

Sunday, October 11

Third Day

to learn that they must be obedient to their parents.

I have another example. A certain man living in my town had a son. The son was invited to join a high school club. This high school club was one of a number. He wanted to have some social life with the other boys, I suppose, and after he talked to his father about it decided he would join. After a while there was to be an initiation.

He went to his father and said, "Father, I need some advice. I have heard in a roundabout way that they do things to you at these initiations. What would be your advice to me as to what I ought to do?"

The father said to him, "Do not let them do anything to you that will involve your dignity as my son or as a man. Do not let them compromise you in your priesthood, in your family, or in your good name."

So he went. The story comes to me that it was a cold winter's night, and the boys of the club, without chaperonage, had hired a cabin in the canyon near our town, and there they prepared to initiate their friends. I suppose the father had an anxious moment or two as he sat through the evening, wondering what was going to happen. The boy left him and took his sleeping bag and his sleeping equipment, because this was to be an all-night affair. The thermometer measured zero during the night.

About two o'clock in the morning the father said he heard the front door open. He got up to see who was entering the house without permission, and

there stood his boy, sleeping bag slung on his back, overcoat on. He said, "What's the matter, Son?"

The boy said, "They tried it, Dad, and I fought them off and came home." He had walked nine miles in that zero weather. After he got warm, the boy retired. The father went upstairs, stood at the foot of his son's bed, and said, "You've done well. I am glad you are an obedient son."

Now, fathers must make decisions. Mothers must make decisions. But so must sons and daughters. If the sons and daughters do not make correct decisions, they are more at fault than their fathers and mothers, if their parents have taught them what is right. A most important purpose of this Church is to bring up children in righteousness and to keep parents righteous also.

I bear my witness that President McKay is a prophet of the Living God, and I bear witness also that his great concern, if I might be so bold as to interpret him, is for the youth of Zion, that they might grow in righteousness and carry the torch of this Church until it fills the earth.

I humbly pray we may find the right and the way to do it. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President David O. McKay:

We have just listened to Elder S. Dilworth Young of the First Council of Seventy. Elder Sterling W. Sill, Assistant to the Twelve, will now address us, and he will be followed by Elder Hugh B. Brown.

ELDER STERLING W. SILL

Assistant to the Council of the Twelve Apostles

Recently a seat companion in an airplane was telling me something about the very interesting science of ballistics. He pointed out that when a bullet is shot through a gun barrel, the bullet receives a set of characteristic markings which will forever identify it with the particular gun barrel through which it is shot.

Our conversation then moved to another set of facts which might be called mental ballistics or spiritual ballistics.

That is, when an idea is passed through the mind, the mind receives a set of characteristic markings; for example, when one thinks negative thoughts, he gets a negative mind. If he thinks depraved thoughts, his mind becomes depraved. If he thinks damned thoughts, a damned mind will be the result. Solomon was speaking as a kind of ballistics expert when he said, "For as he [a man] thinketh in his heart so is he. . . ." (Prov. 23:7.)

In the course of our journey we were obliged to lay over for an hour between planes. During our wait we made an examination of the kind of literature that was being distributed through the magazine stand in the airport. We were impressed—as anyone must be impressed, with the fact that one of the most serious problems of our day, whether considered from the point of view of the church or the nation generally, is the very low-grade of ideas which makes up such a substantial part of our mental diet. William James once said, "The mind is made up by what it feeds upon." We would not think of feeding our bodies contaminated food, and yet we often feed our minds and our souls with contaminated thoughts, and thereby we run contaminated emotions through our hearts, sometimes with fatal results.

One of our most urgent present-day needs is to houseclean our thinking. Because two opposite thoughts cannot co-exist in the mind at the same moment, the best way to get rid of undesirable thoughts is by antidoting them with good. The best way to get darkness out of a room is to fill it with light. The best way to kill the negative is to cultivate the positive, and the best way to improve our lives is to improve our thoughts. And one of the best ways to improve our thoughts is to develop a love of great literature.

Young Abraham Lincoln once said, "What I want to know is in books, and my best friend is the one who will get me a book I haven't read." And in one of the most authoritative voices of latter-day scripture the Lord said, "It is impossible for a man to be saved in ignorance." (D&C 131:6.) And it is just as impossible to be saved by reading the kind of sex stories and murder mysteries that makes up such a large part of our contemporary literature.

This morning I would like to share with you some quotations having to do with the values of great ideas and stimulating ideals as they are made available to us through good books. Someone has said, "Books are among life's most precious possessions. They are the most remarkable creation of man. Nothing else that man builds ever lasts. Monuments fall, civilizations perish, but books continue."

"The perusal of a great book is as it

were an interview with the noblest men of past ages who have written it."

Charles Kingsley once said, "There is nothing more wonderful than a book. It may be a message to us from the dead, from human souls we never saw who lived perhaps thousands of miles away, and yet these little sheets of paper speak to us, arouse us, teach us, open our hearts and in turn open their hearts to us like brothers."

"Without books God is silent, justice dormant, philosophy lame."

John Milton said, "Books are not dead things but contain a certain potency of life in them as active as the soul whose progeny they are. They preserve as in a vial, the purest efficacy of the living intellect that bred them."

Of course, the great literature of the world centers in the Holy Bible. The writings of Shakespeare alone contain some 550 Bible quotations and allusions. The works of Tennyson have 330 Bible references. Emerson's works are filled with Bible ideas, and the New Testament records eighty-nine occasions when the Master himself quoted from the great scriptures.

Think of the effect that the Bible has had in individual lives. Looking backward we see young Abraham Lincoln lying before the open fire reading the Bible, and it is easy to follow the Bible influence in his life throughout his entire career. One Bible passage in the mind of another young man by the name of Joseph Smith helped to change the religious history of the world.

Or, think of the effect that Bible teaching has had in the rise and fall of nations. Most of the nations of the past have fallen because they have disobeyed divine law. Certainly this will continue to be a determining factor in every national success.

With keen insight Daniel Webster once made this prophetic statement, "If we abide by the principles taught in the Bible, our country will go on prospering, but if we, or our children, shall neglect its teachings and its authority, no one can tell how suddenly some calamity may overwhelm us and bury all of our glory in profound obscurity." We inscribe our coins with the motto "In God We Trust." At least we ought to know the kind of God we are talking about.

It has been pointed out that, "We do not know what the future holds, but we do know who holds the future." And we may be sure that our national prosperity as well as our individual exaltation depends upon how well we utilize this great reservoir of spiritual truth. In our uncertain age we need the great scriptures as never before.

Our problem, of course, is that no matter how great our literature may be, even if we have the word of God himself spoken in our own day, it doesn't help us very much unless we know what was said and then govern ourselves accordingly.

The fifth chapter of the book of Moses recounts how God tried to teach the posterity of Adam to live the principles of the gospel. But Satan came among them saying, "Believe it not," and many believed it not. This same problem has been plaguing the world ever since.

One of our great Articles of Faith says, "We believe the Bible to be the word of God as far as it is translated correctly; we also believe the Book of Mormon to be the word of God." But not only is Satan among us saying, "Believe it not," he goes much further and also says, "Don't even read it." And readership surveys show that most people in and out of the Church are following that unfortunate direction. There are very few people who regularly read the Bible with a purpose, and the vast majority read it almost not at all.

It was reported that a Sunday School teacher once asked the members of her class if they knew what was in the Bible and one little girl held up her hand. The teacher said, "All right, Mary Jane, you stand up and tell the class what is in the Bible." And Mary Jane said, "There's a lock of baby's hair in it; some pressed violets from sister's beau are in it; and some of grandmother's love letters are in it." We ought to remember that there are some things in the Bible that Mary Jane apparently had never heard about.

First, the doctrines of eternal life are in it. The Bible teaches us about God, our Eternal Father, and what our relationship to him ought to be. Lord Calvin was once asked to name the greatest discovery that had ever been made, and he replied, "The greatest discovery that is ever made is when a

man discovers God." Jesus indicated this same truth when he prayed, "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." (John 17:3.)

Think of the advantage that young Timothy had over many of our children. Paul said to Timothy, "... from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." Then he said, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." (II Tim. 3:15-16.)

Think of the profit our lives would show if we could absorb the lessons of the great parables, or the philosophy of the Golden Rule, or the spirit of man's individual responsibility to God, or the stimulation contained in the doctrine of eternal progression. Or, suppose that we get God's answers to life's great questions including the one expressed by the rich young ruler when he asked, "Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" (Luke 18:18.)

There are some important "thou shalt nots," in the Bible. The Lord has said that there are some things that we just must not do. Most of the Ten Commandments come in this category. The Bible tells us of forbidden fruit, of forbidden ground, of forbidden desires, and forbidden thoughts. As Cecil B. De Mille has pointed out, "It is not possible for us to break the Ten Commandments, we can only break ourselves against them."

There is a set of what someone has called "promissory notes" in the Bible. Every commandment has a blessing attached for faithful performance. But the Lord has said, "I, the Lord am bound when ye do what I say; but when ye do not what I say, ye have no promise." (D&C 82:10.) He said, "I command and men obey not; I revoke and they receive not the blessing." (*Ibid.*, 58:32.) That means that all blessings do not apply to us individually. Only those laws apply to us that we actually live; for example, the Lord said through Malachi, "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse . . ." then he promised, "and prove me now herewith . . . if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to

receive it." (Mal. 3:10.) But that does not apply to us, unless we pay our tithing.

Suppose that we tear out of the Bible those portions which do not apply to us personally. That is, if we do not keep the Sabbath day holy, or if we fail to observe the laws of honesty, chastity, temperance, repentance, and baptism; then we had better tear those parts out of the scripture, so we will not deceive ourselves unnecessarily by imagining that they apply to us. It would be interesting for each of us to find out just how big our own particular version of the Bible would be under these circumstances. Someone was once asked whether or not he was a Christian and he said he was, in spots. I suppose that it is better to be a Christian in spots than not to be a Christian at all. But we ought to keep in mind that when our Christianity comes in spots, then our blessings will come in spots also.

So far as I know, the most thrilling, exciting idea there is in the world is that if we choose, we may live every single one of these great commandments of God, and thereby we may make ourselves payees on every one of these scriptural promissory notes.

There is great inspiration in the Bible. Some time we express an important human need by saying, "If only I had someone to give me a lift occasionally, someone to look up to. Someone to stir up my faith and wind up my enthusiasm." The greatest need of most of us is just for some plain, honest-to-goodness inspiration. When you feel such a need, suppose that you turn to this great volume that someone has called, "God's Who's Who"; that is, the scriptures tell of the men who are important to God, and they are the ones who can best upgrade our lives. Thomas Carlyle once said, "You cannot look upon a great man without gaining something from him." Certainly you cannot study the lives of such towering figures as Abraham and Moses, Peter and Paul without being uplifted.

Through the Bible we may draw upon the accumulated experiences of some of the greatest men who ever lived. A consistent student of the scripture gains a new power to think, to feel, and to enjoy. It is a source of the most exquisite and enduring delight to have one's mind

stored with worth-while thoughts, beautiful expressions, and stimulating ideals.

Or, we may relive the great events of the Bible in our own lives. Suppose, for example, that in imagination we go and stand upon Mount Sinai where to the accompaniment of the lightnings and thunders of that holy mountain God gave Moses the law. We see the great prophet as he came down from the presence of Jehovah with the glory of God resting upon him with such intensity that the people could not abide his presence.

Then in a moment we might choose to pass over the next 1500 years and go out onto the hills of Judea for the first Christmas, and with that angelic company celebrate the most important event that ever occurred upon this earth, the birth of the Savior of the world. Then suppose that we follow him during those thirty-three years while he walked the dusty roads of this earth and try to learn the lessons that his life teaches.

One of the most inspiring lines in all of the scripture was spoken by the mother of Jesus at the marriage feast at Cana. She said to the servants, "Whatsoever he sayeth unto you, do it." (John 2:5.) What an inspiring motto that would make for our individual lives! Or, suppose that in feeling we go with him into the Garden of Gethsemane while under the burden of our sins he sweat great drops of blood at every pore. Or, we might go and stand with uncovered heads and contrite hearts before the uplifted cross upon that barren Judean hill, while this thorn-crowned Sufferer paid the last full measure of the price of our redemption. How our appreciation would be increased and our lives sanctified by a sympathetic reliving of these great events which all took place in our interest. We must not blame the people of that day alone for putting Jesus to death upon the cross. We must also bear our share of guilt. It was our sins and mine that made it necessary for him to volunteer his own death. But now the greatest opportunity of our lives is to see to it that his atonement was not made in vain.

Emerson once touched upon one of our greatest present-day dangers when he said, "On the brink of an ocean of life and truth we are miserably dying. Sometimes we are furthest away when

we are closest by." Think how near they were who lived contemporaneously with Jesus. He walked among them. They heard his teachings. They knew of his miracles, and yet they were so far away. When Satan came among them saying, "Believe it not," they pronounced their own doom upon themselves by saying, "His blood be upon us and our children." (Matt. 27:25.) And so it has been, and so it may be with us.

We are so near. We have the great scriptures. We have the judgment of time shining upon the life of Christ. The gospel has been restored in a fullness never before known in the world. We have the written testimony of many witnesses, both ancient and modern, and yet if we "believe it not" we may be so far away. Even in this great age of wonders and enlightenment, Satan is still inducing us to mark our souls with the contamination of inferior

thoughts, whereas the greatest opportunity of our lives is to read more and study more and believe more and live more, that word of God which is still able to make us wise unto salvation.

One of the most thrilling accomplishments that I can think of, is that as a Church and as a nation we may aspire to say out of a full understanding, "We believe the Bible to be the word of God." May we so order our lives that this great accomplishment may be brought about, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President David O. McKay:

He to whom we have just listened is Elder Sterling W. Sill, Assistant to the Twelve. Elder Hugh B. Brown of the Council of the Twelve, will now address us.

ELDER HUGH B. BROWN

Of the Council of the Twelve Apostles

My brethren and sisters, and I hope our friends, who are present and who are listening in, who are not members of the Church, will permit me to include them in that salutation, "brothers and sisters," because we believe in the brotherhood of men under the Fatherhood of God, and that Fatherhood which is universal.

Although I come to this assignment semiannually, it is always humbling and sometimes almost overwhelming. But it is reassuring to know that one has the sympathy and prayers of this great congregation and, we hope, the interest of an even larger audience of friendly listeners who are attending conference by means of radio and television.

We are mindful of the unseen audience and prayerfully attempt to assist all who seek a better understanding of some phases of what has been called the "Phenomenon of Mormonism."

In the past, unfortunately, when discussing basic religious questions, it was more difficult to find common ground of understanding than when considering, for instance, science or philosophy. The prejudice of the past

closed some minds to truth and made communication impossible. Victor Hugo promised that "A day will come when the only battlefield will be the market open to commerce and the mind open to new ideas." Thank the Lord that day is dawning, at least in our western world. As A. Powell Davies said, "The world is too dangerous for anything but truth, and too small for anything but brotherhood."

I should like to enter a plea for friendship, understanding, brotherhood, and tolerance, all so badly needed in our confused and troubled world. In one of our Articles of Faith we claim for ourselves, and freely accord to all men, the untrammelled right to worship God according to the dictates of conscience.

Intolerance, one of the bitter fruits of ignorance and bigotry, has plagued the world from the beginning and has been responsible for much of its sorrow and misery. Maurice Samuel, defender of the Jews, wrote in *The Professor and the Fossil*:

"For all peoples, are, alas, in the habit of killing their prophets and teachers. The English martyred their