

Monday, April 5, 1965

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several organs of the human body. As we read in 1 Corinthians, chapter 12,

"Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.

"And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.

"Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles?

"Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret?

"But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way." (Vs. 27-31.)

All are essential to the whole, and none is justified in saying to the other, ". . . I have no need of thee." (1 Cor. 12:21.)

Apostasy and Disintegration

Shortly after the crucifixion of the Christ, the leaven of apostasy and disintegration began to work. The evidence of spiritual decline was observed by the Apostles, and they predicted even a greater falling away, which, in fact, progressed through the early period of Christian persecutions from Nero to Diocletian.

"But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.

"And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.

"And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their

damnation slumbereth not." (2 Peter 2:1-3.)

A widespread apostasy from the Church was followed by an apostasy of the Church. This apostasy, which was repeatedly predicted, is attested by history, both sacred and profane. This fact is the justification for the claim of the Latter-day Saints that there has been a restoration of the gospel. This Church, then, is Christianity restored, together with the principles and ordinances, the priesthood and authority, as taught and exercised in the primitive Church. This is our declaration, my brothers and sisters. This is our warning voice to all men, that the God of heaven has set up his kingdom, which, as predicted by Daniel,

". . . shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, . . . and it shall stand for ever." (Dan. 2:44.)

The Restoration

Now, to this message we humbly testify this morning to our members and to all our friends who are listening. We ask you in humility to hearken to the voices of the prophets of old and to the modern prophets and to the revelations of God and bring your lives into harmony with his laws in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President N. Eldon Tanner

He to whom we have just listened is President Hugh B. Brown, first counselor in the First Presidency of the Church.

Elder Thomas S. Monson of the Council of the Twelve will be our next speaker, and he will be followed by Bishop John H. Vandenberg of the Presiding Bishopric.

ELDER THOMAS S. MONSON

Of the Council of the Twelve Apostles

When Jesus walked and taught among men, he spoke in language easily understood. Whether he was journeying along the dusty way from Perea to Jerusalem, addressing the multitude on

the shore of the Sea of Galilee, or pausing beside Jacob's well in Samaria, he taught in parables. Jesus spoke frequently of having hearts that could know and feel, ears that were capable

of hearing, and eyes that could truly see. Today as I gaze into this vast throng and partake of the spirit of this conference, I give thanks to our Heavenly Father for eyes that see, ears that hear, and a heart that knows and feels.

"I am blind"

One not so blessed with the gift of sight was the blind man who, in an effort to sustain himself, sat day in and day out in his usual place at the edge of a busy sidewalk in one of our large cities. In one hand he held an old felt hat filled with pencils. A tin cup was extended by the other hand. His simple appeal to the passer-by was brief and to the point. It had a certain finality to it, almost a tone of despair. The message was contained on the small placard held about his neck by a string. It read, "I am blind."

"And it is springtime"

Most did not stop to buy his pencils or to place a coin in the tin cup. They were too busy, too occupied by their own problems. That tin cup never had been filled nor even half-filled. Then one beautiful spring day a man paused and with a marking crayon added several new words to the shabby sign. No longer did it read, "I am blind." Now the message read, "It is springtime, and I am blind." The compassion of human feelings could not now be restrained. The cup was soon filled to overflowing. Perhaps the busy people were touched by Charles L. O'Donnell's exclamation:

"I have never been able to school my eyes against young April's blue surprise." To each, however, the coins were a poor substitute for the desired ability to actually restore sight.

The Gift of Sight

Did you happen to notice the United Press International dispatch from Sicily which appeared some weeks ago in our local newspapers? "Five brothers blind since birth got their first dim glimpse of the world Tuesday and cried with delight." The Rotolo brothers were operated on for removal of con-

genital cataracts. As the surgeon, Luigi Picardo, carefully removed their bandages in a darkened room, how he hoped and prayed that his work had been successful.

The first to speak was four-year-old Calogero, the youngest of the brothers. "The necktie," he cried, tugging at the surgeon's tie. "I can see, I can see." The removal of the bandages from the others' eyes was accompanied by shouts of joy. The boys' father could hardly believe it when he held thirteen-year-old Carmelo's face in his hands and tenderly asked, "Can you see, my son? Can you really see?"

By now, Mother Rotolo, the doctors, everyone was weeping for joy. Dr. Picardo replaced the bandages and slowly walked out of the room. Then he sat down on a bench and wept. "Never," he said, "have I felt such extraordinary serenity; such happiness." Thus a skilled surgeon actually brought the gift of sight to five little boys who had been blind.

Each of us knows those who do not have sight. We also know many others who walk in darkness at noonday. Those in this latter group may never carry the usual white cane and carefully make their way to the sound of its familiar tap, tap, tap. They may not have a faithful seeing-eye dog by their side nor carry a sign about their neck which reads, "I am blind." But blind they surely are. Some have been blinded by anger, others by indifference, by revenge, by hate, by prejudice, by ignorance, by neglect of precious opportunities.

Of such the Lord said, "... their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them." (Matt. 13:15.)

Well might such lament, "It is springtime, the gospel of Jesus Christ has been restored, and yet I am blind." Some like the friend of Philip of old call out, "How can I find my way but some man guide me." (See Acts 8:31.) Others are too shy, too fearful to ask for needed help that their precious vision might be restored.

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The case of the Rotolo brothers made national headlines. In literally thousands of other instances, the transition from the dense darkness of despair to glorious spiritual light is accomplished without fanfare, without publicity, without the recognition of the world.

From Darkness into Light

In Price, Utah, seventy-six men together with their wives and children walked from darkness into the light of understanding and truth and journeyed to the Manti Temple, there to participate for the first time in sacred, holy ordinances. More than three hundred such men, women, and children came to the Salt Lake Temple from Denver, Colorado, for the same purpose. In Rigby, Idaho; Cardston, Alberta; and numerous other areas the account has been the same. Hundreds are seeing springtime for the first time.

Let me share with you two typical comments from those who were once blind but who now walk in light and truth, thanks to faithful home teachers and a program sometimes called "Project Temple," which is planned and instituted to motivate brethren long inactive.

Lives Enlightened by Truth

From a family in central Utah: "Before our newly found church activity, we thought we were living average, normal lives. We had our problems, our ups and downs. But there was one thing missing in our home and that was a togetherness that only the priesthood can bring. Now we have that blessing, and our love for one another is greater than we ever dreamed it could be. We are truly happy."

From another family: "We thank our Heavenly Father every night for our bishopric and our home teachers who have helped us to achieve blessings that seemed so far away, so impossible to obtain. We now have a peace of mind beyond description."

Those who have felt the touch of the Master's hand somehow cannot explain the change which comes into their lives. There is a desire to live better, to serve faithfully, to walk

humbly, and to live more like the Savior. Having received their spiritual eyesight and glimpsed the promises of eternity, they echo the words of the blind man to whom Jesus restored sight, ". . . one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see." (John 9:25.)

How can we account for these miracles? Why the upsurge of activity in men long dormant? The poet speaking of death wrote, "God touched him, and he slept." I say, speaking of this new birth, "God touched them, and they awakened."

Two fundamental reasons largely account for these changes of attitudes, of habits, of actions.

First, men have been shown their eternal possibilities and have made the decision to achieve them. Men cannot really long rest content with mediocrity once they see excellence is within their reach.

Second, other men and women and, yes, young people have followed the admonition of the Savior and have loved their neighbors as themselves and helped to bring their neighbors' dreams to fulfillment and their ambitions to realization.

The Principle of Love

The catalyst in this process has been the principle of love, described by President David O. McKay as the noblest attribute of the human soul.

Frequently the love of a child can stir a man's heart to action and bring a change into his life. Last winter in a large department store, a little boy walked hand in hand with his mother and father to the toy department to see Santa Claus. The parents had not been getting along. As the little one climbed upon his knee, old Santa cheerfully asked, "What do you want for Christmas?" Santa had no ready answer when the lad replied, "Just for my daddy to love my mommy like he used to." Could a father hear such a plea and not be moved? Could a mother? ". . . a little child shall lead them." (Isa. 11:6.)

Often it is the love of a patient, forgiving, and understanding wife that awakens within a man the desire to

live a better life, to be the husband and the father he knows he should and can be.

Recently I had the privilege of performing a sealing ceremony in the temple for a family I have known for many years. The scene was one of tranquility. The cares of the outside world had been temporarily discarded. The quiet and peace of the house of the Lord filled the heart of each one assembled in the room. I knew that this particular couple had been married for eighteen years and had never before been to the temple. I turned to the husband and asked, "Jack, who is responsible for bringing this glorious event to fulfilment?" He smiled and silently pointed to his precious wife who sat by his side. I seemed to sense that this lovely woman was never more proud of her husband than at that particular moment. Jack then directed my attention to one of the brethren serving as witness to this ceremony and likewise acknowledged the great influence for good that he had had upon his life. As the three beautiful children were sealed to their parents, I could not help noticing the tears which welled up in the eyes of the teenage daughter and then coursed in little rivulets down her cheeks, finally tumbling upon clasped hands. These were sacred tears, tears of supreme joy, tears that expressed silent but eloquent gratitude of a tender heart too full to speak.

I found myself thinking, "Oh, that such men and women would not wait eighteen long years to receive this priceless blessing."

Yet there are those who feel that their own neglect, their bad habits, their shunning of the righteous life have caused God to abandon them, that he will no longer hear their pleadings, nor see their plight, nor feel compassion towards them. Such feelings are not compatible with the word of the Lord. He said:

The Wayward Son Returned

"... A certain man had two sons:

"And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living.

"And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.

"And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want.

"And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.

"And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him.

"And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!

"I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee,

"And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.

"And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.

"And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.

"But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet:

"And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry:

"For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. . . ." (Luke 15:11-24.)

The Weak Become Strong

Should there be anyone who feels he is too weak to change the onward and downward moving course of his life or should there be those who fail to resolve to do better because of that greatest of fears, the fear of failure, there is no more comforting assurance to be had than the words of the Lord: "... my grace is sufficient for all men that humble themselves before me; for

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if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them." (Ether 12:27.)

There are men and women everywhere who would be made better by our helping hand. They may be our neighbors, our friends, our business associates. All are our brothers and sisters.

The prayer of my heart is that such persons everywhere will respond to the kind invitation and gentle touch of the Master's hand and faithfully serve our Lord and our Savior, who so willingly died that we might forever live, hopefully having eyes that really see, ears that truly hear, and responsive hearts that know and feel, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

BISHOP JOHN H. VANDENBERG

Presiding Bishop of the Church

A historian informs us that about 100 years BC a new milling apparatus had been invented by a master craftsman in the hills of the Fertile Crescent. With this new contrivance the grain was ground into flour by a swift-moving stream turning a paddle wheel rather than by the laborious method of rotating the millstone by hand. Thus the power of a stream of water was put to work. (Life Science Library [Machines], p. 12.)

The poet Longfellow referred to a far greater power and a more significant milling process when he wrote: "Though the mills of God grind slowly, yet they grind exceedingly small; though with patience He stands waiting, with exactness grinds He all." (Longfellow, *Poetic Aphorisms: Retribution*.) By this we are reminded that humankind is the grain being milled, and the individual is a kernel of grain working between the opposing forces of life. It is through the mill or experiences of life that man is to learn and develop. Here he attains a certain degree of knowledge or skill, but it is through discipline and self-control that he is refined.

President N. Eldon Tanner

Elder Thomas S. Monson of the Council of the Twelve has just addressed us. Before hearing from Bishop Vandenberg, the chorus and congregation will join in singing, "Come, Come Ye Saints," conducted by Maughan McMurdie.

The Choir and congregation joined in singing the hymn, "Come, Come, Ye Saints," with Maughan McMurdie conducting.

President N. Eldon Tanner

We shall now hear from Bishop John H. Vandenberg, Presiding Bishop of the Church, and he will be followed by S. Dilworth Young, First Council of Seventy.

The Power of Words and Acts

Today I want to talk particularly about the harnessing of power in connection with this mill of life—the power of words and acts. It was the words of the Prophet Jonah that saved the great city Nineveh from destruction. The power of words has changed the course of history many times for good and many times for bad. In words and acts men influence one another. It is said that we are individually responsible for our own actions and will receive the just reward for our deeds. "Every man will be judged according to his works" (see Mosiah 3:24) is the scriptural warning. Yet no man stands alone; one man's words and acts may influence another man's deeds.

"Opposition in all things"

The Prophet Lehi explains that there is an opposition in all things—light and darkness, good and evil, joy and misery. (See 2 Nephi 2:11.) Emerson said that a dualism bisects nature. It can be seen in night and day, or in a magnet with north and south poles. One attracts; the other repels. Our