

Friday, September 29

First Day

witness until after the trial of your faith." (Eth. 12:6.)

It takes faith, too, to believe what Lehi taught:

"But behold, all things have been done in the wisdom of him who knoweth all things.

"Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy." (2 Ne. 2:24-25.) But we all need to keep in mind that joy is oftentimes camouflaged in the robes of hard work, sorrow, sickness, and a tested faith.

"Thy dress to consume; thy gold to refine"

The trials and adversity experienced by the pioneers who crossed plains and mountains to reach and build this city and this building were related by President J. Reuben Clark, Jr., in his address: "To Them of the Last Wagon." I quote:

". . . The wife, soon to be a mother, could hardly catch her breath in the heavy, choking dust, for even in the pure air she breathed hard from her burden. Each jolt of the wagon, for those ahead had made wagon ruts almost 'ex' deep, wrung from her clenched lips a half-groan [that] she did her best to keep from the anxious, solicitous husband plodding slowly along, guiding and goading the poor dumb cattle, themselves weary from the long trek. So through the long day of jolting and discomfort and sometimes pain, sometimes panting for breath, the mother, anxious only that the unborn babe should not be injured, rode, for she could not walk; and the children walked, for the load was too heavy and big for them to ride; and the father walked sturdily

alongside and prayed. . .

"Then the morning came when from out that last wagon floated the [cry] of the newborn babe, and mother love made a shrine, and Father bowed in reverence before it. But the train must move on. So out into the dust and dirt the last wagon moved again, swaying and jolting, while Mother eased as best she could each pain-giving jolt so no harm might be done her, that she might be strong to feed the little one, bone of her bone, flesh of her flesh. Who will dare to say that angels did not cluster round and guard her and ease her rude bed, for she had given another choice spirit its mortal body that it might work out its God-given destiny?" (*The Improvement Era*, November 1947, p. 705.)

Pray for power to survive adversity

Why should we then ask God for relief from adversity when we as a people have been made strong by adversity? Rather let us search our hearts to learn the Refiner's purpose in our lives. May we all come to know that God is still in his heaven and rules in the world, and that in the providence of a loving Father, "all these things shall give thee experience, and shall be for thy good." (D&C 122:7.)

In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President Hugh B. Brown

Elder Robert L. Simpson, first counselor in the Presiding Bishopric, will now address us.

He will be followed by Elder Victor L. Brown, also of the Presiding Bishopric.

Bishop Robert L. Simpson

Of the Presiding Bishopric

President McKay, my dear brethren and sisters of this great Church: May I spend a moment and discuss with you one of the most neglected of all our Heavenly Father's laws and commandments to his children.

May I begin this important assign-

ment by bearing my testimony that all of Heavenly Father's commandments are perfect; each law when lived brings happiness to the individual.

The law of the Fast

One of the most neglected and yet

most needed laws for this troubled generation in a modern world of acceleration and distraction is the law of the fast. Fasting and praying have been referred to almost as a singular function from the earliest times. Adam's generation fasted and prayed, as did Moses on Sinai. (Deut. 9:9-11.)

The Prophet Elijah traveled to Mt. Horeb under the influence of fasting and prayer. There he received the word of the Lord. His preparation had not been in vain. (1 Kings 19:8.)

Mordecai's advice from Esther as he faced an emergency at Shushan pointed out that he and his people should "neither eat nor drink three days, night or day. . . ." (Esther 4:16.) This was the true fast, abstinence from both food and drink. This is still the manner of the true fast in our day.

There were significant changes made at the time of Christ's mission in mortality. The law of sacrifice, for example, was replaced by a higher law. We are told that following the Master's visit to this, the western hemisphere, the people were told to continue in "fasting and prayer [there was no change in this law] and in meeting together oft both to pray and to hear the word of the Lord." (4 Ne. 12.) So complete and sincere were the people in obeying his commandments "that there was no contention among all the people, in all the land; but there were mighty miracles wrought among the disciples of Jesus." (4 Ne. 13.) Wouldn't it be thrilling to enjoy such a condition today!

Prayer and fasting today

His law has been reconfirmed in our day, for through a modern prophet in the year 1832, he said: ". . . I give unto you a commandment that ye shall continue in prayer and fasting from this time forth." Then in the very next verse he mentions gospel teaching almost as a prime product of the prayer and fasting process. In the words of the Lord: "And I give unto you a commandment that you shall teach one another the doctrine of the kingdom.

"Teach ye diligently and my grace shall attend you, that you may be in-

structed more perfectly in theory, in principle, in doctrine, in the law of the gospel, in all things that pertain unto the kingdom of God, that are expedient for you to understand." (D&C 88:76-78.)

No man or woman can hope to teach of things spiritual unless he is directed by that spirit, for "the Spirit shall be given unto you by the prayer of faith; and if ye receive not the Spirit ye shall not teach.

"And all this ye shall observe to do as I have commanded concerning your teaching, until the fulness of my scriptures is given.

"And as ye shall lift up your voices by the Comforter, ye shall speak and prophesy as seemeth me good;

"For, behold, the Comforter knoweth all things, and beareth record of the Father and of the Son." (D&C 42:14-17.)

A promise for every teacher

Oh, that every teacher might catch the spirit of this promise and claim this offered partnership, available to all who are engaged in the teaching of truth.

There are no better examples of teaching by the Spirit than the Sons of Mosiah. The Book of Mormon tells us how they became "strong in the knowledge of the truth; for they were men of a sound understanding and they had searched the scriptures diligently, that they might know the word of God.

"But this is not all; they had given themselves to much prayer, and fasting; therefore they had the spirit of prophecy, and the spirit of revelation, and when they taught, they taught with power and authority of God." (Al. 17:2-3.)

Is there a priesthood or auxiliary leader any place in this Church who wouldn't give all to possess such power, such assurance? Remember this, above all else, that, according to Alma, they gave themselves to much fasting and prayer. You see, there are certain blessings that can only be fulfilled as we conform to a particular law. The Lord made this very clear through the

Prophet Joseph Smith when he declared: "For all who will have a blessing at my hands shall abide the law which was appointed for that blessing, and the conditions thereof, as were instituted from before the foundation of the world." (D&C 132:5.)

Now, the Lord could not have stated the position more clearly, and, in my opinion, too many Latter-day Saint parents today are depriving themselves and their children of one of the sweetest spiritual experiences that the Father has made available to them.

The monthly Fast Day

In addition to the occasional fasting experience for a special purpose, each member of the Church is expected to miss two meals on the fast and testimony Sunday. To skip two consecutive meals and partake of the third normally constitutes approximately a 24-hour period. Such is the counsel.

Competent medical authorities tell us that our bodies benefit by an occasional fasting period. That is blessing number one and perhaps the least important. Second, we contribute the money saved from missing the meals as a fast offering to the bishop for the poor and the needy. And third, we reap a particular spiritual benefit that can come to us in no other way. It is a sanctification of the soul for us today just as it was for some choice people who lived 2,000 years ago. I quote briefly from the Book of Mormon: "Nevertheless they did fast and pray oft, and did wax stronger and stronger in their humility, and firmer and firmer in the faith of Christ, unto the filling their souls with joy and consolation, yea, even to the purifying and the sanctification of their hearts, which sanctification cometh because of their yielding their hearts unto God." (He. 3:35.) Wouldn't you like this to happen to you? It can, you know!

Did you notice it said that those who do this have their souls filled with "joy and consolation"? You see, the world in general thinks that fasting is a time for "sackcloth and ashes," a

time to carry a look of sorrow, as one to be pitied. On the contrary, the Lord admonishes: "Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

"But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face;

"That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly." (Matt. 6:16-18.)

Blessings of fasting

Now, may we turn to the most important part of this great law. So far we have only discussed those areas that bless us. The real joy comes with the blessing of the poor and the needy. For it is in the fulfillment of this wonderful Christlike act that we practice "pure religion and undefiled" spoken of by James. Can you think of a better or more perfect Christian function than "pure religion and undefiled"? I can't.

The Lord speaking through Moses observed: "If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren within any of thy gates in thy land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thine heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother: But thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him. . . ." (Deut. 15:7-8.) Then he goes on to promise him who gives: ". . . the Lord thy God shall bless thee in all thy works, and in all that thou puttest thine hand unto." (Deut. 15:10.) He concludes: ". . . therefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in thy land." (Deut. 15:11.)

Amulek had something to say on this subject. After instructing the people for some time on various vital matters, he turned his thoughts to the poor and the needy, advising the congregation that even if they are diligent in all of these other things, and "turn away the needy, and the naked, and visit not the sick and afflicted, and

impart of your substance . . . to those who stand in need—I say unto you, if ye do not any of these things, behold, your prayer is vain, and availeth you nothing, and ye are as hypocrites who do deny the faith.” (Al. 34:28.)

A perfecting law

Yes, the law of the fast is a perfect law, and we cannot begin to approach perfection until we decide to make it a part of our lives. When you start and stop the fast is up to you, but wouldn't it be nice to culminate it and be at your spiritual peak for the fast and testimony meeting?

How much you give the bishop as a donation is also up to you, but isn't it thrilling to know that your accounting with the Lord has been paid willingly and with accuracy?

Satisfaction comes with obedience

Why you fast is also up to you. But suppose the main reason was simply that you wanted to help someone in need and to be a part of “pure religion undefiled.” Wouldn't your faith be lifted and sanctified? Of course it would. And incidentally, have you ever noticed how satisfying it is way deep inside each time you are obedient to Heavenly Father's desires? There can be no equal to the peace of mind that always comes as the reward for obedience to truth.

The world needs self-discipline. You can find it in fasting and prayer. Our generation is sick for lack of self-control. Fasting and prayer help to instill this virtue.

The world's future depends upon an

urgent return to family unity. Fasting and prayer will help to guarantee it. Each person has greater need for divine guidance. There is no better way. We all have need to overcome the powers of the adversary. His influence is incompatible with fasting and prayer.

Joy in helping others

There can be no greater joy than in helping others, for “inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.” (Matt. 25:40.)

And now, my dear brothers and sisters, although not as worthy perhaps, but equally enthusiastic in the cause we represent, I join my testimony with Alma of old when he declared: “. . . Behold, I testify unto you that I do know that these things whereof I have spoken are true. And how do ye suppose that I know of their surety?

“Behold, I say unto you they are made known unto me by the Holy Spirit of God. Behold, I have fasted and prayed many days that I might know these things of myself. And now I do know of myself that they are true; for the Lord God hath made them manifest unto me by his Holy Spirit. . . .” (Al. 5:45-46.) In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President Hugh B. Brown

Elder Victor L. Brown of the Presiding Bishopric will now address us, and he will be followed by Elder Ezra Taft Benson of the Council of the Twelve, who will be our concluding speaker.

Bishop Victor L. Brown

Of the Presiding Bishopric

President David O. McKay has said: “The home is truly the first unit of society, and parenthood is next to Godhood. The relationship of the children to the parents should be one which would enable those children to carry out ideal citizenship as they become related to the state and to the larger

forms of society. The secret of good membership in the Church or good citizenship in the nation lies in the home. If and when the time ever comes that parents shift to the state the responsibility of rearing their children, the stability of the nation will be undermined, and its impair-