

exaltation, success, and victory were never meant to be cheap or to come easily. The tides of life often challenge us. To understand why it has to be this way, we should maintain our understanding, our faith, and our courage by a constant rereading of Second Nephi, chapter two, the substance of which is set forth in this excerpt: "For it must needs be, that there is an opposition in all things." (2 Ne. 2:11.)

### **Drink of "living water"**

Now let me make a suggestion that will enable us to maintain our spiritual strength and keep our testimonies vitally alive so that the trials, the storms, and the tides of life will not defeat us. This suggestion is that, above all, we should heed the words of Jesus to the woman at Jacob's well in Samaria when he said, "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him will never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." (John 4:14.)

How could one's strength ebb or falter when it may be so dependably

and continuously nourished and restored? Here it is made clear that life, at its best and most vigorous, is spiritual and, as such, is the sincere expression of the soul to God. The spiritual self of each of us is that part of us that will never grow old, or ill, or die, but it must be nurtured and invigorated! Drinking of the living water is the unique recipe, the only way! My testimony is that God lives, that Jesus is the Christ, who stands at the head of our church, and that President Spencer W. Kimball is our prophet, seer, and revelator, who is guiding the destiny of the true church of our Savior. To this, I testify with all the strength I possess, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

### **President N. Eldon Tanner**

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the First Quorum of the Seventy has just addressed us.

Elder William H. Bennett of the First Quorum of the Seventy will now speak to us. He will be followed by Elder Marion D. Hanks of the First Council of the Seventy.

## **Elder William H. Bennett**

*Of the First Quorum of the Seventy*

Our Lord and Savior in His great Sermon on the Mount gave us our greatest challenge and most important goal when He said, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." (Matt. 5:48.) In these words Jesus challenges us to strive for excellence in all that we do—to develop our talents and abilities—and above all to live in accordance with His teachings.

### **Our goal is perfection**

The pursuit of excellence should be the major work of our lives. Many

people, however, give little attention to it. Perhaps they feel that it is not possible for anyone to reach perfection in this life, and so they let the immediate pressures dominate their actions. While it is true that we cannot attain perfection in a total sense in this life, it is also true that we can attain perfection in many specific areas of activity. Furthermore, if we fail to do what we can and should do in this life, we may deprive ourselves forever of the opportunity to do those things later on and thus lose great eternal blessings.

Let us consider these words of one of our poets, Holland:

Heaven is not reached at a single  
bound;  
But we build the ladder by which we  
rise  
From the lowly earth to the vaulted  
skies,  
And we mount to its summit round  
by round.

Josiah Gilbert Holland, "Gadatim," in *Masterpieces of Religious Verse*, ed. James Dalton Morrison, New York: Harper & Brothers, 1948, p. 443.

With that as our base, I'd like to mention some of the specific ways in which perfection has been or can be attained in this life.

### Olympic perfection

Just a few weeks ago the summer Olympics were held in Montreal, Canada. Were you watching on TV when that fourteen-year-old Rumanian girl, Nadia Comaneci, obtained a perfect score of ten in four of her performances, and one other girl did it once? Or perhaps you viewed the track-and-field competition and saw sprinters, jumpers, or weightmen in action. Or perhaps you saw the swimmers and divers perform. If you did, you saw some great performances. Competitors, assisted by coaches and trainers, had spent many hours trying to achieve perfect coordination between mind and body and to get everything working together so that each competitor might reach his or her potential. In the case of the team competition, a correlation of effort among team members was of great importance. For example, in the relay races there were four runners to a team. The intent was to exchange the baton from runner to runner without losing any forward speed. The foursome that most nearly achieved this was usually the winner.

### Athletes achieve dreams

Success in athletic competition is

pretty much a matter of attitude, knowledge, and skill. Inherent ability is important, but that alone is not enough. Do you remember the "Be Honest with Yourself" program sponsored by the MIA some years ago, in which inspirational recordings from outstanding athletes and others were made available for use throughout the Church? One of those records featured Robert Richards, an outstanding U.S. pole vaulter. He emphasized that the one thing that characterizes all great athletes is *desire*, and he told about a young lady from Holland whom he had met at the 1932 Olympic Games. As a girl she wanted to become an outstanding swimmer, but she got polio. She didn't give up but continued her program. Improvement came slowly, but it came, and the day arrived when she was able to swim across the pool. She said that made her the happiest girl alive. Then the time came when she could swim the length of the pool, and then several lengths. She stayed with it day after day until finally she defeated the world's greatest swimmers in her events at the 1932 Olympics.

Richards also told about Harold Connolly. He was born with a withered left arm—only one good arm. But what an arm it was! He became one of the world's best in the sixteen-pound hammer throw.

Outstanding athletes think positively. They dream the impossible dreams; they reach for the unreachable stars; they say, "I can, I must, and I will"; and their achievements at times are unbelievable. This indomitable spirit also characterizes many of our handicapped people who because of war injuries, unfortunate accidents, or for other reasons have to face life against what seem to be impossible odds.

An article pertaining to the courage of a young lady from Nephi, Utah, who was seriously injured in a car accident appeared in the *NEW ERA* recently. (See Carol Clark, "Making Tracks While the Sun Shines," *NEW ERA*, Sept. 1975, pp.

44-47.) Read it. It will inspire you to new heights in your lives.

### Others excell

As it is in athletics, so it is in other aspects of our living. There are artists, poets, and other writers, musicians, craftsmen, and technicians in many fields of activity who strive diligently to do their best in all they do and then try to make their best better. One of the best examples of this is our great Mormon Tabernacle Choir, the organists, and the "Spoken Word" presentations of Richard L. Evans and now more recently Spencer Kinard. The Choir members and others who have participated in these outstanding presentations over the years and the millions of people who have listened to them know that the unreachable star of perfection has been reached perhaps as well as it can be here in mortality. God bless them all for their dedicated, committed service.

### Spiritual perfection

With respect to spiritual matters, we can be perfect in this life in paying tithing; being honest in our dealings with others; having personal and family prayers; abstaining from the use of alcohol, tobacco, and drugs; holding family home evenings; and in reading the scriptures daily. We can if we really want to.

### Cliff Cushman's efforts

No one is perfect, but everyone should be striving for perfection. If we should stumble or fall as we travel life's highway, let us apply the counsel given to us by Cliff Cushman, a member of the 1960 U.S. Olympic team. He won the silver medal in the 400-meter hurdles and was a top candidate for the gold medal in the 1964 Olympics; but in the American trials, he hit and tripped over a hurdle and was eliminated.

Messages of sympathy poured in to him, and he replied with an open letter to the youth of his hometown, Grand Forks, North Dakota. He wrote:

"Over 15 years ago, I saw a star—first place in the Olympic Games. I literally started to run after it. In 1960 I came within three yards of grabbing it; this year I stumbled, fell and watched it recede four more years away. . . .

"In a split second all the many years of training, pain, sweat, blisters and agony of running were simply and irrevocably wiped out.

"But I tried! I would much rather fail knowing I had put forth an honest effort than never to have tried at all. . . .

"Certainly I was very disappointed in falling flat on my face. However, there is nothing I can do about it now but get up, pick the cinders from my wounds, and take one more step followed by one more and one more, until the steps turn into miles and miles into success.

"I know I may never make it. The odds are against me, but I have something in my favor—desire and faith. . . . At least I am going to try. How about you? . . . Unless your reach exceeds your grasp, how can you be sure what you can attain? . . .

"Let me tell you something about yourselves. . . . You are spending more money, enjoying more freedom, and driving more cars than ever before, yet many of you are very unhappy. Some of you have never known the satisfaction of doing your best in sports, the joy of excelling in class, the wonderful feeling of completing a job, any job, and looking back on it knowing that you have done your best. . . .

"I dare you to look up at the stars, not down at the mud, and set your sights on them that, up to now, you thought were unattainable. There is plenty of room at the top, but no room for anyone to sit down.

"Who knows? You may be surprised at what you can achieve with sincere effort. So get up, pick the

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cinders out of your wounds, and take one more step.

"I dare you!"

The last report I had on Cliff Cushman indicated that he was missing in action in the Vietnam war.

### Saving souls

The Church is engaged in the greatest work in all the world—saving the souls of our Father's children. It is important that each member know his or her duties and be dedicated and committed in carrying them out in a manner that is pleasing to the Lord. It is important that all concerned have vision of the total job to be done and his or her role with respect thereto. It is important that we marshal all the resources and get them working together in a corre-

lated way so the Church can reach its full potential in helping the Lord bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man. Our goal is perfection for all of God's children who will listen, accept, and live the gospel.

May we be successful in this, our greatest responsibility, is my humble prayer, in the name of the Lord, Jesus Christ. Amen.

### President N. Eldon Tanner

We have just listened to Elder William H. Bennett of the First Quorum of the Seventy.

Elder Marion D. Hanks of the First Council of the Seventy will be our next speaker. He will be followed by President Ezra Taft Benson of the Council of the Twelve.

## Elder Marion D. Hanks

Of the First Council of the Seventy

The poet has supplied a line that will suffice me today, though there is much I would wish to say. "We shall not cease from exploration," he wrote, "And the end of all our exploring/Will be to arrive where we started/And know the place for the first time."

I come again to the work of the Seventy with greater capacity to appreciate the significance and sacredness of a calling which the Lord in the revelation talks of in terms of "special witnesses." (D&C 107:25.) There could be no holier commission.

### "What do ye more than others?"

In his great sermon this morning, Elder Hunter referred us to the Savior's quotations in His response to Lucifer,

from scriptures which in His day were already ancient.

"Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill" (Matt. 5:21), He said. "But I say unto you . . ." (Matt. 5:22), and then He broadened the issue; He spoke of matters which those who listened recognized as applying to them. Probably they had not been guilty of killing, but had they been angry with a brother without cause? "It was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery" (Matt. 5:27). But had His hearers offended God by entertaining this sin in their own hearts?

"Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth:

"But I say unto you, That ye resist