

President Kimball

We have just heard from President N. Eldon Tanner, First Counselor in the First Presidency. We are very grateful to have President Tanner back with us.

The Tabernacle Choir just sang "But the Lord Is Mindful of His Own."

We shall now be pleased to hear from Elder Franklin D. Richards, a member of the Presidency of the First Quorum of the Seventy.

Elder Franklin D. Richards

President Kimball, I express the feelings of the people of this worldwide Church in saying that we love you, President Tanner, President Romney, and are grateful that the Lord has performed miracles in your lives so that you can continue to carry on the great work of building the kingdom of God.

Eternal progression

We are living in a remarkable age—the dispensation of the fulness of times—but we are living in a troubled world. The powers of evil are visible in false doctrines, corrupt morals, strife, contention, and persecution. Fears abound in the hearts of many.

A universal question in the hearts and minds of men and women in all parts of the world is, "What is the purpose of life?"

The restored gospel of Jesus Christ answers this question. In modern revelation the Lord has told us, "If you keep my commandments and endure to the end you shall have eternal life, which gift is the greatest of all the gifts of God." (D&C 14:7.)

Therefore, in essence the purpose of life is to prepare us for the greatest gift of God, eternal life.

The restored gospel explains that we existed as spirit entities before being born into this sphere of activity—yes, spirit children of our Father in Heaven. We came to this earth for our spirits to receive bodies of flesh

and bones and to receive experiences wherein we are proved and tested to see, as the scripture states, if we "will do all things whatsoever the Lord . . . shall command." (Abr. 3:25.)

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints teaches the value of eternal progression. We progressed in the premortal existence, and we have the opportunity to progress in this estate and throughout all eternity. Each of us is endowed with gifts and talents, and through study, prayer, proper work habits, and the use of our gifts and talents, we can accomplish our eternal objectives.

"Seek learning"

Study, particularly of the scriptures, is an important factor. We are counseled to "seek learning, even by study and also by faith." (D&C 88:118.) Eternal progress involves continual study. The Lord has told us that "the glory of God is intelligence, or, in other words, light and truth." (D&C 93:36.)

Also, "Whatever principle of intelligence we attain unto in this life, it will rise with us in the resurrection.

"And if a person gains more knowledge and intelligence in this life through his diligence and obedience than another, he will have so much the advantage in the world to come." (D&C 130:18-19.)

President Spencer W. Kimball has counseled us in this manner:

"Let us . . . seek to read and understand and apply the principles and inspired counsel found within the [scriptures]. If we do so, we shall discover that our personal *acts* of righteousness will also bring *personal revelation or inspiration* when needed into our own lives." (EN-SIGN, Sept. 1975, p. 4.)

An abundance of modern revelation is to be found in latter-day scriptures. These scriptures explain in detail how to meet today's challenges. Knowledge received from studying the scriptures assists us in making correct decisions in all areas of life's activities and helps us to know God and understand his purposes.

Prayer

Now, with reference to the part that prayer plays in accomplishing our eternal objectives, the Savior instructed his disciples to "pray always" (Luke 21:36), saying: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you" (Luke 11:9).

The Prophet Joseph Smith observed that "it is the first principle of the gospel to know for a certainty the character of God, and to know that we may converse with Him as one man converses with another." (*History of the Church*, 6:305.)

Brigham Young, in his realistic manner, stated, "You know that it is one peculiarity of our faith and religion never to ask the Lord to do a thing without being willing to help him all that we are able; and then the Lord will do the rest." (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, comp. John A. Widtsoe, Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1941, p. 43.)

"Please, Lord, help me to help myself." I am convinced that this prayer for increased personal power is one that God answers. We can learn to solve our problems with God's help.

A convert told me: "I used to pray, not often, but I did pray before we became members. I prayed that someday my husband and I would grow closer together. I never thought it would come to be, but the Church was my answer. We found the power of prayer. I am so thankful for the Church."

Yes, prayer does play an important part in our eternal progress.

Philosophy of work

Let us now consider the great eternal principle of work. During his earthly ministry, the Savior gave a beautiful parable dealing with the requirement that we work.

The parable of the entrusted talents told of a man who was about to leave on a long trip and he, therefore, called his servants together and gave them his goods. To one he gave five talents, to another he gave two, and to another he gave one. To each man he gave according to his ability.

While the master was away, the one who received five talents put them to use and made five more talents. The man who received two talents put them to use and made two more, but the man who received one talent hid it in the ground.

The master returned and asked for an accounting.

To the servants who had multiplied their talents, the master said: "Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things." (Matt. 25:23.)

The master called the servant who had hidden his talent and did not multiply it a slothful servant and said he would take the one talent from him and give it to the servant who had ten talents.

What a marvelous philosophy—the gospel of work!

At the time the present welfare program of the Church was established, the First Presidency explained

that the primary purpose was to "set up . . . a system under which the curse of idleness would be done away with, the evils of a dole abolished, and independence, industry, thrift and self respect be once more established amongst our people. The aim of the Church is to help the people to help themselves. Work is to be re-enthroned as the ruling principle of the lives of our Church membership." (In Conference Report, October 1936, p. 3.)

These are eternal principles and are as applicable to us today as they were when they were given.

Ever since its organization, the Church has encouraged its members to be thrifty and to establish and maintain their economic independence.

Whether our work is mainly mental or physical, or a combination of both, we should learn to do it well. The philosophy of work is a sound philosophy. It is a vital part of the gospel of Jesus Christ that will lead us to eternal life.

Develop talents

The Savior constantly emphasized the doctrine of loving your neighbor, of unselfishness and sacrifice. Let me suggest, therefore, the advisability of engaging in some work that involves service to our fellowman and some sacrifice of our time, talents, and means.

Remember the words of King Benjamin: "When ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God." (Mosiah 2:17.)

We should also appreciate that talents are developed by use, and they will not grow and multiply unless they are used. This principle was clearly taught in the Savior's parable.

Talents may be developed in many areas, such as teaching, missionary work, the arts, compassionate service, and many other fields.

Another convert had this to say: "An aspect of the Church I love is its constant learning, developing, and growing power. I'm grateful for the opportunity to work in the Church because this constant contact is helping us to grow and develop in the gospel and in all other areas of our lives."

I encourage you to accept every opportunity presented to develop your talents and to share them with enthusiasm, not as a burden, but as a great blessing, and the Lord will make you equal to the task that you are called upon to perform.

Have faith and endure to the end

The story of men and women who achieve is generally the story of persons overcoming handicaps. It appears that there are lessons that can only be learned through the overcoming of obstacles.

One of the darkest periods in the history of the Church was the winter of 1838-39. The Saints had been persecuted, robbed, and murdered. The Prophet Joseph Smith and his associates had been betrayed and were imprisoned in Liberty Jail.

But emerging from this dark period were the men who led the Church throughout trying experiences as well as amazing growth and development. It was during those dark days that the Lord revealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith, while in the Liberty Jail, a great revelation. Out of the midst of his tribulations, the Prophet Joseph Smith called upon God for comfort.

The answer came as God replied, "My son, peace be unto thy soul; thine adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a small moment;

"And then, if thou endure it well, God shall exalt thee on high." (D&C 121:7-8.)

The Liberty Jail experience truly constituted a refiner's fire for those who participated in it, and it gives us

a better understanding and appreciation of the greatness of the Prophet Joseph Smith and the early leaders of the Church.

What can we learn from the Liberty Jail experience that will be helpful to us? Certainly two impressive truths are apparent:

First, the importance of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and loyalty to our leaders and to the Church.

Second, the need for enduring to the end, regardless of how many difficulties we have to surmount.

As we endure to the end, we may need to ask the Lord for comfort, and we, like the Prophet Joseph Smith, may hear, "My son, peace be unto thy soul." (D&C 121:7.)

Purpose in life

Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is called the Prince of Peace, and his message is a message of peace to the individual and to the world. It is the peace that makes us appreciate mortal life and enables us to bear tribulations. One of the objectives of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is to establish this peace in the hearts and homes of the people.

Yes, the restored gospel clearly answers the question, "What is the purpose of life?" giving us an understanding of where we came from, why we are here, and where we go after death.

One can see the significance and the purpose of life with the perspective the restored gospel plan gives.

A convert living in Arizona had this to say: "The thing that has changed my life the most is that I have found a purpose in life and a certain peace of mind that I have never felt before."

A convert from Seattle was asked, "What has the Church done for you?" He replied, "Everything.

My life now has purpose and meaning. Now what can I do for the Lord? I owe him all."

Personally, I feel the same as the Seattle convert—I owe the Lord all.

Testimony

I bear you my testimony that I know that God lives and that Jesus is the Christ, our Redeemer and Savior.

And I know that Joseph Smith was the instrument in the hands of the Lord in restoring the gospel in its fulness, in restoring the power to act in the name of God, and in reestablishing the Church of Jesus Christ upon the earth.

I also bear witness that President Spencer W. Kimball is a prophet of God, acting under divine guidance in administering the affairs of the kingdom of God on the earth today. May the Lord bless and sustain him.

I sincerely pray that we will understand the purpose of life, conform our life-style to eternal gospel principles, enjoy peace, happiness, and growth, and receive eternal life, the greatest gift of God, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The Choir sang "My Shepherd Will Supply My Need" without announcement.

President Kimball

We have just listened to Elder Franklin D. Richards, a member of the Presidency of the First Quorum of the Seventy, followed by the Choir singing "My Shepherd Will Supply My Need."

The Choir and congregation will now join in singing "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet."