

President Marion G. Romney

My beloved brothers and sisters, I invite you to join with me in a prayer that we may enjoy the Spirit of the Lord while I attempt to say a few things about the worth of a soul.

The worth of souls

As I left Church headquarters for a mission fifty-eight years ago this fall, I was given a sheet of instructions on which was printed this modern scripture:

"Remember the worth of souls is great in the sight of God;

"For, behold, the Lord your Redeemer suffered death in the flesh; wherefore he suffered the pain of all men, that all men might repent and come unto him" (D&C 18:10-11).

The impact of this statement that Christ suffered "the pain of all men," here given by the Lord to emphasize his high appraisal of the worth of human souls, is sharpened by the realization of the intensity of that suffering. Of it, Luke wrote, speaking of Christ's prayer in Gethsemane:

"And he . . . kneeled down, and prayed,

"Saying Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.

"And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him.

"And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." (Luke 22:41-44.)

Eighteen hundred years later, Jesus himself, speaking of that suffering, said, speaking to one of the early brethren:

"I command you to repent . . . lest . . . your sufferings be sore—how sore you know not, how exquisite you know not, yea, how hard to bear you know not.

"For behold, I, God, have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent;

"But if they would not repent they must suffer even as I;

"Which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit—and would that I might not drink the bitter cup, and shrink—

"Nevertheless, glory be to the Father, and I partook and finished my preparations unto the children of men." (D&C 19:15-19.)

Words of ancient prophets

This high value which the Lord puts upon the souls of men as made known in these modern scriptures, he also revealed to his ancient prophets. To impress upon their minds the worth of a human soul, he gave some of them a glimpse of the magnitude of his creations and then explained that they were but ancillary to the accomplishment of his purpose—"to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man" (Moses 1:39).

After Enoch had visioned some of God's creations, he declared that "were it possible that man could number the particles of the earth, yea, millions of earths like this, it would not be a beginning to the number of thy creations" (Moses 7:30).

Following a similar showing to Moses, the Lord said: "Worlds without number have I created . . .

"And as one earth shall pass away, and the heavens thereof even so shall another come; and there is no end to my works, neither to my words.

"For behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man." (Moses 1:33, 38-39.)

These scriptures bring to mind and give meaning to the Psalmist's searching inquiry:

"When I consider thy heavens," he said, "the work of thy fingers, the moon

and the stars, which thou hast ordained;

"What is man, that thou art mindful of him? . . .

"For thou hast . . . crowned him with glory and honour.

"Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet." (Ps. 8:3-6.)

Revealed by God

Now the answer to this profound question—What is man that he should be of such inestimable worth?—comes only by direct revelation from heaven. So important is it that it is communicated to men by God himself and angels sent by him. It was thus revealed in the very beginning to Adam and Eve. In each succeeding gospel dispensation, it has been likewise revealed to "chosen vessels of the Lord" (Moro. 7:31)—that is, to his prophets.

These prophets have faithfully borne testimony of the truth revealed to them. This they have done that the residue of men, those who will qualify themselves to obtain it, by the power of the Holy Ghost may come to a knowledge of it. (See Moro. 7:32.)

In this manner we ourselves have learned *who* and *what* man is. For such a knowledge we give the Lord grateful thanks and adoration. Thus knowing the truth, we bear the following witness:

Man is a dual being—a living soul—composed of a body of spirit and a physical body. His spirit existed as an individual personal entity in a pre-mortal life long before the earth was created. As a matter of fact, this earth was expressly created as a place for the spirits of men to take on mortality.

The clearest teaching on record as to the nature of the spirit of man was given 2200 years B.C., when Jesus, in his spirit body, appeared to the brother of Jared and said:

"Behold, I am Jesus Christ. . . .

"Seest thou that ye are created after mine own image? Yea, even all

men were created in the beginning after mine own image.

"Behold, this body, which ye now behold, is the body of my spirit; and man have I created after the body of my spirit; and even as I appear unto thee to be in the spirit will I appear unto my people in the flesh." (Ether 3:14-16.)

From this it is clear that man's physical body is patterned after his spiritual body.

The origin of man

In origin, man is a son of God. The spirits of men "are begotten sons and daughters unto God" (D&C 76:24). Through that birth process, self-existing intelligence was organized into individual spirit beings.

The destiny of man

The spirits of men, by their conduct in pre-earth life, earned a two-point destiny: (1) the privilege to be tabernacled in a body of flesh and bone; and (2) immortality as living souls.

The plan to bring about this two-point destiny provides for (1) mortal birth, through which man's spirit receives a body of flesh and bone, thus becoming a soul; (2) mortal death, by which man's spirit and body are temporarily separated—his soul dissolved; (3) redemption of the soul by resurrection—in which the spirit and body are inseparably reunited.

In this way the Lord brings to pass that immortality of which he spoke to Moses when he said, "This is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man" (Moses 1:39). Through his victory over death, Christ has already secured the immortality here spoken of.

But this is not all. He accomplished more for men.

By his atonement Jesus brought men within the reach of eternal life. However, he did not guarantee eternal life to all men as he did guarantee immortality.

There will be many gradations among immortal souls. As "one star differeth from another star in glory so also is the resurrection of the dead" (1 Cor. 15:41-42). That's Paul's doctrine.

Immortality connotes life without end.

Eternal life, on the other hand, connotes quality of life—exaltation, the highest type of immortality, the kind of life enjoyed by God himself.

Man's potentiality

It is in the attainment of eternal life, which man must earn in mortality, that he reaches his full potentiality. Man, being a child of God—who himself is a glorified, resurrected, immortal soul, enjoying eternal life—has, in harmony with the universal law of nature, the potentiality to reach, in full maturity, the high status of his Heavenly Father.

John was alluding to this truth when he wrote, "We [are] the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him" (1 John 3:2).

To obtain this high estate Jesus enjoined men when he said, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father . . . in heaven is perfect" (Matt. 5:48).

Eternal life is to be obtained only through obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel. "Enter ye in at the strait gate," said Jesus, "for strait is the gate, and narrow is the way that leads to life, and few there be that find it" (3 Ne. 27:33).

Gate to eternal life

Although in this and other scripture Jesus warned and taught that the gate to eternal life is strait and the way narrow, he nevertheless made it clear that both the gate and the way are open for every man who will qualify himself to enter. Here are his words:

"Verily, thus saith the Lord: It shall come to pass that every soul who

forsaketh his sins and cometh unto me, and calleth on my name, and obeyeth my voice, and keepeth my commandments, shall see my face and know that I am. . . .

"I give unto you these sayings that you may understand and know how to worship, and know what you worship, that you may come unto the Father in my name, and in due time receive of his fulness.

"For if you keep my commandments you shall receive of his fulness, and be glorified in me as I am in the Father." (D&C 93:1, 19-20.)

The crowning work and glory of God is, therefore, as he has said, to bring to pass the eternal life of man.

Such is the worth of a soul. Surely it "is great in the sight of God" (D&C 18:10). They should be of like value in the sight of men. As God's work and glory is to bring to pass the eternal life of man, so the desire, hope, and work of every man should be to obtain eternal life for himself. And not for himself only but also for his fellowmen; and it will be when he fully appreciates who and what he is—his nature, origin, destiny, and potentiality.

In comparison to eternal life, all else sinks into insignificance. For, as Jesus said:

"What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?

"Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Mark 8:36-37.)

Truths revealed anew

Now, in conclusion, I direct a short message to you, our listening friends—you who may not have yet received the restored gospel of Jesus Christ:

The truths concerning the worth of human souls we have here briefly sketched are not new. As already indicated, they were revealed to Adam in the beginning. He taught them to his children. They have been revealed anew and taught in each succeeding gospel dispensation. In the meridian of time

Jesus taught them here on earth in person.

Our special message to you today is that in this, our day, known in the scriptures as the dispensation of the fulness of times, the heavens have been reopened; the truths concerning man's nature, origin, destiny, and potentiality have been again revealed for our special benefit. The Father and his Son, Jesus Christ, and ancient apostles and prophets have visited and communicated with "chosen vessels of the Lord"—modern prophets—and have restored and reaffirmed these truths and all the rest of the pure and simple principles, ordinances, and teachings of the everlasting gospel of Jesus Christ.

The priesthood of God—the authority to administer the ordinances of the gospel—has been committed again unto men. Christ has reestablished his church in the earth. It is here with full power to do for us, you and me, all that needs to be done in mortality, which we ourselves cannot do to bring to pass our eternal life.

Invitation to investigate

We love you; we recognize you as our brothers and sisters in the family of God, our Heavenly Father. We thank you for listening to us. We invite you to investigate our message. We know that if you will do so honestly and prayerfully, asking "God, the Eternal Father, in the name of [Jesus] Christ, . . . with a sincere heart, . . . he will manifest the truth of [these things] unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost" (Moro. 10:4).

We are anxious to inform you of the message of the Restoration. At your request or invitation we will send or bring you literature or come and teach you at your convenience. To this service we are dedicated; to it we have been divinely called, for we bear the same responsibility as did Christ's ancient disciples, for unto us also the Lord Jesus has said, "Go ye into all the world,

preach the gospel to every creature" (D&C 68:8).

I give you my personal witness to the truth of these things. If you can understand and accept them, they will give you an appreciation of the worth of souls found in no other source; they will put you in the way of eternal life; they will transform your lives and bring you a peace hitherto unknown. That it may be so I humbly pray, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Following President Marion G. Romney's address, the Tabernacle Choir sang the anthem, "All Glory, Laud, and Honor," without announcement.

President Spencer W. Kimball

President Marion G. Romney, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, has just given the concluding address, followed by the Tabernacle Choir singing, "All Glory, Laud, and Honor."

We are grateful to the managers and operators of the many television and radio stations for offering their facilities as a public service to bring the proceedings of this Conference to a large audience throughout many areas of the world.

We shall conclude this session of the Conference with the Tabernacle Choir singing, "O Thou Rock of Our Salvation." Following the singing, the benediction will be pronounced by Elder Yoshihiko Kikuchi of the First Quorum of the Seventy, who is Supervisor of the Japan-Korea Area.

This Conference will then be adjourned until two o'clock this afternoon.

The Choir sang, "O Thou Rock of Our Salvation."

Elder Yoshihiko Kikuchi pronounced the benediction.