

Elder James E. Faust

I should like to emphasize today three important elements of integrity—dealing justly with oneself, dealing justly with others, and recognizing the law of the harvest. I apologize for my directness. I do not wish to offend. I wish only to be understood.

Honor and integrity

The dictionary defines *integrity* as a firm adherence to a code of moral values (see *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*). It connotes soundness and incorruptibility. It is the mother of many virtues. It begins when we deal justly with ourselves.

Walter Spat, the first stake president in South America, for many years has owned a furniture factory in Sao Paulo, Brazil. The delicately hand-carved roses, figures, and designs in the beautiful woods make his furniture as lovely as I have ever seen. Every piece is exquisite. Every creation is a masterpiece. One day my Ruth and I were in the entrance of his factory when a beautiful, newly made piece of furniture was carried in from the factory for showing. The grain of the wood flowed beautifully, and the finish was perfection. But to President Spat the hardware did not seem up to standard. Without hesitation, he took a screwdriver and a pair of pliers and pulled off all the hardware. His only remark was, "That is not my work." President Spat seems incapable of making a piece of furniture which is not as near perfect as it can be. His work reflects his honor and integrity.

Ralph Waldo Emerson stated: "Every man takes care that his neighbor shall not cheat him. But a day comes when he begins to care that he do[es] not cheat his neighbor. Then all goes well. He has changed his market-cart into a chariot of the sun." (*Conduct of Life*, in *The Complete Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson*,

New York: William H. Wise and Co., 1929, p. 585.)

A vow binds the soul

Integrity is the value we set on ourselves. It is a fulfillment of the duty we owe ourselves. An honorable man or woman will personally commit to live up to certain self-imposed expectations. They need no outside check or control. They are honorable in their inner core.

Where does the soul play its part best? Is it in outward show? Or is it within, where no mortal eyes can penetrate and where we have an inner defense against the tragedies of life?

Integrity is the light that shines from a disciplined conscience. It is the strength of duty within us. Moses gave the following counsel: "If a man vow a vow unto the Lord, or swear an oath to bind his soul with a bond; he shall not break his word, he shall do according to all that proceedeth out of his mouth." (Num. 30:2.)

The power of keeping an oath was manifested by Nephi, who held Zoram, the frightened servant of Laban, to keep him from fleeing. Dr. Hugh Nibley has written:

"Nephi, a powerful fellow, held the terrified Zoram in a vise-like grip long enough to swear a solemn oath in his ear, 'as the Lord liveth, and as I live' (1 Ne. 4:32), that he would not harm him if he would listen. Zoram immediately relaxed, and Nephi swore another oath to him that he would be a free man if he would join the party. . . .

" . . . As soon as Zoram 'made an oath unto us that he would tarry with us from that time forth . . . our fears did cease concerning him.' (1 Ne. 4:35, 37)." (*An Approach to the Book of Mormon*, 2nd ed., Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1976, pp. 103-4.)

Shoot, and be damned

Being true to oneself at times requires extraordinary strength and courage. For instance, in the early days of the Church it was very unpopular, even dangerous, to uphold Joseph Smith as a prophet of God. Lyman Wight was one of those imprisoned by the leaders of a mob in 1839.

General Wilson advised Brother Wight, "We do not wish to hurt you nor kill you," and then following an oath said, "but we have one thing against you, and that is, you are too friendly to Joe Smith. . . . Wight, you know all about his character."

Brother Wight said, "I do, sir."

"Will you swear all you know concerning him?" said Wilson.

Brother Wight then told Wilson he "believed . . . Joseph Smith to be the most philanthropic man he ever saw, and possessed of the most pure . . . principles—a friend to mankind, a maker of peace."

Wilson then observed, "Wight, I fear your life is in danger, for there is no end to the prejudice against Joe Smith."

"Kill and be damned, sir," was Brother Wight's answer.

Returning later that night, Wilson told Lyman Wight: "I regret to tell you your die is cast; your doom is fixed; you are sentenced to be shot tomorrow morning on the public square in Far West, at eight o'clock."

Brother Wight answered, "Shoot, and be damned."

The decree of execution of the prisoners was revoked the next morning. (See *History of the Church*, 3:446-47.)

Dealing justly with others

Dealing justly with oneself lays a foundation for dealing justly with others. During World War II, I came home on leave early one September. It was time to put peaches in bottles to preserve them for winter. My beloved mother-in-law called an old friend,

George B. Andrus, of Holladay in this valley. The conversation on the telephone was brief: "George, do you have any peaches for sale?" mother asked.

Patriarch Andrus answered, "I have a few, but they are not very good."

I volunteered to drive Mother Wright to pick up the peaches. When we arrived she said, "George, where are your peaches?"

Brother Andrus opened his garage door, and I saw bushel baskets filled with large golden fruit with red kisses from sun ripening. Each basket was filled so full that when I lifted them into the trunk of the car some of the luscious peaches on top of the piled basket rolled off and bruised. Brother Andrus immediately replaced them with other perfect fruit.

On the way home I said to Mother Wright, "What did he mean when he said his fruit was not very good?"

She answered, "If you knew George Andrus, you would know that any fruit he would put on the market would be good and that he would give more than full value."

I wondered what the fruit would have been like if George had said it was good. Brother Andrus's self-imposed expectations led him to go beyond what we expected of him in his dealings with us.

Natural, inherent integrity is manifested almost every hour of every day of our lives. Those who unjustly profit at the expense of others may gain a fortune, but they forfeit something more important, which is their own integrity. Taking advantage of others is a counterfeit form of true success and honor.

Performance of duty

Those who have children and are involved in doing something less than they should may be involved in a double evil, for in addition to the inherent wrong they commit, they also teach another generation to do wrong.

There seems to be an immutable law that children may take license from what their parents do and expand upon it, confirming the old adage that the chickens not only come home to roost, but they bring their chicks with them.

Performance of duty, regardless of the sacrifice involved, is a part of dealing justly with oneself and others. Early in the history of this valley Joseph W. McMurrin was placed in charge of guarding some of the leaders of the Church. At a meeting in Social Hall in Salt Lake City, an intruder under a claim of authority tried to enter the hall; and Joseph W. McMurrin, being true to his trust to guard the servants of the Lord, restrained him from going through the door. President Heber J. Grant relates that the intruder "finally got his hand loose and took his pistol and, pressing it against Brother McMurrin's body, fired two bullets . . . through his vitals. Those bullets lodged just under the skin in his back. He was attended by Dr. Joseph Benedict who told Joseph W. McMurrin that no man could live after two bullets had passed through his vitals, and then added: 'If you wish to make a dying statement you should do so immediately.'

"I went with John Henry Smith to Brother McMurrin's home and saw where the flesh was burned away around those terrible gaping wounds. I saw where the bullets had gone clear through him. I heard John Henry Smith say, 'By the authority of the Priesthood of the living God which we hold, and in the name of the Lord, Jesus Christ, we say that you shall be made absolutely whole, and that there shall be no physical weakness left upon your body because of these terrible wounds that you have received while guarding the servants of the living God.'"

On November 21, 1931, President Grant concluded, "Joseph W. McMurrin is alive and well, and has never had any physical weakness because of those terrible wounds."

(*Gospel Standards*, Salt Lake City: Improvement Era, 1969, pp. 310-11.)

We reap that which we sow

It is difficult to be just with oneself and others unless we recognize the law of the harvest. We reap that which we sow. Latter-day Saints have long been taught to live by the virtues of independence, industry, thrift, and self-reliance. Working for what we receive is a cardinal, timeless principle of self-respect. The whole world admires success. But how each of us defines success and how we seek it is crucial to our happiness.

The fruits of industry and thrift may appropriately be put into sound investments. A good solid investment can equal years of toil, and there is some risk in all we do. But investments that are highly speculative and promoted with unsound, vague promises of inordinate return should be viewed very carefully. The leaders of the Church have long warned against speculation.

Brigham Young said, "If the Lord ever revealed anything to me, he has shown me that the Elders of Israel must let speculation alone and attend to the duties of their calling." (*Journal of Discourses*, 8:179.)

In our time President Nathan Eldon Tanner has said:

"Investment debt should be fully secured so as not to encumber a family's security. Don't invest in speculative ventures. The spirit of speculation can become intoxicating. Many fortunes have been wiped out by the uncontrolled appetite to accumulate more and more. Let us learn from the sorrows of the past and avoid enslaving our time, energy, and general health to a gluttonous appetite to acquire increased material goods." (In Conference Report, Oct. 1979, p. 120; also in *ENSIGN*, Nov. 1979, p. 82.)

What is success? Is it money? Is it achievement? Is it fame? Is it position? Is it dominion? The prophet Micah

defined success as follows: "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (Micah 6:8.)

The prophet Ezekiel also gave a formula for success:

"But if a man be just, and do that which is lawful and right, . . .

"And hath not oppressed any, but hath restored to the debtor his pledge, hath spoiled none by violence, hath given his bread to the hungry, and hath covered the naked with a garment; . . .

"Hath walked in my statutes, and hath kept my judgments, to deal truly; he is just, he shall surely live, saith the Lord God." (Ezek. 18:5, 7, 9.)

The Lord appeared to the great Solomon in a dream and said, "Ask what I shall give thee." (1 Kings 3:5.) Solomon replied, "Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad." (1 Kings 3:9.) The Lord was pleased because Solomon had not asked for success as the world defines it.

A place for mercy

Complete and constant integrity is a great law of human conduct. There need to be some absolutes in life. There are some things that should not ever be done, some lines that should never be crossed, vows that should never be broken, words that should never be spoken, and thoughts that should never be entertained.

Yet there is a place for mercy, for equity, and for forgiveness. Even the stalwart Peter, the chief Apostle, was forgiven for a moment of weakness. Luke records:

"Then took they [the Lord], and led him, and brought him into the high priest's house. And Peter followed afar off.

"And when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the hall, and were

set down together, Peter sat down among them.

"But a certain maid beheld him as he sat by the fire, and earnestly looked upon him, and said, This man was also with him.

"And he denied him, saying, Woman, I know him not.

"And after a little while another saw him, and said, Thou art also of them. And Peter said, Man, I am not.

"And about the space of one hour after another confidently affirmed, saying, Of a truth this fellow also was with him: for he is a Galilaean.

"And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew.

"And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.

"And Peter went out, and wept bitterly." (Luke 22:54-62.)

I believe this incident strengthened Peter's commitment. He was never to be weak again. The resolve borne of that disappointment in his own temporary weakness tempered his metal to the hardest steel. He proved his devotion every day of his life thereafter, and in his death. So it can be with all of us. When we have been less than we ought to be and have fallen below our own standards, we can have newfound resolve and strength by forsaking our weakness.

God help us to be honest and true. May we always be thoroughly dependable, standing firm and upright though others may fail, and be fearless, constant, and just. May we say with the much-tested Job: "Till I die I will not remove mine integrity from me." (Job 27:5.)

I leave my testimony that dealing justly with oneself and others, and observing the law of the harvest, is a part of the inner peace of the sweet gospel of the Lord Jesus, of whose divinity as the risen Christ I testify in his holy name, amen.