

Friday, October 7

First Day

In conclusion, let us stand with our hearts centered and our aims firmly fixed upon this eternal truth—that the gospel of Jesus Christ is among men for the redemption and salvation of the human family. Let us go forth in that spirit and deal with our fellow men in the spirit of love and kindness. Let us work in our councils, in our quorums, guided by that same spirit.

God grant that we may remain true to the Church, that we may ever be found defending the men whom God has called to guide us, and realize that harmony with them means that we are in harmony with God, for he sustains

them. I pray for this blessing for all of us throughout the entire world, and that each member may carry the responsibility of his membership in the Church preparatory to the establishment of the kingdom of God, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President David O. McKay:

Our next speaker this morning will be Elder Henry D. Taylor, Assistant to the Twelve. He will be followed by Elder Marion D. Hanks of the First Council of Seventy.

ELDER HENRY D. TAYLOR

Assistant to the Council of the Twelve Apostles

My dear brethren and sisters, after listening to President McKay's inspiring message, I feel that all of us, from the bottom of our hearts, can say, "We thank thee, Heavenly Father, for a prophet to guide us in these latter days."

While World War I was raging in Europe, there were certain individuals here at home who would sit back in their easy armchairs, surround themselves with maps, and follow the progress of battle by reading the newspapers. They were extremely critical of the generals and those who were directing the campaigns and were very eager and vocal in outlining the strategy they would employ if in similar positions of leadership. These individuals were referred to as "armchair generals."

Prior to demolition of old buildings or the construction of new buildings, a solid fence is built to protect passersby. It has become a practice to bore holes in the fence or to instal glass portholes. From these observation points many pause and watch with interest the demolition or construction activities. There are those among the viewers who would improve the way the job is run. Some would knock a building down immediately, while others would have it done bit by bit. Then there are those who would make changes in the architectural design of the building. Others are critical of the manner in which the cement is poured, the bricks are laid, and the glass

is installed. These persons are known as "sidewalk superintendents."

Then there is another group belonging to this category. While riding in a car they are continually offering suggestions to the driver as to how the car should be operated, the speed that should be traveled, when to turn, and the signals to be employed. These are the "back seat drivers."

The Church becomes an object of criticism from just such "experts." They are dissatisfied with the manner in which the superintendent manages the Sunday School. They find fault with the way the bishop conducts the affairs of the ward. The stake president does not please them, and they criticize his administration. They are unhappy with the way the tithing is disbursed. These are the persons who find no fault with their own actions, but seem willing and anxious to confess another person's sins.

The Savior was chastising such groups as these when he said: "And why beholdest thou the mote that is within thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is within thine own eye? . . . Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye." (Matthew 7:3-5.)

I believe that is the same thought that the poet Burns desired to express when he penned the lines:

"O wad some Power the giftie gie us
To see ourselves as ithers see us!"

(Robert Burns, *To a Louse*)

I assure you that I am not against criticism, if it is the right kind. Constructive criticism can be good and helpful. Destructive criticism can be bad and harmful. Many years ago my mission president gave this sound advice: "If criticism is just and given kindly, accept it and give thanks for it. If it is just and given unkindly, accept it. But if it is unjust and given unkindly, pay no heed to it."

A critical attitude and faultfinding with the Church, if persisted in, can easily lead to apostasy. A good motto to adopt and follow is, "If you can't improve on silence, say nothing." It is my deep and firm conviction that the Lord set up his Church in these latter days and has selected prophets to lead the Saints. There is but one on earth at a time called to exercise the keys of the Holy Priesthood. He may delegate to others the power and authority to act for him in such capacity as he will, but he alone holds the keys for such actions. Today that person is President David O. McKay.

Associated with him in the First Presidency are two other wise and good men. Together they constitute the "three great Presiding High Priests." President Joseph F. Smith made this plain in a talk from this pulpit near the turn of the century, when he declared: "God has established all things in their order. The house of God is a house of order, and not a house of confusion. In this house God himself is the Supreme Head, and he must be obeyed. Christ is in the image and likeness of his Being, his Only Begotten Son, and he stands as our Savior and our God. . . . Next unto God and Christ, on the earth is placed one unto whom the keys and authority of the Holy Priesthood are conferred, and to whom the right of Presidency is given. He is God's mouthpiece to his people in all things pertaining to the building up of Zion, and to the spiritual and temporal salvation of the Saints. . . . Those who have entered into covenant to keep the commandments of the Lord must hearken unto the voice of him who is placed to preside over them; and secondarily, to those who are called to

act with him as his counselors in the Holy Priesthood. It takes this Council of three to constitute the presiding and governing authority of the Priesthood in the earth."

These brethren, together with the Quorum of the Twelve and others of our Church leaders, are blessed with vision and foresight far beyond normal powers and ability. The Lord has designated that they should sit in the "driver's seat," to use our figure of speech, and direct the affairs of the Church. From their vantage point they can clearly see the road ahead, which way to turn, how to avoid the rocks and the chuckholes, much better than those of us sitting in the back seat. It is our duty, responsibility, and privilege to uphold and sustain them with our words, our actions, and our prayers.

How best can we do this? By magnifying them in the eyes of our families, our friends, associates, neighbors, and even strangers, and allowing no evil speaking of the Lord's chosen leaders. We can substitute support for complaint, commendation and praise for adverse criticism. We can pray for them in public and in private and in our family prayers, teaching our children to pray for them.

It is my sincere desire that each of us will become "lifters" instead of "leaners"; that we will share in the responsibility of building up the kingdom of God here upon the earth, and not shift it all to the shoulders of our leaders. We shall then never become "armchair generals," "sidewalk superintendents," or "backseat drivers," but rather "doers of the word and not hearers only."

If we will follow the counsel and leadership of our President and Prophet, we shall then become eligible for all of the blessings promised by the Lord when he said:

"Wherefore, meaning the church, thou shalt give heed unto all his words and commandments which he shall give unto you as he receiveth them, walking in all holiness before me;

"For his word ye shall receive, as if from mine own mouth, in all patience and faith.

"For by doing these things the gates of hell shall not prevail against you; yea,

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and the Lord God will disperse the powers of darkness from before you, and cause the heavens to shake for your good, and his name's glory." (D & C 21:4-6.) To which I testify in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

President David O. McKay:

He to whom you have just listened is Elder Henry D. Taylor, Assistant to the Twelve. Our next speaker will be Elder Marion D. Hanks of the First Council of Seventy.

ELDER MARION D. HANKS

Of the First Council of the Seventy

My dear brothers and sisters, I am deeply grateful this morning that I can identify in myself at least one virtue commonly associated with those who shall inherit the kingdom. I love to hear the angels sing. Thank God for wonderful Latter-day Saint mothers, for music, for harmony, for service, for leadership. I rejoice that the spirit of personal conviction invoked upon us by President Lewis, spoken of by the President of the Church, prayed for earnestly by each of us in our own closets, may be enjoyed by the least of us, as well as by those who are greatest among us. I pray for that spirit as I express my personal witness this morning.

While the people of Israel were on the plains of Moab, in the last part of the fortieth year of the Exodus, shortly before Moses was taken from them and Joshua led them over Jordan to their promised land, Moses delivered a series of marvelous discourses to the people. He reviewed the experiences and events of the past forty years and admonished and exhorted Israel to obey and appreciate and keep faith with God, who had preserved them as a people through their wanderings in the wilderness from Sinai to Jordan. He reminded them of the magnificence of their blessings at Sinai, repeated for them the Ten Commandments, and said to them:

"And it came to pass, when ye heard the voice out of the midst of the darkness, (for the mountain did burn with fire,) that ye came near unto me, even all the heads of your tribes, and your elders;

"And ye said, Behold, the Lord our God hath shewed us his glory and his greatness, and we have heard his voice out of the midst of the fire: we have seen this day that God doth talk with man, and he liveth." (Deut. 5:23-24.)

After bearing this great testimony, the people pledged themselves to obedience and to loyalty. They said to Moses: "Go thou near, and hear all that the Lord our God shall say; and speak thou unto us all that the Lord our God shall speak unto thee; and we will hear it, and do it."

Moses gave moving response: "And the Lord heard the voice of your words, when ye spake unto me; and the Lord said unto me I have heard the voice of the words of this people, which they have spoken unto thee: they have well said all that they have spoken.

"O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!" (*Ibid.*, 5:27-29.)

The scripture teaches us that on that occasion Moses "stood between the Lord" and the people to show them "the word of the Lord." So President McKay has this day stood between us and the Lord to show us His word. Our hearts have responded. Surely many of us have covenanted anew, as did Israel of old: "Go thou near, and hear all that the Lord our God shall say; and speak thou unto us all that he shall speak unto thee; and we will hear it, and do it." And as we so affirm our faith and sustain our prophet, is there an echo in your heart as there is in mine of the voice of the Lord to Israel?

"O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!"

The Lord wants more from us than these moving expressions of conviction and covenant. He wants more than expressions of gratitude and testimony and commitment. He wants us to fear