

to us. He was followed by the Tabernacle Choir singing "Hallelujah, Amen," by Handel.

The choir and the congregation will now join in singing "I Know That My Redeemer Lives."

Following the singing, Elder L. Tom Perry, Assistant to the Twelve, will speak to us.

The congregation sang the

hymn, "I Know That My Redeemer Lives."

President Lee

Elder L. Tom Perry, Assistant to the Council of the Twelve, will now address us.

Following Elder Perry, we will hear from Elder Robert L. Simpson, Assistant to the Twelve.

Elder L. Tom Perry

Assistant to the Council of the Twelve

"Now therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts; Consider your ways.

"Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes.

"Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Consider your ways." (Hag. 1:5-7.)

Conditions of today

I have read this great scripture and continue to be impressed with how clearly the Old Testament prophet describes the conditions of today. Almost daily we read of those who invest for little return. We eat food so refined that the nourishment is lacking. We witness the drink that can never satisfy the thirst for those who drink; the dressing for style, rather than warmth, comfort, and modesty; the high wages of the wage earner today which still do not satisfy or supply his needs.

A noted historian several years ago summarized the reasons for the fall of Rome as follows:

1. The breakdown of the family and the rapid increase of divorce.

2. The spiraling rise of taxes and extravagant spending.

3. The mounting craze for pleasure and the brutalization of sports.

4. The decay of religion into myriads of confused forms, leaving the people without a uniform guide.

Our unconquered appetites and consuming drive for material possessions appear to be leading us on a course so often repeated in history. Greed, lust, and desire historically have only led mankind to waste, destruction, and suffering.

James E. Talmage has written:

"Material belongings, relative wealth or poverty, physical environment—the things on which we are prone to set our hearts and anchor our aspirations, the things for which we sweat and strive, oftentimes at the sacrifice of happiness and to the forfeiture of real success—these after all are but externals, the worth of which in the reckoning to come shall be counted in terms of the use we have made of them." (James E. Talmage, *The Vitality of Mormonism*, 1919, p. 352.)

Isn't this the time and isn't this the hour to follow the admonition of the Lord to "consider your ways"?

Personal experiences

I have spent considerable time since the last general conference examining my ways to determine what I have to do to measure up to the calling the Prophet has issued to me. Let me share one or two of these lessons that this new experience has given me.

For 21 years, before receiving this call, I was employed by some of the great department stores of the country. I have been blessed with some close associations with some of the most talented leaders this industry has produced. I find myself today making a comparison between my former business associates and those with whom I am now busily engaged. Both groups have great leaders, but how different is their motivation! I have found in these Brethren seated before you the fulfillment in their lives of the promise given to the Prophet Joseph Smith:

“. . . let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God; and the doctrine of the priesthood shall distil upon thy soul as the dews from heaven.

“The Holy Ghost shall be thy constant companion. . . .” (D&C 121:45-46.)

Companionship of Holy Ghost

I have watched them armed with the Holy Ghost as a constant companion, taking on enormous work loads at an age when most men would be confined to rocking chairs, and engaging in strenuous travel schedules with great enthusiasm to be anxiously engaged in building the kingdom of God. Then by observation, the realization has come to me that this great Spirit that blesses them in their activities is not a special gift to them alone, but is available to all mankind if

they will but be partakers and earnestly seek it and be humbly guided by it. “The office of the Holy Ghost is to enlighten the mind, to purify and sanctify the soul, to incite to good works, and to reveal the things of God.” (James E. Talmage, *Articles of Faith*, p. 167.)

Isn't this spirit a constant companion you need in your life? “Consider your ways.” Isn't now the time to follow the Lord's direction and receive the divine assurance that he is with you, guiding you in the paths that will make your life meaningful, rewarding, and satisfying?

Security of love

Secondly, I was reared in a home by noble parents who gave their children the security of love. We as a family were tied together by those great bonds. During our married life, with the exception of an occasional visit, we have lived at least a thousand miles away from our family center. What a great enjoyment it is to be near them again!

The last high school basketball tournament gave our family a rallying point for a common activity. My brother's boy participated on one of the teams. They had lost their first game, and his personal production for that game was 12 points. This was about average for what he had been doing during the regular season. Then tragedy struck the team in the second game. Their big center, who was their high scorer, was injured and was out for the balance of the tournament. The team realized that another loss meant elimination.

My nephew was placed under the pressure of having to make up for that loss. He was moved from his regular position of forward to replace the center. He met the challenge by scoring 32 points that game. Then in the final two games he led the team to victory and finished

second in total scoring in the state tournament. His scoring was twice what he had normally been producing.

Bearing his testimony the following week in meeting, he remarked that when the pressure became great and the burden difficult to bear, he would hear the encouraging cries of his family above the roar of the crowd and would be inspired to try harder.

The courage of this young man taught us all a lesson that day. One of the gifts of a loving family is the encouragement and confidence we receive to magnify ourselves. Is your family one of strength, help, and support one for another, or do you waste and depreciate one of the greatest gifts of our eternal Father with jealousy, bickering, or the lack of interest of one for another? Do you fail to communicate the love you have for each other and thus deprive yourself of some of life's choicest moments?

Influences of home

One of our prophets has said: "I have but one thought in my heart for the young folk of the Church and that is that they be happy. I know of no other place than home where more happiness can be found in this life. It is possible to make home a bit of heaven; indeed, I picture heaven to be a continuation of the ideal home." (President David O. McKay, *Gospel Ideals*, p. 490.)

"Consider your ways." Isn't this the time to bring that sweet influence of the Lord into your home?

The home we have just purchased since moving west has one unique feature. The small study provided has an adjoining large

closet about one-fourth the size of the entire study. We thought when we were considering the purchase of the home that this closet was an error in design. Since occupying the home, it has become one of my favorite places. Here is where I can shut myself off from the world and communicate with my Father in heaven. "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly." (Matt. 6:6.)

Consider your ways

"Consider your ways." Couldn't your life stand some open rewarding by the Father? Isn't this the time to learn how to communicate with our Father which is in heaven?

I leave you my witness that I know that God lives. I know that his Son is directing the affairs of this church today through his chosen prophet. I sustain and support him.

"Consider your ways." If that witness has not been given to you, isn't now the time to seek it? Come and join with us, and let us continue to build the kingdom of God here and now, I humbly pray, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President Harold B. Lee

Thank you, Elder Perry, for calling our attention to a very vital matter. Elder L. Tom Perry, Assistant to the Twelve, has just spoken. Elder Robert L. Simpson, Assistant to the Twelve, will now address us.