

Elder Delbert L. Stapley

Of the Council of the Twelve

My brothers, sisters, friends, and all who are listening to the messages of this conference via radio and television: It is always difficult to follow President Romney because there is much meat in the talks and sermons he gives.

Our need for God

Today many people of the world are questioning their belief in God, thinking they have progressed intellectually and scientifically beyond their need for his guidance in the affairs of life. They choose to forget that he is the source of all knowledge, he controls all life, and all things are his works of creation.

Man cannot afford to forsake God, depending solely upon his own intelligence. Such a course can only lead to utter confusion and ultimate destruction. Not knowing the mind, will, and purpose of an infinite God, man does not have, regardless of his advanced knowledge, the wisdom and judgment, nor the correct answers to solve all world problems. With implicit faith we must all turn to the God of our fathers in humility and sincere prayer for counsel and guidance.

The prophet Isaiah admonished the children of Israel to "seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near:

"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." (Isa. 55:6-7.)

This counsel is as important for us today as it was in those ancient times. Worsening, frustrating world problems, aggravated by a general departure from true Christian teach-

ings and ethical practices, give warning of impending dangers and much sorrow unless man forsakes sin and turns to God in sincere repentance. Only by avoiding the pitfalls of evil and following Isaiah's counsel can we expect to receive God's mercy and his abundant pardon.

The gospel plan

The gospel of Jesus Christ is the only sure basis for a righteous life. No other plan, moral code, or creed can match or supplant its teachings. The gospel is a wise and guiding set of laws, principles, and ordinances for all men to live by.

The weakness and foolishness of many today cause them to be more interested in the teachings of man than in the teachings of God, as found in both ancient and modern scriptures. Unfortunately, for the most part, the thoughts of mortal men are centered in this temporal life and not on the eternal life. The philosophies of men cannot replace nor transcend gospel philosophy as given in the revelations of God, nor can the science of man replace the truths revealed by God through his prophets.

God's ways are not man's ways, but are infinitely superior thereto. The Lord proclaimed to the prophet Isaiah:

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, . . .

"For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." (Isa. 55:8-9.)

By revelation the Savior has furnished the following formula to guide our path to eternal glory:

"Verily, thus saith the Lord: It

shall come to pass that every soul who forsaketh his sins and cometh unto me, and calleth on my name, and obeyeth my voice, and keepeth my commandments, shall see my face and know that I am;

"And that I am the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world." (D&C 93:1-2.)

Faith in God

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints teaches the complete way of life. Our whole life requires that we reach constantly for high ideals and noble standards of true Christian conduct. The faith of Latter-day Saints should not depend upon the wisdom of men, but upon the knowledge and power of God.

"Be not deceived," warned the apostle Paul; "God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

"For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." (Gal. 6:7-8.)

Seek learning by faith and earnest prayer to know the mind and will of the Lord. Have the courage to obey. Remember, the Lord gives no commandment or law unto the children of men that he himself does not obey. Obedience is a loving principle of a just God, and through obedience we can gain power from on high.

Repentance

In this mortal life we not only have the opportunity, but the moral obligation, to right our wrongs. We should repent of our evil doings and confess them in order to give our lives spiritual direction. We are counseled to have faith in our Eternal Father and in his Son, our Redeemer. We should seek the desire,

through righteous living, to once again dwell with them in the heavenly mansions they have prepared for the faithful. The following scripture sustains this thought:

"For if you will that I give you a place in the celestial world, you must prepare yourselves by doing the things which I have commanded you and required of you." (D&C 78:7.)

It is unfortunate that so many have to learn the lessons of life the hard way, but what a great blessing it is to have an Eternal Father who cares enough to teach us, to bring us to repentance, and to forgive. Hear the words of encouragement as given to the prophet Ezekiel: "Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord God: and not that he should return from his ways, and live?" (Ezek. 18:23.)

The importance of man

The Lord expressed to Moses great concern for the welfare of his children when he said: "... behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man." (Moses 1:39.)

Immortality is assured to all of us through the atonement of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. But eternal life is a personal responsibility we must earn and be worthy of.

David the Psalmist emphasized the importance of man in this inspired statement:

"What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?"

"For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour.

"Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet." (Ps. 8:4-6.)

Man's recent scientific and technological accomplishments, his desire and courage to explore the universe, and his attainment in so

many fields of learning testify he is a child of God and, therefore, should always look to God for guidance and further light and truth.

Unity

God has revealed that he desires all of his people to grow together in the unity of faith, understanding, and devotion. The apostle Paul so encouraged the Corinthian saints: "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." (1 Cor. 1:10.)

We are here to help each other progress, to inspire one another unto love and good works, and not just to sit in judgment. Our responsibility is to give encouragement to those who are inactive and erring. We have a duty to "see that there is no iniquity in the Church, neither hardness with each other, neither lying, backbiting, nor evil speaking." (D&C 20:54.)

This teaching was emphasized by the apostle Peter when he gave this advice:

"... be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous:

"Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing; but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing." (1 Pet. 3:8-9.)

Strength of the Church

The real strength of the Church is in the character and dedication of its members. The apostle Paul instructed the Corinthians: "Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel." (1 Cor. 9:14.) This counsel can be applied to every mem-

ber of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—that by living the gospel and setting a good example we are automatically preaching its tenets and showing the right way for others to follow. The greatest gift we can give another is the gift of a good example.

President Spencer W. Kimball said: "Our challenge today is to be a light unto the world. . . . if the three million members of the Church would live the gospel principles, all the errors of the world would evaporate. The world would come to us, and we would change the frustration of the world to the peace of the gospel." (*Church News*, February 26, 1972, p. 13.)

I plead with all members of the Church to actively and honestly live the gospel of Christ. Our eternal happiness and joy depends upon the kind of life we chart and live here in mortality. The apostle Paul taught: "Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils." (1 Cor. 10:21.) In other words, we cannot serve two masters, for either we will hate the one and love the other, or else we will hold to the one and despise the other. We cannot serve both God and mammon. (See Matt. 6:24.)

Obedience to gospel requirements

Anyone who thinks he can obtain eternal goals some other way than outlined in the gospel of Christ should remember the Savior classified such as a thief and robber. (See John 10:1.) Christ gave this parable to his disciples:

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls:

"Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold

all that he had, and bought it." (Matt. 13:45-46.)

Each of us has the responsibility to seek that goodly pearl, the kingdom of heaven, which is, according to the Savior's parable, the pearl of great price. Its attainment is worth every effort and sacrifice we make. To be saved in the kingdom of God is the greatest of all the gifts of God, for there is no gift greater than the gift of salvation, and he that hath eternal life, proclaims the Lord, is rich. (See D&C 6:13, 7.)

To those members who are not living the gospel, I challenge you to do so, obeying all gospel requirements and attending church regularly for a full year. Then compare your life after a year's trial of faithful gospel living with your previous manner of living, and ask yourself conscientiously which way is best. Give the gospel a chance in your life by living it, to prove its worth and value to you and to your family.

The Holy Ghost

Live to be worthy of the companionship of the Holy Ghost. If you have its spiritual influence, it will bring conviction into your hearts. It will build testimony and create in you a desire to love the Lord. You will manifest that love by keeping his laws and commandments and serving him. The Holy Spirit will testify to the truth of these teachings and you will know, as the apostle Paul knew, that the gospel of Jesus Christ is the power of God unto salvation. (See Rom 1:16.)

It will also give you the perfect assurance that the Lord's way is the only way one can find the abundant life the Savior promised.

I extend this challenge to all people everywhere who desire to know the truth and who are not satisfied with their present lives and associations. It takes courage to accept the challenge to seek the

Lord while he may be found and call upon him while he is near; but I promise you, if you do so, it will pay off in dividends of peace of mind, joy of heart, comfort of soul, satisfaction of personal needs, and a love that never fails.

Personal Testimony

Now, brothers, sisters, and friends, I know that God lives. I know that Jesus is the Christ, our Redeemer and Savior, the very Son of God. He sacrificed his own life upon the cross that we might live eternally. He broke the bonds of death through his resurrection, which guarantees the resurrection of all mankind. He bought us with the price of his own blood. We can show our gratitude by living righteously and setting a proper example to all people everywhere.

May God bless and guide us aright; may we be blessed with the spiritual strength to close the door to all temptations of evil and walk uprightly before the Lord, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

After Elder Stapley's address, the choir sang the hymn, "An Angel from on High," without announcement.

President Harold B. Lee

He to whom we have just listened is Elder Delbert L. Stapley of the Council of the Twelve, followed by the choir singing "An Angel from on High."

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "Come, O Thou King of Kings" following which we shall hear from Elder Sterling W. Sill, Assistant to the Twelve.