

Saturday, April 3

First Day

all over the world, bringing great joy and happiness to their lives.

You who are Americans assembled here have an expression which I have learned, and it says, "Life is not all peaches and cream." Although in the season we have plenty of peaches in Holland and cream enough all year long, we are happy with the sure knowledge that the Lord has placed us on this earth as part of his great plan of salvation. That is, brethren, what brings happiness to us.

Testimony

In closing I bear you my testimony that these brethren with whom I am privileged to share the stand today are men of God, that President Spencer W. Kimball is indeed a prophet of the living God to guide us in these the latter days. I testify that these brethren who are members of the Council of the Twelve are indeed called to be special witnesses of the name of Christ in all the world, like the members of the First Council of the Seventy have been called to preach the gospel in all the world. I love and admire them for the example they set, for their friendship, and for the way they teach us by the Spirit all the things we need to do to return to our Heavenly Father.

This conference will touch our hearts and change our lives, and I bear witness to you that your life will not be

the same when you return to your respective wards and branches. We will return edified, wiser, more sensitive to the needs of others, and better equipped with the knowledge we need in our homes and therefore will be happier and closer to our Heavenly Father. May peace and happiness be with you this day and always, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President Spencer W. Kimball

You have just heard four brethren whom you sustained today as General Authorities in the First Quorum of Seventy.

Brother Searle will now direct the congregation and choir in singing "The Spirit of God Like a Fire Is Burning."

The congregation sang the hymn "The Spirit of God Like a Fire Is Burning."

President Kimball

We shall now greatly appreciate hearing from President N. Eldon Tanner, first counselor in the First Presidency.

President N. Eldon Tanner

First Counselor in the First Presidency

My beloved brethren, I have greatly enjoyed and wish to congratulate this men's chorus on the fine and beautiful singing they have given us this evening. I've also enjoyed very much

the testimonies of the Brethren, particularly these new brethren who have been called, set apart, and ordained as members of the First Quorum of the Seventy.

It is a great privilege and heavy responsibility to stand before a body of this priesthood. No place in all the world could you find such fine, clean, devoted, honorable, and dependable men, who as individuals and as a group have great power. You have been called, ordained, and have had the priesthood conferred upon you by those having the authority from God.

Importance of the Priesthood

Also, no men outside The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have this priesthood or the authority to speak or act in the name of the Lord. I tremble and fear as I stand before you and think what this body is and represents—*tremble* because of the great responsibility placed upon the priesthood, and *fear* because we are not doing all the Lord would have us do.

Never before have I felt so keenly the need and the importance of the priesthood in the world and the need for each and every one of us to honor our priesthood, magnify our callings, and contribute wherever we can to the furtherance of the cause of truth and righteousness and peace throughout the world. As I speak to you I humbly pray that the Spirit and blessings of the Lord will attend and inspire us.

The strength of the Church, the growth of the Church, and the building of the kingdom of God here upon the earth depend on how we perform our duty.

A privilege, not a right

This evening, I should like to talk about the importance of the priesthood and what the Lord expects of those who hold it. We should all realize that there is nothing in the world more powerful than the priesthood of God. However, I fear that too often some seem to take it for granted as a *right* and not a *privilege*. Many seem to feel that *age* should determine when they are entitled to receive the priesthood or advance in it.

Let us just stop and think for a moment of the great importance the Lord placed on the Aaronic Priesthood when it was restored. John the Baptist, who baptized the Savior, was sent to restore the Aaronic Priesthood. Placing his hands upon the heads of Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery, he said:

“Upon you my fellow servants, in the name of Messiah I confer the Priesthood of Aaron, which holds the *keys of the ministering of angels*, and of the *gospel of repentance*, and of *baptism by immersion for the remission of sins.*” D&C 13. Italics added.)

Works of righteousness

We should all realize that great works of righteousness can be and are performed by the Aaronic Priesthood. President Wilford Woodruff relates an experience that he had. He said:

“I was strongly impressed three times to go up and warn Father Hake-man [an early apostate]. At last I did so, according to the commandment of God to me. The third time I met with him, his house seemed to be full of evil spirits, and I was troubled in spirit at the manifestation. When I finished my warning, I left him. He followed me from his house with the intention of killing me. I have no doubt about his intention, for it was shown to me in vision. When he came to where I was, he fell dead at my feet, as if he had been struck with a thunderbolt from heaven. I was then a Priest, but God defended me and preserved my life. I speak of this because it is a principle that has been manifest in the Church of God in this generation as well as in others. I had the administration of angels while holding the office of a Priest. I had visions and revelations. I traveled thousands of miles. I baptized men, though I could not confirm them because I had not the authority to do it.” (*Millennial Star*, 1891, 53:641-42.)

He also said: “I desire to impress upon you the fact that it does not make any difference whether a man is a Priest

or an Apostle, if he magnifies his calling. A Priest holds the keys of the ministering of angels. Never in my life, as an Apostle, as a Seventy, or as an Elder, have I ever had more of the protection of the Lord than while holding the office of a Priest. The Lord revealed to me by visions, by revelations, and by the Holy Spirit, many things that lay before me." (*Millennial Star*, 1891, 53:629.)

Importance of Aaronic Priesthood

Now, we all realize, of course, that the inspiration and revelation which he received as a priest, and which all of us can receive, is for the benefit and guidance of the individual, and not for the Church.

The importance of the Aaronic Priesthood is emphasized also by the fact that the Lord appointed as the presidency of this priesthood the bishopric who hold the keys and authority of the same. I don't know how you feel about it, but every time I see the Aaronic Priesthood administering and passing the sacrament I think what a great and glorious privilege it is for these young men to participate. I know that the Lord wants them to be worthy and reverent and is not pleased when they are not.

The Lord mentions another privilege and responsibility of the Aaronic Priesthood in these words:

"Therefore, take with you those who are ordained unto the lesser priesthood, and send them before you to make appointments, and to prepare the way, and to fill appointments that you yourselves are not able to fill." (D&C 84:107.)

For the past few years I have had the privilege of home teaching with an ordained teacher part of the time and a priest with whom I am teaching at the present time. They make the appointments and take their turn in presenting and leading the discussions. The other day my home teaching companion

called me and said that the head of one of the families we visit was in the hospital and suggested that we go to see him. We did and blessed him.

Covenants

Regardless of the priesthood we hold, if we keep ourselves clean and pure and in tune with the Spirit of the Lord, we find great joy and satisfaction in performing our duties. As we receive the priesthood we make certain covenants with the Lord which are binding and very important. And he expects us to keep those covenants. Here I should like to quote parts of the priesthood covenant:

"For whoso is *faithful* unto the obtaining these two priesthoods of which I have spoken, and the *magnifying their calling*, are sanctified by the Spirit unto the renewing of their bodies.

"They become the sons of Moses and of Aaron and the seed of Abraham, and the church and kingdom, and the elect of God. . . .

"And I now give unto you a commandment to beware concerning yourselves, to give diligent heed to the words of eternal life.

"For you shall live by every word that proceedeth forth from the mouth of God." (D&C 84:33-34, 43-44; italics added.)

What a tremendous blessing, promise, and responsibility. And this is to everyone who will keep the covenant and applies to all of us. The first four words of the covenant are "For whoso is faithful."

Keep the Commandments

Regarding faithfulness, I should like to say a few words about the Word of Wisdom, chastity, honesty, and keeping the commandments. The Lord has said,

"If ye love me, keep my commandments." (John 14:15.)

I am sure that every man under the

sound of my voice tonight would say that he loves the Lord. But how does he prove it? He said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments."

I realize that there is much evil in the world today. Satan is on the loose, and sometimes we are sorely tempted by him and his cohorts to do things we know we should not do, and in many instances we succumb because we want to be popular with our peers. However, holding the priesthood makes us different, and we must be prepared to be different, to be set apart from the ways of the world, and ready and willing to do the work the Lord has called us to do.

Though science has proven that the use of tea, coffee, tobacco, drugs, and alcohol are detrimental to the body, the world does not have the Word of Wisdom. We are different from the world in that the Lord has given us the Word of Wisdom as a commandment, with a tremendous blessing and promise as recorded in the 89th section of the Doctrine and Covenants.

Word of Wisdom

I should like to share with you tonight an experience and tell you a story regarding keeping the Word of Wisdom. When I was president of the Edmonton Branch in Canada, I was in charge of our priests group. We used to meet in the basement of an IOOF Hall, which had dirt walls and a dirt floor. One of the priests, named Max, was playing on the school basketball team. He was the only member of the Church on that team. The other boys, naturally, had no qualms about using tea, coffee, or tobacco, and sometimes using alcohol. Max, of course, kept the Word of Wisdom strictly. He used to tell the boys about the Word of Wisdom and the evils of breaking it, and he told them that the Lord had promised that they should run and not be weary, and walk and not faint, if they kept the Word of Wisdom. He assured them they

would be better basketball players if they refrained from the use of these things. He was one of the top players, and the boys respected him. It was not long until all of them were keeping the Word of Wisdom.

A few weeks ago I was in Houston, Texas, and was met there by this young man and his family. He told his family of the times we used to meet in the basement of the IOOF Hall and of some of the things he remembered that I had taught them. Then I told the family of his experience with and influence on the basketball team, emphasizing that people always respect one who will live up to his standards, and that he will benefit greatly thereby. Max now is the head geologist in one of the big oil companies in Houston.

I should like to tell you the experience of one of our young men we will call John, who went east to an officers' training school. A new commanding officer came into the school, and they put on a banquet to honor him. There, by every plate, was a cocktail glass. When the proper time came, every one of those potential officers stood up with his cocktail glass to toast that incoming officer—that is, all but one boy, and he raised a glass of milk. It would take a lot of courage, wouldn't it, to stand there with all those officers and see all of those cocktail glasses come up, and stand and raise a glass of milk!

Well, the officer saw it, and he made a beeline for that boy after the entertainment was over and said, "Why did you toast me with a glass of milk?"

"Well, sir," he said, "I've never touched alcohol in my life. I don't want to touch it; my parents wouldn't want me to touch it; and I didn't think you would want me to either. I wanted to toast you, so I thought you would be satisfied if I toasted you with what I am accustomed to drinking."

The officer said, "Report to my headquarters in the morning."

I suppose that boy spent a sleepless night, but when he went to the officer's

quarters the next morning, do you know what happened? The officer assigned him a place on his staff with this explanation: "I want to surround myself with men who have the courage to do what they think is right regardless of what anybody else thinks about it."

In all my experience, brethren, I have never found a time when living the standards of the Church deprived me or retarded me in any way in advancement or recognition. Surely no one can feel that he is honoring the priesthood and magnifying his calling while he is breaking the Word of Wisdom.

Chastity

Now, regarding chastity. Immorality is so common in the world that it is even affecting some of our priesthood holders, which makes me very sad. The Lord has told us definitely: "Thou shalt not commit adultery." (Exod. 20:14.)

Paul, in speaking to the Corinthians, said: "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind." (1 Cor. 6:9.)

Helaman, speaking to his people, warned them in these words: "Yea, even at this time ye are ripening, because of your murders and your fornication and wickedness, for everlasting destruction; yea, and except ye repent it will come unto you soon." (Hel. 8:26.)

Wherever we are, associating with boys or girls or young men or young women, it is most important that we remember who we are and act accordingly and never allow ourselves to be led into temptation which will lead us to transgression. We are the spirit children of God, holding the priesthood, in which we must honor and magnify our callings. The breaking of the law of chastity is most displeasing to the Lord and is most detrimental and debasing. It causes heartbreak, remorse of conscience, and deprives one of many

opportunities and blessings which the Lord has in store for the faithful, such as filling a mission, attending the temple, being advanced in the priesthood, and holding responsible positions in the Church organizations.

I humbly pray every night and morning that our members will have the desire and determination and strength to keep themselves morally clean, and I plead with everyone here tonight that he will determine to live as the Lord would have him live, and keep himself free from serious temptation and transgression.

Honesty

Now I should like to say a few words about honesty. There is no greater quality of character than honesty in all we do. My parents taught me when I was just a child never to lie, emphasizing that

*Nothing needs a lie, and
The fault which needs it most grows
two thereby.*

If any of you are guilty of serious sin or transgression, I would urge you to go and confess, repent, and clear your life so that you might prepare yourself to enjoy the blessings that you could not enjoy otherwise.

I am very sorry to report that we have cases where people, both men and women, have lied to go to the temple and to go on missions. The Lord has said that no unclean thing shall enter the temple of God. (See, e.g., D&C 97:15.) When one is being interviewed for a temple recommend or for a mission, he should realize that the bishop and stake president are representing the Lord and that their answers are to the Lord and their commitments to the Lord. The Lord knows and will not be mocked.

Be worthy

We have cases where people have gone to the temple unworthily and have had a guilty conscience for years, wondering whether the ordinance will be binding or effective, and they have come to the President of the Church heartbroken to ask forgiveness and to get the matter cleared up. Let us be honest, true, chaste, benevolent, and virtuous. (See Thirteenth Article of Faith.)

Prospective missionaries should realize that the Lord wants somebody in whom he can place every confidence, one who is clean and worthy in every way to represent him in the mission field. If you are not worthy, don't accept a call, don't lie to get there, but through repentance prepare yourself to go. It is so much better to wait a year or so than to go unworthily. Have the courage and manhood, stamina and determination to face the facts, to tell the truth, to prepare yourselves in every way to do what the Lord would want you to do.

Let us listen to and always remember this profound statement made by the late Richard L. Evans:

"Sometimes and under some conditions it is possible to escape from many things—from prison walls, from false friends, from bad company, from boring people, from old environments—but never from ourselves. When we lie down at night, we are there with our own thoughts—whether we like them or not. When we wake in the morning, we are still there—whether we like us or not. The most persistent thing in life (and, we have no doubt, in death also) is our own consciousness of ourselves. This being so, there is no more pitiable person than he who is uncomfortable in his own company—no matter where he runs or how fast, or how far." (Richard L. Evans, *Richard Evans Quote Book*, Salt Lake City: Publishers Press, 1971, p. 214.)

Repent and forsake sin

The Lord has provided a way by which one can be released from such a condition. He said:

"Behold, he who has repented of his sins, the same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more.

"By this ye may know if a man repenteth of his sins—behold, he will confess them and forsake them." (D&C 58:42-43.)

Let us always remember that we priesthood holders are the royal army of God. We are all volunteers. We are waging war against the devil and evil of all kinds. This is a struggle of right or wrong, life or death, for eternal life. Jesus Christ is our leader—our general. Spencer W. Kimball is our commanding officer. The priesthood is our strength, and we must not weaken our army by breaking the Word of Wisdom, by being immoral, by being dishonest or undependable. We must remain strong and follow the orders of our commanding officer.

If we are to win, we cannot have soldiers AWOL. We must not have deserters. We need and must have a loyal, devoted, dedicated, united front. We cannot lose if we remain clean, obedient, and true to the faith.

Testimony

Let us remember also that every disloyal person weakens our army, and pray that we will not be that person. This is the work of the Lord in which we are engaged. This is his church and kingdom here upon the earth. We are being led by the Lord through our president and prophet, Spencer W. Kimball. May we follow our leader, honor the priesthood, magnify the callings which we have been given, and prove ourselves worthy in every way. I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.