

# “Charity Never Faileth”

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My beloved sisters, I speak to you a few words by assignment of President Tanner, President Romney, and President Smith. I am grateful for this theme, the theme of the Relief Society: “Charity never faileth.”

I had occasion the other evening to do a little research on the Willie and Martin handcart companies of 1856. There were more than a thousand in those companies, converts to the Church from Scandinavia and the British Isles. They were late in arriving in the States, and dangerously late in leaving Iowa City to begin the long walk to this valley. They became trapped in the snows of Wyoming. Fortunately they were passed on the way by several missionaries who were returning from England and who, when they saw the plight of the handcart Saints, pushed on to this valley and reported to President Brigham Young. That was on the Saturday of the October conference of 1856. The next morning, Sunday, he stood before the people in the old tabernacle that stood on this square, and said in the morning session:

“I will now give this people the subject and the text for the Elders who may speak to-day and during the conference,” he announced. “It is this. ... Many of our brethren and sister are on the plains with handcarts, and probably many are now seven hundred miles from this place, and they must be brought here, we must send assistance to them. The text will be, ‘to get them here.’ ...

“That is my religion; that is the dictation of the Holy Ghost that I possess. It is to save the people.”

He called for teams and wagons and drivers, and then said:

“I want the sisters to have the privilege of fetching in blankets, skirts, stockings, shoes, etc. for the men, women and children that are in those hand-cart companies ... hoods, winter bonnets, stockings, skirts, garments, and almost any description of clothing.”

That was on Sunday. On Tuesday morning, two days later, sixteen wagonloads of food and supplies began moving out of this city drawn by sixteen strong four-mule teams, handled by twenty-seven young men.

This was the beginning, and other wagonloads followed as the men responded with their teams and wagons, and the women from their own meager stores gathered in food, clothing, blankets, and other necessities. (See LeRoy R. Hafen, *Handcarts to Zion*, Glendale, California: Arthur H. Clark Company, 1960, pp. 119–26.)

There is no more heroic episode in all of our history. As these poor people, many of them with badly frozen

hands and feet, some of them nearer death than life, arrived in the valley, the women who were here opened their homes to them, nurtured them, dressed their wounds, fed them and encouraged and blessed them through that long, bitter winter.

“Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.” (1 Cor. 13:1.)

God bless the women of the Relief Society who, now as then, have succored the needy, have befriended the lonely, have fed the hungry, and nursed the sick. “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.” (Matt. 25:40.) So said the Lord.

Now I should like to say a word concerning charity of a different kind.

I speak of charity in the sense of forgiveness, of tolerance of the failings of another, of the smothering of the feelings of jealousy and unkindness toward associates.

I think of two women, once the closest of friends. The one, through an accident of which she was innocent, became in effect a party to the death of a child of the other. It is difficult to say which of those women suffered the most over the death of that child. The one who was not the mother, but who was involved in the accident that led to the fatality, has grieved and wept these many years, not only for the child who was lost and for her part in the tragic situation, but perhaps even more over the unforgiving spirit of the mother who lost the child. It is understandable why the bereft mother, mourning over the loss of her baby, felt bitter. But long since there should have been a realization on her part that her friend was innocent, that she too has wept, and that there should have been an outpouring of love toward her rather than recrimination. An absence of charity has cankered the soul of that woman, destroyed her happiness, brought only misery to her days and sorrow to her nights.

Moroni taught that “charity is the pure love of Christ.” (Moro. 7:47.) It was the suffering Redeemer who said, as he hung on Calvary’s cross and looked down upon those who had so brutally crucified him, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.” (Luke 23:34.)

If there be any within the sound of my voice who have harbored grudges, who have let hatred develop in their hearts one toward another, I ask you to make the effort to turn around. Hatred always fails and bitterness always destroys, but “charity never faileth.” (1 Cor. 13:8.)

There is another aspect of this matter. There is rampant among us a spirit of criticism. Perhaps it is a part of the age in which we live. We are constantly exposed to the writings of newspaper columnists and the opinions of radio and television commentators. Their major objective, it seems to me, is to find fault. They are critical, sometimes viciously so. They are critical of political figures. They are critical of church leaders. None of us is perfect; all of us occasionally make mistakes. There was only one perfect individual who ever walked the earth. Men and women who carry heavy responsibility do not need criticism, they need encouragement. One can disagree with policy without being disagreeable concerning the policymaker.

I would plead with you women, young and old, to restrain your tongues in criticism of others. It is so easy to find fault. It is so much nobler to speak constructively.

May I mention another matter to you mothers? I was distressed to read in the newspaper recently that a poll

taken in one of our communities among high school students indicated a spirit of discrimination and unfriendliness toward those not of our faith. I know nothing about the reliability of the poll. If there be substance to the result, I am embarrassed. I would hope that in your family home evenings you would teach your children the importance of friendliness, of tolerance, of the need to reach out, even to those with whom we disagree, in a spirit of love and kindness and helpfulness.

Now in conclusion, I should like to say a word or two about one who stands as an example to all of us. I speak of Sister Camilla Eyring Kimball. During these past weeks I have seen her frequently as she has stood by the side of her husband day and night during the illness which he has suffered. Her loyalty to him, the evidence of her unflinching love for him, her tender care of him, have become as the threads of a beautiful tapestry. Her prayers in his behalf, her pleadings with the Lord, have been those of a woman of strength and humility, who knows that all of life is a gift from God our Eternal Father.

And there is another facet to her nature that ought to be an example to all of us, and I point it out particularly to you younger women. She came of a very large family. She was the first of the children to leave home to secure an education. She thirsted for knowledge and she secured it. Having qualified for her chosen vocation, she used part of her earnings to help her brothers and sisters begin their education. From that family have come men and women of world renown.

Sister Kimball has never lost her hunger for learning. Reading is of the very essence of her life. She feasted on it when she was young, and now in her later years it is a comfort and a strength to her. To women everywhere she is a shining example of the need to grow constantly, to stretch the mind, to enlarge understanding, to be nurtured by the thoughts of great men and women of all ages.

She is the epitome of kindness and thoughtfulness. She knew something of poverty when she was young, although she did not recognize it as such. But out of a sense of values cultivated in those early years she has reached out in love and sympathy to help those in distress.

I commend her example to you. I invoke the blessings of the Lord upon her and her beloved husband. I invoke blessings upon you young women whose lives are filled with hopes and dreams of good things, that those dreams may come true; upon you young mothers who carry so important a role in the nurturing and teaching of children; and upon you older women who have seen much of life and have come to appreciate its beauties and to acknowledge its sorrows.

“Charity never faileth.” It is the “pure love of Christ, and it endureth forever.” (Moro. 7:46–47.)

God bless you each one, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.