

## ELDER DELBERT L. STAPLEY

### *Of the Council of the Twelve Apostles*

My brothers and sisters, as I contemplate the gospel plan of our Heavenly Father for his children as given in the revelations, I am convinced that no sacrifice here in mortality is too great for us to make to attain the riches and glories of eternal life. I am also convinced that by righteous living and devoted service a good measure of this happiness and joy can be experienced here and now in this mortal life.

God our Father, through his Beloved Son, Jesus Christ, has admonished:

"For all who will have a blessing at my hands shall abide the law which was appointed for that blessing, and the conditions thereof, as were instituted from before the foundation of the world." (D&C 132:5.)

This important admonition is reaffirmed in another revelation which is clear to the understanding of all mankind. Said the Lord:

"There is a law, irrevocably decreed in heaven before the foundations of this world, upon which all blessings are predicated—

"And when we obtain any blessing from God, it is by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated." (*Ibid.*, 130:20-21.)

These pronouncements of principle and admonition of the Lord are fundamental requirements for each individual seeking eternal life and are as firm and sure as the pillars of heaven. Every law and ordinance of the gospel is to be complied with to attain a fulness of God's glory. The key to guide us safely to the celestial kingdom is found in this instruction:

"And I now give unto you a commandment to beware concerning yourselves, to give diligent heed to the words of eternal life.

"For you shall live by every word that proceedeth forth from the mouth of God." (*Ibid.*, 84:43-44.)

Three important points are here enumerated: 1. to beware concerning ourselves; 2. to give diligent heed to the words of eternal life; and 3. to live by

every word that proceeds forth from the mouth of God.

The Apostle James warned, "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." (James 2:10.) This statement appears harsh and uncompromising, but it takes full obedience to the whole gospel plan to obtain a fulness of eternal lives and glory; therefore, to break one law is to violate the whole law and makes the violator guilty of all. So often we are deceived by thinking that some divine laws are not too significant and to break them is no deterrent to a fulness of eternal joy. However, the Lord himself has declared:

"But no man is possessor of all things except he be purified and cleansed from all sin.

"And if ye are purified and cleansed from all sin, ye shall ask whatsoever you will in the name of Jesus and it shall be done." (*Ibid.*, 50:28-29.)

Our Omnipotent God is possessor of all things: the universe with its heights and depths and all his works of creation; all truth, knowledge, power, wisdom, and every quality of goodness, love, and charity. Christ inherited these gifts and attributes from his Father and if, as the scriptures teach, we are joint-heirs with Christ, we are then potentially eligible to share with him the full joy and glory of these creations, powers, gifts, and blessings.

Complete obedience and faithfulness obtain full fellowship in the household of faith and, more importantly, merit joint-heirship with Christ our Lord in all that the Father has committed unto him. The Apostle Paul stated that God appointed his Only Begotten Son heir of all things and it pleased the Father that in his Son should a fulness dwell. John the Beloved taught,

"The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand," (John 3:35.)

—which makes Christ the heir and joint-possessor of the fulness of God's kingdoms, works, and glory.

Christ prayed to the Father for his

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disciples to be one even as he and the Father are one. This quality of sharing, so characteristic of the Savior's life, offers to us, if faithful and worthy, every blessing which he has received from his Father.

In the important doctrinal discourse known as the "King Follett Sermon" the Prophet Joseph Smith, referring to those who "shall be heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ," described joint-heirship as inheriting the same power, the same glory, and the same exaltation, until an individual ascends to the station of Godhood and rises to the throne of eternal power, sharing the rewards with all the faithful who have preceded him. A joint-heir legally inherits and shares all equities and gifts in equal interest with all other heirs. Nothing is excluded nor adjusted in value between the participating joint-heirs.

The Apostle Paul expressed to the Roman saints this knowledge and hope: "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. . . ."

"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God;

"And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." (Romans 8:14, 16-18.)

If we are led by the Spirit of God in our lives, we are promised heirship with him and joint-heirship with Christ our Lord in the great estate of God's kingdom and glory. We "suffer with Christ" as we sacrifice the things of the world and yield complete obedience to every truth, principle, and ordinance of the gospel plan. Whatever we contribute in honest tithes and other contributions along with unselfish participation and service to our fellow men to build the kingdom of God on the earth, increases our personal joy and happiness in heirship with Christ the Lord.

We learn in modern scripture that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob abided by the law of God completely and did ". . . none other things than that which they were commanded; and because they did none other things than that which they were commanded, they have entered into their exaltation, according to the

promises, and sit upon thrones, and are not angels but are Gods." (D&C 132:37.) They have inherited, as joint-heirs with Christ, a fulness of God's kingdom, power, and glory.

John the beloved apostle expressed this meaningful teaching and instruction:

"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.

"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

"And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." (1 John 3:1-3.)

As sons and daughters of God, we are required to purify and perfect ourselves in righteousness; otherwise, we cannot be with him nor enjoy eternal lives and glory in his kingdom. To become like God we must possess the powers of Godhood. For such preparation there are important covenants, obligations, and ordinances for mankind to receive beyond the requirement of baptism and the laying on of hands for the reception of the Holy Ghost. Every person is to receive his or her endowments in the house of the Lord which permit them, if faithful and true, to pass by the angels who stand as sentinels guarding the way to eternal glory in the mansions of God. The everlasting covenant of marriage, ordained of God for man and woman, also is to be entered into and the marriage contract sealed eternally by the authority of the Holy Priesthood of God. Otherwise, the highest degree of the celestial kingdom cannot be attained nor Godhood acquired, which exalted condition assures continuation of the lives forever.

President Joseph Fielding Smith has said,

"He who obtains eternal life will become a son of God, a joint-heir with Jesus Christ, and the Father promises him the fullness of the blessings of his kingdom. Eternal life has a deeper meaning than immortality, and all

those who receive it become like God. They will inherit the fulness of the Father's kingdom, all things will be given to them and they become sons and daughters of God." (*Man, His Origin and Destiny*, pp. 530, 540.)

God has said of his sons, "For the power is in them wherein they are agents unto themselves." (D&C 58:28.) Man, as a child of God, partakes of the divine nature of his Father and has within him the power to upgrade himself and by perfecting his own native endowments become like his eternal parent, possessing the same attributes and qualities in their perfection as the Father and the Son.

The Father has promised his sons who receive the Holy Priesthood and faithfully abide by the conditions of its oath and covenant that they are to share in all that which the Father hath. The Father possesses kingdoms, thrones, principalities, powers, dominions, and exaltations. These the faithful will receive of him as heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ. This promise—and the Lord will not fail—is a challenging encouragement for all to do his will. It is natural for a father to share his estate with his children. Our Heavenly Father is no exception. He does so with a binding covenant with his faithful sons. Listen to the words of this promise:

"Therefore, all those who receive the priesthood, receive this oath and covenant of my Father, which he cannot break, neither can it be moved." (*Ibid.*, 84:40.)

The number sharing these great and choice blessings will be limited. It is unfortunate that so few will worthily prepare themselves and enter the strait gate and faithfully follow the narrow way to the end to earn the promising reward of eternal life and its joint-heirship with Christ of all that God the Father possesses.

It seems strange, but people generally fail to understand these gospel teachings and, living as they do in this mortal world, are prone to think and act in terms of mortal existence, which they only partially understand. As a result, they fail to project themselves into that eternal state of life after the death of

the mortal body and to envision their true place in it according to their present manner of living here in mortality. If somehow we could view with clarity the impressive picture of the life hereafter resulting from obeying every gospel principle and ordinance while here, perhaps we would plan our lives in mortality differently and see to it that all our daily actions are motivated by truth and righteousness and good works. Life then would have sincere purpose and would earn rewarding values for the soul.

President Wilford Woodruff made this significant observation:

"Now I sometimes ask myself the question, Do we comprehend these things? Do we comprehend that if we abide the laws of the priesthood we shall become heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ? I realize that our eyes have not seen, our ears have not heard, neither hath it entered into our hearts to conceive the glory that is in store for the faithful." (*Discourses of Wilford Woodruff*, p. 80.)

In the vision given to Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon concerning the degrees of glory, the Lord specified the qualifications of those who belong to the Church of the Firstborn and then said:

"They are they into whose hands the Father has given all things—

"They are they who are priests and kings, who have received of his fulness, and of his glory; . . .

"Wherefore, as it is written, they are gods, even the sons of God—

"Wherefore, all things are theirs, whether life or death, or things present, or things to come, all are theirs and they are Christ's, and Christ is God's." (D&C 76:55-56, 58-59.)

Personally, my brothers and sisters, I am humbly grateful for the privilege and blessing of being a candidate for joint-heirship with Christ, my Lord, in all that the Father has promised. My heart is full of love and gratitude for the Savior and for the sacrifice of his life on the cross to redeem mankind from the fall and the offer he has given all mankind for salvation and exaltation as joint-heirs with him in the kingdom of our God.

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I pray that God will bless us all, my brothers and sisters, with the courage and the faith to live every standard and obey every law and every ordinance of the gospel to merit joint-heirship with Christ our Lord in all things. This I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President David O. McKay:

He to whom we have just listened is Elder Delbert L. Stapley, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve. Elder Eldred G. Smith, Patriarch to the Church, will now address us, and he will be followed by Elder S. Dilworth Young of the First Council of Seventy.

## ELDER ELDRED G. SMITH

### *Patriarch to the Church*

I pray that I will have the guidance of the Lord while I fulfil this assignment. We have heard considerable in these conference sessions (as we usually do in all of our meetings throughout the Church) about the principles and acts and teachings which label us as Latter-day Saints and note to us the requirements to be a Latter-day Saint. Have you ever thought to ask yourself, "Are you a Latter-day Saint because of the things you do not do or because of the things you do?" What makes a Latter-day Saint?

Jesus was asked on one occasion, "Master, which is the great commandment in the law?"

"Jesus said unto him, 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.

"On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." (Matt. 22:36-40.)

These two commandments are inseparable. It is impossible to fulfil the first without fulfilling the second. We cannot love our Father in heaven without loving our fellow men and loving our neighbor.

Latter-day Saints should be known by the things they do, the first of which is to keep these two commandments.

A most important quality in love is forgiveness. If we truly love our neighbor, we will always be willing and ready to forgive. Jesus Christ placed great importance on forgiveness. Teaching the multitude, he gave what is known as the Lord's prayer in which

he said: ". . . forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." Then he added:

"For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you:

"But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." (*Ibid.*, 6:12, 14-15.)

Again the Lord said, "Judge not that ye be not judged.

"For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged. . . ." (*Ibid.*, 7:1-2.)

How can we as mortals fully judge another? We do not know how much knowledge another has received, for he receives knowledge through the Spirit. We cannot measure that which another receives through the Spirit.

Elder Matthew Cowley once said:

"We ought to say in our hearts let God judge between me and thee, but as for me I will forgive." That means to say in our hearts, not just lip service. We must be willing to forgive and forget. Most of us have a natural ability to forget, especially the things we are supposed to remember. Most of us work diligently to increase our power to remember. However, in forgiving, we should increase or attempt to increase and work diligently to increase our power to forget.

Peter asked Jesus: "Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?"

"Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, until seventy times seven." (Matt. 18:21-22.)

The Lord also said:

"But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you." (*Ibid.*, 5:44.)