

unseen audience, and to all who are gathered in this historic building.

We should like again to express our appreciation for these lovely flowers that are here on the rostrum in front of you and in different parts of the building, and would especially like to make note of these two vases of flowers on either side of me which have been presented to us by the Hopi Indians.

The singing for this afternoon's session will be furnished by the Ogden LDS Institute Chorale, conducted by Brother Ladd R. Cropper, with Brother Roy M. Darley at the organ.

We are exceedingly pleased to have these young men and women with us this afternoon, and extend a hearty welcome to them.

We shall begin these services by the choir singing, "The Forty-sixth Psalm," conducted by Brother Cropper.

The invocation will be offered by Elder Ralph J. Hill, formerly president of the Texas Mission.

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Singing: "The Forty-Sixth Psalm."

Prayer: Ralph J. Hill, formerly President of the Texas Mission.

### ELDER SPENCER W. KIMBALL

*Of the Council of the Twelve Apostles*

One night I lay awake thinking through the problems of the day. All week there had filed by my desk people—wonderful people—some bowed in grief and anguish of soul; others learning repentance through life's penalties; some frustrated in their marital upsets, in their moral aberrations, in their financial reverses, and in their spiritual deficiencies.

These people were good people basically; but as they traveled, they had found difficulty in staying on the main thoroughfare and had deviated on side roads; they had forgotten covenants and postponed putting into effect their good resolutions.

#### "Forgotten wedges"

There came to my mind an article

#### President N. Eldon Tanner:

The invocation was just offered by Elder Ralph J. Hill, formerly president of the Texas Mission.

Sister Isaacson has asked that I express on behalf of President Isaacson and the family their appreciation of your faith and prayers in his behalf. He is listening in and is glad to be with us in spirit.

The Ogden Institute Chorale will now favor us with "A Prophet Stood." This was inspired by and dedicated to our beloved prophet, President David O. McKay. The lyrics and music were written by Sister Lorraine S. Wilkinson. President McKay, who is listening in, has asked that I express to the choir his appreciation for this number.

Following this number Spencer W. Kimball of the Council of the Twelve will be our first speaker this afternoon. He will be followed by Elder Alma Sonne.

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#### Singing: "A Prophet Stood"

Elder Spencer W. Kimball of the Council of the Twelve will be our first speaker.

Brother Kimball:

by Samuel T. Whitman entitled "Forgotten Wedges." I had learned to use wedges when I was a lad in Arizona, it being my duty to supply wood for many fires in the big house. May I quote Whitman:

"The ice storm wasn't generally destructive. True, a few wires came down, and there was a sudden jump in accidents along the highway. Walking out of doors became unpleasant and difficult. It was disagreeable weather, but it was not serious. Normally, the big walnut tree could easily have borne the weight that formed on its spreading limbs. It was the iron wedge in its heart that caused the damage.

"The story of the iron wedge began years ago when the white-haired

farmer was a lad on his father's homestead. The sawmill had then only recently been moved from the valley, and the settlers were still finding tools and odd pieces of equipment scattered about. . . .

"On this particular day, it was a faller's wedge—wide, flat, and heavy, a foot or more long, and splayed from mighty poundings. The path from the south pasture did not pass the woodshed; and, because he was already late for dinner, the lad laid the wedge . . . between the limbs of the young walnut tree his father had planted near the front gate. He would take the wedge to the shed right after dinner, or sometime when he was going that way.

"He truly meant to, but he never did. It was there between the limbs, a little tight, when he attained his manhood. It was there, now firmly gripped, when he married and took over his father's farm. It was half grown over on the day the threshing crew ate dinner under the tree. . . . Crown in and healed over, the wedge was still in the tree the winter the ice storm came.

"In the chill silence of that wintry night, with the mist like rain sifting down and freezing where it fell, one of the three major limbs split away from the trunk and crashed to the ground. This so unbalanced the remainder of the top that it, too, split apart and went down. When the storm was over, not a twig of the once-proud tree remained.

"Early the next morning, the farmer went out to mourn his loss. 'Wouldn't have had that happen for a thousand dollars,' he said. 'Prettiest tree in the valley, that was.'

"Then, his eyes caught sight of something in the splintered ruin. 'The wedge,' he muttered reproachfully. 'The wedge I found in the south pasture.' A glance told him why the tree had fallen. Growing edge-up in the trunk, the wedge had prevented the limb fibers from knitting together as they should."

Forgotten wedges! Hidden weaknesses grown over and invisible, waiting until some winter night to work their ruin. What better symbolizes the

presence and the effect of sin in our lives?

This brings to my memory some verses I heard long years ago entitled:

### Jim Died Today

Around the corner I have a friend,  
In this great city which has no end;

Yet, days go by and weeks rush on,  
And before I know it a year has gone.

And I never see my old friend's face;  
For life is a swift and terrible race.

He knows I like him just as well  
As in the days when I rang his bell

And he rang mine. We were younger  
then  
And now we are busy tired men—

Tired with playing the foolish game;  
Tired with trying to make a name;

Tomorrow, I say, I will call on Jim,  
Just to show I'm thinking of him.

But tomorrow comes and tomorrow  
goes;  
And the distance between us grows  
and grows

Around the corner! Yet miles away—  
Here's a telegram, sir—"Jim died  
today!"

And that's what we get—and deserve  
in the end—  
Around the corner, a vanished friend.

### John's wedge

And, as I thought of Jim, I thought also of John, my trusted friend. He was well regarded in his community, honorable in business dealings, kindly. He frankly admitted his principal weakness. John was an inveterate chain smoker. Always a cigarette hung between his lips. It seemed as much a part of him as his ear or nose or finger. Sometimes we joked about his inseparable companion. He always chuckled and said, "Everybody is entitled to one weakness." And then in more sober moments, he would become pensive

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and say, "I know it is bad, but it has hold of me like an octopus. Someday I'll conquer it." Yes, someday! But the days sped into years; his hair became thinner, his complexion more sallow; and there finally came a cough—a little hacking cough. It worried us who appreciated his good qualities, but there was little we could do.

I moved to Utah and saw him no more for many years. Time put on its running shoes, and years piled up; and one day I was on assignment in Phoenix when a mutual friend, knowing my affection for John, said, "Did you know he is in the hospital dying of lung cancer?" Dropping everything, I rushed to the hospital but almost too late. There he lay propped up in his bed, breathing irregular, painful gasps. I was glad he recognized me even for that single moment. His forced smile froze. His light went out. He had certainly intended to overcome the habit, especially after scientific research had confirmed the Lord's revelation, but his master dictator decreed otherwise.

Here he had lain in fear and alone, facing the inevitable. The cancer was too deep, too scattered, too entrenched.

I trembled as I saw him die, this friend of thirty years. He might have lived yet many years in health and happiness. And as I stood in awe and with head bowed low, I remembered another great tree that could not stand the storm because of forgotten wedges, slow death-dealing wedges. Tomorrow he would have thrown his cigarettes away, but that recant tomorrow, that procrastinating tomorrow that supposedly never comes, was here. There would now never be another cigarette. The wedges had seen to that. And then there came to me the words of Ralph Parlett:

"Strength and struggle travel together. The supreme reward of struggle is strength. Life is a battle and the greatest joy is to overcome. The pursuit of easy things makes men weak. . . ."

#### **Bottle wedge**

My thoughts shifted to a little boy in Arizona with curly hair who sat

upon my knee long years ago. His smile was beautiful and his laugh contagious. He grew into handsome manhood, but as he went through his teens, he carelessly threw into the forks of his walnut tree a bottle. In his sober moments he admitted it was bad for him. Tomorrow he would discard this little devil, his master. Yes, tomorrow!

When he was married, the bottle wedge was still in the tree and the fibers encasing it. With a hollow laugh, he passed it off and said he could certainly remove it tomorrow. The cursed thing was there when the children came. They loved this handsome dad! Yet, sometimes came strange situations they could not understand. Hardly could they believe this was their dad, so different he was at times—more and more frequent.

This bottle wedge was still there when the children were in their teens. They still could not comprehend how their father could be Dr. Jekyll yesterday and Mr. Hyde today, so wonderful he was when sober. Procrastination and the bottle wedge became deeper and deeper in his tree and engulfed by it. He had about reached the point of no return.

Years passed, and he entered my life again. He borrowed two dollars. On the spur of the moment, I did not realize what two dollars would buy and how desperate one could be for what two dollars would purchase. His hair was gray, his body sloppy fat, his eyes bleary, his laugh hollow. His children were now on their own. One son had died in a tavern, one had divorced three times. One day I found him in the gutter. The storm had come, the wedge was deeply imbedded. Yesterday, with self control, he could have defeated his enemy and been headed toward thrones and exaltations, but the yesterdays became tomorrows. And, as I helped him out of the gutter and for a moment to stand upon his feet, I sorrowed and remembered wedges—hidden wedges.

And, as I saw him fettered and enslaved, there came to my memory a paragraph from a modern writer, which I paraphrase:

History, which had yawned for thousands of years, stirred on her dust-covered couch, opened her eyes, and saw one more son of God become a fettered slave. She sighed, sat up, shook the dust from the pages of her voluminous book, glanced at the long list of victims, turned a fresh page, took up her pen and moistened it, and wrote another name.

"It is an old tale," she said, tiredly and hopelessly, as her old bones moved wearily to record again. "Millions have followed this highway through the ages of the past," she said, "depriving spouses, neglecting children, corrupting lives, destroying character." Then she remonstrated, "Why can I never sleep? Why must I continue on, recording distorted lives, corrupted civilizations—will men never learn?" (Taylor Caldwell, *The Earth Is the Lord's*, p. 414.)

Here were bottle wedges! the winds and whirlwind wedges, broken trees split open, branchless tree-made skeletons.

### Bill

And then I remembered Bill. His was also a sad story. His beginnings were auspicious, his backgrounds good. Even his home life was better than average, but he was tiring of restraints.

He would enlist in the military service, where he could do what he wanted to do. A short training period and he was shipped abroad. Saigon was an intriguing city with its great river, its exotic nature, its strange people.

One day he relaxed his hold, yielded to impulse, made a contact that dropped him into a foreign world to him—a world of sin. His training came to his rescue and brought him to his knees in repentance. But the memory of man is short, and the sensations and demands of the carnal are insistent; and with abandon, he threw his wedge into the forks of his walnut tree. Some day he would remove the wedge and put it away where it belonged.

Under some pressures from associates, he began to smoke and then to

drink, his inhibitions smothered. With his wedge in the forks of his tree, he was uncomfortable at first and his conscience hurt, but soon he seared it. Many months passed, and his military stint was nearing the end. On one of the many occasions when he had imbibed too freely, he pulled from his pocket a handful of coins and boasted loudly, "With these coins I can buy every kind of sin in the book." And he heedlessly proceeded to make his purchase. Long ago he had ceased to pray. How could he ask the Lord's blessings upon his sinful acts, perversions, and aberrations? Not long now and he would be done with this war business and would return to normal life. Surely he would remove the wedge then.

He did go home, but by now his mischief was entrenched, his habits of thought and action too deeply imbedded, his willpower too weak.

Fibers had grown over the wedge. Nothing short of major tree surgery could remove it now.

And then I remembered the story of the young farmer grown old and the walnut tree split apart, and I thought again: Forgotten wedges! Hidden wedges! And my heart was heavy. Then Horace Greeley's words came to me:

### Self-mastery

"The height of a man's success is gauged by his self-mastery; the depth of his failure by his self-abandonment. There is no other limitation in either direction. And this law is the expression of eternal justice.

"He who cannot establish a dominion over himself will have no dominion over others, he who masters himself shall be king."

### Wedges of conflicts

Then came the couple from Texas. In their prolonged conflicts, selfishness, and stubbornness, a wide chasm had deepened between them. Their relatives mourned for them, their leaders struggled with them, and their innocent children suffered from frustration, rebellion, and delinquency because of

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these two potentially great souls. The beautiful love of 16 years ago was fast changing to hate; the long-ago trust was turning to bitterness; each was bent upon reforming the other. Argument, pressures, levers, and threats were used to bend the other to his and her will. And while they quarreled and manufactured venom in their in-criminations and recriminations, they shriveled and wrinkled and dwarfed. The former great gentleman became a quarrelsome antagonist; the former lovely lady became a shrew. Two selfish people degenerated to wizened little pygmies. Their wedges had now been long in the tree. Some day he would conquer her. Some day she would win, justifying her position. Yes, they would tomorrow correct their errors, swallow their pride, neutralize their selfishness, and remove the wedge, but already it was tight in the forks.

Oh, how blind is self-centered, selfish man, with his ugly wedges!

These folks may never get their "chariot of the sun" as expressed by Ralph Waldo Emerson:

"Every man takes care that his neighbor shall not cheat him. But a day comes when he begins to care that he does not cheat his neighbor. Then all goes well. He has changed his market cart into a chariot of the sun."

And Phillips Brooks addressed such who permit themselves hatred and bitterness:

"You who are letting miserable misunderstandings run on from year to year, meaning to clear them up some day; you who are keeping wretched quarrels alive because you cannot quite make up your mind that now is the day to sacrifice your pride and kill them; you who are passing men sullenly upon the street, not speaking to them out of some silly spite, and yet knowing that it would fill you with shame and remorse if you heard that one of those men were dead tomorrow morning; you who are letting your neighbor starve, till you hear that he is dying of starvation; or letting your friend's heart ache for a word of appre-

ciation or sympathy which you mean to give him some day; if you only could know and see and feel, all of a sudden, that 'the time is short.' How it would break the spell! How you would go instantly and do the thing which you might never have another chance to do!"

### Power to remove wedges

And then, I applied the wedge story in another area. For more than a century the living gospel has been restored on the earth, and tens of thousands of missionaries have proclaimed to millions the true message. Their testimonies have touched many hearts that said, "Yes," but whose lips with human fears resisted their accepting the gospel toward their eternal welfare. They have trembled as the Holy Ghost whispered to their spirits, "It is true—embrace it," and yet poor excuses caused their postponing action. Numerous are those who all over the world have received the witness that the gospel is true, yet have postponed baptism. Great numbers have heard of the additional scripture, the Book of Mormon, which contains the fullness of the gospel, yet never have absorbed its truths. A million copies of it found their way in a million home libraries last year and other millions previously, yet procrastinating people have failed to complete their investigation and have remained estranged. "Tomorrow I will read it," they say; "another day I will invite the missionaries to teach me." But tomorrow is a sluggard and shifts along on leaden feet, and life goes on, and storms do come, and limbs are split, and trees do fall, and eternity approaches, and our sincere call goes unheeded.

Percy Adams Hutchison (1878- ) gave this verse in his "Swordless Christ" (*Vicisti Galilee*, stanza 1):

"Ay, down the years, behold he rides,  
The lowly Christ, upon an ass;  
But conquering? Ten shall heed the  
call,  
A thousand idly watch him pass."

And I wondered how many tens of thousands did hear his voice, felt an inner twinge of heart, felt impelled to follow, but lingered and procrastinated.

### Procrastination intrenches the wedge

How many saw his smile and heard his sermons on the mount and were pricked in their hearts, but stopped to eat and sleep and work and play, and failed to heed?

Numerous ones must have jostled him in narrow streets of Jerusalem and turned around and looked the second time at him whom they had touched, but went their way to daily tasks and missed their opportunity.

How many heard the story of his walking on the water but were too busy with their selling fish in the market or herding sheep to ask the vital reasons and fathom the deep powers?

How many who saw him hanging there upon the cross saw only wood beams and nails and flesh and blood and made no effort to penetrate the purposes and the reasons: how one could choose to die such an ignominious death; how one could be so controlled in time of such excruciating pain; what were the reasons behind such treatment; what were the deep purposes; who was this "author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him"? (Heb. 5:9.)

How many felt the stir that comes in human breasts when truth, pressed in upon them but pressured by minor exigencies, moves far away from their eternal destiny?

And then I think: Procrastination—thou wretched thief of time and opportunity!

When will men stand true to their one-time inspired yearnings?

Let those take care who postpone the clearing of bad habits and of constructively doing what they ought. "Some day I'll join the Church," says one. "I'll cease my drinking soon," says another. "One day I'll smoke no more," others pledge. "Some day we'll be ready for our temple sealings,"

promise a delayed-action husband and wife. "Some day, when they apologize, I'll forgive those who injured me," small souls say. "Some day I'll get my debts paid." "We'll get around soon to having our family prayers, and next week we'll start our home evenings." "We shall start paying tithing from our next pay check." Tomorrow—yes, tomorrow.

### Wedges of flaws and sin

And then, we quote more lines from Whitman:

"Pride, envy, selfishness, dishonesty, intemperance, doubt, secret passions—almost numberless in variety and degree are the wedges of sin. And alas! almost numberless are the men and women who today are allowing sin to grow in the heart wood of their lives.

"The wedge is there. We know it is there. We put it there ourselves one day, when we were hurried and thoughtless. It shouldn't be there, of course. It is harming the tree. But we are busy so we leave it there; and in time, it grows over and we forget. The years slip swiftly by. Wintertime comes with its storms and ice. The life we prized so much goes down in the unspeakable loss of spiritual disaster. For years after the wedge had grown over, the tree flourished and gave no sign of its inner weakness. Thus it is with sin.

"Many a fine house on many a fine street has a wedge of sin within its elegance. And many a man who walks the streets in pride and arrogance of worldly success is an unrepentant sinner before God. Nevertheless, the wedge is there and in the end of its work is a fallen tree, split and shattered and worthless."

May the Lord bless us all that we may early recognize and remember and remove all wedges before they wreak their havoc in our lives, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

### President N. Eldon Tanner:

Elder Spencer W. Kimball of the Council of the Twelve has just spoken to us.