

BISHOP ROBERT L. SIMPSON

Of the Presiding Bishopric

My dear brothers and sisters: I feel strength in the presence of this assembly. I feel great humility in the presence of these lovely children who have borne witness to us in song, and I bask in the reflected memory of an inspiring Primary conference that concluded just the day before yesterday. I am sure we all compliment Sister Parmley and the great Primary organization for their tremendous effort. On this sacred square we gain a feeling of peace, we gain a feeling of security, and sometimes we might be inclined to say, "All is well in Zion." I would like to take for my thought today, "All is well in Zion, but. . ." And I would like to begin by telling you of a disturbing incident that came to my attention a day or two ago as I read a recent letter from the head of one of the state's largest employers, seeking help in curbing dishonest practices among his employees, who incidentally are people who should know better. He stated in the letter that sick-leave privileges were being grossly violated, more so than in other sections of the country. The Lord expects more from this community.

Lack of integrity

Another company head who recently moved to this community from another section of the United States complains that among his business associates there is a serious lack of integrity, that seemingly good men who are obviously trained to know better are discovered to be unethical in their business dealings.

Recently some variety store managers met with law enforcement officers for the purpose of implementing some sort of control in the midst of a rash of shoplifting, an evil practice that was apparent in all age levels, regardless of sex, and in all sectors of the community.

"And there shall also be many which shall say: Eat, drink and be merry; nevertheless, fear God—he will justify

in committing a little sin; yea, lie a little, take the advantage of one because of his words, dig a pit for thy neighbor; there is no harm in this; and do all these things, for tomorrow we die; and if it so be that we are guilty, God will beat us with a few stripes, and at last we shall be saved in the kingdom of God.

"And others will he pacify, and lull them away into carnal security, that they will say: All is well in Zion; yea, Zion prospereth, all is well—and thus the devil cheateth their souls, and leadeth them away carefully down to hell." (2 Ne. 28:3, 21.)

Led away from the good

I know a man who used to be an authority on the Book of Mormon. He had the ability of thrilling the people with his speaking and profound knowledge of the truth. The adversary found a weakness ever so small, but a weakness. Finally the grip was secure, and he was gradually led away—ever so gently, but ever so surely, away from all that was good and sacred. This same man who was a leader among the people has now lost his ability to lead, at least for the time being. That great gift of knowledge that was once his has become dim and remote. He seems helplessly engulfed in transgression and has been unable to even recognize the hand of fellowship that would lift him back to firm ground. I suppose this is the same condition described in the seventy-eighth section of the Doctrine and Covenants, verse 10:

"Otherwise Satan seeketh to turn their hearts away from the truth, that they become blinded and understand not the things which are prepared for them."

Others turned from truth

May I tell you about a man who has a keen mind, but his sweet spirit of testimony has been replaced with criticism of his priesthood leaders. He

seems impatient because certain basic doctrines cannot be altered to suit his convenience of social concept based on the meager knowledge and philosophy of men.

Let me tell you about a sister who became literally hypnotized by a deck of playing cards. Eventually, there were not enough hours in the week to fit everything in. Her keen spiritual sensitivity became dulled, and it was easy for the cunning one to help her decide to give up an important Relief Society calling and abandon her wonderful circle of former associates in favor of the nonessential, time-wasting pastime that had captured her fancy. Sisters in the ward continuing their lives of charity and compassionate service are now termed by her as narrow-minded, as hypocritical and dogooders, but in reality, the only thing that changed was this woman.

I know a man who started taking supplies home from his place of employment. First it was just a few pencils; then it was something more. In the end, it cost him his job, the respect of his family, and the spirit of his calling in the Church. His practices became incompatible with the priesthood that gave him the promise of life eternal.

I know a host of others that time will not permit us to discuss, wonderful people of the kingdom who ventured too close to the edge, all the time saying to themselves, "I know what I am doing. I can turn back the second I choose." Then all of a sudden it happens. The riptide loosens the last foothold, the quicksand starts to sink, the thin ice suddenly cracks, the precipice abruptly gives way. There are physical laws that govern the riptide, the cracking ice, the unstable ground; and there are moral and spiritual laws that are just as real, whose safe boundary is just as clearly defined, but as we take one fatal step, just one step too far, the laws of the universe take over—the consequence is inevitable.

Eternal judgment undeviating

There have been some excellent thoughts on repentance during these

conference sessions, but this plea is for each and every member of the Church to stand on holy ground, to avoid the inevitable, to make repentance unnecessary. In terms of eternity, there is no such thing as not getting caught. Eternal judgment is undeviating, for it is founded on truth. Maybe that is why the Lord said what he did on page one of the Doctrine and Covenants, revelation for our day, as he declared:

"For verily the voice of the Lord is unto all men, and there is none to escape; and there is no eye that shall not see, neither ear that shall not hear, neither heart that shall not be penetrated.

"And the rebellious shall be pierced with much sorrow; for their iniquities shall be spoken upon the housetops, and their secret acts shall be revealed.

"Unto the day when the Lord shall come to recompense unto every man according to his work, and measure to every man according to the measure which he has measured to his fellow man." (D&C 1:2-3, 10.)

To him who says: "I am lucky, I didn't get caught," I say, how unfortunate; for his other foot is already in motion for the next treacherous step.

Things the Lord hates

"These six things doth the Lord hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him:

"A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood,

"An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief,

"A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren." (Prov. 6:16-19.)

Now it seems rather odd that the Lord would speak of a proud look and running to mischief in the same breath with the shedding of innocent blood, but can anything counter to the glory and power of God or the exaltation of man be counted as trivial? "For I the Lord cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance." (D&C 1:31.) And then he also says in another place:

"He that diggeth a pit shall fall into it. . ." (Eccles. 10:8.)

Bad habits tip the scale

My dear fellow members of our Heavenly Father's true and everlasting Church, with our families and eternal life on one side of the scales, is it conceivable that we are willing to allow a few bad habits to tip that scale away from all that is good and precious and true? None is exempt from the possibility. Just open the door—just a crack, that's all—and the adversary will lead us quietly away, and we will rationalize as we go that what we are doing is done by so many, and surely this once won't hurt.

The adversary sometimes changes the labels on the bottles, but the contents are still full of poison. Just like the young lad I visited in prison. Upon asking him if the offense was stealing, I received an indignant, "Not on your life. I would never steal. My mother has taught me better than that. I am here for forgery." Shoplifting never, but what is wrong with forging someone else's name on a \$500.00 check!

The way clearly marked

May our judgment be sound and our course straight. The way is clearly marked before us and is to be found in every word of this conference. Just as the insignificant termite takes his annual toll, causing buildings to tumble, and just as rust and erosive forces eat away at the foundations of that which seems so strong and so firm, so it is with those little habits that must be corrected if we are to dwell in His presence.

May we know the truth, may we live the truth, may we sustain the truth. May we do these things, that all may truly be well in Zion, for you know and I know that the truth shall make us free, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

President Alvin R. Dyer

He to whom we have just listened is Elder Robert L. Simpson of the Presiding Bishopric.

We shall now hear from Elder LeGrand Richards of the Council of the Twelve.

ELDER LEGRAND RICHARDS

Of the Council of the Twelve

I rejoice with you, my brethren and sisters, in this wonderful conference, and in the inspiring remarks of our worthy president, President David O. McKay.

We have just listened to Bishop Simpson as he quoted the statement of Jesus, when he said: "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (John 8:32.) I ask, free from what? The false teachings and philosophies and man-made doctrines.

Jesus said: "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." (Matt. 11:25.)

With man's wisdom alone, one cannot know the truth. This is evidenced

by a survey taken in New Zealand last year, in which there were 411 different churches listed. Hence the need of divine revelation to interpret the teachings of the prophets, and this church is built upon divine revelation.

A marvelous work and a wonder

I take my text today from the twentieth chapter of Isaiah, where he states: "Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men:

"Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, even a marvellous work and