

Talmage in these words:

"The solemn testimonies of millions dead and of millions living unite in proclaiming Him as divine, the Son of the Living God, the Redeemer and Savior of the human race, the Eternal Judge of the souls of men, the Chosen and Anointed of the Father—in short, the Christ." (*Jesus the Christ*, 3rd ed., Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1916, pp. 1-2.)

Our church does not and will not in any way compromise its position! It never at any time or place falters, hesitates, or shows any reluctance to bear unwavering testimony to the divinity of Jesus Christ. The state of the world being what it is, each priesthood bearer must take advantage of every opportunity to testify of the Savior and teach and exemplify gospel truth, letting his light so shine before friends and strangers alike to perpetuate the truth concerning our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Testimony

In closing I bear deep and solemn testimony of my absolute conviction of the Savior as expressed in these words from a simple and beautiful poem by Elder Bruce R. McConkie, entitled "I Believe in Christ."

*I believe in Christ—my Lord, my God—
My feet he plants on gospel sod;
I'll worship him with all my might;
He is the source of truth and light.*

*I believe in Christ; so come what may,
With him I'll stand in that great day
When on this earth he comes again,
To rule among the sons of men.*
(*"The Testimony of Jesus,"* ENSIGN, July 1972, p. 109.)

I testify to you that President Kimball is indeed a mighty prophet of the Lord. His divinely inspired words and example convey the certainty of an unwavering testimony. Upon us he pronounces rich blessings and unbounded love and encouragement. May we follow his great leadership, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President Spencer W. Kimball

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

President Marion G. Romney, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, will be our next speaker.

President Marion G. Romney

Brethren, I have in mind saying a few things about what it takes to become a disciple of Jesus Christ. And this being a priesthood meeting, I presume that each of us holds the priesthood and desires to qualify as a disciple of Christ. On this premise I have chosen as my text the fifth verse of the forty-first section of the Doctrine and Covenants, which reads:

"He that receiveth my law and doeth it, the same is my disciple; and he that saith he receiveth it and doeth it

not, the same is not my disciple, and shall be cast out from among you."

Becoming Christ's disciple

Christ's invitation to become his disciple is universal. He extends it to everyone. His call and promise is "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28).

And he has said "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" (D&C 93:1).

Jesus put no money price tag on his invitation. Nephi quotes him as saying, "Come unto me all ye ends of the earth, buy milk and honey, without money and without price" (2 Ne. 26:25).

This does not mean, however, that because he put no money price on it that there is no cost involved. There is a cost to be paid in becoming a disciple of Christ, a very real cost. But the cost is a performance cost, not a money price.

Jesus taught this very plainly. He further taught that those who profess to follow him should realize the cost at the outset.

Here are some examples. In the Gospel according to Luke he said:

"It came to pass, that, as they went in the way, a certain man said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.

"And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.

"And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.

"Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God.

"And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house.

"And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." (Luke 9:57-62.)

Jesus was not looking for, or calling, men to do lip service only. He wanted them to realize that following him meant effort and sacrifice. Luke tells us of an occasion when "there went great multitudes with him: and he turned, and said unto them,

"If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife,

and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.

"And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.

"So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple." (Luke 14:25-27, 33.)

In these seemingly harsh statements, Jesus was not specifying "literal hatred toward one's family . . . as a condition of discipleship." He was emphasizing "the preeminence of duty toward God over personal" or worldly demands of those who would be his disciples. (James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1976, p. 453.)

As to counting the cost, Jesus pointed out the wisdom of doing so even with respect to mundane projects:

"Which of you," he said, "intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it?

"Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him,

"Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish." (Luke 14:28-30.)

Dedication and obedience

In this last dispensation, the Lord has taught the importance of complete dedication to his service and strict obedience to his commandments as emphatically as he did during his earthly ministry. For example, in 1831, the first year after the Church was organized, the Lord revealed through the Prophet Joseph Smith, who was visiting the Saints then assembled in Jackson County, Missouri, that they were in "the land of promise, . . . the place for the city of Zion" (D&C 57:2). This good news heightened the enthusiasm of the Saints, who were already eagerly anticipating the blessings of Zion as it would be in its glory.

At this juncture, to calm them down a little and impress upon them the fact that the establishment of Zion would depend upon their obedience to his law, the Lord said to them:

"Hearken, O ye elders of my church, and give ear to my word, and learn of me what I will concerning you, and also concerning this land unto which I have sent you.

"For verily I say unto you, *blessed is he that keepeth my commandments, whether in life or in death; and he that is faithful in tribulation, the reward of the same is greater in the kingdom of heaven.*

"For after much tribulation come the blessings. . .

"Remember this, which I tell you before, that you may lay it to heart." (D&C 58:1-2, 4-5; italics added.)

The Lord was reminding the Saints there that there was some tribulation ahead before they could enjoy the promised blessings of Zion as it will be in its glory.

He was warning them that in Jackson County, Missouri—which was Zion then and will yet be Zion—where they were going, the law—that is, his law—had to be kept. Men had to be true disciples. This was clear notice to the Saints in Missouri, and it should and must be clear notice to us, that keeping the law of God is the principal thing that all who truly become his disciples must learn.

A week later, just before the Prophet left Missouri for Kirtland, the Lord gave through him a revelation in which he emphasized the importance of complete and total dedication:

"Behold, blessed, saith the Lord, are they who have come up unto this land with an eye *single to my glory*. . .

"For those that live shall inherit the earth, and those that die shall rest from all their labors. . . .

"Yea, blessed are they whose feet stand upon the land of Zion, *who have obeyed my gospel*; for they shall receive for their reward the good things of the earth. . . .

"And they shall also be crowned with blessings from above, . . . *they that are faithful and diligent* before me.

"Wherefore, I give unto them a commandment, saying thus: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God *with all thy heart, with all thy might, mind, and strength*; and in the name of Jesus Christ thou shalt serve him." (D&C 59:1-5; italics added.) *Confessing and accepting is not sufficient.*

Then he named some specific things that these Saints had to learn to do before they prospered in Zion:

"Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Thou shalt not steal; neither commit adultery, nor kill, nor do anything like unto it.

"Thou shalt thank the Lord thy God in all things.

"Thou shalt offer a sacrifice unto the Lord thy God in righteousness, even that of a broken heart and a contrite spirit.

"And that thou mayest more fully keep thyself unspotted from the world, thou shalt go to the house of prayer and offer up thy sacraments upon my holy day." (D&C 59:6-9.)

These are some of the specific things the Lord told the Missouri Saints to do in order to prove themselves to be his disciples when he first took them to Jackson County, Missouri, the center stake of Zion.

His concluding instruction was: "Learn that he who doeth the works of righteousness shall receive his reward, even peace in this world, and eternal life in the world to come" (D&C 59:23).

A great promise

This is not the occasion to review the history of the Saints in Jackson County, Missouri. Suffice it to say that they did not demonstrate the necessary dedication and commitment to establish Zion at that time. On February 24, 1834, after they had been "driven and smitten by the hands of [their] enemies" (D&C 103:2), the Lord told the Prophet Joseph that the reason he had permitted

their expulsion was so "that those who call themselves after my name might be chastened for a little season with a sore and grievous chastisement, because they *did not hearken altogether unto the precepts and commandments which I gave unto them*" (D&C 103:4; italics added). They were not yet his disciples in the true sense of the term. He did, however, give them this great promise:

"They shall . . . begin to prevail against mine enemies from this very hour.

"And by hearkening to observe all the words which I, the Lord their God, shall speak unto them, they shall never cease to prevail until the kingdoms of the world are subdued under my feet, and the earth is given unto the saints, to possess it forever and ever." (D&C 103:6-7.)

That's our great promise. We will never cease to prevail until the Lord establishes his Zion in this world. The true discipleship of the priesthood of God will determine how fast we move toward that great consummation as we, through living the gospel, fight the debauchery and the wickedness that's going on in this world.

And then the Lord said, "Let no man be afraid to lay down his life for my sake; for whoso layeth down his life for my sake shall find it again" (D&C 103:27).

And this is a shocking statement to me: "And whoso is not willing to lay down his life for my sake is not my disciple" (D&C 103:28).

Oath and covenant of the Priesthood

As we contemplate this great declaration, it may be well for us to be reminded of the oath and covenant which belongeth to the priesthood, by which all of us who hold the Melchizedek Priesthood are bound. Following a discussion of the "Holy Priesthood" (D&C 84:6) and the "lesser priesthood" (D&C 84:30), the revelation which gives the oath and covenant of the priesthood continues:

"Whoso is faithful unto the obtaining these two priesthoods [the greater priesthood and the lesser priesthood—meaning, of course, the Melchizedek and the Aaronic] 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 also all they who receive this priesthood receive me, saith the Lord:

"For he that receiveth my servants receiveth me;

"And he that receiveth me receiveth my Father;

"And he that receiveth my Father receiveth my Father's kingdom; therefore all that my Father hath shall be given unto him.

"And this is according to the oath and covenant which belongeth to the priesthood.

"Therefore, all those who receive the priesthood, receive this oath and covenant of my Father, which he cannot break, neither can it be moved."

And then this warning:

"But whoso breaketh this covenant [of the priesthood] after he hath received it, and altogether turneth therefrom, shall not have forgiveness of sins in this world nor in the world to come." (D&C 84:33-41.)

I hope and pray that each of us will remember and perform our obligations under the foregoing covenant and qualify for the blessing promised in the following declaration:

"Verily, thus saith the Lord: It shall come to pass that every soul"—this is said of all of us here tonight—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" (D&C 93:1).

Truthfulness of the Gospel

Now, my brethren, I want to leave

with you my witness. I know that God lives, and I am striving with all my soul to know God himself. I do not remember the time when I had any question about the truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ. I know as I live that Jesus lives, that he was and is the Only Begotten Son of God in the flesh, and that he is our Redeemer.

I know that Joseph Smith opened this last dispensation. It is thrilling to me to contemplate the fact that the Father and the Son stood before Joseph in the grove and that the Father gave the Prophet a personal introduction to his Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. I know that angels came and restored the priesthood to the Prophet and Oliver Cowdery; that God did establish again his church upon the earth; that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is his church; that Jesus Christ is the only name given under heaven whereby men can be saved; that acceptance and obedience to the gospel of Jesus Christ, which we have the honor to preach and are commissioned to carry to all the ends of the earth, is the only means of salvation for this world, both temporally and spiritually.

I shall not know these things better in the not-too-distant future when I shall stand before the Lord to give an

account of my work in mortality. As I bear you this testimony I pray that we shall all *fully* live the gospel and thereby qualify as true disciples of Christ, to obtain the promised peace in this world and eternal life in the world to come. This I do in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President Spencer W. Kimball

President Marion G. Romney of the First Presidency has just spoken to us.

The Choir and congregation will now join in singing, "Let Us All Press On."

After the singing, we shall be pleased to hear from President N. Eldon Tanner, First Counselor in the First Presidency.

The Choir and congregation sang the hymn, "Let Us All Press On."

President Kimball

We shall now be pleased to listen to President N. Eldon Tanner, First Counselor in the First Presidency.

President N. Eldon Tanner

This is a glorious sight, indeed, brethren, to see this great body of the priesthood here in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, and it is most encouraging to know that other thousands are listening to these proceedings by closed-circuit broadcast in nearly 1,500 other buildings throughout the world.

We are all gathered to be directed by the President of the Church, a prophet of God, and other speakers from whom we have heard this evening.

We all know that the priesthood is the power of God delegated to man to act in His name in the office which he holds. No greater blessing can be given to a man than to have a testimony of the gospel and to hold the priesthood of God.

I think of this vast body of priesthood holders, all engaged in the work of the Lord, trying to promote the cause of truth and righteousness and build the kingdom of God; and we each have an individual responsibility to help do this.