

ELDER ELDRED G. SMITH

Patriarch to the Church

I pray for the blessings of the Lord while I take this time, that the prayers that have been offered in behalf of those who take this time will be answered in my behalf.

The gospel of Jesus Christ is the way to salvation and exaltation or the way to perfection. There are many steps to perfection. Many are mentioned by the speakers of this conference. The fulfilling of the ordinances are vitally important.

There is another thought I would like to refer to today. There are many good lessons in the story of Job. I find one I would like to refer to here today. It reveals a certain principle I think is vitally important and helpful to many. "Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them.

"And the Lord said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it.

"And the Lord said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?

"Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought?

"Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land.

"But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face.

"And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord." (Job 1:6-12.)

As a result of this Job lost all his wealth and his possessions. Yet Job did not curse God. He remained faithful and true. He said, ". . . Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed

be the name of the Lord." (*Ibid.*, 1:21.)

"Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them to present himself before the Lord.

"And the Lord said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? and still he holdeth fast his integrity, although thou movedst me against him, to destroy him without cause." (*Ibid.*, 2:1, 3.)

Who has not felt at one time or another that the Lord has turned against him without cause? We all come to the occasion at times I think when we feel as if all has been turned loose against us. We've had difficulties and trials and sicknesses.

Then again, "And Satan answered the Lord, and said, Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life.

"But put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face.

"And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold, he is in thine hand; but save his life." (*Ibid.*, 2:4-6.)

In other words, now Satan could go forth and do anything he wanted to with Job, except he could not take his life. Again, in spite of all the physical torment Job was subjected to, he proved faithful, declaring his testimony to the reality of the resurrection. He declared the immortal words of testimony, "For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth:

"And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: . . ." (*Ibid.*, 19:25-26.)

In the end God accepted Job and returned to him many-fold all his possessions in rich abundance.

Going back to the story now to get the principle I was looking for, we note that Satan had power to do only what God had permitted him to do. Satan did not win that war in heaven. He

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was cast out of heaven to do what the Lord wanted him to do, to test and try and torment man. Satan, then, has power on this earth only as the Lord permits and as we yield to his temptations.

Do you think a just God would permit Satan to try us beyond our power to resist? Then the Lord will always give us power to resist if we will remain true and faithful to the end and seek the Lord and his guidance in all the trials and difficulties, even though we may think they are unjust. Nearly all of us go through some experience in this life of sickness, disease, trouble, financial difficulties, many even born with difficulties and handicaps—not because of any cause on their part as we see it, but because that is the part that the Lord wants us to go through as a trial and temptation to see if we will prove faithful to the end, in spite of these conditions, which are as far as we are concerned without cause.

Why, then, did the Lord first say to Satan "only upon himself put not forth thine hand." The Lord knew the strength of Job, so step by step Job was strengthened and given more power. Had the Lord said in the beginning, "All right, Lucifer, you may have full power over Job, you may do anything you wish with him, except you cannot take his life." I doubt if Job would have had the strength to resist all he went through and still remain faithful. But in the wisdom of the Lord he was just given part of it at a time. By so doing he was strengthened, in the first step sufficiently to take the next step. And then having proved faithful to the end the Lord restored to him his blessings many-fold, thus having become in that degree perfect.

No one is exempt from the trials and temptations of Satan. Even the Savior himself, after he had fasted for forty days, physically weakened beyond the strength of any normal mortal! Then came Satan unto the Savior trying and tempting, first with his weakest point at the time of hunger, saying ". . . If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." (Matt. 4:3.) The test of the appetite, an appeal for relief of suffering and pain! Then came he with the test of power and

wealth. The Lord, knowing who he was and having strength said, "Get thee hence, Satan." (*Ibid.*, 4:10.)

If the Lord and Savior was not spared of the trials and temptations of Satan, then neither are we, and we too must prove ourselves in everything the Lord wants to release Satan for, to test us, to try us, that we may thereby also become perfect. Remember, however, that the Lord will always give us power to resist any temptation which comes upon us if we will but accept the guidance of the Lord and accept his inspiration and call upon him for help. Even though at times we may yield to temptation, the Lord still doesn't close the door behind us. There is still the door of repentance open and a way to come back. The Lord is so merciful.

For us to become perfect, in addition to performing the ordinances of the gospel, we must also have the strength that the Lord might say to Satan in reference to us, or in reference to you, "All right, Lucifer, you may have full control except you cannot take his life." If we are to become perfect, we must be able to withstand that test just as Job did, somewhere along the line of life. So I would say to all, be patient, be faithful, call upon the Lord and seek his help, and he will not withhold his blessings from us. In the end, all may stand as Job and declare, "I know that God lives," as I declare that God lives and answers prayer, that he rules over his people here on the earth. He is truly our Father and Ruler, a Kind and Loving Father, and has restored to us in this the latter day the gospel of Jesus Christ whereby, if we shall accept his gospel, accept of him and accept of the ordinances pertaining thereto, we may again return to him exalted in his kingdom.

I wish to add my testimony to those that have been borne in this conference, that I too know that God lives, and that he answers prayers, and that the gospel of Jesus Christ has been restored in this the last dispensation through his Prophet Joseph Smith, and that our present prophet and president, David O. McKay, is likewise a prophet of God, directing his work here upon the earth. And so I testify in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.