

## ELDER ALVIN R. DYER

*Assistant to the Council of the Twelve Apostles*

We learn from past history the harsh lessons that have come to those that lack faith and obedience which have brought disaster upon themselves and their people. At the end of Israel's sojourn in the desert, where because of disobedience and lack of faith, wherein all of the aged, except three who had been delivered through Godly intervention from Egypt, had virtually been wasted, making way for a new generation to fulfil the covenant of the Lord in occupying the land of their inheritance, Moses, the great lawgiver and prophet, called all of the new hosts of Israel together at the gateway to the Promised Land, in a place known as Kadesh-barnea the southerly entrance to Canaan, and there he recounted unto the children of Israel all the experiences that had happened to their parents and the great things which the Lord God had done for them. Here he repeated that which had been given their faithless forebears and the reason for their downfall. I call your attention to his initial words as he spoke to them:

"And it came to pass in the fortieth year, in the eleventh month, on the first day of the month, that Moses spake unto the children of Israel, according unto all that the Lord had given him in commandment unto them; . . .

"These be the words which Moses spake unto all Israel on this side of Jordan in the wilderness, . . .

"(There are eleven days' journey from Horeb by the way of mount Seir unto Kadesh-barnea.)" (Deut. 1:3, 1-2.)

Horeb, also known as Mount Sinai, is where Moses communicated personally with God. Mount Seir is the range of mountains bordering the desert which the camel trains followed along to avoid the heat of the desert. At Kadesh-barnea, the gateway to the Promised Land, Moses reminded the children of Israel that the distance from Sinai to the fulfilment of their covenant was but an eleven-day journey. I read in the paper recently where this same distance was covered in three hours by automobile, yet it took Israel forty years to travel that distance.

Carlyle has said this, "For a man to have lived and died, who might have been wise and was not—this I call a tragedy."

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints stands poised on the threshold of its greatest hour. Regardless of the many accomplishments of the past, and there have been many, its greatest challenge is ahead. We must believe this and adjust to it.

In one of the more often referred to parables of Jesus, concerning the rich young ruler who came to him inquiring as to how he could find favor and stand approved, the Master told him to keep all the laws. This meant keeping the Sabbath day holy, the payment of offerings in the temple, the honoring of parents, and strict obedience to the laws as were imposed at that time. "But all these," said the young man, "have I kept from my youth. What lack I yet?"

From this incident we may strike a parallel of some in the Church today who keep the commandments, and who, like this rich young man, feel to stand approved. But in the true sense of Christian endeavor, when we have schooled ourselves to obey the will of God, we will have but reached the doorway of greatness. To this young ruler, who thought that he had done all that was needed, Jesus said,

"... go ... sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, . . . and follow me." (Mark 10:21.)

The young man erroneously thought that Jesus referred to the distribution of his earthly riches only; this would soon be used up in following the divine injunction. Actually he was being given the challenge of service. It is not enough to keep the commandments of commission only, as Jesus clarified, for if one is to find the real meaning of a successful life and to understand fully the message of Jesus Christ, there must be service given unto others.

The Apostle James, the apostle of realism, has said this: "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." (James 4:17.)

Friday, October 5

First Day

My associations and contacts within the Church, having served seven of my last eight years in the mission fields, and now again in the stakes of the Church, confirm to me the great faith and devotion that exists among our people. It is true, nevertheless, that many do not respond to the challenge of service. Unto these primarily and unto all members generally, I refer to the divine obligations placed upon us as members of the true Church of Jesus Christ restored in these latter-days. There are three principal areas of challenge by which every member may test his own faith and conviction. These are given in the revelations as contained in section 45 and section 128 of the Doctrine and Covenants, and perhaps never before, my brothers and sisters, in God's dealings with his children, is there so much expected of so few!

*First:* As members, by our conduct and by obedience to the commandments of God, we should endeavor to serve the Lord that we may make the Church strong from within, that it can be a standard unto God's children and a light unto the world.

There can be no greater aspect to righteous living than to feel the regenerative force of striving to do better. There is no member listening here this morning, or over the air waves, who has come anywhere near in accomplishing what he actually is capable of; none have reached their full potential of leadership in the Church. This means that throughout the Church in all of the facets of its organization, members, teachers, officers, bishoprics, high councils, stake presidencies, and others, the challenge is before us today to step up to leadership, to step up to real membership in God's kingdom. Two great revelations from the Lord emphasize this to us.

"Wherefore, now let every man learn his duty, and to act in the office in which he is appointed, in all diligence." (D&C 107:99.)

And the second, which is companionable: "Verily I say, men should be anxiously engaged in a good cause, and do many things of their own free will, and bring to pass much righteousness;

"For the power is in them, wherein they are agents unto themselves. And inasmuch as men do good they shall in no-

wise lose their reward. (*Ibid.*, 58:27-28.)

The second area of divine commitment is that of missionary work, to listen to the voice of a prophet of God, that every member be a missionary, and as the children of God, there can be no apathy toward this great challenge. Many there are who say, "We want to help, but we just don't know how to do it." Let me tell you of an experience that might indicate how through friendliness, through being a good neighbor, through being honest in our dealings with our fellow men, and simply by being a Latter-day Saint in harmony with its teachings, we can bear an influence on the minds of people in this sense as well as in many other ways be a missionary.

Under the instruction of President McKay, during my term in Europe, I had the experience of going to Iceland and there, after meeting all of the leading civic authorities that we thought it important to meet, I went into the office of the mayor of Reykjavik, Mayor Hallgrímsson, and he treated us with such courtesy and with such friendliness that I wondered why a man that far off would be so friendly to us in our desire to find out if it would be possible that missionaries could be sent into that land. He said, "We shall welcome your missionaries," and offered personally to locate a place for us to hold meetings should we come. I finally asked him why he was so friendly. He said, "The story is simple. Years ago my uncle went to America. He had been converted by two missionaries on the old Western Island, 150 kilometers off the mainland of Iceland"—which is now referred to by many as "Mormon Island," where some 150 Icelandic people were baptized into the Church, and many of whom emigrated to America; some settled in Spanish Fork and in Springville. Mayor Hallgrímsson came to America, unannounced, not as a mayor but as an individual, primarily to visit an uncle who was among those converted. He met and lived with the Mormon people in that area. He observed their manner and way of life, and he told of finally coming to Salt Lake City where he met a man who managed a motel, and he said that this man went out of his way to help him.

He recalled of him that he was a high priest in one of the quorums and said, "If these are Latter-day Saints, who so befriended me, why would I not be friendly to you?" And I have often wondered if that man who owned this motel really knew the good that he did that day when he befriended Mayor Hallgrímsson of Reykjavik, Iceland.

Now there are people coming into our midst constantly; men of the priesthood go away on business trips, and if they are concerned with the responsibility of projecting the message of the gospel that we have and assist in establishing a true image in the eyes of the people of the world of the Latter-day Saint, here is the simple way to be a missionary, by the downright effort of being a Latter-day Saint no matter where we are or in whose presence we find ourselves.

The third area in which we can assist is in seeking after our kindred dead by establishing the family genealogical organization for this purpose. As I go throughout the stakes of Zion, I see the need of a greater number of marriages in the temple of our young people. Probably because the family failed to have this kind of organization to seek after their kindred dead, the image has not been made in the minds of their sons and daughters of the necessity for temple marriage. If, on the other hand, there were frequent evidence in the home of the importance of temple work through genealogical research and attendance at the temple, when the time comes for marriage of young people in the home, their hearts and minds would be focused on temple marriage.

In conclusion I want to tell of a remarkable personal experience that happened just recently. I learned indirectly of a young girl in Massachusetts who had been keeping a very remarkable genealogical record. I learned that this record was on the Dyer family. By contacting her I learned that she was not a member of the Dyer family, she was not a member of our Church, and yet she has done an excellent research on more than 20,000 members of the Dyer family. I have written to her and obtained this record which is in three volumes and which has been micro-filmed by our Genealogical Association and is available to all in the Church

who are interested in this family line. I endeavored to learn why she did this. In a letter in reply to my inquiry, these are her words:

"The Dyer family is far more than a hobby. Please don't think it foolish, Mr. Dyer, but I feel that somehow it was God's will that I do this work. My whole life belongs to these people." This girl is seventeen years old. She began researching at the age of fourteen. She is not a member of the Church, and she is not a member of our family, but the spirit of Elijah has been upon her. We have learned where similar experiences have been had in many of the families of the Church, which indicates the power that is in the work of seeking for our kindred dead.

I bear testimony of the opportunity that is ours as members of the Church to answer the challenge in working through these three areas of activity within the Church. *First*, to build the Church and make it strong so that when those who are converted come into it, they feel the power and the strength of it; and *secondly*, that as missionaries we shall assist in every way to proclaim the truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ unto the world; and *thirdly*, in fulfilling the commandments of God, that we seek after our kindred dead. I bear this record and urge that as a people we meet these great challenges, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

#### President David O. McKay:

He to whom you have just listened is Elder Alvin R. Dyer, Assistant to the Twelve.

The Chorus and Congregation will now join in singing, "We Thank Thee, O God, For a Prophet," conducted by Sister Florence Jepperson Madsen. After the singing, Elder Ezra Taft Benson of the Council of the Twelve will speak to us.

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The congregation and the Singing Mothers Chorus joined in singing the hymn, "We Thank Thee, O God, For A Prophet."