

Monday, April 5, 1965

Second Day

Alma Sonne, Assistant to the Twelve will speak to us.

President Hugh B. Brown

The Combined Choruses and the congregational joined in singing the hymn, "How Firm A Foundation."

Elder Alma Sonne, Assistant to the Twelve, will now speak to us, and he will be followed by Elder William J. Critchlow, Jr., Assistant to the Twelve.

ELDER ALMA SONNE

Assistant to the Council of the Twelve Apostles

My brethren and sisters, we have heard much during this conference about the home and the family, and I am sure you all know that they are the units of civilization. A nation can rise no higher than its homes.

Bruce Barton, in one of his books entitled *On the Up and Up*, tells about a clergyman who had recently visited a parish where he had labored successfully for thirty years. The old church had crumbled, and the region round about had become a slum. The families he had known so well had been scattered to the suburbs, and the church, of course, was closed. "What is left," he moaned in self-pity, "to show for all my labor?" He could not understand that everything was left. Some of the people, their sons and daughters, were left. To them he had preached Sunday after Sunday. He had built up their faith, enriched their lives, and given them renewed incentives to live a righteous life.

The Importance of People and Their Regeneration

There is nothing more important than people—our own neighbors and friends. They are precious in the sight of God. To reclaim them from waywardness and sin is our greatest obligation. God loves them, and amid the changes which come and go, they still are his treasures. I have concluded that he is more interested in them than in their possessions, like stocks and bonds, houses and lands. We cannot fight change for we are living in a changing world. Permanency has few guarantees. There are things, however, which do not change. Honor, like truth, is not a composite thing. It never changes. It is the light which brightens our pathway. I suppose all

people have a degree of light within them. Sometimes it is very dim; sometimes it has been extinguished by evil thoughts and deeds. The human mind is darkened by the shadows of earth. The word "light" appears many times in the scriptures, modern and ancient. When it does, it is symbolic of truth, for God's word is truth.

It was on the Master's lips many times as he spoke and conversed with people. I read from his Sermon on the Mount:

"Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." (Matt. 5:15-16.)

To Nicodemus, the Jewish ruler who came to Jesus at night, the Savior was a little more explicit. He said, ". . . this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." (John 3:19.)

What happens when a light fades out—when a man, a woman, a family, or a nation departs from the standards by which they have arisen and succeeded? Then all things go to decay. They build their structures on sand. The winds of adversity blow. The storms come, and the structures tumble. Their hopes, their aspirations, and their innermost feelings and longings are shattered. Their house is left unto them desolate. It is the tragedy of an irresolute and misspent life.

Activity in the Church is the one best safeguard; it is essential to growth and development. Light does not penetrate the dark places without some

effort and some solicitation. It requires the energy of individuals, personal contacts, patience, diligence, and the inspiration of devoted missionaries and teachers to spread the light and to place the gospel message in the hearts of people.

The Gospel a Light to Guide Mankind

The gospel is a beacon light to guide humanity through the journey of life. It points the way. It inspires unselfish service. It fills the soul with love for others, and it is the pure, primitive faith preached by great men like Peter and Paul.

Jesus outlined the road to happiness, for his gospel is a way of life. It is the foundation upon which you and I must build our lives. There is no other safe and dependable road for us to follow, for "... strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." (Matt. 7:14.)

Those who have spoken today and in the past from the place where I now stand have testified to the divinity of Jesus Christ. His words are solemn declarations of truth, and his life is a shining light to all the world. That light will never fade away, for "heaven and earth shall pass away," said he, "but my words shall not pass away." (*Ibid.*, 24:35.)

It will survive the harsh, superficial, and bitter criticism of bigots and cynics. In all of his assertions, Jesus never minimized nor underrated the importance of his message to the world.

Many of you who are listening to me at this moment, and I refer to the Latter-day Saints, have introduced the gospel into your lives. You have tested it. You have lived by it. It has guided your footsteps and has kept you mindful of your duty to God and your

fellow men. Your convictions have deepened, and your understanding of the gospel has increased; you have recognized the priesthood as the life-giving power of the Church; you have read the literature of the Church, including the Book of Mormon; doubt and uncertainty have fled; doctrines and principles have been examined and compared with those taught in other churches. You know the purpose and meaning of mortal life. You have answered the questions which have perplexed humanity for centuries, namely: Whence did I come? Why am I here? and, What is my destiny? You are composed and satisfied.

Revival of Faith and Hope for Eternal Life

The revival of faith and enthusiasm in the early Saints and followers of Jesus after the crucifixion and the resurrection is one of the marvels of history. They too had investigated and examined. They were convinced by what they had seen and by the promptings of the Holy Ghost that Jesus is the Christ, the promised Redeemer, that truth had been personified before them, and they recognized it. The proof was overwhelming. They could not conscientiously deny it.

May we be true to our convictions. May we be loyal to our standards. May we serve the Lord with a singleness of purpose and live righteously before him and all men, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President Hugh B. Brown

We have just listened to Elder Alma Sonne, Assistant to the Twelve. We will now hear from William J. Critchlow, Jr., and he will be followed by Gordon B. Hinckley of the Council of the Twelve, who will be our concluding speaker.

ELDER WILLIAM J. CRITCHLOW, JR.

Assistant to the Council of the Twelve Apostles

President McKay, wherever you are, I love you. We all love you.

I have been reminded that we are short on time and long on speakers.