

Elder Howard W. Hunter

Of the Council of the Twelve

There are thousands of young men in many places in the world who have joined with us tonight in this priesthood meeting being conducted in the Mormon Tabernacle in Salt Lake City. It is to these young men that I would like to speak, but your fathers and grandfathers may listen also if they like.

"Bind on thy sandals"

Some years ago I read an article in the Era of Youth section of our IMPROVEMENT ERA magazine entitled "Bind on Thy Sandals." It told of the less-than-spectacular career of a quarterback on the football team of a small, rural high school. This young man managed to make the team, but it was clear he was not going to be all-state or all-American. Indeed, it didn't look like he was going to be all-anything, except perhaps all battered and bruised. He was the fourth of the four quarterbacks.

By season's end he had never been called into a game and had given up hope. During the final game of the year he pulled off his shoes, wrapped himself in a blanket, and settled down on the bench to watch his buddies play.

Midway through the game he heard the coach shout his name. He was startled and wondered if he had been mistaken. Then it came again, right from the coach's lips, "Hey, you! Get in there and move the ball!"

What should he do? His first impulse was to lapse into a coma. His second was to pretend he didn't hear. His third was to say, "Wait, coach. Wait while I put on my shoes." He did the only manly thing. Strapping on his helmet as he ran, he made straight for the huddle; his white-stockinged feet were conspicuous to the players on both teams, as well as to the spectators and the coach, who also must have been ready to lapse into a coma.

He called the play, but the shock of

his first game was obviously a little disconcerting. By the time he took the snap from center he had forgotten the play he had called. His teammates moved to the right, but he gamely went left. There, alone against the world, he met the opposition head-on and was swallowed up in the snarl of the onrushing linemen.

He said later, "No one expected me to make a touchdown. Even running the wrong way was understandable. But there was no excuse for a quarterback without shoes." (See *Improvement Era*, Sept. 1969, p. 44.)

Be prepared

I want to invite the young men in this audience tonight to keep their gospel shoes on, to believe in the opportunities that lie ahead. I am reminded of what Abraham Lincoln said when he sat on the sidelines for a long time, losing election after election and struggling to make a professional contribution. He said simply, "I will prepare, and perhaps my chance will come." He lived long enough to learn what everyone learns—that chance always favors the prepared life.

As surely as I know anything, I know you young men are needed and will be called on to help the kingdom in the years ahead. Indeed, we call upon you now. We need your company and your friendship and your service and your standards. Some of your assignments may seem small to you, but they are very important and they prepare you for greater service to come.

Oliver Cowdery was one who, for just a moment, slipped his shoes off while the game was still going, and it led to one of the great disappointments in Church history. He had been serving as scribe for the Prophet Joseph Smith as the Book of Mormon was being translated, and the Lord told him that

he, too, would be granted the gift of translation. (See D&C 6:25.)

Oliver was not as ready as he might have been—or as he once had been. His belief in himself and in this great latter-day work had faltered just a bit, and he cried out, “Wait while I get ready.” But he learned that eternal work can seldom wait for long. The Lord eventually replied to him, “Because . . . you did not continue as you commenced, . . . I have taken away this privilege. . . . You feared, and the time is past, and it is not expedient now.” (D&C 9:5, 11.) The opportunity of a lifetime had not been seized, and it was gone forever.

President Kimball

If President Kimball will pardon a personal reference, I would like to refer to his readiness and preparation. At President Harold B. Lee’s funeral he said with love and emotion: “President Lee has gone. I never thought it could happen. I sincerely wanted it never to happen. I doubt if anyone in the Church has prayed harder and more consistently for a long life and the general welfare for President Lee than my Camilla and myself. I have not been ambitious. I am four years older than Brother Lee (to the exact day, March 28). I have expected that I would go long before he would go. My heart cries out to him and for him. How we loved him!” (ENSIGN, Feb. 1974, p. 86.)

Certainly President Kimball was not ambitious to be president of the Church, but when the call came, unexpected as it may have been, he was ready. In all the years we have been privileged to know him, President Kimball has always been ready. He has never slipped off his shoes while the game was still on—not ever. He has never had to say, “Wait while I prepare. Wait while I get ready.” Though he may never have dreamed it would someday be his, all of his life he has been getting ready for the assignment he now has.

Let me cite just one example of that preparation which started many

years ago, when President Kimball was the age of many of you sitting within the sound of my voice tonight. When he was fourteen years old, a Church leader visited a conference of the stake over which his father presided and told the congregation that they should read the scriptures.

President Kimball, in recalling that experience, said: “I recognized that I had never read the Bible, [so] that very night at the conclusion of that very sermon I walked to my home a block away and climbed up in my little attic room in the top of the house and lighted a little coal-oil lamp that was on the little table, and I read the first chapters of Genesis. A year later I closed the Bible, having read every chapter in that big and glorious book. . . . It was formidable, but I knew if others did it that I could do it.

“I found,” said President Kimball, “that there were certain parts that were hard for a 14-year-old boy to understand. There were some pages that were not especially interesting to me, but when I had read the 66 books and the 1,189 chapters and 1,519 pages, I had a glowing satisfaction that I had made a goal and that I had achieved it.

“Now I am not telling you this story to boast,” President Kimball concludes, “I am merely using this as an example to say that if I could do it by coal-oil light, you can do it by electric light. I have always been glad I read the Bible from cover to cover.” (ENSIGN, May 1974, p. 88.) In this and a thousand other ways, young Spencer Woolley Kimball silently and efficiently prepared, never dreaming of what lay ahead.

Be ready

May I say once more to the youth of the Church—prepare, believe, be ready, have faith. Do not say or do or be that which would limit your service or render you ineffective in the kingdom of God. Be ready when your call comes, for surely it will come. Keep

your gospel shoes on, or as Paul wrote to the Ephesians, "Stand therefore, having . . . your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace." (Eph. 6:14-15.) The Lord would say to you tonight what the angel said long ago to Simon Peter: "Arise. . . Bind on thy sandals. . . Follow me." (Acts 12:7-8.)

What a glorious thing it is to have the privilege of bearing the priesthood. God does live and Jesus Christ is his Son—our Lord and Savior. I bear witness that there is a prophet of God on the earth, and tonight we have the privilege of sitting at his feet in this great gathering. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Elder Robert L. Simpson

Of the First Quorum of the Seventy

My beloved brethren of the priesthood, my heart always fills to overflowing as we meet each six months in this great general priesthood meeting of the Church. Believe me when I say that no force on earth can possibly match the potential power of so many men meeting together with the priesthood of God as their common cause.

Thanks to the modern-day miracle of such things as transistors, coaxial cables, and earth-orbiting satellites, other thousands are able to join with us in faraway places. Way over in Perth, Australia, halfway around the world from Salt Lake City, I can visualize Bruce Opie, the mission president, sitting in the midst of his missionaries as they attend this priesthood meeting on the shores of the Indian Ocean. It is already tomorrow morning where they are.

Then there is young Carlos down in Argentina, where it's midnight; but who cares about a few hours of lost sleep compared to the privilege of being instructed by a living prophet? You see, Carlos is preparing to invest two years of his life as a missionary for the Lord.

President N. Eldon Tanner

Elder Howard W. Hunter of the Quorum of the Twelve has just addressed us.

We shall now hear from Elder Robert L. Simpson, a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy who is Supervisor of the Australia-New Zealand Area.

He will be followed by Elder Henry D. Taylor, a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy.

Speaking of investments: While walking down Main Street the other day, I was impressed with the number of signs encouraging people to invest their money. Each bank offered a return on that investment of 6 to 8 percent, depending upon the conditions of investment.

A mission is an investment

Just about four months ago a missionary was released from one of our Australia-New Zealand missions and in the following report talks about the Lord's interest payments or dividends received following an investment of two years in His service. The missionary writes:

"First and foremost, I learned the importance and power of prayer—I learned to communicate with the Lord, and how to recognize His answers—even when He says no. I learned about having implicit faith and trust in the Lord, something I never had before. I learned to heed the promptings of the Holy Ghost. I also developed the gift of discernment. I had this to a degree be-