

Sunday, April 7

Third Day

my hand to shake hands with her, and I was going to rub noses with her and she said: 'Do not shake hands with me. . . .'

"I said: 'Oh, that is clean dirt on your hands. I am willing to shake hands with you. I am glad to. I want to.'

"She said: 'Not yet.' Then she got on her hands and knees and crawled over to her little house. At the corner of the house there was a spade. She lifted up that spade and crawled off in another direction, measuring the distance she went. She finally arrived at a spot and started digging down into the soil with that spade. It finally struck something hard. She took out the soil with her hands and lifted out a fruit jar. She opened that fruit jar and reached down in it, took something out and handed it to me, and it turned out to be New Zealand money. In American money it would have been equivalent to [about] one hundred dollars.

"She said: 'There is my tithing. Now I can shake hands with the priesthood of God.'

"I said: 'You do not owe that much tithing.'

"She said: 'I know it. I do not owe it now, but I am paying some in advance, for I do not know when the priesthood of God will get around this way again.'

Then after a brief pause and with considerable emotion Brother Cowley

continued: "And then I leaned over and pressed my nose and forehead against hers, and the tears from my eyes ran down her cheeks. . . ." (CR, Oct. 1948, pp. 159-60.)

Promised blessings

My beloved brothers and sisters, the Lord does keep his promises. He truly opens the windows of heaven and pours out his blessings upon those who are faithful and who obey his commandments but it will be done in his own way. These blessings may come in a financial or temporal way or may be realized by a spiritual outpouring, bringing strength, peace, and comfort. His blessings may come in unusual and unexpected ways so that at the time we may not even recognize them as blessings; but the promises of the Lord will be kept.

And to this I testify in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

President Spencer W. Kimball

Elder Henry D. Taylor has just spoken to us. He is an Assistant to the Council of the Twelve.

Elder Hartman Rector, Jr. of the First Council of Seventy will now address us.

Elder Hartman Rector, Jr.

Of the First Council of the Seventy

We have sustained a new prophet at this conference, which is wonderful and inspiring. It's necessary, for it is a commandment of God, but of course, the work is yet to do. We must follow him.

Fundamental principles

The response of the Prophet Joseph Smith to the question "What

are the fundamental principles of your religion?" contains a succinct statement about the importance of testimony. He said:

"The fundamental principles of our religion are the testimony of the Apostles and Prophets, concerning Jesus Christ, that He died, was buried, and rose again the third day, and ascended into heaven; and all other things which pertain to our religion are

only appendages to it." (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 121.)

Definition of testimony

Testimony is a sure knowledge of the truth of the gospel received by revelation from the Holy Ghost, as President Romney outlined this morning. As such, it is vital to the soul who would have communion with the Creator. Testimony is vitally important, *but* men are not saved by virtue of their testimony alone, although it is the beginning of real spiritual progress.

It is a common error to feel that testimony means full conversion. We many times equate testimony with a man's faith. We say, "He has great faith," meaning that he has a strong testimony, or we say, "He has a strong testimony," meaning that he has great faith. However, I don't believe the two are always synonymous. Faith is based on knowledge; it is a hope in that which is not seen which is true. (See Al. 32:21.) Testimony is revealed knowledge.

Bearing testimony has to do with bearing witness to that which we know to be true. Much of what we call testimony bearing is not really testimony at all—it is a statement or expression of public thanks. It is good to be thankful, but public thanks is not testimony. Testimony comes from the Holy Ghost. The Spirit of Christ, which John testifies is "the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world" (John 1:9), will lead a man to Christ and help him get a testimony, and if followed will lead to baptism in Jesus Christ's church.

Belief not enough

Many people feel they receive a witness that Jesus is the Christ, and they think this alone saves them. They say they are "saved." Of course, it does not. It didn't save a third of the hosts of heaven. James records, "... the devils

also believe, and tremble." (James 2:19.) What do they believe? That Jesus is the Christ; in fact, they know it.

Peter had a testimony that Jesus is the Christ, which he bore, and it surely came from the Lord, for the Master said, "... flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." (Matt. 16:17.) It is very doubtful that Peter was at that time converted, because he could not admit that he knew the Lord Jesus Christ when he felt his own life was in danger. Later the Master confirmed that Peter lacked conversion when, just before going to his agony and death on the cross, he said to Peter, "... when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." (Luke 22:32.) Peter's testimony or knowledge that Jesus was the Christ did not "save" him from denying the Master—probably because he was not converted. He did not follow the Lord at the peril of his own life.

True conversion

When we are converted, we sustain and follow the Lord's anointed servants; we find ourselves in agreement with them. This is one of the real marks of conversion. Many men with testimonies have been unable to do this. In this dispensation, to name a few, Martin Harris, David Whitmer, and Oliver Cowdery (the Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon) and Thomas B. Marsh (the first president of the Quorum of the Twelve) had this very problem. They refused to sustain the Lord's anointed servant, and it led to their expulsion from his church.

Conversion implies a change; as King Benjamin says, it means putting "off the natural man," which is selfish, conceited, impatient, intemperate, disobedient, and rebellious, so that a person becomes "a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord." This would mean becoming even "as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all

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things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father." (Mosiah 3:19.)

In order to emphasize this particular point, Jesus said, "Not [he] that saith . . . Lord, Lord, [will be saved] but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." (Matt. 7:21.)

Doing God's will

Jesus was committed completely to doing the will of his Father, and he was unequivocal in his counsel to us that we follow him in doing the will of the Father. Those who are truly converted desire to do the will of the Father. How are we to know his will? Surely it can come direct from the Father by revelation, but it seldom does. When he has authorized servants to act for him, generally we get it through his servants—the president of the Church, the General Authorities, the stake president, the bishop, the branch president, or in other words, the Lord's anointed servants. Thus the clear necessity of sustaining the Lord's anointed servants in righteousness. If we are truly converted, we will find ourselves in harmony with them. This is a sign of true conversion; this is doing the will of the Father.

Word of God

There are few times in the recorded history of the world when God the Father has spoken to man directly. Generally it is the Lord Jesus Christ who speaks. He is Jehovah of the Old Testament. He has authority to speak for his Father. There are, however, some recorded instances where there is no doubt who is speaking—it is the Father. His voice was heard at the baptism of Jesus by John in the River Jordan. It was heard again at the Mount of Transfiguration. It was heard again in 1820 in the grove near Palmyra, New York, by the Prophet Joseph Smith—always either introducing his Son Jesus Christ or bearing testimony of him.

However, there are recorded instances in which the words of the Father are given to us by the prophets. Some of these are in the Book of Mormon. The Book of Mormon is that book about which the Prophet Joseph Smith bore his testimony: it is "the most correct of any book on earth, . . . and a man [will] get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book." (*Documentary History of the Church*, vol. 4, p. 461.)

The narrow gate

In the particular passage to which I refer, the prophet Nephi explained why it was necessary for Jesus to be baptized by John to "fulfil all righteousness." He taught that Christ "humbleth himself before the Father, and witnesseth unto the Father that he would be obedient unto him in keeping his commandments.

" . . . Again, it showeth unto the children of men the straightness of the path, and the narrowness of the gate, by which they should enter, he having set the example before them." Then he said, ". . . Follow thou me. . . ." (2 Ne. 31:6-7, 9-10.)

Nephi asked, ". . . Wherefore, my beloved brethren, can we follow Jesus save we shall be willing to keep the commandments of the Father?" (2 Ne. 31:10.) Nephi then records the doctrine of the Father: ". . . Repent ye, repent ye, and be baptized in the name of my Beloved Son."

"And also, the voice of the Son came unto me, saying: He that is baptized in my name, to him will the Father give the Holy Ghost, like unto me; wherefore, follow me, and do the things which ye have seen me do." (2 Ne. 31:11-12.)

Further, Nephi records that the voice of the Son came unto him, saying:

". . . After ye have repented of your sins, and witnessed unto the Father that

ye are willing to keep my commandments, by the baptism of water, and have received the baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost, and can speak with a new tongue, yea, even with the tongue of angels, and after this should deny me, it would have been better for you that ye had not known me." (2 Ne. 31:14.)

Then Nephi records this testimony of the Father concerning the Son:

"And I heard a voice from the Father, saying: Yea, the words of my Beloved are true and faithful. He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved." (2 Ne. 31:15.)

Now this is obviously the most important message that God the Father could possibly give to his children: Repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ and then endure to the end. This is the will of the Father. This is what he wants for his children. The mark of real conversion is *endurance*. Only unto him who endures to the end will be brought about the great and eternal plan of redemption.

Danger of rebellion

The statement of the Prophet Joseph Smith concerning the danger of faultfinding or rebelling against the Lord's anointed is very significant:

"I will give you one of the [keys] of the mysteries of the kingdom," said the Prophet. "It is an eternal principle, that has existed with God from all eternity: That man who rises up to condemn others, finding fault with the Church, saying that they are out of the way, while he himself is righteous, then know assuredly, that that man is in the high road to apostasy; and if he does not repent will apostatize, as God lives." (*DHC*, vol. 3, p. 385.)

Then refusal on our part to sustain or follow the Lord's anointed servants is a form of rebellion, which is open or willful resistance to and defiance of God's authority. This is extremely

serious. Rebellion is the opposite of obedience and leads to expulsion from the kingdom. This is what happened to Lucifer. He refused to sustain the Lord in that he would not follow and do the things which he had seen the Father do before him.

When we fail to do what we know we should, having the light before us but refusing to obey, notwithstanding the covenants made in the waters of baptism, we become rebels. Some even seem to delight in their rebellion. They brag about it; if they only knew that the Lord's anger is kindled against all the rebellious (see D&C 63:2), and they shall be pierced with much sorrow and they shall fail (see D&C 1:3).

The kingdom of God

In this earth-life probation those who are converted will succeed. The kingdom isn't going to fail. It is the stone which the prophet Daniel saw was cut out of the mountain without hands, and it rolled forth down the mountain-side, gaining momentum as it went. It broke down all other kingdoms; it filled the whole earth and stood forever.

The kingdom of God is a winner. Isn't it great to be part of a winner? Don't you love a winner? I do. I confess I hate to lose. I think I'm the worst loser in all the world. I don't believe in it. Some say it matters not whether you win or lose but how you play the game. Don't you believe it; it makes a lot of difference whether you win or not. We came to this earth to win, and we will win if we stick with the Lord, because the Lord is not going to lose. He can't lose. The kingdom is a winner, and when we do it his way, we will win with him. The promise is sure: ". . . He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved." (2 Ne. 31:15.)

Testimony won't save us, but testimony coupled with faith and conversion, which includes staying power, which is endurance, will exalt us.

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Zion shall flourish

Listen to the words of the Master:

"Wherefore, as ye are agents, ye are on the Lord's errand; and whatsoever ye do according to the will of the Lord is the Lord's business.

"Wherefore, be not weary in well-doing, for ye are laying the foundation of a great work. And out of small things proceedeth that which is great.

"Behold, the Lord requireth the heart and a willing mind; and the willing and obedient shall eat the good of the land of Zion in these last days.

"And the rebellious shall be cut off out of the land of Zion and shall be sent away, and shall not inherit the land.

"For, verily I say that the rebellious are not of the blood of Ephraim, wherefore they shall be plucked out.

"Behold, I, the Lord, have made my church in these last days like unto a judge sitting on a hill, or in a high place, to judge the nations.

"For it shall come to pass that the inhabitants of Zion shall judge all things pertaining to Zion.

"And liars and hypocrites shall be proved by them, and they who are not apostles and prophets shall be known.

"And even the bishop, who is a judge, and his counselors, if they are not faithful in their stewardships shall be condemned, and others shall be planted in their stead.

"For, behold, I say unto you that

Zion shall flourish, and the glory of the Lord shall be upon her;

"And she shall be an ensign unto the people, and there shall come unto her out of every nation under heaven.

"And the day shall come when the nations of the earth shall tremble because of her, and shall fear because of her terrible ones. The Lord hath spoken it. Amen. (D&C 64:29, 33-43.)

Obedience

Does that sound like a loser to you? I tell you it doesn't. And those who are converted, who can follow the Lord and his anointed servants, these are they who will bring to pass the purposes of God. Before you can be a great leader in the kingdom of God, you must first be a great follower. Obedience is still better than sacrifice and to hearken than the fat of rams. (See 1 Sam. 15:22.)

May the Lord bless us to hold fast and remain faithful as we follow the Lord's anointed servants, and may we feel good about it. I pray that we will, in Jesus' name. Amen.

President Spencer W. Kimball

We have just heard Elder Hartman Rector, Jr. of the First Council of Seventy.

We shall now hear from Elder Neal A. Maxwell, newly sustained Assistant to the Twelve.

Elder Neal A. Maxwell

Assistant to the Council of the Twelve

Brothers and sisters, my verba moment is not for sermons but for appreciation, not for doctrine but for testimony.

Appreciation

Appreciation for the Lord's call through President Kimball.

Appreciation for your sustaining vote which was not vindication but an invitation—an invitation for me to be and to do better.

Appreciation for humble parents who both told and showed me that the gospel and Church are true.

Appreciation for a splendid wom-