

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.

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

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.

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

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

the Lord for his life and the fact that one person's commitment can make such a difference. I learned again that night that commitment is doing what everyone *can do*—but usually doesn't. When one commits himself like this young man, it is like opening up the headgates of a mighty dam, permitting all its power to become available.

As I think of commitment I recall one of many solemn days of commitment in the life of the Savior. Jesus had just touched the ear of a servant of one of the high priests and healed him. Only moments before, his ear had been severed by a sword. And then Jesus was taken into the high priest's house where he was mocked, bound, blindfolded, and spat upon. The next day he was taken again before the council and was again scourged and berated. He might have saved himself. Instead, he stood majestically before his accusers and acknowledged his sonship, his kingship, his personal commitment to his Father and to all mankind. This ultimately changed the destiny of every living soul. How many hundreds of times because of fatigue, hunger, pain, or disappointment he might have disavowed this commitment.

The Savior's commitment was a very special one, to be sure. It could only be done by him. But we, too, have commitments to make—commitments to him, our families, and others. These are essential to our happiness here and our exaltation hereafter.

What of commitment? Does it really make a difference? The Lord spoke of this principle to the Prophet Joseph Smith on August 1, 1831:

"Verily I say, men should be anxiously engaged in a good cause, and do many things of their own free will, and bring to pass much righteousness;

"For the power is in them" (D&C 58:27-28).

Commitment, as we have observed, is to be an example of goodness. It is to be "anxiously engaged" and "do many things" of our "own free will." It is not by compulsion, but because of our desire to "bring to pass much righteousness." Commitment is not confessing, but doing. It is not convenient. It isn't easy—it's never easy. It is example leadership. It is a binding, but happy, response to duty. It is at once peaceful yet compelling, for it obligates one to action. It is essential to the good life. It is doing what everyone *can do*. It is a beautiful principle to observe in action.

While I was in the mission field a few years ago, I observed one of the missionaries who always had people to teach and baptize. Wherever he went, he went with such commitment, happiness, and love for others that he was accepted. It was said of him that when he would come back into an area, many of the people would peek through their windows just to get a glimpse of this unusual young man. Though he was not particularly gifted in language skills, he succeeded in bearing a strong testimony to thousands of people.

Again, like my friend, he only did what everybody *could do*, but usually doesn't.

A commitment to the Savior

Once commitment is understood as a binding principle of the gospel of Jesus Christ, a committed person is able to call on heavenly powers and healings. Like the waters behind the mighty dam, these powers transform his personal world.

An early American prophet counseled us how important our commitment is to the Savior:

"And now, my sons, remember, remember that it is upon the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God, that ye must build your foundation; that when the devil shall

send forth his mighty winds, yea, his shafts in the whirlwind, yea, when all his hail and his mighty storm shall beat upon you, it shall have no power over you to drag you down to the gulf of misery and endless wo, because of the rock upon which ye are built, which is a sure foundation, a foundation whereon if men build they cannot fall" (Hel. 5:12).

When we commit ourselves to him, we receive the inner peace and security he promised: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you" (John 14:27). When we are committed to him, we bind him to bless us, for he said: "I, the Lord, am bound when ye do what I say;" and conversely "but when ye do not what I say, ye have no promise" (D&C 82:10).

A newspaper once received this question from a reader: "What would be the most important news the world could receive?" After much careful deliberation the editor answered: "To know that Jesus Christ lives today." This would be the most important news anyone could know.

We bear a solemn witness to you that he does live. He restored and directs his church through a prophet of God. The priesthood and the principles of the gospel have been restored to bless all who commit them into their lives. We invite all to make a personal commitment this day from the things you have heard to study these doctrines and earnestly ask our Father in Heaven if they are true.

A commitment to our families

As we commit ourselves to the Lord and his principles, we are led to share them with our families. The family is eternal. We may be sealed together forever in a patriarchal order if we are righteous. This knowledge we willingly and anxiously share with the world because of the joy we feel. We affirm that every life is sa-

cred and important. Every child is a gift and a blessing. The home is an institution of learning, of loving—to develop the capacities of each of its members to live in accordance to the laws of God. We testify that these laws are eternal and unchanging. A personal commitment to this priority is paramount. Nothing can surpass the inner security of having one's family committed to God.

A busy father, businessman, and Church leader told me a few years ago that he loved his family so much that he made this commitment: he would give several nights each week and part of every Saturday to them. They were programmed into his schedule. The gospel helped him to understand the importance of this priority. Then, though fatigue, business, Church, and other requirements pressed him every day, he followed this commitment. For him, it was an irrevocable obligation, a looked-for pleasure to be with and nurture his family. He did what every father *could and must do*—but sometimes doesn't do.

Prophets in all ages have counseled families to pray, study, work, and play together, to bind ourselves together in all holiness. It is and ever will be the answer to happiness, peace, and unity in this world. But it takes a commitment to do so—to do all we can. Knowing is not enough! It takes a personal commitment to be "anxiously engaged," to do *everything possible*.

And may I reecho a thought expressed by another? Never give up trying to reach a loved one—never, never, never. The blessings of heaven may be realized after the prayers and personal commitment of the righteous. When one is totally committed to *this* endeavor, there is a greater inner strength. We not only love more, but we help more. Can any member forget the story told yesterday by Elder Perry about an anxious prophet-father, Alma, who

received the blessing of a changed son?

A commitment to others

One man who had committed himself to do everything he could to share the gospel with others walked out of his office one day and saw a man running down the hall. He learned this man had stapled his finger. He reached into his big pocket, pulled out Merthiolate and a Band-Aid, and dressed the wound. The shocked individual asked in amazement why he did this. He responded: "I am a Mormon, and Mormons do these things." This man was prepared to help another whenever possible.

In a stake conference a number of speakers mentioned a certain man. After the session the General Authority met the man. He learned from others that more than fifty people had joined the Church because of him. The way he kept his yard, his home, his happiness, his good deeds to his neighbors all brought him opportunities to tell others how the gospel had blessed his life.

These two men had just committed themselves to do what everyone *can* do.

I know, after many interviews, that many long to become part of the assembly of the blessed. Many times they cry out in the night for help, not knowing where to turn, how to begin. Their eternal spirits seek help. As social beings we need each other. The commitment to reach out to them is a binding invitation from the Savior. When this is done in love, we may help redeem them. It is infinitely more than just confessing Jesus Christ—it is *doing* what needs to be done.

Church leaders and home teachers have special opportunities to help. The object of all their work, meetings, faith, and prayers will be to help each individual and family.

A sister in France who joined the Church was approached by her former minister who asked her how she could possibly have done such a thing. Her response was beautiful and reassuring. It shows us how important our collective commitment is to serve others. She said that at least once every month leaders or members of the Church would visit her. They looked after her spiritual and temporal needs. She told her former minister that since she had been baptized as a baby, the only time she had been visited by anyone from her former church was this day, and that visit was only to inquire about her membership.

A total commitment to anxiously serve the Lord and others is the surest way to overcome the many temptations of the adversary.

Everyone who truly commits himself to the gospel finds his life expanding and his appreciation growing for all good things. His acknowledgment of God and his wondrous creations intensifies. The Lord described how this process works in a revelation given to the Prophet Joseph Smith in May 1831:

"That which is of God is light; and he that receiveth light, and continueth in God, receiveth more light; and that light groweth brighter and brighter until the perfect day" (D&C 50:24).

Brothers and sisters, a committed person makes goodness look attractive. He builds an inner confidence as he learns light and truth and then practices it. He becomes more like our prophet today, Spencer W. Kimball, who over a lifetime has translated desire into firm commitment to do everything he can do to demonstrate his love for the Lord and all of His children.

We, too, can resolve this day to declare ourselves, give ourselves, devote ourselves; to commit ourselves to do what *everyone can do*. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.