

President N. Eldon Tanner

Second Counselor in the First Presidency

● On this beautiful Sabbath morning it is a privilege and pleasure for me to bring greetings on behalf of the First Presidency and my colleagues to all who are here assembled and to all who are listening in.

Last week we commemorated the resurrection of our Lord and Savior, which brings hope and promise to all who accept him and are prepared to keep his commandments. He said:

“. . . I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.” (John 10:10.)

“I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:

“And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.” (John 11:25-26.)

And then he gave us great assurance in these words:

“. . . this is my work and my glory— to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.” (Moses 1:39.)

Plan to insure blessings

He gave his life for us, and the plan which, if followed, will make it possible for us to enjoy every blessing promised to those who will keep his commandments. In these latter days he explained in these words:

“There is a law, irrevocably decreed in heaven before the foundations of this world, upon which all blessings are predicated—

“And when we obtain any blessing from God, it is by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated.” (D&C 130:20-21.)

We are all concerned about conditions in the world today, and are searching for answers to the many problems that are affecting our personal lives, our communities, and countries throughout the world. Though it is true that the trend in the world today is toward lawlessness, rioting, and rebellion, we are sick and tired of having it played up so much both in conversation and in news media. We, with a

positive approach, need to center our efforts on living and teaching the gospel, thereby eliminating the cause and improving conditions. Every man, including the rebellious, who is honest with himself must admit that what he is ultimately seeking is happiness and a better way of life.

With this in mind, I wish to address my remarks to the subject: The Blessings of Obedience. While I speak, I pray that the Spirit of the Lord will attend and guide us. Let us remember the words of Samuel to Saul: “. . . to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.” (1 Sam. 15:22.) And let us also remember that “through the Atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel.” (Article of Faith 3.)

Freedom to choose

Just the other day I was talking to a young man who said, in effect, “I am fed up and tired of being told, ‘You *have* to do this,’ or ‘You *have* to do that.’ I want to be free to decide for *myself* what I want to do.”

My response was: “You *are* free to choose *exactly* what you want to do, as long as it does not restrict or impose on the rights or liberties of others, but you must be responsible for your acts and prepared to take the consequences.”

I explained that the Lord’s greatest gift to mortal man is threefold: first, the right to immortality and eternal life; second, the plan by which he can gain it; third, *his free agency to choose what he will do*. The Lord gave us the plan which will bring us the greatest joy and happiness while on this earth, and which will prepare us for eternal life. All we have to do to enjoy this is to obey the law and keep his commandments.

Subject to natural laws

I suggested to this young man that he consider with me the physical or

natural laws, which are fixed and immutable, and which apply to all, regardless of their station or learning or intention. If a person, whether knowingly, ignorantly, intentionally, or accidentally, touches a hot stove or a bare high-voltage wire, he will be burned to the extent of the exposure. If for any reason he steps in front of a rapidly moving vehicle, even to save another life, he will be injured and possibly killed. Numerous examples could be given to show that we are subject to these laws regardless of who we are or what our intention might be. We cannot change the laws of nature.

As we understand natural laws and respect them, we can apply them to our good. If we violate law, we suffer; and if we obey it, we are blessed. How fortunate we are to know that we can depend on these natural laws: that the sun will rise at a certain time every morning; that electricity, though we don't know exactly what it is, will respond always the same under the same conditions; that the sun will be eclipsed by the moon at a certain time on a certain day in a certain year, all because the laws of nature never vary. Imagine an engineer, doctor, or scientist in any field not being able to depend on the laws of nature, or disregarding them. Man can never ignore the natural laws affecting his operations and be successful. In fact, to ignore them could be disastrous.

Laws exist for man's benefit

All the laws of God and the laws of nature and the laws of the land are made for the benefit of man, for his comfort, enjoyment, safety, and well-being; and it is up to the individual to learn these laws and to determine whether or not he will enjoy these benefits by obeying the law and by keeping the commandments. My whole purpose today is to show that laws exist for our benefit and that to be happy and successful we must obey the laws and regulations pertaining to our activities; and these laws will function either to our joy and well-being or to our detriment and sorrow, according to our actions.

Flight of Apollo 11

To accomplish the great flight of Apollo 11, which resulted in the landing on the moon, every law of nature affecting this endeavor had to be kept in the most minute detail: the law of physics, the law of chemistry, the law of gravity, and every other law pertaining to the flight had to be understood and applied by those who were concerned and engaged in the preparations. They did not think of these laws as being a restriction or impediment to them in any way, but rather as a means by which they could carry out their program; and they were determined to learn all they could about the laws on which their success was dependent, and to obey or apply them so they might be successful in their mission.

Success through obeying law

This is so true in life. To be a musician, to be an athlete, to get a degree, to accomplish anything worthwhile, we must set our goals, determine what we want to do and wish to accomplish, and set about to find out which laws if obeyed will make this possible, and then discipline ourselves in order to accomplish it. When we do this, we are on our way to success, while those who continually fight the laws and refuse to obey, and complain about things that are required, become frustrated, begin to rebel, and fail to accomplish.

As someone has said, you do not break the law, but actually break yourself by refusing to respect it as it applies to your condition. The law applies, and our actions determine the result. Too often we are not prepared to discipline ourselves and do that which is necessary to accomplish the things which we desire most.

Laws of the land

It is a fact that the laws of the land are made by the governing body in the interest of the safety and well-being of the citizens. Consider, for example, the laws pertaining to drunken driving and other regulations pertaining to highway traffic control, health, zoning restric-

tions, building codes, etc. Even taxes make it possible for us to have better roads, better schools, and other public services, all of which are for our comfort and convenience and self-improvement.

If all people were to recognize law as a benefit to man and then honor and obey it, it would contribute greatly to our health, well-being, and happiness. Laws are essential. Imagine a city, community, state, or country without law and regulations. To the extent we disregard, disobey, and flaunt the law, we are losing our freedom, depriving others of theirs, and leading to anarchy. If a bad law exists, then the people should take proper legal measures through their governing bodies to improve or change the law, but while it is law, it should be obeyed.

Laws to improve social conditions

In life generally we have to determine the kind of life or environment of which we want to be a part. We still have in the human race today people in the jungles who practice cannibalism, where the animal instincts in man rule, and where the laws of the jungle apply. If that is the kind of life we wish, it is available to us. Part of the purpose of our existence, however, is to rise above these animal instincts, and to reach the highest plane of human behavior in our social relations.

In order that we may accomplish this, God, our Father and our Creator, and his Son Jesus Christ, who want us to be happy and successful, have given us the laws which, if applied in our lives, will improve our social conditions and our relationship to one another. Yes, if all of us would obey these laws, we would have none of the disturbing conditions so prevalent today, and our young people would have no reason, need, nor desire to demonstrate against a society that today does not practice what it preaches.

The Ten Commandments

Let us refer to some of the Ten Commandments, which are as applicable today as they were in the time of Moses, and which later were taught

by Christ. If everyone would obey the commandments, "Thou shalt not steal, kill, covet, commit adultery, or bear false witness," we could leave our homes or properties unattended, walk down the street any place at any time, or feel secure in our homes, without fear of thieves or robbers, or that someone might be trying to take our lives.

Imagine too the joy of living in a community in which there were no covetousness, backbiting, or adultery; where everyone was living according to the law. In addition to the peaceful and happy existence we would lead, and the strength and help we could be to one another, just think of the money we would save on law enforcement and the effects of crime, all of which money could be diverted to fighting poverty, or improving health and educational facilities, and for other worthwhile purposes. We cannot begin to number the temporal blessings we would receive from obedience to these commandments.

Lord's law of health

Another commandment that is so important in the lives of all of us is the Lord's law of health, which is called the Word of Wisdom, and which should be taught in every home by example and by precept. In this Word of Wisdom we are warned against the use of tobacco and alcohol and other things that are harmful to the body. I am sure we can include the use of drugs.

Though this law of health was given to us by the Lord over a hundred years ago, it was generally ignored until scientists and experience proved beyond doubt that these things are not only harmful to the body, but are a menace to society. Many *still* ignore and defy this law, and are prepared to take the risks. The use of these things results in broken homes, diseased and broken bodies and spirits, destruction of property, misery, and death on the highway, and many other tragedies too numerous to mention, all of which are now causing society, lawmakers, law enforcement officers, and all of us serious concern.

In just one evening I gleaned the

Sunday, April 5

Second Day

following information from reading the newspaper:

One-car fatal accidents doubled in '69.

Twenty-six percent of all fatal accidents occurred after the driver had been drinking.

A well-known television personality died of lung cancer at age 45. He had publicly stated he would rather smoke and take a chance than be a "fat neurotic." He quit when he learned he had cancer.

A hotel fire caused by a cigarette claimed 14 lives, and a burning cigarette in another building caused ten thousand dollars worth of damage.

Marijuana harm is very real, and drugs put blinders on youth.

Glorious promise for obedience

We owe it to ourselves, to our youth, and to the future of our country to restrict and if possible do away entirely with the use of these devilish and deleterious things that are causing so much tragedy in the world today. Listen to the great and glorious promise given by the Lord to all those who will keep this and other commandments:

"And all saints who remember to keep and do these sayings, *walking in obedience to the commandments*, shall receive health in their navel and marrow to their bones;

"And shall find wisdom and great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures;

"And shall run and not be weary, and shall walk and not faint.

"And I, the Lord, give unto them a promise, that the destroying angel shall pass by them, as the children of Israel, and not slay them." (D&C 89:18-21. Italics added.)

Can you think of a greater promise?

Keeping the sabbath holy

Let me refer to another very important commandment, which is: "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.

"Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work:

"But the seventh day is the sabbath

of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work." (Exod. 20:8-10.)

And the Lord has told us:

"And that thou mayest more fully keep thyself unspotted from the world, thou shalt go to the house of prayer and offer up thy sacraments upon my holy day." (D&C 59:9.)

In spite of what so many say to the contrary, this is a law of God, a religious and therefore a moral law. If observed, it will bring many blessings not otherwise enjoyed; and, like any other law, if not obeyed it will bring condemnation to the soul.

Learning to know God

Keeping the Sabbath day holy gives us an opportunity to learn and understand the teachings of the gospel through worship and study, and to learn to know God, which is essential to our eternal destiny.

The Lord has said:

"And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." (John 17:3.)

Surely for one day in seven we can and need to turn our thoughts to our Maker and feed our spiritual selves, to learn obedience to God, and to teach reverence and obedience to our children. One of the greatest lessons we can learn in life is that "man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." (Matt. 4:4.)

Someone has wisely said: "Woe unto those who consider the laws of God only as forces of convenience, to be ignored or employed at will. Woe unto those individuals, classes, and nations that believe in the might of their wealth, in the strength of their armor, in the invincibility of their positions."

No culture can last, no nation or union of nations can survive if they ignore God's laws. The Lord has admonished:

". . . seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33), meaning everything that is for our good.

Importance of teaching spirituality

We cannot keep the Sabbath day holy, nor enjoy the blessings thereof, by seeking to satisfy our material wants and pleasures. It is truthfully said that "material things have no power to raise the sunken spirit. The wealth of the world cannot heal a broken heart, and the wisdom of all the universities cannot turn into righteousness a wayward soul."

As important as it is that we attend the house of prayer and keep the Sabbath day holy, teaching spirituality cannot be left to the churches alone. Parents have the first and great and important responsibility to teach the laws of God in the home. The Lord has told us:

"And again, inasmuch as parents have children in Zion, or in any of her stakes which are organized, that teach them not to understand the doctrine of repentance, faith in Christ the Son of the living God, and of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of the hands, when eight years old, the sin be upon the heads of the parents.

"And they shall also teach their children to pray, and to walk uprightly before the Lord." (D&C 68:25, 28.) This means to keep his commandments—to love, honor, and obey him.

Parents to be living examples

Parents, if we are to teach our children to keep the commandments and walk uprightly before God, we must be their living example. We cannot break any law with impunity and expect our children to honor and obey us or the law. We cannot question the teachings and commandments of the Lord without causing great doubts in the minds of our children as to why they should keep the commandments. We cannot be hypocrites. We cannot teach or profess a belief in one thing and live another, and expect our children to obey the commandment: "Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." (Exod. 20:12.)

Children who are taught obedience,

to honor and obey the law, to have faith in God and to keep his commandments, will, as they grow up, honor their parents and be a credit to them; and they will be able to meet and solve their problems, find greater success and joy in life, and contribute greatly to the solution of the problems now causing the world such great concern. It is up to the parents to see to it that their children are prepared through obedience to law for the positions of leadership they will occupy in the future, where their responsibility will be to bring peace and righteousness to the world.

Two great commandments

The Lord's message may be summed up in his statement:

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

"This is the first and great commandment.

"And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

"On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." (Matt. 22:37-40.)

Surely if we love the Lord we will keep his commandments, and if we will love our fellowmen we will enjoy utopia here on earth.

As the Lord further has promised: ". . . he who doeth the works of righteousness shall receive his reward, even peace in this world, and eternal life in the world to come." (D&C 59:23.)

I bear witness to you this day that as we accept God as our Father, and his Son Jesus Christ as the Savior of the world, and keep the commandments, we will have greater joy here on earth and eternal life in the world to come. May this be the blessing of all of us, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen. ○

President Harold B. Lee

He to whom you have just listened is President N. Eldon Tanner of the First Presidency.

The Tabernacle Choir will now sing "Now We Sing Thy Praise."