

Elder William H. Bennett

Assistant to the Council of the Twelve

● My brothers and sisters: It is a choice and wonderful experience to be called to be an Assistant to the Council of the Twelve, but it is also a very humbling experience. I feel especially humble this afternoon as I stand before you for the first time as a General Authority and contemplate the sacredness and the importance of this great call. I ask for an interest in your faith and prayers, not just here today but on a continuous basis, that I might be able to serve in the way the Lord would like me to serve.

I am grateful for this call because I love the Lord, and I have found great joy and satisfaction in being in his service, in helping to build the kingdom of God here upon the earth, and in trying to serve my fellowmen.

Gratitude for testimony

I know that God lives; that Jesus Christ is his Son, the Redeemer of the world; that Joseph Smith was indeed a true prophet of God, through whom the gospel of Jesus Christ was restored in these the last days and through whom the Church of Jesus Christ was re-established. I know that President Joseph Fielding Smith is a true prophet of God, and I sustain him and all the other brethren with all my heart.

How grateful I am for this testimony, and how grateful I am to those who helped me gain it early in life, and who have helped me strengthen it with the passage of time.

Tribute to family

I should like to pay tribute today to my ancestors who accepted the gospel, joined the Church, and gave me a rich heritage, and to my parents and brothers and sisters, all of whom taught me the gospel by example. My mother was one of the sweetest women who ever lived, and my father was truly a noble man. It has been said that an honest man is the noblest work of God. That's the kind of man my father was. Those

of you who knew him and had dealings with him know that I speak the truth.

I married rather late in life. The Lord went the extra mile with me and gave me a wonderful person to be my wife and blessed our home with six lovely children. I love them dearly, and they are all supporting me wholeheartedly, without reservations, in this new assignment.

Let me take a moment to share a choice experience we had together on Father's Day. It happened in a Sunday School service. I didn't know anything about what was planned. At the appropriate time the chorister asked my family members to come forward. Then my wife and five daughters sang "We Ever Pray for Thee, Our Father Dear." They substituted the word *Father*, in place of the word *prophet*, in the song for this occasion and sang it that way. Then my only son recited the poem "I Follow a Noble Father." My heart was touched and so were the hearts of all others who were there. I am grateful for my wonderful family.

Appreciation for associates

I should like to say thanks to all you wonderful people in Alberta, Canada, who taught me in my early youth, in Sunday School, Primary, and MIA; to my colleagues and students at Utah State University; to people throughout the state of Utah with whom I have worked over the years; and to President Glen Taggart, president of Utah State University, who has been very helpful and understanding during the transition period between my assignment at Utah State University and my assignment with the Church.

Inspirational leaders

Four others to whom I am deeply indebted are President Hugh B. Brown, who was my stake president in the Lethbridge Stake when I was a boy; Asael E. Palmer, a counselor to Presi-

dent Brown at that time, who later became president of the Lethbridge Stake, where he served for many years; my uncle, Archibald F. Bennett, one of the great teachers of the Church, who lived about as close to his Father in heaven as any man I know; and my Scoutmaster, Vernon Bigelow. These men had the ability to reach me when I lacked confidence in myself as a boy. They helped me set worthwhile goals and objectives and to gain a vision of the importance of the gospel in my life and in the scheme of things. I just want to say I will be eternally grateful to these men for what they did for me and are still doing.

Experience with President Brown

Let me take a moment to share a choice experience that I had with President Brown. I have always been interested in athletics. One day when I was about 15 years of age, I was taking part in the high jump in a tri-stake MIA track meet. We had reached the height where most of the jumpers were eliminated; there were just two of us still in there. I knocked the bar off twice and had one jump remaining. President Brown, who was watching the event, came over, put his arm on my shoulder, and said, "Young man, you can clear that bar; I know you can. I have been watching you. You are not over the bar when you are at the highest point. If you adjust your take-off just a bit, you will clear that bar, young man. I know you will!"

Something happened to me inside. It seemed as though new strength had come into my body from President Brown. I went up to that bar with complete assurance that I could clear it and I did. I shall never forget that experience.

In the days of my youth the Lord saw fit to bless me with an inferiority complex. I say "blessed" because in wrestling with this problem I learned the meaning of humility. I learned what it meant to get close to my Father in heaven through prayer on an almost continuous basis. I learned that in problems we find our challenges. In those challenges lie opportunities. If

we can just identify those opportunities and capitalize on them, growth, progress, and success will result. I learned that strength comes from facing up to problems squarely and realistically, not from disregarding them or avoiding them.

World beset by problems

The world today is beset by many problems, and mention has been made of this in various ways during this conference. When man unaided tries to solve these problems, he frequently finds that new problems arise, and there is confusion, more confusion, contradictions, strife, and contention. Finally, man may resort to war to try to solve his difficulties. But war does not solve difficulties. This was brought forcibly to my mind recently when I was in Europe participating in a seminar for mission presidents and their wives. The seminar was held in Brussels, Belgium, just a few miles from Waterloo, where the forces of the Duke of Wellington engaged the forces of Napoleon in a great battle, back in about 1815. And it was just a few miles from Flanders Field and not very far from Dunkirk, where other battles and fighting took place at different times in the history of the world.

Conflict between good and evil

And now war is with us again, and many people are deeply troubled and confused. But I should like to say that the great battles of the world are not fought on the battlefields. They are fought in the hearts and in the minds of men and women everywhere, as they wrestle with their problems, try to meet the difficulties and issues that confront them, exercise their free agency, and make choices. The forces of evil and the forces of righteousness are both trying to influence the decisions, and there is conflict in the hearts and minds of men everywhere. If the forces of righteousness triumph universally, there will be love, harmony, and peace on earth. If the forces of evil dominate, there will be outward expressions that lead to war and destruction.

Gospel brings peace

The gospel of Jesus Christ can resolve those inner conflicts and bring inner peace and outer peace as well. The gospel of Jesus Christ is the most valuable, the most needed message in the world today. It is the answer to the problems that grow out of man's selfishness and greed, where such a high percentage of the problems arise. The gospel teaches us to build rather than to destroy, to help people to give of themselves in unselfish service to others rather than being on the receiving end of things most of the time.

Over the years men and women have learned to appreciate the importance of free agency. But all too frequently they overlook the fact that along with free agency there must be responsibility and accountability. One has his free agency to determine what he will do and what he will not do, but he does not have his free agency to determine the consequences, because laws operate.

Obedience to law

The gospel teaches the importance of obedience to law. President Lee referred to that so beautifully this morning when he talked about the astronauts. Let me make a further application. You will remember that the astronauts on one of the missions had an outward trip and a return trip. On the outward trip their goal was the moon. On the return trip their goal was the earth, their home base. They reached their goals both going and coming because they themselves, the engines and the instruments under their control, and those at mission control at home base were able to operate in accordance with law.

Do you remember what happened on the Apollo 13 mission that Brother Lee referred to? As they made their return trip they were almost home when they found out that they were off course a bit. They had to make a correction.

To do so, they had to fire their engine. If that engine hadn't fired, the correction could not have been made; they would have missed the earth by eighty miles, and we wouldn't have been able to bring them back. But the engine *did* fire, the correction was made, and they returned to earth safe and sound.

Is there not an important lesson there for us? Is it not true that we, too, had an outward trip when we left our Father in heaven in the spirit world and came to earth? Are we not now walking around on our earth, which might be likened to the astronaut's moon? And is it not true that whether or not we will be able sometime in the future to return to our Father in heaven, our home base, will be dependent on our willingness and our ability to observe the laws and keep the commandments that pertain thereto? And is it not true that the Lord has provided us with a way through repentance for making a correction to put us back on course when we have strayed because of sin?

The gospel of Jesus Christ is the answer to all problems. However, men and women everywhere must be doers of the word, and not hearers only, if they would have peace within themselves and peace in the world and would find joy and happiness in this life and in the life to come. This is our great and important test. May we be equal to it, I humbly pray, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen. ○

President Harold B. Lee

Thank you, Brother Bennett.

President Brown, if you are listening in, your heart will be warmed by one whose life you touched, which I am sure could be multiplied countless times by the lives that you have uplifted. The Lord bless you, President Brown.

We will now listen to Elder Alvin R. Dyer, Assistant to the Twelve.