

PRESIDENT JOSEPH FIELDING SMITH

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

My dear brethren and sisters: Here we are at another general conference. I am sure we are all very happy that we can attend, and we welcome all those who are listening in. I hope and pray that the Lord will bless me in what I may say.

The thief of eternal life

Procrastination, as it may be applied to gospel principles, is the thief of eternal life, which is life in the presence of the Father and the Son. There are many among us, even members of the Church, who feel that there is no need for haste in the observance of gospel principles and the keeping of the commandments.

Nephi wrote of the people of the last days: "Yea, and there shall be many which shall say: Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die; and it shall be well with us.

"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." (2 Ne. 28:7-8.)

Do not think that this was said of the world, or even the "stranger . . . within our gates." (See Exod. 20:10.) It is said of members of the Church. Moreover, Nephi warns us that in the last days there will be many who will follow Satan. I could go on and read more from Second Nephi, but I am going to give you the chapter and verse so when you go home, get out your Book of Mormon and read Second Nephi, Chapter 28, verses 20-29.

We are living in the last days. Have we not heard individuals talk as Nephi said they would? Are there not many who excuse themselves and lull themselves to sleep in "carnal security,"

thinking that the Lord will overlook their little sins? Are there not those among us who are denying the power of the devil, and who deny that there is a devil? Do they not "spiritualize" the torments of hell and say there is no hell? Have you not heard these things taught? In this manner, Satan is raging in the hearts of the people, and members of the Church do not entirely escape his cunning sophistries!

Restitution must be made

Bad habits are easily formed, but not so easily broken. Are we yielding to our evil habits, thinking they are only trifles after all, and we will get rid of them in the grave? Do we expect that our bodies will be cleansed in the grave, and we shall come forth with perfect and sanctified bodies in the resurrection? There are some among us who teach such things and excuse themselves for their practices, saying that they will be cleansed in the grave.

Alma taught a very different doctrine. He said to Corianton: "Do not suppose, because it has been spoken concerning restoration, that ye shall be restored from sin to happiness. Behold, I say unto you, wickedness never was happiness. . . .

"For that which ye do send out shall return unto you again, and be restored; therefore, the word restoration more fully condemneth the sinner, and justifieth him not at all." (Al. 41:10, 15.)

The Savior also said, ". . . with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again." (Matt. 7:2.) Some think that a little punishment will not be so bad, and they are willing to take a chance and suffer for their offenses rather than keep the commandments of the Lord, as we are instructed. If they are able to escape with a "few stripes," they may consider themselves fortunate. But let us remember that sin must be atoned for. Restitution must be made; we will have to pay the price if we refuse to repent and to

Sunday, April 6

Third Day

receive the blessings of the gospel.

Punishment is not easy to bear, especially when the conscience is troubled. Who could be happy in suffering, and all the while be thinking that the suffering had come because of a willful, or persistent, breaking of the commandments of God, when knowledge and counsel had been given to walk in righteousness? What will the sinner think in that day when he has learned repentance for willful rebellion, and realizes that the great suffering of our Lord in love made it unnecessary for him so to suffer if he had accepted Christ and his work?

Three kingdoms prepared

Our Eternal Father has prepared three great kingdoms into which the souls of men will go. It is not the purpose here to discuss these kingdoms. In passing, it is only necessary to say that in the celestial will go all those who have not been true: those who have professed and who have not performed (D&C 41:1); the liars, sorcerers, adulterers, and all who refuse to walk in ways of truth. Into the terrestrial will go all those who are honorable, who have been morally clean, but who would not receive the gospel; also those who die without law.

To enter the celestial and obtain exaltation, it is necessary that the whole law be kept. The word of the Lord is as follows:

"Therefore, it must needs be sanctified from all unrighteousness, that it may be prepared for the celestial glory. . . .

"And they who are not sanctified through the law which I have given unto you, even the law of Christ, must inherit another kingdom, even that of a terrestrial kingdom, or that of a telestial kingdom." (D&C 88:18, 21.)

To become sanctified, there are certain definite covenants we must keep in faithfulness, living by "every word that proceedeth forth from the mouth of God." (D&C 84:44.) "They are they who received the testimony of Jesus, and believed on his name and were baptized after the manner of his burial, . . .

"That by keeping the commandments they might be washed and cleansed from all their sins, and receive the Holy Spirit by the laying on of the hands of him who is ordained and sealed unto this power;

"And who overcome by faith, and are sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, which the Father sheds forth upon all those who are just and true." (D&C 76:51-53; see also verses 54-60.) And they who are not sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise and who are not just and true need not expect these great blessings.

Seek the Lord early

No person can begin too early to serve the Lord. Parents are instructed to teach their children from infancy, with the warning that they will be held accountable if they fail to do so. If a child is taught in righteousness from birth, it will most likely be a follower of righteousness always. They who refuse to seek the Lord early are forsaken in the hour of their trouble. Read the history of Israel, of the Nephites. How often when they rebelled were they punished! How slow was the Lord to hear their cries when trouble came upon them because of their sins!

"They were slow to hearken unto the voice of the Lord their God; therefore, the Lord their God is slow to hearken unto their prayers, to answer them in the day of their trouble." (D&C 101:7.) So spake the Lord to modern Israel.

Obligation to keep commandments

Do you desire to enter into the celestial kingdom and receive eternal life? Then be willing to keep all of the commandments the Lord may give you. Baptism and confirmation are the ordinances by which we come into the kingdom of God. But these ordinances of themselves will not grant us a place of exaltation.

Each person baptized into the Church is under obligation to keep the commandments of the Lord. He is under covenant, for baptism is a "new and an everlasting covenant." (D&C

22:1.) When he has proved himself by a worthy life, having been faithful in all things required of him, then it is his privilege to receive other covenants and to take upon himself other obligations that will make of him an heir, and he will become a member of the "Church of the Firstborn." "They are they into whose hands the Father has given all things." He will receive of the Father's fullness and of his glory. Is this worth having? It cannot be obtained without some effort.

We frequently hear quoted these words of the Lord to Joseph Smith: "It is impossible for a man to be saved in ignorance." (D&C 131:6.) In ignorance of what? The philosophies of the world? No! In ignorance of the gospel truths—the saving principles and ordinances by which salvation comes! These must not only be understood, but they must be lived. Knowledge of them will not in itself save us. Obedience thereto will. And then will come the fullness of knowledge, bringing with it wisdom, power, and dominion. And the fullness of these blessings can only be obtained in the temple of the Lord.

The time to prepare

We are told that the fear (love) of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction.

"Also, I give unto you a commandment that ye shall continue in prayer and fasting from this time forth.

"And I give unto you a commandment that you shall teach one another the doctrine of the kingdom." (D&C 88:76-77.)

Do not let us forget the words of Alma: "For behold, this life is the time for men to prepare to meet God; yea, behold the day of this life is the day for men to perform their labors.

"And now, as I said unto you before, as ye have had so many witnesses, therefore, I beseech of you that ye do not procrastinate the day of your repentance until the end; for after this day of life, which is given us to prepare for eternity, behold, if we do not improve our time while in this life,

then cometh the night of darkness wherein there can be no labor performed.

"Ye cannot say, when ye are brought to that awful crisis, that I will repent, that I will return to my God. Nay, ye cannot say this; for that same spirit which doth possess your bodies at the time that ye go out of this life, that same spirit will have power to possess your body in that eternal world." (Al. 34:32-34.)

Diligence in seeking

The Lord is always merciful and kind. If we draw near unto him, he will draw near unto us. ". . . seek me diligently and ye shall find me; ask, and ye shall receive; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." (D&C 88:63.)

Our chief trouble is that we do not seek diligently. Our seeking is superficial; we seem to think the Lord is bound to hear us without our putting forth much effort. Let diligence and love be our guides, and we shall find the path of eternal life.

May we all heed these warnings, I humbly pray, in the name of Jesus Christ, our Redeemer. Amen.

President Hugh B. Brown

President Joseph Fielding Smith of the First Presidency has just addressed us.

The Choir and congregation will now join in singing "God Moves in a Mysterious Way," following which we shall have a brief interlude with music by the Choir.

The choir and congregation joined in singing the hymn, "God Moves in a Mysterious Way."

Following an organ interlude, the Tabernacle Choir sang the song, "Lord Jesus, Thy Dear Angels Send."

President Hugh B. Brown

For the benefit of the television and radio audience we announce that we are again met on Temple Square in