

Elder H. Verlan Andersen

My dear brothers and sisters, knowing as I do that this is the Lord's church, and sensing somewhat the magnitude of the responsibility which comes with my calling and assignment as a General Authority, I have prayed most earnestly for that divine help which I feel so much in need of.

Missionary work in Latin America: fulfillment of prophecy

During the past few years, my wife and I have served as missionaries in Latin American countries. This has been one of the most challenging and rewarding experiences of our lives. It has been deeply satisfying to work with those lovable and believing people and to see the prophecies of the Book of Mormon being fulfilled as hundreds of thousands of the descendants of Lehi join the Church. The day of the Lamanites has truly arrived.

The history of the Lamanites just prior to the Lord's first appearance on this continent reveals an interesting parallel between what occurred then and what is happening today. Commencing about the year 92 B.C., the Lamanites began coming into the Lord's church by the tens of thousands. That conversion miracle, which took place just shortly before the Lord's first advent, is being repeated now just prior to his second coming.

Devotion to missionary work brings joy

There is an aspect of missionary work upon which I would like to comment briefly, and that is the joy which comes to those who engage in it.

The Book of Mormon sums up the whole purpose of existence in this short sentence: "Men are, that they might have joy" (2 Nephi 2:25).

If joy is the supreme goal of life, then everyone should be intensely interested in how it may be obtained. We should be equally concerned about how

we may avoid its opposite, misery. These vital topics are discussed and illustrated in the Book of Mormon, and the information concerning them is directly related to missionary work. The book tells us that those who completely devote their lives to the task of spreading the gospel experience exquisite joy, while those who oppose it and seek to promulgate falsehood suffer a misery equally intense.

The gospel, and the opportunity to share its message, have not always been on the earth. But when the gospel is here, we should value it highly. The Lord has given us his promise that if we labor all of our days and bring save it be one soul to him, how great shall be our joy with him in the kingdom of our Father (see D&C 18:15).

Lifeblood of the Church

A number of years ago, the late President Spencer W. Kimball, who was then a member of the Quorum of the Twelve, visited the stake in which I was living and made the statement that missionary work is the lifeblood of the Church. He also said that were it not for missionary work, the Church would wither and die on the vine. That statement doubtless applies as much to us as individuals and families as it does to the Church as a whole. A failure to utilize our endowments and fulfill our callings as the salt of the earth may indeed cause us to wither and die on the vine.

Blessings of sacrificing for missionary work

I should like to discuss for a moment the enormous influence which missionary work has had on my own life. My parents, who grew up in Mexico, had not served missions prior to their marriage. But when a call came to the seventies quorum to which my father belonged for a volunteer to serve a short-term mission, he went, even though it meant leaving a farm and a

large family of small children for his wife to care for. She welcomed that opportunity to sacrifice for Church and family, and I well remember how heroically she bore her burdens during those difficult winter months.

Later, during the long, cruel years of the Great Depression, even though my parents suffered severe financial hardship, they always kept one of their children in the mission field.

My father passed away at a relatively young age, and after he was gone and we children had married, my mother asked for, and was given, permission to serve a mission in Mexico.

If there is honor attached to my call to the First Quorum of the Seventy, and indeed there is, it goes not to me, but to those whose examples of sacrifice and dedication have influenced my life so greatly. I pay tribute to them for their tireless and unceasing devotion to the Church and to their family. They have wielded an immense influence upon their ten children and their other numerous posterity.

I must not close without expressing my love and appreciation for my dear companion, who is herself a notable example of hard work and sacrifice. I think she deserves to be heard from, and so I am going to pass on to you the following thoughts that she suggested I include in my address, not expecting I would attribute them to her:

Message to grandparents

"And now a word to grandparents on missionary work. The blessings you receive therefrom reach down into your families. The grandchildren will never forget the special joy they feel at your farewell. Then, when you get into the mission field, letters start arriving containing statements like these: 'Grandma and Grandpa, I keep praying for you to be good missionaries,' or, 'Sometime I'll go on a mission just like you.'

"Grandmothers, you say you cannot leave the grandchildren? I want to bear you my testimony that you can be a lasting influence for good in the lives of those little ones by giving a year or so of your time to the service of the Lord in the mission field. The bonds of love will be strengthened, and true miracles will occur. Don't deny your grandchildren those blessings. I challenge you to put missionary work to the test."

Such is the message of my dear wife, with whom I am in total agreement. And now in closing, I bear you my own witness that missionary work truly is the lifeblood of the Church and that we have a divine commission to share the gospel with others both at home and abroad. I know, nothing doubting, that this is the work of the Lord and that President Benson is his prophet on earth today. This testimony I bear in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder George I. Cannon

My brothers and sisters, the Lord's work is moving forward in Asia through the faith, prayers, and good works of the Saints and missionaries in many countries in that part of the world. A spiritual awakening is taking place, and doors are being opened. It is a humbling and uplifting experience for Sister Cannon and me to be called to serve in that choice area of the world.

I would like to share some thoughts with you as a father and grandfather.

Importance of children

First, I would like to talk to you young children. I want you to know that you are loved by your Father in Heaven and your Elder Brother, Jesus Christ. When Jesus was living upon the earth, a very important event took place: