

work of the Lord, it is a very vital work that needs to be done, and I testify that this is true, that the gospel is true, and that the Lord will help us if we will be diligent to do what he wants us to do.

I pray the blessings of the Lord upon all who diligently seek after their dead and who are diligent in all of the responsibilities given to them in the

Church, and I do so in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

**President David O. McKay:**

Elder Eldred G. Smith, Presiding Patriarch of the Church, has just concluded speaking, Elder Thorpe B. Isaacson, Assistant to the Twelve, will now address us.

## ELDER THORPE B. ISAACSON

*Assistant to the Council of the Twelve Apostles*

President McKay, President Moyle, President Brown, my dear brothers and sisters: This is a great sight. Someone has said he wishes that every one of you could stand here for a moment. It would make a better Christian out of you. I sincerely pray that what I shall say will be helpful to someone, especially those who may have troubles, or those who may have problems, or who may have sorrows. There are so many troubles and so much sorrow in the world.

This is a great chorus today. We have surely enjoyed it, coming from a great institution [Ricks College]. I am sure we all miss Brother Stapley, Brother Morris, Brother Hunter, Brother McConkie, and Brother Hanks, but they know that they have our prayers.

Fasting and prayer and the contribution of an honest fast offering have given us some concern recently. I desire to speak on those two very closely related subjects today.

Fasting consists in the complete abstinence from food and drink. Fasting, with prayer, its companion, is designed to increase spirituality, to foster a spirit of devotion and a love of God, to increase faith in the hearts of men, thus assuring divine favor; to encourage humility and contrition of soul; to aid in the acquirement of righteousness; and to teach man his nothingness and dependence upon God; and to hasten along the path of salvation those who properly comply with this law of fasting.

There are many specific reasons for fasting recorded in the scriptures. It is a general obligation imposed by revelation upon Church members. It is in

itself a form of true worship of God. In 1832 the Lord gave a revelation to the Prophet Joseph, when he stated: ". . . I give unto you a commandment that ye continue in prayer and fasting from this time forth." (D&C 88:76.)

But this was not the beginning of fasting. The law is as old as man. In 1932 President Joseph Fielding Smith stated: ". . . if we had the records before us, we would discover that fasting was introduced by revelation to man in the dawn of history." (*Deseret News*, August 13, 1932, p. 5.)

The late President Joseph F. Smith, commenting on the law of fasting and the payment of an honest fast offering, stated: "It is, therefore, incumbent upon every Latter-day Saint to give to his bishop, on fast day, the food [or its equivalent], that he and his family would consume for the day, that it may be given to the poor for their benefit and blessing; or, in lieu of the food, that its equivalent [value or] amount, or if the person is wealthy, a liberal donation in money, be so reserved and dedicated to the poor." (*Gospel Doctrine*, p. 243.)

Is it proper to fast for the sick? I quote from 2 Samuel: "David therefore besought God for the child; and David fasted, and went in, and lay all night upon the earth." (2 Samuel 12:16.)

Is it proper to fast for a special blessing? I wonder if everyone of us doesn't need a special blessing? If I may be forgiven right here, I think I should like to tell you that Thursday morning in the temple in an upper room, all of the General Authorities met there in fasting and prayer. President McKay talked to

Saturday, April 7

us and gave us such assurance and such comfort that will carry us through this conference. Then as he stood there, he talked about Jesus and he stated: "Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church, and he is real." I wish you could have felt that. I am sure you must feel it here today, because it is here.

Then President Moyle talked to us. He offered the opening prayer, and we were all deeply touched. Fasting for a special blessing? Yes, we were fasting for a special blessing. Then as President Moyle spoke to us a little later, he said he had the feeling and the assurance that we would be comforted as we came here to speak, and that we would have the assurance that everything would be done well. Fasting for a special blessing? Yes.

Then President Brown talked to us and reassured us that as we come here to this pulpit, he would bow his head and ask God to bless us. Fasting for a special blessing? Yes.

May I quote from Mosiah in the Book of Mormon: "And he caused that the priests should assemble themselves together; and they began to fast, and to pray to the Lord their God that he would open the mouth of Alma, that he might speak, and also that his limbs might receive their strength—the the eyes of the people might be opened to see and know of the goodness and glory of God.

"And it came to pass after they had fasted and prayed for the space of two days and two nights, the limbs of Alma received their strength, and he stood up and began to speak unto them, bidding them to be of good comfort:" (Mosiah 27:22-23.)

Is it proper to fast in order to gain a testimony? I refer to Alma again: "Behold, I say unto you they are made known unto me by the Holy Spirit of God. Behold, I have fasted and prayed many days that I might know these things of myself. And now I do know of myself that they are true; for the Lord God hath made them manifest unto me by his Holy Spirit; and this is the spirit of revelation which is in me." (Alma 5:46.)

Is it proper to fast that we may know and speak the will of the Lord? Again

from Alma: "But this is not all; they had given themselves to much prayer, and fasting; therefore they had the spirit of prophecy, and the spirit of revelation, and when they taught, they taught with power and authority of God." (*Ibid.*, 17:3.)

In Third Nephi we read: "And it came to pass that as the disciples of Jesus were journeying and were preaching the things which they had both heard and seen, and were baptizing in the name of Jesus, it came to pass that the disciples were gathered together and were united in mighty prayer and fasting." (3 Nephi 27:1.)

It is said of Moses, while he was with God at Mt. Sinai: "And he was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights; he did neither eat bread, nor drink water. And he wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the ten commandments." (Exodus 34:28.)

Is it appropriate to fast when in mourning or in sorrow? Again, from Alma in the Book of Mormon: "And thus there was a tremendous battle; yea, even such an one as never had been known among all the people in the land from the time Lehi left Jerusalem; yea, and tens of thousands of the Lamanites were slain and scattered abroad.

"Yea, the cry of widows mourning for their husbands, and also of fathers mourning for their sons, and the daughter for the brother, yea, the brother for the father; and thus the cry of mourning was heard among all of them, mourning for their kindred who had been slain.

"And now surely this was a sorrowful day; yea, a time of solemnity, and a time of much fasting and prayer.

"Now their dead were not numbered because of the greatness of their numbers; neither were the dead of the Nephites numbered—but it came to pass after they had buried their dead, and also after the days of fasting, and mourning, and prayer, . . . there began to be continual peace throughout all the land." (Alma 28:2, 5-6 and 30:2.)

Is it proper to fast as a means of purifying one's soul? In the book of Helaman we read: "Nevertheless they did fast and pray oft, and did wax stronger and stronger in their humility,

and firmer and firmer in the faith of Christ, unto the filling their souls with joy and consolation, yea, even to the purifying and the sanctification of their hearts, which sanctification cometh because of their yielding their hearts unto God." (Helaman 3:35.)

Amaleki wrote to his brethren as recorded in the book of Omni: "And now, my beloved brethren, I would that ye should come unto Christ, who is the Holy One of Israel, and partake of his salvation, and the power of his redemption. Yea, come unto him, and offer your whole souls as an offering unto him, and continue in fasting and praying, and endure to the end; and as the Lord liveth ye will be saved." (Omni 26.)

Our Latter-day Saint temples are houses of fasting. When the Lord gave instructions for the building of the Kirtland Temple, he said: "And let the lower part of the inner court be dedicated unto me for your sacrament offerings, and for your preaching, and your fasting, and your praying, and the offering up of your most holy desires unto me, saith your Lord." (D&C 95:16.)

Listen to these words of the Lord to the Prophet Joseph Smith in 1832, and again repeated by the Prophet when he dedicated the Kirtland Temple in 1836: "Organize yourselves; prepare every needful thing; and establish a house, even a house of prayer, a house of fasting, a house of faith, a house of learning, a house of glory, a house of order, a house of God." (*Ibid.*, 88:119; 109:8.)

Again, turn to the late President Joseph F. Smith and eagerly read his words on fasting, prayer, and fast offerings, and the great blessing attendant upon obedience to this law in all of its ramifications: "It would be a simple matter for people to comply with this requirement to abstain from food and drink one day each month, and to dedicate what would be consumed during that day to the poor, and as much more as they pleased. The Lord has instituted this law; it is simple and perfect, based on reason and intelligence, and would not only prove a solution to the question of providing for the poor, but

it would result in good to those who observe the law. It would call attention to the sin of over-eating, place the body in subjection to the spirit, and so promote communion with the Holy Ghost, and insure a spiritual strength and power which the people of the nation so greatly need. (That was given over fifty years ago.)

"As fasting should always be accompanied by prayer, this law would bring the people nearer to God, and divert their minds once a month at least, from the mad rush of worldly affairs and cause them to be brought into immediate contact with practical, pure and undefiled religion—to visit the fatherless and the widow, and keep themselves unspotted from the sins of the world. For religion is not in believing the commandments only, it is in doing them. I would to God that men would not only believe Jesus Christ and his teachings, but would broaden their belief to the extent of doing the things that are taught by them, and doing them in spirit." (*Gospel Doctrine*, pp. 237-238.)

If Latter-day Saints faithfully fulfilled the law of the fast, and if they prayed in connection therewith as commanded and paid an honest fast offering, they would be blessed more abundantly—both temporally and spiritually—and there would be ample funds in the Church to provide for all our poor, as the Lord has commanded. He has given us the way, but sad as it may seem, we are negligent about the payment of an honest fast offering.

Many of us may sometimes wonder why blessings are seemingly withheld from us. It could well be that the laws on which those blessings are predicated have escaped our attention or that we underestimate the necessity for obedience to those laws. It may well be, therefore, that many of our desired blessings are never realized because we do not more faithfully obey the law of fasting and prayer and contribute for the blessing of the poor the full value of the meals not consumed on Fast Day.

President McKay has summed up the great blessing attendant upon full obedience to the law of the fast when he said: "All the principles associated with fasting seem to point to the fact that

Saturday, April 7

Second Day

it produces: (1) physical benefits, (2) intellectual activity, (3) spiritual strength."

In tonight's *Church Section of the Deseret News-Salt Lake Telegram*—I just saw it at noon today—there is another very wonderful article on the law of the fast by President McKay.

Now, what of the blessings accruing to the poor through the payment of the fast offering each month by all members of the Church? Of course, only those grateful souls who receive such assistance could possibly describe those blessings. How would the man describe hunger who knows nothing of its pangs? Or cold when he has always been warm? Or illness when he has always had good health?

Fasting, prayer, and the contributing of the full amount of fast offering are the Lord's divine prescription for many of the blessings which everyone of us needs in one way or another or at one time or another. In order that this great Church may do its part in taking care of the poor, that both the giver and the receiver may be blessed as the Lord desires, we commend to you more serious consideration of the law of fasting, and then prayer as its companion, and then the payment of an honest fast offering in keeping with the value of the meals not consumed on that day.

About the turn of the century one of America's most brilliant, prominent attorneys had an occasion to defend a helpless person, and he used this very beautiful allegory: "When God decided to make man, he called the three angels who waited on his throne—Justice, Truth, and Mercy—and said: 'Shall we make Man?' Justice replied: 'Make him not, O God, for he will trample on thy laws.' Truth replied, 'Make him not, O God, for he will pollute thy sanctuaries.' Mercy, kneeling, looked through her

tears, and said, 'Make him, O God, and I will watch over him all the days of his life.'

"So God decided to make man and said, 'Thou art a child of Mercy; go out and live with thy brothers.'"

I know that God is our Father. I know that God lives. I know that Jesus is our beloved Savior. I felt it strongly when President McKay said the other day, "Jesus is real." I am grateful to you brethren whom we meet each week. What strength you give us as we come to you, most of the time in fasting. I am grateful that I learned a few days ago, rather accidentally, that my wife fasts for me every Sunday morning as I come to you. For that I am grateful.

May we live the law of the fast, and you cannot think of fasting without praying. God bless us that we may take seriously fasting, praying, and the payment of an honest fast offering as the Lord has divinely ruled it so, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

#### President David O. McKay:

Elder Thorpe B. Isaacson, Assistant to the Twelve, has just addressed us. The Ricks College Choir and Congregation will now sing, "How Firm A Foundation," conducted by Richard W. Robison. After the singing, Elder Gordon B. Hinckley will speak to us.

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The Ricks College Choir joined with the Congregation in singing the hymn, "How Firm A Foundation."

#### President David O. McKay:

Elder Gordon B. Hinckley of the Council of the Twelve will now address us. He will be followed by Elder Howard W. Hunter.

### ELDER GORDON B. HINCKLEY

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

My brethren and sisters, I rejoice with you in the attendance here of bishops and presidents of stakes from foreign lands. This is a great and significant day in the history of the Church, and

foretells, I think, the time when these general conferences shall become in reality great parliaments of men gathered from over the world, endowed with the Holy Priesthood, whose only desire