

President N. Eldon Tanner

We have just listened to Elder Marion D. Hanks, Assistant to the Twelve.

Elder Victor L. Brown, second counselor in the Presiding Bishopric, will now address us.

Bishop Victor L. Brown

Of the Presiding Bishopric

My dear brethren and sisters and friends: I am grateful for this opportunity to be with you this Sabbath morning. I pray that my message will convey to you some of the feelings and emotions that filled my heart two weeks ago today in South Vietnam. We had just arrived in Hong Kong after attending language seminars in Samoa, Tonga, Tahiti, and New Zealand. We were on our way to attend similar seminars in Hong Kong, Tokyo, and Seoul, Korea. As President Warren B. Hardy, president of the Southern Far East Mission, greeted us, he called me aside and informed me that 500 LDS servicemen had just arrived in South Vietnam from southeast Idaho. He asked if there were any way I could readjust my schedule so as to accompany him to meet these men. Changes were made, and I went to South Vietnam with President Hardy, there to become involved in one of the most inspiring and moving experiences of my life.

There was evidence of war on every side—jet fighters and helicopters landing and taking off, artillery fire, and the report of bombs exploding in the distance. I suppose there isn't a man there who wouldn't give almost anything to be at home with his loved ones, but because of patriotism and devotion to duty to God and country, many of them actually expressed gratitude for being there.

Meetings in Vietnam

In the meetings we attended, the men were dressed in combat gear. Many came directly from combat outposts or from missions with their helicopters and fighter planes. Some of them still carried their weapons. I remember one in particular. He was the district clerk

in DaNang. He arrived a few minutes after the meeting had begun, slipped his gun under his chair, and started to take the minutes of the meeting.

We met under varying circumstances—in the open air under the scorching Vietnam sun at Phan Rang, in a small chapel in Bien Hoa. This is the only LDS chapel in Vietnam. It was constructed by servicemen, and, incidentally, they did not request one dollar from the general funds of the Church to assist them. This is a story of self-reliance, ingenuity, faith, and perseverance. At DaNang we met in a building with a tin roof and no sides, located a few yards from the beach of the South China Sea. We could hear the artillery in the distance. The continuous roar of jet fighters and helicopters made it almost impossible to hear the speaker at times.

It was in this environment that I heard a young serviceman pray to his Heavenly Father: "We are grateful for the opportunity of serving in Vietnam." And in another prayer: "We thank thee for the great land we represent in this far-off country. May we take pride in being here and in doing those things thou wouldst have us do."

Change in convert

One young man, a member of the Church for only two months, said he had come to Vietnam fearing he would be killed before being baptized. He was baptized in the South China Sea, and now his buddies have seen a change in him. In his own words, this change is all because of his knowledge now that God lives, that the Church is true, and that there is a living prophet on the earth today. He didn't say so, but it is my feeling that this change is noticeable because of the

peace of mind this young man now has that he didn't have before.

A young combat artist told of receiving a letter from his father in which he said: "You know, Dick, I don't worry about you. I know things are going to be all right." And then he told us that before he left home, his father had placed his hands on his son's head and through the authority of the Holy Priesthood had given him a father's blessing.

Testimony of Marine

Now may I share some parts of the testimony of another young marine. I do not know how old he is, but I would think if he is out of his teens, he is not far out of them. He has been a member of the Church for two years. Until recently he had been in a special reconnaissance outfit. These are men who are taken by helicopter to the far distant areas of the jungle, dropped, and told to be back at the same place in five days to be picked up. He told us of his regret at no longer being in the front lines, even though he had completed eight months in one of the most dangerous of all assignments. He said:

"... but 'recon' [reconnaissance]—there's sacrifice there. It knows no end. I mean, when you're in a platoon, you have a sense of security, but when there's five or six or eight of you, and you're out there, and your radio is gone, there'll be no contact. If you're not here in five days, sorry about that! And so at this time you really become humble. It really makes you close to the Lord. Some people tell me, 'Well, you did your first tour.' Who says where your duty ends? Who says when you've done enough?"

He went on to tell how he and his close buddy taught the gospel to a young man with an unusually wonderful spirit, and how he was baptized, and how he was the first one killed in an assault on Hill 200. And then he shared with us the anguish he felt at losing another close friend. In his own words:

"The Lord doesn't take away lives of people that want to live so bad and have so much to do because it's his

desire. You can say they had something to do in the next life, but they had things to do in this life, too. Why? Well, I did a little bit of reading in the Book of Mormon and a lot of praying about this, and it seems a little more clear to me now. This is, for me, the price we're paying for freedom. In the Book of Mormon, if you've read about the wars, we always came out on top, just about. I mean if we're on the side of righteousness, the Lord was on the side of the Nephites, and they came out on top. But at the end of every story about a war they always said, 'But we lost this few. We lost this many good men.' And this is part of the price we have to pay for freedom. I don't know for sure if I'm right, but I don't think there's a whole lot the Lord can do about losing some of us, because we're here fighting for something that's worthwhile, and the wicked are trying to seek unrighteous dominion over us, and some of us are going to die for this."

Serving our fellowmen

And then he went on: "I found out something that almost everybody here knows. I've only been a member of the Church two years. I didn't find this out from any member of the Church. I wasn't doing a whole lot of studying when I came over here. I was looking for the way to become active. How can I increase my knowledge of the gospel? How can the Spirit humble me more? Well, I found this out. It came to me all of a sudden. It's serving our fellowmen. It's serving the guy that sleeps next to you. It's being dedicated. There's nothing in this life that matters but that.

"It's not what kind of car you have at home. It's not how many pairs of jungle boots you got back, or what you're saving. All these little things that people seem to worry about—they don't matter. We didn't come to this life with these things. We came to be happy, to serve our fellowmen, to glorify God, to return to our Father in heaven. This is the key as far as I am concerned, and that is service to your fellowman. It's what's in your heart that counts, not what's on your back.

"I heard David O. McKay say that the highest ideal ever taught in any religion is service to our fellowman. This I believe with all my heart, and I know I should be thankful that Scott was baptized before he was killed, and I truly am."

Then he continued: "Brethren, I know the Church is true. I know that this Church is divinely directed, that Joseph Smith had revelations, and that Jesus Christ is the head of the Church today. I pray that while we are over here we might strive to build our characters, to build our testimonies, that we might all do a little bit of suffering so that we might all know the joy that comes from just plain living, and that as long as our hearts are beating, and we're walking and talking, we don't have a thing to complain about, not at all."

This, then, is the testimony of a young LDS marine in South Vietnam. This is some of the spirit of our servicemen in war. After Saturday's meeting I witnessed five servicemen sharing this same spirit with five other servicemen as they took them into the waters of baptism in the South China Sea.

Concern for servicemen

As we met in various meetings, I told the men of the forthcoming meeting in an upper room of the Salt Lake Temple, where all of the General Authorities would meet under the direction of President McKay. I assured them that they and their families would be remembered in the prayers of the General Authorities. I also assured them of President McKay's love for them, and he asked me this morning to tell them again how much he loves them. They asked me to bring their love back to him, which I have done, and which he deeply appreciated.

Our men need to know that we really care. One major wrote to his wife telling how much the men needed to know "that our Father in heaven does in fact love us and that there are those who really care." I simply cannot overemphasize the need for those at home to let these men know that we do sincerely care. Families, of course, should and do write often. I appeal to

you bishops to write a letter before this week is over to every serviceman from your wards. If you need help, get it, but please see that every one of them hears from you, and then keep it up on a monthly basis. Your note of encouragement may be the only source of strength, at a crucial moment in his life, that will prevent a serviceman from making a tragic mistake. Of course, each one should also receive *The Improvement Era* and the *Church News*.

The lives and testimonies of these wonderful men will probably never make the headlines. Almost everyone is aware of the other side of what goes on in Vietnam. All that is necessary is to read the headlines.

LDS servicemen's organization

We have a wonderful Church organization in Vietnam. It is manned almost exclusively by servicemen. I've never seen more enthusiastic nor dedicated Church leaders than those in Vietnam. May I encourage all servicemen, members and nonmembers alike, to make immediate contact with the LDS servicemen's organization over there or here at Church headquarters. Such a contact can be the means of bringing peace and understanding to the heart when all about you is turmoil.

Loyalty to God and country

Now, in conclusion, from some of the wonderful wives of servicemen. First from a young mother of three small children, whose husband had been seriously wounded by an exploding rocket but who has recovered and is again carrying out his duties: "We love our country and feel honored to sacrifice for it."

Another one said: "Don left two small children here at home, with a third little blessing joining us by Thanksgiving. . . . We know that there is something very important for them to accomplish while they are there, and our prayers join yours that they might have the necessary strength to fulfill their calling."

My brethren and sisters, I shall never forget the experience of standing toe to toe, eye to eye, with several hundred men in battle dress, our hands in a

wise-like grip. Something happened inside me that I can't quite explain. This I know: whatever happened caused chills of pride, gratitude, and love to go up and down my spine. I partook of the fruits of the gospel in a very special way.

I should like to bear my testimony; as one serviceman said: "I don't want to leave you my testimony. I need it too much myself in my everyday life, but I will be happy to share it with you." I know that God lives, and that through Joseph Smith the Prophet the authority to act in the name of God was restored to the earth, and that today God has a mouthpiece through whom he speaks to us, and that is David O. McKay. I share this testimony with you in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President Joseph Fielding Smith

Of the First Presidency and President of the Council of the Twelve

I am very grateful for the opportunity of meeting with you, my good brethren and sisters, in this session of the conference and, in fact, all of the sessions of the conference.

I rejoice exceedingly in the truth. I thank the Lord every day of my life for his mercy and kindness and loving care and protection that have been extended to all his people, and for the many manifestations of his mercy and blessings unto us throughout all the length and breadth of the land, and through all the years since the organization of the Church, on the sixth day of April 1830.

Our mission to save

Our mission is to save, to preserve from evil, to exalt mankind, to bring light and truth into the world, to prevail upon the people of the earth to walk righteously before God and to honor him in their lives and with the first fruits of all their substance and increase.

I desire to say that "Mormonism," as it is called (and I place the word in quotation marks), is still, as always, nothing more nor less than the power

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We have just listened to Elder Victor L. Brown of the Presiding Bishopric of the Church.

The Tabernacle Choir will now sing, "All People That On Earth Do Dwell," after which President Joseph Fielding Smith of the First Presidency will be the concluding speaker.

Singing by the Tabernacle Choir,
"All People That on Earth Do Dwell."

President N. Eldon Tanner

President Joseph Fielding Smith, a counselor in the First Presidency, and President of the Quorum of the Twelve, will be our concluding speaker.

of God unto salvation, unto every soul that will receive it honestly and will obey it. I say to you, that all Latter-day Saints, wherever you find them, provided they are true to their name, their calling, and their understanding of the gospel, are people who stand for truth, honor, virtue, purity of life, honesty in business and in religion; people who stand for God and his righteousness, his truth, his work in the earth, and for the salvation of the children of men.

We have been laboring all these years in the Church to bring men to a knowledge of the gospel of Jesus Christ, to bring them to repentance and obedience to the requirements of divine law. We have been striving to save men from error and persuade them to turn away from evil and learn to do good.

The gospel of Jesus Christ is the power of God unto salvation, and it is absolutely necessary for every man and woman in the Church to work righteously, to observe the laws of God, and to keep the commandments that he has given, in order that they may avail themselves of the power of God