

## Elder Joseph Anderson

*Assistant to the Council of the Twelve*

It has been truly said that the greatest asset of a man or a nation is faith, that the men who built this country and made it prosper during its darkest days were men with unshakable faith, men of courage, men of vision, men who always looked forward and never backward.

The same can be said in truth of those who established this church under the inspiration and revelation of the Lord and of those who have built upon the foundation they laid. They too were and are men of un-failing testimony and unwavering faith.

I think perhaps there has never been greater need for faith than is the need today, particularly faith in divine leadership. Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, as a general rule, have faith in divine leadership, but the world needs faith in God, that he rules the world; and the people of this nation and the world need that faith, faith in the God of this land and faith in the God of the world, who is Jesus Christ.

### Man's eternal horizon

Many of us have had the experience of being on a ship traveling on the ocean. As we look in the various directions, we can see nothing but water. As far as the mortal eye can see, the sky comes down and meets the water. The sun comes up on the horizon, and in the evening the sun sets on the horizon. The same is true when we are on the ground; the limit of our vision is the horizon. Is it not true also that the limit of our spiritual perception is the horizon we see?

What about our spiritual horizon? Is it limited to our present struggle for the things of this world? Is it limited to an acquisition of things of the flesh? Is our horizon limited to our competition with a money-

mad world, to the obtaining of the worldly things of life, or does it reach out to an eternity with God and our loved ones in the life to come?

Our horizon should extend to an unlimited future beyond death—out beyond those things of a temporal nature. Our horizon of the future should not be confused with the close-up horizon of present conditions.

Our philosophy of life contemplates an eternity of life—life without beginning before we came here, life without end hereafter. Our happiness here and hereafter depends upon our actions here. We should therefore seek the finer things of life. The road leading to eternal life must be paved with obedience to the commandments of the Lord.

### Earth life

We once dwelt in the presence of our Father, in the spirit, and we rejoiced at the opportunity to come to earth and take upon ourselves mortality and pass through the experiences we here encounter, that we might prove ourselves worthy of greater experiences and greater blessings.

While here we are not to enjoy the presence of our Father, but we can communicate with him, and we can hear his voice if that becomes necessary. The Holy Ghost is given to us as our guide and companion and monitor, if we live worthy of that blessing.

### Communication with God

It seems difficult for some to have faith in an eternal being and that he can communicate with man, that he hears and answers our prayers, that he is the Father of our spirits, for we are dual beings, spiritual and physical; that he loves us; that he has given us commandments which, if we accept

and live them, will result in mortal as well as eternal blessings to us.

There was a time when men would have laughed to scorn anyone who would have said that in time to come we would be able to sit in our homes and watch and see and hear by means of television and radio things that are transpiring today in our own country, in Europe or Asia, South America or Africa; that these conference proceedings would be telecast to the listening world by means of remarkable electronic devices.

In our time we have seen men walk on the moon and heard the messages they have sent over the great expanse of space between us and the moon and witnessed pictures they were transmitting.

These things have been accomplished by faith, by work, and by intelligence.

Can we talk with God?

Can our prayers, even in thought as well as word, ascend to the Father of us all, and does he have the power to make answer thereto?

### **Long-distance horizon**

We lived by sight in the spirit state before we came here; we are walking by faith in this mortal existence. The Spirit of God bears witness to the spirit of man that we are God's children; that he loves us; and that there is a purpose to earth life, a great and mighty purpose, a glorious purpose; that by keeping the commandments that he has given us we may gain knowledge and understanding; that we may gain experience by overcoming the opposition with which we must contend; that we shall resurrect from the grave in the due time of the Lord and eventually return into his presence if we live worthily. This is the long-distance horizon we should keep in view.

### **Alma's teachings**

Alma, a Book of Mormon prophet, relates an experience in his time

about a people who were cast out of the synagogues because of the coarseness of their apparel, a people who were poor as to the things of this world and were also poor in heart. They came unto Alma, explaining their situation, and asked what they should do. Alma answered by explaining to them the principle of faith and teaching them the word of God.

Concerning faith he states that "faith is not to have a perfect knowledge of things; therefore if ye have faith ye hope for things which are not seen, which are true." (Al. 32:21.)

Alma then goes on to compare his words, which are truly the word of God and the gospel of salvation, to a seed that a man plants in the soil. He suggests that if we will give place that a seed may be planted in our hearts, and not cast it out or resist the Spirit of the Lord, if it is a true seed it will swell within the breast; and when one feels this swelling motion he cannot do otherwise than admit that the seed is a good seed, for it enlargeth the soul and beginneth to enlighten one's understanding, and it becomes delicious to the individual. Further, when the seed, or the word, or the gospel, swells and sprouts and begins to grow in your soul, you know it is a good seed, and therefore your knowledge is perfect; it is no longer faith but knowledge.

People sometimes say that one cannot know that the gospel is true. As indicated by Alma, if, when you hear the word of God, you do not cast it out by unbelief or resist the Spirit of the Lord, the swellings within your breast, its enlargement of your soul and its enlightening of your understanding are of such a nature that they cause you to know that it is the truth.

### **Nourishing the seed**

However, this is only a beginning. You must nourish the seed; in other words, you must nourish the testi-

mony that you have that it is true, by living the teachings of the gospel.

If you will do this, this ancient prophet tells us, the seed will grow into a tree and bring forth fruit. But if the tree is neglected, it will not take root; and when the heat of the sun cometh and scorcheth it, it will wither and die. This is not because the seed or the word of God was not true nor because the fruit thereof would not be desirable, but it is because the ground was barren and the plant or the tree was not nourished, in which event one cannot have the fruit thereof that he otherwise would obtain.

### Fruits of faith

If, however, you have faith and patience to nourish the word, or the tree, as time goes on you may pluck the fruit thereof, which is most precious and delicious to the taste.

I testify to you that if you do these things—truly try this experiment regarding the word of God as contained in the gospel of Jesus Christ and live in accordance with the commandments therein set forth, nourishing the truths of the gospel—you shall have the privilege of feasting upon this fruit; your faith will be fully rewarded and will develop into a sure knowledge of the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

We testify that when occasion requires, the voice of God can be heard by the Lord's latter-day prophets; that they can tune in through the instrument of faith; and that even you and I can see beyond the veil, if it is in accordance with the Lord's will and if we are in tune with the Infinite.

### A fullness of joy

The Latter-day Saints believe and teach that without the experience of mortal life, its problems and accomplishments, and without a resurrected body, the spirit of man cannot have

a fullness of joy. Our philosophy of life contemplates an eternity of existence—life without beginning in the preexistent world and life hereafter throughout the eternities.

Our happiness in this life and in the life to come depends upon our actions here. If we are to attain the goal of eternal salvation and exaltation in the kingdom of our Heavenly Father, we must hold fast to the iron rod, which is the word of God, and render obedience to the commandments of the Lord.

### Keeping all commandments

It is reported that on one occasion when Sir Isaac Newton was thinking seriously concerning the nature of light, he cut a hole in a window blind and a ray of light entered his room. He held a triangular piece of glass in the range of the light, and there were reflected in great beauty all the colors of the rainbow. And for the first time man learned that all of the glorious colors of the universe are locked up in a ray of white light.

It is important that we live all the principles of the gospel and obey all the commandments that the Lord has given us if we are to grow more nearly like our Father and his Beloved Son. We cannot say, "Oh, I believe in missionary work—it is important; I am thoroughly converted to the welfare plan or the wonderful social program of the Church for its young people; but I don't believe that Joseph Smith was a prophet or that our present prophets are guided by revelation from the Lord."

Some may say, "I believe the Book of Mormon, but I can't believe that it was received from an angel as Joseph said it was."

With a wavering faith of that kind, how can such a person expect to have the true light of Christ, the true understanding and light of the gospel? How can he expect to receive the blessings that the Lord has promised to the faithful? If he leaves out any

one of these principles, he does not get pure white light. If he fails to have faith in all the principles of the gospel and does not have faith to live in accordance therewith, he cannot expect to get the pure light of the gospel in his heart.

### **Horizon extended**

If you truly have faith in God sufficient to impel you to keep his commandments, you will draw nearer to him and he will come nearer to you, and your faith will become knowledge, and the limit of your horizon will extend into the eternal world.

May we grow in faith through the love and blessing of our Lord and Savior. May we keep the commandments that he has given us, that we may ultimately find salvation and exaltation in his celestial kingdom, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen. □

### **President N. Eldon Tanner**

Elder Joseph Anderson, Assistant to the Council of the Twelve, has just addressed us.

We shall now be pleased to hear from Elder William H. Bennett, Assistant to the Twelve, and he will be followed by Elder Howard W. Hunter of the Council of the Twelve.

## **Elder William H. Bennett**

*Assistant to the Council of the Twelve*

It was two years ago, my brothers and sisters, when I was called to be an Assistant to the Council of the Twelve. These years have brought new challenges and many choice and wonderful experiences. Today I should like to begin my message by expressing gratitude to my Father in heaven, to the leaders of the Church, and to my loved ones, for their confidence in me and for their support and sustaining hand.

### **Missionary assignment**

Now I have received a new assignment from the First Presidency, to preside over the Florida South Mission. Along with my call, a call was issued to Sister Bennett to serve at my side as my companion and to be the supervisor of the activities of the women and children in the mission. We are deeply grateful for this call and accept it without reservations. It is our desire to direct the affairs of the mission in accordance with the instructions of the First Presidency. We ask for an interest in your faith and prayers.

### **Purpose of gospel**

As I thought about what I might say today, I reminded myself of the mission of the Church and the purpose of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Specifically, my mind went back to some statements made by the Savior. In the Pearl of Great Price we read, "For behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man." (Moses 1:39.)

Then in his Sermon on the Mount, the Savior said, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." (Matt. 5:38.) In these words I find an expression of hope and confidence as well as a challenge from our Savior.

I then thought about how the Church and the gospel can help men and women in reaching these great objectives. The words of President David O. McKay came to mind: "The purpose of the gospel is to make bad men good and good men better—to change men's lives."