

ren hill not far beyond the city wall he was nailed to a cross. As he suffered his cruel crucifixion, no doubt there were witnesses and spectators who observed with their limited perspective, "He is losing. He is confined. He is defeated." How wrong they were and how wrong they are. Jesus of Nazareth a loser? Never! He is our Savior, our Redeemer, a winner, a Son of God.

Adopt convictions

He this day would have us permanently adopt the attitude of conviction and commitment so movingly expressed in verse seven of our hymn, "How Firm a Foundation":

The soul that on Jesus hath leaned for repose

I will not, I cannot, desert to his foes;

That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake,

I'll never, no never, no never forsake!

Hymns, no. 66

What a pleasure it is for me, brothers and sisters, to bear special witness to his reality, his strength, his divinity, and his earthly purposes. This is his church. This is his gospel. This is his plan for those who would conquer self, continue faithfully, and be victo-

rious. I bear testimony to these truths in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President Kimball

We have just heard from Elder Marvin J. Ashton of the Council of the Twelve.

The Choir and congregation will now join in singing: "Come, O Thou King of Kings," following which we shall hear from Elder Rex D. Pinegar of the First Council of Seventy.

The Tabernacle Choir and the congregation sang the number, "Come, O Thou King of Kings."

President Kimball

To those of the television and radio audience who have just joined us in this third session of the 144th Semi-Annual Conference of the Church, we are convened in the historic Tabernacle on Temple Square and other buildings in Salt Lake City, Utah.

We shall now hear from Elder Rex D. Pinegar of the First Council of Seventy. He will be followed by Elder Robert L. Simpson, Assistant to the Council of the Twelve.

Elder Rex D. Pinegar

of the First Council of the Seventy

My beloved brothers and sisters, I'm sure we all echoed with the choir "Thanks Be to God" for the opportunity we have to be gathered today under the direction of a prophet, Spencer W. Kimball.

Missionary experiences

My family and I have recently returned from Virginia, where it has been my great privilege to preside over a mission of the Church for the past three years. Observing the diligence and

faith of the missionaries has brought to me a greater realization of the blessings that accompany those who continue to serve the Lord in righteousness. I'm grateful to the Lord for the calling I now have which permits me to continue to serve in missionary service.

This privilege was even more keenly felt when one of my recently returned missionaries confided in me a dilemma at returning home. This fine young man had served well his entire mission. He had demonstrated faith and courage under difficult circumstances.

Now he faces the challenge of maintaining his missionary zeal and spirit in the surroundings of home where more subtle opposition may exist.

Conflicting values

After telling me what a great family he had and how well they had supported him during his missionary service, he posed a problem. He said, "The only big thing that is really bothering me about being home and being around the family is that my family is one that likes to do a lot of hunting. Now that used to be a great thing for me, but now it is a lot different, mainly because it means the family will be expecting me to go hunting with them on Sundays. So I am faced with a big decision right off the bat. I really don't want to go hunting on Sunday, but I don't want to upset my family because of it. Any counsel would surely be appreciated." He went on to assure me that he knew his family did not desire nor intend to ask him to do wrong. Hunting was just a long-standing activity.

The counsel I would give to my missionary, and to others who may be faced with the decision to continue or not to continue a righteous course, is to recall the experience of Oliver Cowdery. Oliver had begun his labors in the kingdom with a faithful and humble service. The Lord rewarded him by giving him the gift of translation. He told Oliver of marvelous contributions he could make toward enlightening the people if he would continue faithfully in his efforts. Later when Oliver attempted to translate, he failed. The Lord told Oliver it was "because that you did not continue as you commenced." (D&C 9:5.) Oliver had not continued in his righteous efforts, and the gift was taken from him.

Simply stated, the Lord's counsel to one who has "commenced" properly and faithfully is, "Continue as you have

commenced." We could follow the example of Nephi, a son of Helaman, who after laboring diligently to teach and live righteously, had decided to give up and return home because the people refused to accept his counsel and to repent. As he approached his home, the voice of the Lord came to him. The Lord reminded Nephi of the blessings that would result from the unwearyingness with which he had labored and taught the people and with which he had kept the commandments of God. With renewed vigor and determination, Nephi turned from his home and returned to his labors to continue as he had commenced. (See Hel. 10:2-12.)

The blessing of righteous parents

There is also the enlightening experience which Enos had. He helps us to understand the blessing of building upon and following the teachings of righteous parents. Enos described his father as a "just man—for he taught me in his language, and also in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, . . . and the words which I had often heard my father speak concerning eternal life, and the joy of the saints, sunk deep into my heart." (Enos 1,3.) The continual teachings of a just father caused Enos' soul to hunger, and he went before the Lord in mighty prayer and supplication for his own soul.

Enos had also learned the value of continuing in righteousness, for he tells us that he prayed all day long, "and when the night came I did still raise my voice high that it reached the heavens." (Enos 4.) His continuous and fervent humble prayer resulted in a marvelous declaration from on high: "And there came a voice unto me, saying: Enos, thy sins are forgiven thee, and thou shalt be blessed." (Enos 5.)

Enos had built upon the righteous teachings of his father as the base for his own search for the Lord. He had continued as he commenced.

Maintain a steady course

To continue means more than to endure or to tolerate something. It means to maintain a steady course of action with unshaken faith in Christ. It means to be a true follower of Christ.

"Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed.

"And ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." (John 8:31-32.)

To continue means to press forward.

"And now, my beloved brethren, after ye have gotten into this straight and narrow path, I would ask if all is done? Behold, I say unto you, Nay; for ye have not come thus far save it were by the word of Christ with unshaken faith in him, relying wholly upon the merits of him who is mighty to save.

"Wherefore, ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men. Wherefore, if ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life." (2 Ne. 31:19-20.)

Press forward

To continue in righteousness takes personal courage and strength of commitment. We must recognize that there is an opposing force to that which is right. Sometimes hardships come our way or fatigue dims our vision in decision making. It may be a selfish motive or a carnal desire that needs to be overcome before we can continue. In every situation, however, the answer which leads to happiness is to press forward. President Kimball has assured us that when we have done all we can do in a situation, the Lord "will find a way to open doors."

A pair of lady missionaries spent an entire week striving to open the doors of people's hearts in a small town.

They met rejection and ridicule at almost every door. After a particularly difficult day, they returned to their apartment dejected and tired. They were not sure they could continue in the face of such opposition. After much discussion and prayer, they retired for the night, determined that on the morrow they would return once more to their area to continue their labors. The next morning they pleaded again with the Lord for strength to face the challenges of the day. That day nearly every family they called on welcomed their message. The Lord blessed their continued efforts and faith and opened the doors of homes and hearts to the message of restoration.

A home teacher continued faithfully to visit a certain family for seven years before the father in that home responded to the invitation to become actively involved in the Church.

Continued effort

One young husband decided to find out for himself if the Church were true. He had observed the uplifting changes brought into the lives of his wife and children, who had joined The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints six years previously. He obtained a copy of the Book of Mormon and began reading. At first he felt nothing, but he continued to read. He remembered that he should pray as he read—that was the counsel the missionaries had given. For the next six evenings he continued to read and to pray. He continued to plead with the Lord to let him know the truths contained in these scriptures.

Two more evenings he continued, and then a deeply spiritual experience began to unfold. He found himself listening as he read. It was as though he were hearing the characters in the story speak rather than verbalizing the printed word himself. He continued to pray and to study. At the close of the tenth evening, he stated that he was now hearing the voices of the characters

and feeling the spirit of their messages.

His continued effort brought him near to the Lord in his search for truth; he then received a testimony of the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon.

A noble wife continued for 37 years to teach her children to honor their father, for she promised that he would one day honor his priesthood. This promise was realized, and he became a diligent and faithful follower of the Lord.

Our faithful pioneers sang, "Press on, press on" ("Though Deepening Trials," *Hymns*, no. 285) as they faced difficult and trying times. The youth of the Church today sing, "Carry on, carry on" ("Firm as the Mountains Around Us," *Hymns*, no. 42) in the face of modern trials.

Blessings through endurance

There are many, many examples of those who have received blessings

through continuing in righteousness. There are also numberless examples of those who have been denied the Lord's blessings because they turn from righteous paths and do that which is wrong.

May the Lord bless each of us with the strength, courage, and faith to continue what we commence in righteousness. I testify to you that God lives. May we each follow the counsel of the Lord to continue in righteousness ourselves, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President Kimball

Elder Rex D. Pinegar of the First Council of Seventy has just addressed us.

We will now hear from Elder Robert L. Simpson, Assistant to the Council of the Twelve Apostles. He will be followed by Elder Mark E. Petersen of the Council of the Twelve.

Elder Robert L. Simpson

Assistant to the Council of the Twelve

My beloved brothers and sisters, I am grateful for this opportunity and for the spirit of the testimonies that have been borne here this morning.

Just a couple of weeks ago I was passing through the Salt Lake airport and had a less-than-five-minute contact with a young man that impressed me very much. During our brief contact he found out about my affiliation with the Church. He found out that the yellow pad that I had in my hand was in preparation for some thoughts to give at the Saturday morning session of general conference.

I observed a tenderness between him and his wife and his three children. And I knew that he was a man with deep spiritual sensitivity. But having only three or four minutes to chat, as I boarded my aircraft, I discovered that I

didn't know his name, I didn't have his address. But I want you to know that much of what I say this morning is because I know he is listening to this particular session of conference.

Teachings of Christ

We are met here this morning hopefully that we might communicate well about the Lord Jesus Christ, because incorporated in his precious teachings are the most urgent, the most important, and the most vital of all information pertaining to the ultimate happiness and eternal destiny of man.

I earnestly seek his divine help and guidance that the intent of my heart will not be misunderstood, and perhaps our communication can be like the prophet Isaiah when he said, "Come now, and