

Bishop Vaughn J. Featherstone

Of the Presiding Bishopric

My beloved brothers and sisters of the great Church of Jesus Christ, I would like you to know how humble I am at this great opportunity. I kind of like Ed Gardner's story. His wife is hard of hearing and she wore a hearing aid; as they sat one evening in the living room, and she was knitting and looking down, he looked out over his newspaper and, speaking about his wife, he said, "You know, I am just kind of proud of you." And she looked up and said, "You know, I am getting tired of you, too."

When President Lee and President Tanner under the direction of President Joseph Fielding Smith talked to me on the phone, I wasn't exactly sure I heard what I thought I heard.

Integrity of brethren

For over twenty years now, I have been coming to the priesthood sessions of conference at about four o'clock. I watch the afternoon sessions at home on TV until about twenty to four and then drive down here and wait outside with my sons or with friends. We come inside to priesthood meeting when they open the doors and sit for two or three hours before the meeting starts.

During that time I have had one single purpose in mind. Along with hearing the words of the apostles and prophets and great General Authorities I have looked into their faces and studied them. And I am sure each time that I have found purity of heart. I have found integrity. I have found great love and understanding. I have found self-discipline. I have found all the fine qualities that a holder of the priesthood would like to have. And then I have gone back renewed and decided that I want to put the things I have seen in their faces into mine.

Aaronic Priesthood

After this call came the other day, I went out into the backyard, and in my mind's eye I could see hosts of Aaronic Priesthood bearers—young men who are fine and good and true, who are dedicated to the Lord with all their heart and soul, who want to put that same look into their face which we see in the faces of the brethren here before us today. And they were doing it and they were obedient and following their leaders.

And in my mind's eye, with great sadness, I saw another great group of Aaronic Priesthood bearers who were not able to put this into their faces because they were disobedient; they were being persuaded by friends and peers.

Then I saw a third group that troubled me even more, because these were they who would have been faithful had they had the leadership. If someone had reached out a hand and lifted them and picked them up and cared for them, they could have put integrity and love and purity of heart—all of these fine qualities—into their lives.

Gratitude for family

I am more grateful to my wife than I could ever express to you. She has to be the sweetest, kindest human being that I have ever known, and she has this look in her face that I have seen in the apostles and prophets and the General Authorities. And I have five sons. Two of them are on missions, one in the Gulf States and one in North Carolina-Virginia. Both of these boys are Eagle Scouts, and they both, at least from the words we get from them, are striving with all their might to serve the Lord in their mission calls.

I have two other boys at home—Joe and Scott—who are also Eagle Scouts, and we are very proud of them, and they are following and being obedient as they should be. Then I have a young son, eleven, Lawrence, who I believe has the stature of Mormon. He is a large and mighty young man, and I am very proud of him. Then we have one daughter, after the five boys, Jill, and I am sure she was sent as a special angel into our home.

Confidence of Bishop Brown

I am grateful for the confidence of Bishop [Victor L.] Brown. As I have considered this past week—and it's the longest week I have ever lived in my life—as I have considered the great souls that I know across the Church and the powerful influence and the great direction they have and the great willingness to follow the Lord, I am humble that he would call one such as I, or that the Lord would call me through him.

May I bear testimony to you. I should first mention that sweet mother of mine, and my in-laws. These are wonderful people. My sweet mother has pretty well raised our family alone. She has given the guidance and mental and physical ambition; she has bred this into us and wanted us to make something of ourselves, and I am so proud of her.

Conversion of Lamanite king

In closing let me just quote to you the words of the prophet in the book of Alma, when Aaron had spoken all the day long to the king of all the Lamanites, and finally the king believed; and these are the words:

"And it came to pass that after Aaron had expounded these things unto him, the king said: What shall I do that I may have this eternal life of which thou hast spoken? Yea, what shall I do that I may be born of God, having this wicked spirit rooted out of my breast, and receive his Spirit,

that I may be filled with joy, that I may not be cast off at the last day? Behold, said he, I will give up all that I possess, yea, I will forsake my kingdom, that I may receive this great joy.

"But Aaron said unto him; If thou desirest this thing, if thou wilt bow down before God, yea, if thou wilt repent of all thy sins, and will bow down before God, . . . believing that ye shall receive, then shalt thou receive the hope which thou desirest.

"And it came to pass that when Aaron had said these words, the king did bow down before the Lord, upon his knees; yea, even he did prostrate himself upon the earth, and cried mightily, saying:

"O God, Aaron hath told me that there is a God; and if there is a God, and if thou art God, wilt thou make thyself known unto me, and I will give away all my sins to know thee. . . ." (Al. 22:15-18.)

Knowledge of God

There is a great host of Aaronic Priesthood bearers who would give away all their sins, they would give away all that the world would offer, and they would give away their riches, if they but knew that he was there. Our solemn responsibility today is to help these Aaronic Priesthood bearers understand and know the great callings, know that God does live, which I testify he does, and that we have living prophets upon the earth.

During those twenty years I have watched our beloved prophet and the Council of the Twelve come in, I know these are inspired men, these are holy men; they are prophets. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen. □

President Harold B. Lee

Bishop Featherstone has now spoken to us. We will now hear from Bishop H. Burke Peterson. He has just been sustained as the new first counselor in the Presiding Bishopric of the Church. We welcome you, Bishop, with all our hearts.