

### Laws governing prayer

It is important to recognize that the laws governing prayer are as immutable as those governing science. Response is predicated upon our having the proper attitude and so living that we are entitled to the whisperings of the Spirit. We must keep ourselves in tune with the Holy Ghost.

Yes, as we do our part or magnify our callings, the Lord will make us equal to the task by blessing us with strength of body and of mind far beyond our normal capacities.

May we this day commit ourselves to so live that we may go before the Lord with a clear conscience and ask for his divine guidance and assistance. As we do this, we will truly appreciate the words of the beautiful hymn: "O how praying rests the weary! Prayer will change the night to day." (*Hymns*, no. 31.)

May the choice blessings of our Father in heaven attend you, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen. □

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Following Elder Franklin D. Richards, the Choir sang "How Wondrous and Great" and "Keep My Words" without announcement.

### President Harold B. Lee

Elder Franklin D. Richards, Assistant to the Twelve, has just spoken to us, followed by the singing of the Tabernacle Choir.

Following a brief interlude Elder Thomas S. Monson of the Council of the Twelve will be our concluding speaker.

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Alexander Schreiner played a short interlude of organ music.

### President Lee

We welcome those joining with us on television and radio in this third session of the 142nd Annual Conference of the Church.

Elder Thomas S. Monson of the Council of the Twelve, will be our concluding speaker.

## Elder Thomas S. Monson

*Of the Council of the Twelve*

### "Finishers Wanted"

On sunlit days during the noon hour, the streets of Salt Lake City abound with men and women who for a moment leave the confines of the tall office buildings and engage in that universal delight called window shopping. On occasion I, too, am a participant.

One Wednesday I paused before the elegant show window of a prestigious furniture store. That which caught and held my attention was not the beautifully designed sofa nor the comfortable-appearing chair that stood at its side. Neither was it the beautiful chandelier positioned overhead. Rather, my eyes rested upon a small sign that

had been placed at the bottom right-hand corner of the window. Its message was brief: "Finishers Wanted."

The store had need of those persons who possessed the talent and the skill to make ready for final sale the expensive furniture that the firm manufactured and sold. "Finishers Wanted." The words remained with me as I returned to the pressing activities of the day.

In life, as in business, there has always been a need for those persons who could be called finishers. Their ranks are few, their opportunities many, their contributions great.

## The race of life

From the very beginning to the present time, a fundamental question remains to be answered by each who runs the race of life. Shall I falter or shall I finish? On the answer await the blessings of joy and happiness here in mortality and eternal life in the world to come.

We are not left without guidance to make this momentous decision. The Holy Bible contains those accounts, even those lessons, which, if carefully learned, will serve us well and be as a beacon light to guide our thoughts and influence our actions. As we read, we sympathize with those who falter. We honor those who finish.

The apostle Paul likened life to a great race when he declared: "Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain." (1 Cor. 9:24.)

And before the words of Paul fell upon the ears of his listeners, the counsel of the preacher, even the son of David, king in Jerusalem, cautioned: ". . . the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong. . . ." (Eccles. 9:11.)

### David's failure to finish

Could the son of David have been referring to his own father? Judged by any standards, the greatest king Israel ever had was David. Anointed by Samuel, he was honored by the Lord.

In the first flush of his incredible triumphs, David rode the crest of popularity. As he achieved fresh victories, the women greeted him with a new song: ". . . Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands." (1 Sam. 18:7.) In adoration the people exclaimed: "Behold, we are thy bone and thy flesh." (2 Sam. 5:1.)

Power he won. Peace he lost.

It happened one evening when David was walking upon the roof of the king's house that he saw from the roof a woman bathing, and the woman was very beautiful.

"And David sent and inquired after the woman. And one said, Is not this Bathsheba, . . . the wife of Uriah the Hittite?" So "David sent messengers, and took her. . ." (2 Sam. 11:3-4.)

The gross sin of adultery was followed by yet another: ". . . Set ye Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle, and retire ye from him, that he may be smitten, and die." (2 Sam. 11:15.) Lust and power had triumphed.

David's rebuke came from the Lord God of Israel: ". . . thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife. . . . Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house. . . ." (2 Sam. 12:9-10.)

David commenced well the race, then faltered and failed to finish his course.

### The rich young man

Lest we lull ourselves into thinking that only the gross sins of life cause us to falter, consider the experience of the rich young man who came running to the Savior and asked the question: "Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?"

Jesus answered him: "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.

"He saith unto him, Which?"

To Jesus' enumeration of the commandments, "The young man saith . . . All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?"

"Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, . . . and come and follow me.

"But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions." (Matt. 19:16-18, 20-22.)

He preferred the comforts of earth to the treasures of heaven. He would not purchase the things of eternity by abandoning those of time. He faltered. He failed to finish.

## Betrayal of Christ

So it was with Judas Iscariot. He commenced his ministry as an apostle of the Lord. He ended it a traitor. For thirty paltry pieces of silver, he sold his soul. At last, realizing the enormity of his sin, Judas, to his patrons and tempters of his crime, shrieked: "I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood." (Matt. 27:4.)

Remorse had led to despair, despair to madness, and madness to suicide. He had succeeded in betraying the Christ. He had failed to finish the apostolic ministry to which he had been divinely called.

Lust for power, greed of gold, and disdain for honor have ever appeared as faces of failure in the panorama of life. Captivated by their artificial attraction, many noble souls have stumbled and fallen, thus losing the crown of victory reserved for the finisher of life's great race.

Concerning those who fall short, John Greenleaf Whittier's words seem particularly fitting:

"For of all sad words of tongue or pen,  
The saddest are these: 'It might have  
been!'" —"Maude Muller"

## Job, a finisher

May we turn from the lives of those who faltered and consider for a moment some who finished and won the prize.

There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job, and that man was perfect and upright and one that feared God and eschewed evil. Pious in his conduct, prosperous in his fortune, Job was to face a test that would tempt any man.

Shorn of his possessions, scorned by his friends, afflicted by his suffering, even tempted by his wife, Job was to declare from the depths of his noble soul: ". . . behold, my witness is in heaven, and my record is on high." (Job 16:19.) ". . . I know that my redeemer liveth. . . ." (Job 19:25.)

Job did not falter. Job became a finisher.

## Paul's example

Following the earthly ministry of the Lord, there were many who, rather than deny testimony of him, would forfeit their lives. Such was Paul the apostle. The impulse of his father to send him to Jerusalem opened the door to Paul's destiny. He would pass through it and help to shape a new world.

Gifted in his capacity to stir, move, and manage groups of men, Paul was a peerless example of one who nobly made the transition from sinner to saint. Though disappointment, heartache, and trial were to beset him, yet Paul, at the conclusion of his ministry, could say: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." (2 Tim. 4:7.) Like Job, Paul was a finisher.

He admonished us to "lay aside . . . sin" and to "run with patience the race . . . , Looking [for an example] unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith. . . ." (Heb. 12:1-2.)

## Work finished

Though Jesus was tempted by the evil one, yet he resisted. Though he was hated, yet he loved. Though he was betrayed, yet he triumphed. Not in a cloud of glory or chariot of fire was Jesus to depart mortality, but with arms outstretched in agony upon a cruel cross. The magnitude of his mission is depicted in the simplicity of his words.

To his Father he prayed, ". . . the hour is come. . . I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." (John 17:1,4.) ". . . into thy hands I commend my spirit. . . ." (Luke 23:46.)

Mortality ended. Immortality began.

## Marks of the finisher

Times change, circumstances vary, but the true marks of a finisher remain.

Note them well, for they are vital to our success.

1. *The Mark of Vision.* It has been said that the doorways of history turn on small hinges, and so do people's lives. We are constantly making small decisions. The outcome determines the success or failure of our lives. That is why it is worthwhile to look ahead, set a course, and at least be partly ready when the moment of decision comes. True finishers have the capacity to visualize their objective.

2. *The Mark of Effort.* Vision without effort is daydreaming, effort without vision is drudgery; but vision, coupled with effort, will obtain the prize.

Needed is the capacity to make the second effort when life's challenges lay us low.

"Stick to your task 'til it sticks to you;  
Beginners are many, but enders are few.  
Honor, power, place and praise  
Will always come to the one who stays.

"Stick to your task 'til it sticks to you;  
Bend at it, sweat at it, smile at it, too;  
For out of the bend and the sweat and  
the smile  
Will come life's victories after a while."

—Author Unknown

3. *The Mark of Faith.* Long years ago the psalmist wrote: "It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man: It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes." (Ps. 118:8-9.) Recognize that faith and doubt cannot exist in the same mind at the same time, for one will dispel the other.

4. *The Mark of Virtue.* ". . . let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly. . . ." (D&C 121:45.) This counsel from the Lord will provide staying power in the race we run.

5. *The Mark of Courage.* Courage becomes a living and attractive virtue when it is regarded not as a willingness to die manfully, but the determination to live decently. Have the courage—

"To dream the impossible dream;  
To fight the unbeatable foe;  
To bear with unbearable sorrow;  
To run where the brave dare not go.

"To right the unrightable wrong;  
To love, pure and chaste, from afar;  
To try when your arms are too weary  
To reach the unreachable star."<sup>1</sup>

—and you will thus become a finisher.

6. *The Mark of Prayer.* When the burdens of life become heavy, when trials test one's faith, when pain, sorrow, and despair cause the light of hope to flicker and burn low, communication with our Heavenly Father provides peace.

These, the marks of a true finisher, will be as a lamp to our feet in the journey through life. Ever beckoning us onward and lifting us upward is he who pleaded, ". . . come, follow me." (Luke 18:22.)

### Experience with missionary

Frequently his help comes silently —on occasion with dramatic impact. Such was my experience of some years ago when, as a mission president, I was afforded the privilege of guiding the activities of precious young men and women, even missionaries whom he had called.

Some had problems, others required motivation; but one came to me in utter despair. He had made his decision to leave the mission field when but at the halfway mark. His bags were packed, his return ticket purchased. He came by to bid me farewell. We talked; we listened; we prayed. There remained hidden the actual reason for his decision to quit.

As we arose from our knees in the quiet of my office, the missionary began to weep. Flexing the muscle in his strong right arm, he blurted out, "This is my problem. All through school

<sup>1</sup>Joe Darion, "The Impossible Dream," Sam Fox, Publisher, New York, 1965.

my muscle power qualified me for honors in football and track, but my mental power was neglected. President Monson, I'm ashamed of my school record. It reveals that 'with effort' I have the capacity to read at but the level of the fourth grade. I can't even read the Book of Mormon. How then can I understand its contents and teach others its truths?"

The silence of the room was broken by my young nine-year-old son, who, without knocking, opened the door and, with surprise, apologetically said, "Excuse me. I just wanted to put this book back on the shelf."

He handed me the book. Its title: *A Child's Story of the Book of Mormon*, by Dr. Deta P. Neeley. I turned to the foreword and read these words: "This book has been written with a scientifically controlled vocabulary to the level of the fourth grade." A sincere prayer from an honest heart had been dramatically answered.

My missionary accepted the challenge to read the book. Half laughing, half crying, he declared, "It will be good to read something I can understand." Clouds of despair were dispelled by the sunshine of hope. He completed an honorable mission. He became a finisher.

### Prize of eternal life

Today I think I shall once more walk by that furniture store in our city and again gaze at the small sign in the large show window, that I may indelibly impress upon my mind the true meaning of its words: "Finishers Wanted."

I pray humbly that each one of us may be a finisher in the race of life and thus qualify for that precious prize: eternal life with our Heavenly Father in the celestial kingdom. I testify that God lives, that this is his work, and ask that each may follow the example of his Son, a true finisher, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen. □

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Following Elder Thomas S. Monson's address, the Choir sang "Praise the Lord" without announcement.

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### President Harold B. Lee

Elder Thomas S. Monson of the Council of the Twelve has just given the concluding address.

We are grateful for the managers and operators of many television and radio stations who have offered their facilities as a public service to make the proceedings of this conference available to millions throughout North America, South America, the Far East, and many other areas of the world.

These proceedings are being broadcast over stations in countries of Latin America and Australia by means of satellite transmission.

Through special arrangements of the Armed Forces Radio and Television Network this session will be televised to bases of the Armed Forces throughout the Pacific and heard by radio in Vietnam.

We shall now conclude this session of the conference with the Tabernacle Choir singing from the "Requiem" by Brahms, "Redeemed of the Lord."

Following the singing, the benediction will be pronounced by Elder Raymond P. Larson, former president of the Morgan Stake of the Church.

This conference will then be adjourned until two o'clock this afternoon.

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The Choir sang "Redeemed of the Lord."

The benediction was offered by Elder Raymond P. Larson, former president of the Morgan Stake.

The conference was then adjourned until 2 o'clock P.M.