood. Indeed, might we say, it is a royal priesthood.

"An holy nation," of course, an holy nation, as I understand it, is the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is an holy nation, and all of those who have membership in the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ are in that holy nation as long as they live the gospel.

"A peculiar people"—a peculiar people because we accept without question Jesus Christ as the Son of God! A peculiar people because we declare to the world that God the Father and his Son Jesus Christ appeared to that fourteen-year-old young man and gave him the direction and inspiration whereby the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints could again be established upon the earth for the benefit, the direction, and the inspiration of all the sons and daughters of our Heavenly Father, and ". . . that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." (*Idem.*)

My testimony to you is this: if my grandfather in Switzerland, if my grandfather in England had not had the

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privilege of hearing and understanding the gospel, we as a family, without a doubt, would still be in the darkness of the world, but because they accepted the gospel, it is possible now for all of us to go into the marvelous light of the Church, the marvelous light of Jesus Christ himself.

We have a great responsibility of so living the gospel that it will be a great source of inspiration and divine guidance to all of those with whom we come in contact.

In the final analysis, as we live the gospel, it is a wonderful thing to think of the words of Jesus Christ, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall

make you free." (John 8:32.) That is the promise and the blessing that each and every one of us may live and understand—that we shall know the truth and the truth shall make us free.

May the Lord continue to inspire us in all of our endeavors, I humbly ask in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President David O. McKay:

Bishop Joseph L. Wirthlin, Presiding Bishop of the Church, has just addressed us. We shall now hear from Elder ElRay L. Christiansen, Assistant to the Twelve.

ELDER ELRAY L. CHRISTIANSEN

Assistant to the Council of the Twelve Apostles

I humbly pray, my brothers and sisters, that what I say may give encouragement and fortitude to someone. We have had some marvelous addresses given, some wonderful music, all of which should inspire us to go forth and live better lives.

I believe that each of us needs a spiritual checkup just about as often as we need a physical checkup; that each of us, the young, and the rest of us, needs to make an appraisal of himself as a member of the Church of Jesus Christ, and as the head of a family, or as a member of a family, from time to time to determine the degree of our fidelity and our allegiance and adherence to the accepted rules and doctrines of the Church.

One of the ancient prophets of whom Elder Kimball spoke, had this day in mind—when he said:

"Yea, and there shall be many which shall say: Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die; . . .

"And there shall also be many which shall say: Eat, drink, and be merry; nevertheless, fear God—he will justify in committing a little sin; yea, lie a little, take the advantage of one because of his words, dig a pit for thy neighbor; there is no harm in this; and do all these things, for tomorrow we die; and if it so be that we are guilty, God will beat us with a few stripes, and at

last we shall be saved in the kingdom of God." (2 Nephi 28:7-8.)

Is this prediction of Nephi coming to pass in our day? Are there those of us who would justify ourselves in committing a little sin? Are there those of us who would yield to the enticement and the pressure of acquaintances and associates to "eat, drink, and be merry," on certain occasions? Would we, for instance, when in the company of certain others, forsake principles, propriety, and decency in order to conform with and be accepted by the group? So-called social drinking, for example? Would we forsake the high principles of conduct which we as a people espouse and yield to the unapproved practices when we know that to do so weakens one's character, discredits his family name, and will bring sorrow and unhappiness in place of joy and peace?

"We believe in being honest, true, chaste, benevolent, virtuous, and in doing good to all men. . . . If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after these things." (Thirteenth Article of Faith.)

This being the case—this being our standard, could it be then that any of us would lie a little, or take advantage of one because of his words, perhaps by misquoting or exaggerating what he said? Are there any of us who would