

Sunday, April 1

Second Day

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Following President Romney's remarks, the Tabernacle Choir sang "Come Unto Jesus", without announcement.

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### President Spencer W. Kimball

We have heard from president Marion G. Romney, Second Counselor in the First Presidency of the Church, followed by the Tabernacle Choir singing, "Come Unto Jesus."

The Choir will now continue by

singing, "Daughter of Zion," following which Elder James E. Faust, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, will address us.

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The Choir sang, "Daughter of Zion."

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### President Kimball

We shall now be pleased to hear from Elder James E. Faust, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles.

## Elder James E. Faust

Coming to this pulpit is always a very humbling responsibility. I seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit and pray that what I have to say will be guided by the Spirit and that it may abundantly rest upon all of us so that you might understand also by that special spirit.

I wish to speak this morning to all, but especially to those who feel they have had more trials, sorrows, pricks, and thorns than they can bear and in their adversity are almost drowned in the waters of bitterness. My message is intended as one of hope, strength, and deliverance. I speak of the refiner's fire.

### Martin handcart company

Some years ago President David O. McKay told from this pulpit of the experience of some of those in the Martin handcart company. Many of these early converts had emigrated from Europe and were too poor to buy oxen or horses and a wagon. They were forced by their poverty to pull handcarts containing all of their belongings across the plains by their own brute strength. President McKay relates an occurrence which took

place some years after the heroic exodus: "A teacher, conducting a class, said it was unwise ever to attempt, even to permit them [the Martin handcart company] to come across the plains under such conditions.

"[According to a class member,] some sharp criticism of the Church and its leaders was being indulged in for permitting any company of converts to venture across the plains with no more supplies or protection than a handcart caravan afforded.

"An old man in the corner . . . sat silent and listened as long as he could stand it, then he arose and said things that no person who heard him will ever forget. His face was white with emotion, yet he spoke calmly, deliberately, but with great earnestness and sincerity.

"In substance [he] said, 'I ask you to stop this criticism. You are discussing a matter you know nothing about. Cold historic facts mean nothing here, for they give no proper interpretation of the questions involved. Mistake to send the Handcart Company out so late in the season? Yes. But I was in that company and

my wife was in it and Sister Nellie Unthank whom you have cited was there, too. We suffered beyond anything you can imagine and many died of exposure and starvation, but did you ever hear a survivor of that company utter a word of criticism? *Not one of that company ever apostatized or left the Church, because everyone of us came through with the absolute knowledge that God lives for we became acquainted with him in our extremities.*

"I have pulled my handcart when I was so weak and weary from illness and lack of food that I could hardly put one foot ahead of the other. I have looked ahead and seen a patch of sand or a hill slope and I have said, I can go only that far and there I must give up, for I cannot pull the load through it." He continues: "I have gone on to that sand and when I reached it, the cart began pushing me. I have looked back many times to see who was pushing my cart, but my eyes saw no one. I knew then that the angels of God were there.

"Was I sorry that I chose to come by handcart? No. Neither then nor any minute of my life since. *The price we paid to become acquainted with God was a privilege to pay, and I am thankful that I was privileged to come in the Martin Handcart Company.*" (*Relief Society Magazine*, Jan. 1948, p. 8.)

### The refiner's fire

Here then is a great truth. In the pain, the agony, and the heroic endeavors of life, we pass through a refiner's fire, and the insignificant and the unimportant in our lives can melt away like dross and make our faith bright, intact, and strong. In this way the divine image can be mirrored from the soul. It is part of the purging toll exacted of some to become acquainted with God. In the agonies of life, we seem to listen

better to the faint, godly whisperings of the Divine Shepherd.

Into every life there come the painful, despairing days of adversity and buffeting. There seems to be a full measure of anguish, sorrow, and often heartbreak for everyone, including those who earnestly seek to do right and be faithful. The thorns that prick, that stick in the flesh, that hurt, often change lives which seem robbed of significance and hope. This change comes about through a refining process which often seems cruel and hard. In this way the soul can become like soft clay in the hands of the Master in building lives of faith, usefulness, beauty, and strength. For some, the refiner's fire causes a loss of belief and faith in God, but those with eternal perspective understand that such refining is part of the perfection process.

In our extremities, it is possible to become born again, born anew, renewed in heart and spirit. We no longer ride with the flow of the crowd, but instead we enjoy the promise of Isaiah to be renewed in our strength and "mount up with wings as eagles" (Isa. 40:31).

The proving of one's faith goes before the witnessing, for Moroni testified, "Ye receive no witness until after the trial of your faith" (Eth. 12:6). This trial of faith can become a priceless experience. Stated Peter, "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 1:7). Trials and adversity can be preparatory to becoming born anew.

### Spiritual rebirth

A rebirth out of spiritual adversity causes us to become new creatures. From the book of Mosiah we learn that all mankind must be born again—born of God, changed, re-

deemed, and uplifted—to become the sons and daughters of God. (See *Mosiah 27:24-27*.)

President Marion G. Romney, speaking for the Lord, has said of this marvelous power: "The effect upon each person's life is likewise similar. No person whose soul is illuminated by the burning Spirit of God can in this world of sin and dense darkness remain passive. He is driven by an irresistible urge to fit himself to be an active agent of God in furthering righteousness and in freeing the lives and minds of men from the bondage of sin." (In *Conference Report*, 4 Oct. 1941, p. 89.)

The feelings of being reborn were expressed by Parley P. Pratt as follows:

"If I had been set to turn the world over, to dig down a mountain, to go to the ends of the earth, or traverse the deserts of Arabia, it would have been easier than to have undertaken to rest, while the Priesthood was upon me. I have received the holy anointing, and I can never rest till the last enemy is conquered, death destroyed, and truth reigns triumphant." (*Journal of Discourses*, 1:15.)

Unfortunately, some of our greatest tribulations are the result of our own foolishness and weakness and occur because of our own carelessness or transgression. Central to solving these problems is the great need to get back on the right track and, if necessary, engage in each of the steps for full and complete repentance. Through this great principle, many things can be made fully right and all things better. We can go to others for help. To whom can we go? Elder Orson F. Whitney asked and answered this question: "To whom do we look, in days of grief and disaster, for help and consolation? . . . They are men and women who have suffered, and out of their experience in suffering they bring forth the riches of their sympa-

thy and condolences as a blessing to those now in need. Could they do this had they not suffered themselves?"

" . . . Is not this God's purpose in causing his children to suffer? He wants them to become more like himself. God has suffered far more than man ever did or ever will, and is therefore the great source of sympathy and consolation." (*Improvement Era*, Nov. 1918, p. 7.)

Isaiah, before the Savior's birth, referred to him as "a man of sorrows" (*Isa. 53:3*). Speaking in the Doctrine and Covenants of himself, the Savior said:

"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" (*D&C 19:18*).

### Afflictions are not punishment

Some are prone to feel that their afflictions are punishment. Roy Doxey states:

"The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that it is a false idea to believe that the saints will escape all the judgments—disease, pestilence, war, etc.—of the last days; consequently, it is an unhallowed principle to say that these adversities are due to transgression. . . .

"President Joseph F. Smith taught that it is a feeble thought to believe that the illness and affliction that come to us are attributable either to the mercy or the displeasure of God." (*The Doctrine and Covenants Speaks*, Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1970, vol. 2, p. 373.)

Paul understood this perfectly. When referring to the Savior, he said:

"Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered;

"And being made perfect, he

became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him." (Heb. 5:8-9).

### Stillman Pond

For some, the suffering is extraordinary.

Stillman Pond was a member of the Second Quorum of Seventy in Nauvoo. He was an early convert to the Church, having come from Hubbardston, Massachusetts. Like others, he and his wife, Maria, and their children were harrassed and driven out of Nauvoo. In September 1846, they became part of the great western migration. The early winter that year brought extreme hardships, including malaria, cholera, and consumption. The family was visited by all three of these diseases.

Maria contracted consumption, and all of the children were stricken with malaria. Three of the children died while moving through the early snows. Stillman buried them on the plains. Maria's condition worsened because of the grief, pain, and the fever of malaria. She could no longer walk. Weakened and sickly, she gave birth to twins. They were named Joseph and Hyrum, and both died within a few days.

The Stillman Pond family arrived at Winter Quarters and, like many other families, they suffered bitterly while living in a tent. The death of the five children coming across the plains to Winter Quarters was but a beginning.

The journal of Horace K. and Helen Mar Whitney verifies the following regarding four more of the children of Stillman Pond who perished:

"On Wednesday, the 2nd of December 1846, Laura Jane Pond, age 14 years, . . . died of chills and fever." Two days later on "Friday, the 4th of December 1846, Harriet M. Pond, age 11 years, . . . died with chills." Three days later,

"Monday, the 7th of December, 1846, Abigail A. Pond, age 18 years, . . . died with chills." Just five weeks later, "Friday, the 15th of January, 1847, Lyman Pond, age 6 years, . . . died with chills and fever." Four months later, on the 17th of May, 1847, his wife Maria Davis Pond also died. Crossing the plains, Stillman Pond lost nine children and a wife. He became an outstanding colonizer in Utah, and became the senior president of the thirty-fifth Quorum of Seventy. (See Leon Y. and H. Ray Pond, comps., "Stillman Pond, a Biographical Sketch," in *Sterling Forsyth Histories*, typescript, Church Historical Dept. Archives, pp. 4-5.)

Having lost these nine children and his wife in crossing the plains, Stillman Pond did not lose his faith. He did not quit. He went forward. He paid a price, as have many others before and since, to become acquainted with God.

### Divine purpose in adversities

The Divine Shepherd has a message of hope, strength, and deliverance for all. If there were no night, we would not appreciate the day, nor could we see the stars and the vastness of the heavens. We must partake of the bitter with the sweet. There is a divine purpose in the adversities we encounter every day. They prepare, they purge, they purify, and thus they bless.

When we pluck the roses, we find we often cannot avoid the thorns which spring from the same stem.

Out of the refiner's fire can come a glorious deliverance. It can be a noble and lasting rebirth. The price to become acquainted with God will have been paid. There can come a sacred peace. There will be a reawakening of dormant, inner resources. A comfortable cloak of righteousness will be drawn around us to protect us and to keep us warm

spiritually. Self-pity will vanish as our blessings are counted.

### Testimony

I now wish to conclude by testifying concerning Jesus as the Christ and the Divine Redeemer. He lives! His are the sweet words of eternal life. He is the Son of the Living God. This is his holy work and glory. This is his church. It is true. I am most grateful for this sacred knowledge. It is my cherished privilege and duty to so testify, which I humbly do. In the hallowed name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

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The hymn, "The Morning Breaks" was sung by the Choir following Elder Faust's remarks, without announcement.

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### President Spencer W. Kimball

We have just listened to Elder James E. Faust, a member of the

Council of the Twelve Apostles, followed by the Choir singing, "The Morning Breaks."

The Choir and congregation will now join in singing, "How Firm A Foundation," following which we shall hear from Elder James M. Paramore, a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy.

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The Choir and congregation sang "How Firm A Foundation."

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### President Kimball

To those of the television and radio audience who have just joined us, we are convened in the historic Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, in this fourth session of the 149th Annual Conference of the Church.

We shall now hear from Elder James M. Paramore, a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy. He will be followed by Elder David B. Haight, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles.

## Elder James M. Paramore

My brothers and sisters, I am grateful to be a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I would like to thank you, all of you members, for all that you have done for me these past two years. I solicit your faith and prayers this morning as I speak with you about the subject of commitment.

### Commitment

A short time ago I attended a very special dinner meeting. It was to honor a friend who had given many years of total commitment to a special group of people. I watched

group after group bring gifts, embrace, and thank him for what he had done for them. As I saw him stand before the hundreds gathered that night, I thought: "How could anyone so young have done so much in such a short time?"

Then I reflected on the thousands of selfless acts he had done for these people; his encouragement in the face of almost insurmountable obstacles. He gave his time, home, money, skills—his total commitment to do everything he could to help them. It was like being in a testimony meeting. I went away thanking