

of the First Quorum of the Seventy were sustained as the General Presidency of the Sunday School; and Elders Robert L. Backman, Vaughn J. Featherstone, and Rex D. Pinegar of the First Quorum of the Seventy were sustained as the Presidency of the Young Men.

The singing during this session will be furnished by the combined Tabernacle Choir and Mormon youth men's choir, under the direction of Brothers Jerold Ottley and Robert C. Bowden, with Brother Roy M. Darley at the organ.

We shall begin this service by the choir singing "The Priesthood Gift."

Following the singing, Bishop H. Burke Peterson, First Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric, will offer the invocation.

The combined men's choir sang "The Priesthood Gift." Bishop H. Burke Peterson offered the invocation.

President Tanner

The choir will now favor us with "Come, O Thou King of Kings," after which we shall be pleased to hear from Elder L. Tom Perry, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles.

The choir sang the hymn "Come, O Thou King of Kings."

President Tanner

Elder L. Tom Perry, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, will now speak to us. He will be followed by Elder William R. Bradford, a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy and Executive Administrator of the Mexico-Central America area.

Elder L. Tom Perry

Leaving the Tabernacle after the Saturday afternoon session of the last few conferences, I have been impressed with the lines forming to gain admission to the priesthood session some three hours before its beginning. I have stopped to visit with those in the lines. Much to my surprise, a good percent of those preparing to enter were young men, bearers of the Aaronic Priesthood.

Tonight I pay tribute to you for your devotion. It is to this chosen generation of a royal priesthood I would like to direct my remarks in this session of our conference.

Making right decisions

When I received my assignment to speak in the priesthood session, I called Elder Backman, the new director of the Young Men program, and asked for any suggestions on a subject needing the special attention of those holding the Aaronic Priesthood. Within a few days I received a memo back from Elder Backman, and his response was, "The youth are at a most interesting time in their lives. They will soon be making major decisions which will shape their future, such as going on missions,

college, a profession, marriage, etc.” His counsel was to speak on making right decisions.

Attached to his memo was a “Peanuts” cartoon that pictured Linus standing with a nice, firm snowball in his hand as Lucy enters the picture. She surveys the situation and makes this comment to Linus: “Life is full of choices. You may choose, if you wish, to throw that snowball at me. You also may choose, if you wish, not to throw that snowball at me. Now if you choose to throw that snowball at me, I will pound you right into the ground! If you choose not to throw that snowball at me, your head will be spared.”

Then Linus, throwing the snowball away with a disgusted look on his face, said, “Life is full of choices, but I never get any.”

Freedom of choice

Linus is right that life is full of choices. But I have found him to be wrong in the second part. Decisions are before us every step of the way. Richard L. Evans said in the film *Man's Search for Happiness*: “Life offers you two precious gifts. One is time, the other, freedom of choice—the freedom to buy with your time what you will. You are free to exchange your allotment of time for thrills. You may trade it for base desires. You may invest it in greed. You may purchase with it vanity; you may spend your time in pursuit of material things. *Yours is the freedom to choose*. But these are not bargains, for in them you find no lasting satisfaction” (italics added).

Nephi

There is a great account in the very beginning of the Book of Mormon of a family that had some grave decisions to make. Just imagine that you are living in that time

and you are a member of Lehi's household. You are living in Jerusalem in a very comfortable home, warm and secure, surrounded with many of the good things of life. As you arise one morning, your father calls a family council. He states that he had a dream last night, and then makes a startling statement to you: “Go get your sleeping bags and the tents. Just take what provisions we can carry on our backs. Don't worry about the gold and silver and your precious things. We will have no room for them. I have been commanded by the Lord that we should depart into the wilderness.” And the scripture records, “And he left his house, and the land of his inheritance, and his gold, and his silver, and his precious things, and took nothing with him, save it were his family, and provisions, and tents, and departed into the wilderness” (1 Ne. 2:4).

You have only gone a short distance when your father has another dream. He calls you to him and says, “Behold I have dreamed a dream, in the which the Lord hath commanded me that thou and thy brethren shall return to Jerusalem.

“For behold, Laban hath the record of the Jews and also a genealogy of thy forefathers, and they are engraven upon plates of brass.

“Wherefore, the Lord hath commanded me that thou and thy brothers should go unto the house of Laban, and seek the records, and bring them down hither into the wilderness” (1 Ne. 3:2-4).

Now that was a hard task assigned to the sons, for Laban was a very rich and powerful man. They murmured against their father, and said it was a hard thing he was requiring them to do. But one son said to his father, “I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded, for I know that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall pre-

pare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them" (1 Ne. 3:7).

Several decisions faced these young men as they approached Laban to ask for the records. It's most interesting to me to note the process by which they made those decisions. First, the decision was to leave it to chance. And they cast lots, and the lot fell to Laman. He went to the house of Laban, and as he sat and talked with him, he said he desired the records that were written on the plates of brass. Laban was not too pleased with this request and was angry, and thrust him out of his presence, and would not let him have the record. He said, "Behold thou art a robber, and I will slay thee" (1 Ne. 3:13). That was enough for Laman; he fled and came back and reported to his brothers that leaving the assignment to chance did not work.

Nephi had to make another decision on how to obtain the records. He thought of all the wealth they were leaving in their home, the gold and silver and all manner of riches. He thought he would gather up that gold and silver and trust in the things of the world to purchase the records. So they approached the house of Laban and displayed the gold and silver and offered to trade these precious things for the plates of brass. When Laban saw the property and that it was exceedingly great, he did just after it. Looking at the four boys against all of his servants, it was easy to determine that he could retain the plates and have the wealth also. He sent his servants after the boys to slay them, and they had to flee, leaving their property behind. Things of the world did not produce the records.

Now the brothers of Nephi had almost lost their lives twice attempting to get the record, and they were not very happy with him. Nephi was not willing to give up; he reasoned with them this way: "Let us

go up again unto Jerusalem, and let us be faithful in keeping the commandments of the Lord; for behold he is mightier than all the earth, then why not mightier than Laban and his fifty, yea, or even than his tens of thousands?" (1 Ne. 4:1).

Who could argue against such sound reasoning? Of course the Lord was mightier than Laban and all of his servants. So by night Nephi led his brothers outside the wall of Jerusalem. He crept inside towards the house of Laban, this time not leaving it to chance or to worldly things, but going by faith. He said, "I was led by the Spirit, not knowing beforehand the things which I should do" (1 Ne. 4:6).

As he came to the house of Laban, he found a man fallen to the earth, drunken with wine. On coming closer, he discovered it was Laban. Laban had been delivered into his hands. The Lord had opened the way to obtain the record. Making the decision to place his trust in the Lord produced the results.

There is a great lesson to be learned in the decision-making process of the sons of Lehi. Of course, leaving the decision to chance was not a very acceptable method.

Do not leave decisions to chance

I remember one time when I was in the Marine Corps, stationed at Camp Pendleton in California. I left a decision to chance and almost found myself in a most unpleasant situation.

My buddies had been after me each weekend to go with them into the dance hall in Los Angeles to have a good time. Each weekend I was encouraged to go. After several weeks of turning them down, thinking that that was no place for me, I decided just once to leave it to chance and see how it would turn out.

I started with them towards this big dance hall in Los Angeles. We were riding the streetcar, and as it progressed from stop to stop, it was filling up with many young ladies. They were not the type I had ever been around before. They were extremely forward. I felt very uncomfortable around them. As they approached me, I adopted a tactic completely unknown to a marine. I retreated.

On the back row of the streetcar I found four young ladies whose appearance was entirely different. I asked them if they were going to the dance, and their reply was, "Yes, but not to the same one you are." Then they said, "We are going to the Adams Ward to a Mormon dance. What do you know about the Mormon Church?" I was surprised, relieved, and willingly got off the streetcar with them, and had a most delightful evening at the Adams Ward. Have more confidence in yourself than allowing your decisions to happen just by chance.

Resist pressure

The decision by Nephi and his brothers to place their trust in the things of the world proved to be no more successful than leaving it to chance. I was talking to a father while attending a stake conference. He was telling me about the pressures on his teenage daughter to follow the ways of the world, and how she had made the decision not to allow those pressures to influence her life.

She was the only member of the Church in her class in school. She was a popular young lady with the boys, and had many opportunities to go out on dates. The boys in her class did not live by the standards she had been taught in our Church. She made the decision to tell every boy who asked her for a date what standards she lived by. If she were to

date them, they would be expected to conduct themselves in accordance with her standards. She would get such a commitment from them before she accepted a date. One day the big campus football hero came up to her before the most special dance of the year and said, "You know, I would ask you to go to the dance with me if you would lower your standards just a little."

There was no hesitation in her voice as she replied, "If I would go out with you, I would be lowering my standards." Be strong enough to make your decisions to not follow worldly ways.

Nephi found success when he made his decision to have faith in the Lord and to follow His way.

President Kimball's example

Some years ago in the *Church News* section there appeared a most interesting article about a young man who made his decision to trust in the ways of the Lord. The article reads:

"President Spencer W. Kimball is a constant inspiration to the Church. This is not only so through what he says, but likewise by what he does. When addressing the Stockholm Area Conference he revealed the secret of this success. Said he:

"As I was out alone, milking the cows, or putting up the hay, I had time to think. I mulled it over in my mind and made this decision: 'I, Spencer Kimball, will never taste any form of liquor. I, Spencer Kimball, will never touch tobacco. I will never drink coffee, nor will I ever touch tea—not because I can explain why I shouldn't, except that the Lord said not to.' He said those things were an abomination. There are many other things that are, too, that are not in the Word of Wisdom. But I made up my mind.

"That's the point I am trying to make. I made up my mind then, as a little boy; 'I will never touch

those things." And so, having made up my mind, it was easy to follow it, and I did not yield. There were many temptations that came along, but I did not even analyze it; I did not stop and measure it and say, "Well, shall I or shall I not?" I always said to myself: "But I made up my mind I would not. Therefore, I do not."

President Kimball continues, "I want to just say that I will soon go into another year and that I have never tasted tea, nor coffee, nor tobacco, nor liquor of any kind, nor drugs. Now that may sound very presumptuous and boasting to you, but I am only trying to make this point: that if every boy and girl—as he or she begins to grow a little more mature and becomes a little more independent of his friends and his family and all—if every boy and girl would make up his or her mind, "I will not yield," then no matter what the temptation is: "I made up my mind. That's settled."'" (*Church News* 4 Oct. 1975; see also Conference Report, Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden Area Conference, Aug. 1974, pp. 86-87.)

If we would all follow his example to make our decisions based

on our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, what a change it would make in our lives.

Choose the right

O, youth of the noble birthright, make your decision here tonight: "I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded" (1 Ne. 3:7). There is power in His way. There is no greater joy in this life than to be found in His service. I bear you my solemn testimony that a decision to live according to His law will bring you life eternal. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President N. Eldon Tanner

Elder L. Tom Perry, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, has just addressed us.

We shall now hear from Elder William R. Bradford, a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy and Executive Administrator of the Mexico-Central America area.

He will be followed by President Marion G. Romney, Second Counselor in the First Presidency.

Elder William R. Bradford

My dear brethren, this is a thrilling hour. At no time has there been a gathering such as this of the elect sons of God. Were it not for the power of the Spirit, I could not bear up the weight of this moment.

I feel impressed to express my profound love for you my brethren. My confidence in you can only be compared to my confidence in the Master, whom we follow. The knowledge that we are brothers brings me great joy.

I would never criticize you, but because I love you and because we

are brothers, I feel I can talk openly and directly to you.

Governing Ones

The fact that you bear the priesthood is not a casual matter. It manifests that you have passed through the waters of baptism. You have been interviewed by Israel's judges and found qualified to be *God's governing ones*. Your status as the governing ones has been, and remains, conditional upon compliance with the terms set forth by