

overflow congregation in the Assembly Hall where Elders Marion D. Hanks and Richard G. Scott preside. We welcome likewise those who are viewing this conference through a great satellite network which will carry the proceedings to some five hundred and fifty stake centers of the Church. President Spencer W. Kimball is watching the proceedings of this session on television. He sends his love and blessings, as does President Marion G. Romney who is watching it from his home.

We acknowledge the presence this morning of government, education, and civic leaders, and officers and members of the Church from many lands who have assembled to worship and to counsel together in this conference.

The Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Jerold Ottley with John Longhurst at the organ, is providing the music for this session.

The Choir opened these services by singing "Arise, O Glorious Zion"

and will now sing "Sweet Hour of Prayer," following which Elder Gene R. Cook, a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy, will offer the invocation.

The Choir sang "Sweet Hour of Prayer."

Elder Gene R. Cook offered the invocation.

The Choir sang "How Great the Wisdom and the Love" without announcement.

President Hinckley

The Tabernacle Choir has sung "How Great the Wisdom and the Love."

It will now be our privilege to hear from President Ezra Taft Benson, President of the Council of the Twelve Apostles.

President Ezra Taft Benson

My beloved brethren and sisters, one hundred and fifty years ago the Prophet Joseph Smith organized the School of the Prophets. The purpose of this school was to prepare selected members of the priesthood to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ to all the world.

First School of the Prophets meetings

In the absence of a temple, the first School of the Prophets was held in a small room in the home of Bishop Newel K. Whitney. Brigham Young was one of the early participants in this school, and he described a scene which frequently presented itself during meetings:

"The brethren came to that place for hundreds of miles to attend school in a little room probably no larger than eleven by fourteen. When they assembled together in this room after breakfast, the first they did was to light their pipes, and, while smoking, talk about the great things of the kingdom, . . . and as soon as the pipe was out of their mouths a large chew of tobacco would then be taken. Often when the Prophet entered the room to give the school instructions he would find himself in a cloud of tobacco smoke. This, and the complaints of his wife at having to clean [the] floor, made the Prophet think upon the matter, and he inquired of the Lord relating to the conduct of the Elders in using tobacco" (*Journal of Discourses*, 12:158).

A principle with a promise

In response to this inquiry by the Prophet, the Lord gave him a revelation in the Whitney home. This revelation is known as the Word of Wisdom.

At first the revelation was not given as a commandment. It was given as "a principle with promise, adapted to the capacity of the weak and the weakest of all saints, who are or can be called saints" (D&C 89:3). This allowed time for the Saints to adjust to the principles contained in the revelation.

While I was on my first mission in Great Britain in 1922, some of the sisters had difficulty giving up their tea. I read that passage to them, and most of them quit drinking tea because they did not want to be considered the "weakest" of those who are or can be called Saints.

A binding commandment and distinctive practice

In 1851, President Brigham Young proposed to the general conference of the Church that all Saints formally covenant to keep the Word of Wisdom. This proposal was unanimously upheld by the membership of the Church. Since that day, the revelation has been a binding commandment on all Church members.

The Word of Wisdom is one of the recognized and distinctive practices of members of the Church. Generally, others not of our faith acknowledge that members in good standing abstain from tobacco, coffee, tea, and all alcoholic beverages.

Scientific studies have confirmed that Latter-day Saints have less incidence of heart problems, all forms of cancer, and other diseases because of their adherence to the Word of Wisdom.

These studies have demonstrated that not only will one live a longer life, but also that the quality of one's life will be better.

Evidence of Joseph Smith's prophetic calling

The Word of Wisdom is one of the evidences of the inspiration of Joseph Smith's prophetic calling. Let me tell you why.

Several years ago an investigator gave this testimonial about Joseph Smith. He said that the Word of Wisdom was the revelation that most attracted him to investigate the Church. "There is no possible way," he said, "that Joseph Smith could have known what we now know in the medical world about the harmful effects of tobacco, alcohol, tea, and coffee. Yet this has all been substantiated by medical science."

He said that this was the beginning of his earnest investigation of the gospel, for he reasoned that if Joseph Smith could be so accurate on a matter that medical science validated over a hundred years later, the rest of the teachings of the Church deserved investigation. He did so and is now a member of the Church.

Young people: God governs by law

One principle of the gospel that all young people of the Church should understand is this: God, our Heavenly Father, governs His children by law. He has instituted laws for our perfection. If we obey His laws, we receive the blessings pertaining to those laws. If we do not obey, we receive the consequences.

The Word of Wisdom is a law—a principle with promise. If we obey the provisions of the law, we receive the promises. If we do not, there will be both temporal and spiritual consequences.

What are the provisions of the law known as the Word of Wisdom?

Admonitions and counsels in Word of Wisdom

The revelation defines and admonishes abstinence from harmful

substances and beverages in these words:

“Strong drinks [or, in other words, alcoholic or harmful beverages] are not for the belly” (D&C 89:7).

“Tobacco is not for the body . . . and is not good for man” (D&C 89:8).

“Hot drinks [defined as tea and coffee] are not for the body” (D&C 89:9).

Those foods which are good for man are described in these words:

“All wholesome herbs God hath ordained for the constitution, nature, and use of man—

“Every herb in the season thereof, and every fruit in the season thereof;

“Flesh . . . of beasts and of the fowls of the air . . . are to be used sparingly;

“All grain is ordained for the use of man . . . to be the staff of life. . . .

“All grain is good for the food of man; as also the fruit of the vine” (D&C 89:10–12, 14, 16).

In this revelation the Lord counsels us to use meat sparingly. I have often felt that the Lord is further counseling us in this revelation against indiscriminately killing animals, for He has said elsewhere in scripture, “Wo be unto man that sheddeth blood or that wasteth flesh and hath no need” (D&C 49:21).

Obedience—the greater blessing

Wheat is particularly singled out as being good for man, as is the fruit of the vine—vegetables and all fruits. This is the wisdom of the Lord on the matter of sound nutrition and diet.

The Word of Wisdom allows us to know that the Lord is vitally concerned about the health of His Saints. He has graciously given us counsel for improving our health, endurance, and resistance to many diseases.

The temporal promise for obedience is: They “shall receive health in their navel and marrow to their bones; . . . [they] shall run and not be

weary and shall walk and not faint” (D&C 89:18, 20).

I have always felt, however, that the greater blessing of obedience to the Word of Wisdom and all other commandments is spiritual.

Listen to the spiritual promise: “All saints who remember to keep and do these sayings, walking in obedience to the commandments, . . . shall find wisdom and great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures” (D&C 89:18, 19; italics added).

Some have thought this promise was contingent on just keeping the provisions of the Word of Wisdom. But you will notice we must walk in obedience to *all* the commandments. Then we shall receive specific spiritual promises. This means we must obey the law of tithing, keep the Sabbath day holy, keep morally clean and chaste, and obey all other commandments.

When we do all this, the promise is: They “shall find wisdom and great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures” (D&C 89:19).

What father and mother would not want the inspiration of the Lord in rearing their children? I testify these blessings can be yours. Surely parents would not want, through disobedience, to prevent their children from receiving the Lord’s blessings. All fathers and mothers in Israel should qualify themselves for this promise.

Living the commandments of God is a condition of worthiness for entrance into the House of the Lord. There wisdom and “great treasures of knowledge” are given that relate to our happiness in this life and joy throughout eternity.

Brothers and sisters and friends, learn this principle. The Lord will increase our knowledge, wisdom, and capacity to obey when we obey His fundamental laws. This is what the Prophet Joseph Smith meant when he said we could have “sudden strokes of ideas” which come into our minds as “pure intelligence.” (See *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, se1. Joseph

Fielding Smith [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938], p. 151.) This is revelation. We must learn to rely on the Holy Ghost so we can use it to guide our lives and the lives of those for whom we have responsibility.

I do not believe that a member of the Church can have an active, vibrant testimony of the gospel without keeping the commandments. A testimony is to have current inspiration to know the work is true, not something we receive only once. The Holy Ghost abides with those who honor, respect, and obey God's laws. And it is that Spirit which gives inspiration to the individual. Humbly I testify to the reality of this promise.

Warning to modern generation

There is another part of this revelation that constitutes a pertinent warning to this modern generation: "In consequence of evils and designs which do and will exist in the hearts of conspiring men in the last days, I have warned you, and forewarn you, by giving unto you this word of wisdom by revelation" (D&C 89:4).

The Lord foresaw the situation of today when motives for money would cause men to conspire to entice others to take noxious substances into their bodies. Advertisements which promote beer, wine, liquors, coffee, tobacco, and other harmful substances are examples of what the Lord foresaw. But the most pernicious example of an evil conspiracy in our time is those who induce young people into the use of drugs.

My young brothers and sisters, in all love, we give you warning that Satan and his emissaries will strive to entice you to use harmful substances, because they well know if you partake, your spiritual powers will be inhibited and you will be in their evil power. Stay away from those places or people which would influence you to break the

commandments of God. Keep the commandments of God and you will have the wisdom to know and discern that which is evil.

Restoration and growth in Kirtland

This year marks the 150th anniversary of the Word of Wisdom in this dispensation. Marking this anniversary, the Church is restoring the Newel K. Whitney store in Kirtland, Ohio. The store is a most ordinary structure by any modern standard, but it is the place where sacred revelations of God were received. One hundred and fifty years have scientifically confirmed the Word of Wisdom as a formula for sound health. One hundred and fifty years' experience with Saints living these laws has also confirmed that God fulfills His spiritual promises to His Saints.

May we as Saints of God keep all His commandments. May we be pure and holy so we can have the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost. Let us be distinctive as a people because of our obedience to God's laws.

A new day is dawning in Kirtland. A few years ago, I broke ground for the first meetinghouse to be built in Kirtland since the dedication of the first temple in 1836.

I recently returned and dedicated a beautiful new building. Following the dedication, we participated in a special reception attended by fifty-eight nonmembers, descendants of the early Saints in Kirtland. Some of these nonmembers have now been baptized and others are being prepared.

We anticipate that within the next year we will once again have a stake in Kirtland where the very first stake of the Church was organized.

I testify that this is the Lord's Church restored in this modern day. Jesus Christ lives. He directs the affairs of this Church and is close to His servants.

I further testify that obedience to all of God's laws brings the precious promise of peace in this life and eternal life in the world to come, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Go, Ye Messengers of Glory" without announcement.

President Hinckley

We have heard from President Ezra Taft Benson, President of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, followed by the Tabernacle Choir singing "Go, Ye Messengers of Glory."

We shall now be pleased to hear from Elder Thomas S. Monson, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles.

Elder Thomas S. Monson

Anonymous donor

Recently, I approached the reception desk of a large hospital to learn the room number of a patient I had come to visit. This hospital, like almost every other in the land, was undergoing a massive expansion. Behind the desk where the receptionist sat was a magnificent plaque which bore an inscription of thanks to donors who had made possible the expansion. The name of each donor who had contributed \$100,000 appeared in a flowing script, etched on an individual brass placard suspended from the main plaque by a glittering chain.

The names of the benefactors were well known. Captains of commerce, giants of industry, professors of learning—all were there. I felt gratitude for their charitable benevolence. Then my eyes rested on a brass placard which was different—it contained no name. One word, and one word only, was inscribed: "Anonymous." I smiled and wondered who the unnamed contributor could have been. Surely he or she experienced a quiet joy unknown to any other.

"Tell no man"

My thoughts turned backward in time—back to the Holy Land; back to Him whom we especially remember this Easter Sunday; back to Him who

redeemed from the grave all mankind; back to Him who on that special mountain taught His disciples the true spirit of giving when he counseled, "Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them. . . .

"But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth" (Matthew 6:1, 3).

Then, as though to indelibly impress on their souls the practical application of this sacred truth, He came down from the mountain with a great multitude following Him. "And, behold, there came a leper and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.

"And Jesus put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.

"And Jesus saith unto him, See thou tell no man" (Matthew 8:2-4). The word *anonymous* had a precious meaning then. It still has.

"Shan't know who sends it"

The classics of literature, as well as the words from holy writ, teach us the endurance of anonymity. A favorite of mine is Charles Dickens' "A Christmas Carol." I can picture the trembling Ebenezer Scrooge seeing in vision the return of his former partner, Jacob Marley, though Jacob had been dead for seven years. The words of