

sacrifice of all things never has power sufficient to produce the faith necessary unto life and salvation" (*Lectures on Faith*, comp. N. B. Lundwall, Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, p. 58).

Active membership in Christ's church builds strong spiritual capital and reserves. Serving a full-time mission builds unwavering spiritual capital and reserves.

Trust and love

I read from Doctrine and Covenants 124:20: "My servant . . . may be trusted because of the integrity of his heart; and for the love which he has to my testimony," he adds, "I, the Lord, love him."

I solemnly testify as a witness that

God lives and loves us; that Jesus Christ, his divine Son, stands glorified and exalted at the head of this church which bears his holy name; that the legal and authorized mouthpiece of the Lord here on earth is our living prophet who guides this great and divine church which was restored by the Prophet Joseph Smith, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President N. Eldon Tanner

Elder Vaughn J. Featherstone of the First Quorum of the Seventy, who has just been released as President of the Texas San Antonio Mission, will now speak to us.

He will be followed by Elder J. Thomas Fyans, a President of the First Quorum of the Seventy.

Elder Vaughn J. Featherstone

And any man that shall go and preach this gospel of the kingdom, and fail not to continue faithful in all things, shall not be weary in mind, neither darkened, neither in body, limb, nor joint; and a hair of his head shall not fall to the ground unnoticed. And they shall not go hungry, neither athirst." (D&C 84:80.)

Time for serving the Lord

For the past two years our family has served a mission in Texas. It has been glorious and fulfilling beyond all expectations. When we first arrived, Sister Featherstone went to the Lord and said: "We don't have much time. Please let me learn quickly so that the work will go forth."

Later she said, "The Lord has answered my prayers. He taught me several great lessons. One of those lessons came after the first three or four weeks

in the mission field. I was unable to find a few minutes each day to repair to a quiet spot. When I was home I would take about forty-five minutes in the afternoon and go out and curry down my Arabian horse. I would retreat into a world of my own for those few minutes."

She could not find time for even a few minutes for herself in the mission field. She went to the Lord and knelt in prayer and said, "Please, Heavenly Father, help me to find some time for myself while I am here."

And she said that just as clear as anything in this world the words came into her mind, saying, "My daughter, this is not your time; this is my time." We have attempted to work with all our energy while we were on his time. And that work standard is compared to our work standard and not someone else's.

Let me share with you some of the "faith" experiences of the messengers with whom we have served.

Faith of fellow missionaries

Elder and Sister Weidel wrote in their weekly letter: "Please, may we take a few moments to tell you of a spiritual experience this week. Friday Elder Curtis, who was splitting with Elder Aloï, came to work with us and afterwards we took them home. Elder Aloï invited us in to see what a real elders' apartment looks like. He went through the back door to open the front door, and in a moment he came out beaming.

'Elder, come and see what has been brought to us.' There on the table was a large supply of groceries. After a while Elder Curtis told us that Elder Aloï and his companion had found a family that didn't have anything to eat, so they took all of their own food out to them. Our hearts just about broke," wrote Sister Weidel. "The Lord does take care of his own."

One of the sweet, widowed sister missionaries, Lorna Call Alder, said in her weekly letter to me: "The experiences of my mission have strengthened my testimony greatly. I cannot remember when I gained a testimony, but I do remember many experiences that have enriched and built upon the foundation I have. Of the many humbling experiences I've had, these past eight months have brought me closer to the Lord than any other period. I've lived through three revolutions in Mexico, which really built my testimony. Writing lessons for the Church brings one very close to the Lord, and he did bless me with more than I can tell you. But this mission has given me more twenty-four-hour spirituality than I have ever had.

"Other very spiritual uplifts in my life were times my sons were on their missions and they asked me to read the Book of Mormon while they were gone. My husband died while my oldest son was in Chile on his mission, and I was really humbled during that trying period. I am thankful for this experience of hard work and great blessings. With

humility and thanksgiving, Sister Alder."

Some months back we had a lovely couple assigned to our mission. Before they arrived, I received a letter from their daughter. In part she said: "Dear President Featherstone, you are getting two of the most wonderful folks in the world in a few weeks to serve in your mission for eighteen months. They are just tickled pink to be serving under you. They told me they plan to do whatever you tell them to do. You enjoy mom and dad. We'll miss them, so please take good care of them while they are there."

Most of our missionaries come into the field because they love the Lord Jesus Christ and they desire to serve him and bring souls unto him. There are a few, however, who rationalize themselves out of a call or try to justify poor performance in the mission field—like the man who received his pay envelope and noticed that he had been shorted five dollars. He went to the paymaster and said, "You shorted me five dollars in my pay envelope this week."

The paymaster responded, "Well, I have been expecting you. I noticed you didn't come in complaining last week when I overpaid you five dollars."

The fellow said, "Well, I can tolerate one mistake, but not two in a row."

Thousands of mature couples and widowed missionaries could be called if they would simply make themselves available. Many of us understand the blessings that come when children and grandchildren kneel down at night and say, "Dear Heavenly Father, please bless grandma and grandpa, who are out in Texas on a mission."

Sister Olsen mothered twelve children, and she supported all of her sons on missions. Now they are supporting her on a mission. I have felt the love between missionaries and their families every day of my mission.

Another fine young elder was called on a mission. At the time, he drove cars across the country for a for-

eign car company. When his boss, who was not LDS, heard he was going to be gone for two years to serve a mission, he said, "If you will stay at home and work for me, I will give you a \$28,000 Ferrari." Elder Grannis completed his mission a month ago as a presiding zone leader.

Another elder entered the mission just after I arrived in San Antonio. He came from a large family. The father found that he needed to pick up a part-time job to help support his son. This was not quite enough, and so the sweet mother went to work in the school lunch program so that she could be home when her children were home. Even with this additional money, the elder fell a little further behind each month. A choice friend occasionally gives me several \$100 bills to share where they are needed. When I interviewed this elder, I asked him how he was doing financially. His eyes clouded up, and he said was really trying, but his folks weren't sending him quite enough. He said, "President, I haven't been wasting. I haven't eaten anything for three days, trying to cut back." Then he said, "Even my little sister is helping. She received a one-dollar bill for her birthday, and she put it in an envelope and sent it to me because she thought I needed it more than she did." Then he wept openly. I reached into my shirt pocket, and extracted two crisp \$100 bills, and said, "A choice friend of mine asked me to give these to you." He put his head down in his hands and was overcome.

Elder Daniel Gifford was promised in his patriarchal blessing that he would serve closely with a General Authority while he was on his mission. He wondered how this would be when he received his mission call to Texas, where the mission president had only served two or three months. While he was in the Missionary Training Center listening to the final session of October general conference, he heard President Tanner announce that the next speaker would be Elder Vaughn J. Featherstone, a member of the First Quorum of

the Seventy and newly called president of the Texas San Antonio Mission. When Elder Gifford was later called to be an assistant to the president, he shared his patriarchal blessing promise with us. Do you think he has any question about whose work this is?

One elder who was transferred from another mission wanted to go home. He knew his parents and bishop wanted him to stay and complete his mission. In one of the many interviews we had, he said that five previous elders in his ward had abandoned their missions and had returned home early. I thought what a great disservice the first elder did to the other young men who followed his poor example. I made a solemn vow that this elder would not go home until his mission was completed successfully. Every week for thirteen to fifteen weeks he would write in his letter to the president all the reasons he should be released from his mission. Each week I wrote a letter of response.

After all these weeks I received a letter which appeared the same as the others—until I got to the P.S. He said, "President, you are winning and you know it." I sat in my office, and tears filled my eyes.

Vince Lombardi said, "The harder you fight for something, the harder it is to surrender." This elder completed his mission as a great presiding zone leader. He has a great warmth and a great talent to teach; he loves and cares for people; and he is extremely spiritual. He returned home with an honorable release from a very successful mission, married a beautiful girl in the temple, and now they live near the temple where they visit regularly. This elder set a great example for all prospective missionaries from his ward.

Elder Sheffield has been under the knife eleven times in major surgery and many more times in surgery lasting less than an hour. The greatest desire of his life was that the surgery would make him acceptable for a mission. A year before he entered the mission field, he had

his final operation. Since he has been on his mission, he has averaged seventy to eighty hours a week in proselyting. He is greatly loved by all.

He has been a great blessing to missionaries who thought they had problems. In one interview his companion told me that Elder Sheffield's shoulder separates and falls out of place quite often. When this happens he is in severe pain. It happens most often during the night. When I interviewed Elder Sheffield, I suggested that we put him in a local hospital here and have the doctors do what needed to be done to correct this problem. He looked me in the eye, and with a sternness seldom seen he said, "President, I have spent most of my life in hospitals, and when I complete my mission I am returning to several more major surgical operations. I promised the Lord that if he would let me serve a mission, I would not spend one day in the hospital during the two years no matter how sick I was or how much I suffered."

Blessings of a mission

What are the blessings of a mission? "Can ye tell?" (Al. 26:2).

Maybe Brother and Sister William Keith Clark can. "Dear President Featherstone," they wrote, "we were happy to receive your letter. I'm sure we love you already." (Bless them, they didn't even know me, and yet they could love me.) They continued: "We are not too young anymore. William Keith Clark is eighty-one years old. He has been a bishop's counselor, a bishop, and a patriarch for thirty-one years. I, Ellen Clark, am seventy-six years of age. I have been a music director and a teacher in all the organizations of the Church, ward and stake. We have had an abundant life and love to teach the gospel. We have ten children, all married in the temple and working in the

Church. We had our reunion recently—fifty-six grandchildren and twenty-six great-grandchildren! This is four missions for my husband and three for me. Our happiest moments are teaching the gospel of Jesus Christ." Every missionary is a story of love and sacrifice. I love them so much. Their great devotion to the cause, their love for the Lord, and their willingness to serve him, whose work this is, will bless their lives and their posterity forever.

All to hear the Gospel

You see, my beloved brothers and sisters, every soul should have the privilege of hearing about the restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Those who respond to the call to be a missionary shall "not be weary in mind, neither darkened, neither in body, limb, nor joint; and a hair of [their] head[s] shall not fall to the ground unnoticed. And they shall not go hungry, neither athirst." (D&C 84:80.)

We must seek out every soul and do it with the pure love of Christ.

We must not judge the people. We do not know who God has prepared, but we do know as the Prophet Joseph Smith stated: "The Standard of Truth has been erected; no unhallowed hand can stop the work from progressing; persecutions may rage, mobs may combine, armies may assemble, calumny may defame, but the truth of God will go forth boldly, nobly, and independent, till it has penetrated every continent, visited every clime, swept every country, and sounded in every ear, till the purposes of God shall be accomplished, and the Great Jehovah shall say the work is done" (*History of the Church*, 4:540).

God bless that all—all— who may be able to serve will make themselves available for a mission call. The blessings are sure, I know, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.