

his love and blessing to brethren of the priesthood wherever they might be assembled this evening.

Before giving the closing remarks, I remind you that the CBS Tabernacle Choir broadcast will be from 9:30 to 10:00 tomorrow morning. Those desiring to attend this broadcast and the Sunday morning session, which follows, must be in their seats before 9:15 A.M.

As you leave this meeting tonight, we ask you to obey traffic rules, to use

caution, and to be courteous in driving.

We express our gratitude to the brethren of the Tabernacle Choir and Mormon Youth Chorus for the wonderful music they have given and will give us. They will conclude after I have spoken by singing "The Pilgrim's Chorus." The benediction will then be offered by Elder Spencer J. Condie of the Seventy.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

The released and emeritus brethren of the Seventy

Brethren, this has been a wonderful meeting, in which we have been stirred and uplifted and motivated, and I pray for a continuation of the Spirit of the Lord.

This great semiannual gathering of tens and tens of thousands of boys and men is a religious conference unique and wonderful. I desire to treat two matters this evening.

The first is an expression of appreciation to my brethren of the Seventy who were honorably released from active service this afternoon. Others eventually will be called to take their places. No one here needs to be told that the Church is growing. It is spreading over the world in a remarkable way. Involved in this are many problems of administration. The pace is heavy, and the demands are many. Coincident with this growth, there is an increasing number of men of faith and ability who can serve full-time for a season. As announced some years ago, a program of rotation will be followed among the Brethren of the Seventy. Likewise, age and conditions of health will become factors in the length of service the Brethren are asked to give.

To those who are released or who receive emeritus status, may I express appreciation in behalf of the entire Church. Without exception, you have done a magnificent work. When you were called, you consecrated yourselves to this work. You have gone wherever you have been asked to go and never complained. You

have put in long and wearisome days. You have dealt with very serious problems. You have been absolutely loyal to the Church and its membership. You have served at times at the peril of your own health. You have gone when human wisdom would have dictated that you stay home. You have sacrificed private means in giving your full time to the work.

You have exercised apostolic power in carrying the gospel to the nations of the earth. You have exercised the divine sealing power in the temples of the Lord. You have spoken from scores and scores of pulpits with power and conviction, with great persuasiveness to your listeners, and with deep sincerity welling up from the strong and sure testimonies which you carry in your hearts. Your wives have been a part of all of this. They, too, have made sacrifices. In many instances, they have remained at home while their husbands have been off traveling in the ministry. They have known much of loneliness and even anxiety. To them we express our deep and sincere gratitude. We sincerely thank each of you.

While these brethren are being released from Churchwide service, they still have much to offer. They are men of demonstrated judgment and wisdom. They know the gospel. They know how to speak about it. They know how to teach it. They know how to live it. They are not ready to lie down and die. They have so much of value in them that they can still make tremendous contributions. While some have physical limitations

which would make it inadvisable to call them to certain duties, others are not so limited except by factors of age, which eventually slow us all. You presidents of stakes and bishops of wards should speak with them and find out their desires and be guided thereby.

They have served as General Authorities of the Church, with worldwide jurisdiction. There is due them much of gratitude, much of respect, and much of understanding. Be sensitive to their conditions and circumstances.

They leave the ranks of the active General Authorities with our commendation for work well done, with our love because of the wonderful association we have had with them and their companions, with our respect for the goodness and strength of their lives, with our good wishes for health and strength and a measure of relaxation from the very hectic schedule under which they have been living, and with our prayers that the Lord will bless them and their companions and make sweet their days through the years that lie ahead. It is not easy to retire from any duty to which one has wholly dedicated himself over a long period. The very nature of their work, out among the people who have come to know them and love them, makes even more difficult a sudden cessation from strenuous activity.

God bless you, our dear brethren. Your testimony of the truth of this work is strong and vibrant. We have heard your expressions. Your love for the Lord is real and personal. We know that. Your desire to serve is sincere and commendable. We know because we have worked beside you. Please know that you will continue to be in our prayers and that we shall never forget you, having served with you on the front lines of this great and vital work.

The scourge of illicit drugs

Now, I should like to say a few words on another subject. It is a matter much in the public press these days. It is the widespread use of illegal drugs

with all of the ramifications associated therewith.

I received a letter the other day from a government official who for years has been involved in the fight against illegal drugs. He says: "I know from firsthand knowledge what a scourge illicit narcotics are to this country and others. The drain on the human and monetary resources of the world being caused by this dilemma is inestimable and threatens the very foundations of freedom. I have watched as families dissolved, morals collapsed, and lives were lost, both directly and indirectly due to the effect of drugs."

I am confident this man knows whereof he speaks. He pleads for help, for public support, for Church support against this terrible scourge that is destroying so many. The *Wall Street Journal* a few days ago carried the results of a national poll which indicated that "three out of four Americans have been touched personally by drugs. Half have personally used drugs or have a family member who has. A remarkable 43% say that drugs are the nation's single most important issue."

The article goes on to say: "A surprisingly high 70% of the voters surveyed believe at least half of the crimes committed in their neighborhoods are drug related. Also, 70% of those with children between the ages of 13 and 17 say that drugs are sold in their children's schools."

As most of you are aware, the president of the United States has described the drug problem as the gravest domestic threat facing our nation. He has launched a battle against illicit drugs, with some eight billion dollars to be spent on strengthening police forces, building more prisons, and implementing other measures. Notwithstanding this, "those responding to the poll were deeply skeptical that the battle can be won: Only a third believe a federal program would do a 'great deal' or 'quite a bit' to correct the drug problem."

A woman respondent said, "No amount of money is going to stop it. It has to be a change within the hearts and minds of people. Young people have to think: 'I have just one body, and I'm

going to need it all my life” (Michael McQueen and David Shribman, “Battle against Drugs Is Chief Issue Facing Nation, Americans Say,” *Wall Street Journal*, 22 Sept. 1989, sec. A, pp. 1, 12).

I am inclined to agree with this woman. Stiffer enforcement measures may be necessary. But I believe that, only when far greater numbers of people conclude within their hearts and minds that the fruits of drug-taking are only sorrow and trouble, remorse, and even death, then will things change to any significant degree.

I wish I could say that all of our people, and particularly our young men, are free from this scourge. They are not, although I am pleased to note that drug use has declined among young people in some areas, including Utah.

Many of you young men to whom I am speaking are high school students. We may not be able to change the nation or the world. But we can change the problem in our own lives as individuals and, in that process, move others in the same direction.

Some have even used as an alibi the fact that drugs are not mentioned in the Word of Wisdom. What a miserable excuse. There is likewise no mention of the hazards of diving into an empty swimming pool or of jumping from an overpass onto the freeway. But who doubts the deadly consequences of such? Common sense would dictate against such behavior.

Use of illegal drugs is an affront to God

Regardless of the Word of Wisdom, there is a divinely given reason for avoiding these illegal substances.

I am convinced that their use is an affront to God. He is our Creator. We are made in His image. These remarkable and wonderful bodies are His handiwork. Does anyone think that he can deliberately injure and impair his body without affronting its Creator? We are told again and again that the body is the tabernacle of the spirit. We are told that it is a temple, holy to the Lord. In a time of terrible conflict between the Nephites

and the Lamanites, we are told that the Nephites, who had been strong, became “weak, like unto their brethren, the Lamanites, and that the Spirit of the Lord did no more preserve them; yea, it had withdrawn from them because the Spirit of the Lord doth not dwell in unholy temples” (Helaman 4:24).

Alma taught the people of Zarahemla, The Lord “doth not dwell in unholy temples; neither can filthiness or anything which is unclean be received into the kingdom of God” (Alma 7:21).

Can anyone doubt that the taking of these mind- and body-destroying drugs is an act of unholiness? Does anyone think that the Spirit of God can dwell in the temple of the body when that body is defiled by these destructive elements? If there be a young man anywhere who is listening tonight, who is tampering with these things, let him resolve forthwith, and with the strongest determination of which he is capable, that he will never touch them again.

You hold the priesthood of almighty God, and the revelation is clear that this priesthood cannot be exercised in any degree of unrighteousness. In holding the Aaronic Priesthood, you partake of the keys of “the gospel of repentance.” Begin immediately to implement that repentance in your own lives. It may not be easy to stand up to your friends. It may be most difficult to resist the demands of your body for more of this illicit material. Pray for strength. Seek help. God will bless you if you make the effort. And I promise you that you will be grateful for the remainder of your lives for the decision you have made.

I know it is difficult to resist following when your peers are pulling you along with others down into the swamp of narcotics. It takes a man with something of a bit of steel in his spine to say no and then keep his resolution.

Blood on the hands of drug users

We recently deemed it prudent, for reasons of personal safety, to move our American missionaries out of one of the nations of South America. It was not an

easy decision. We have many wonderful and faithful Latter-day Saints there. The people in that area are receptive to the gospel. For the most part, they are good people, law-abiding, and desirous of doing what is right. But the very life of that nation is threatened by powerful men of the drug cartel. There would be no such problem if the people of the United States and other nations refused to become a market for these narcotics. It is a supply-and-demand situation. There is great demand with a ready supply to meet that demand. Everyone who partakes of these illicit drugs has on his hands some of the blood of those who have been killed or wounded in the fight to stop the cultivation and exportation of these destructive products.

Drugs destroy self-worth

You cannot afford to tamper with them in the least. Certainly you must be grateful for your bodies and your minds, the very substance of your mortal lives. Certainly you must know that health is the most precious of assets. Certainly you recognize that, for the years that lie ahead, you will need health of body and clarity of mind if you are to live productively and with the respect of your associates. You would not knowingly break an arm or a leg just for the fun of it. Broken bones will mend and will function again in a normal way. But a mind warped by drugs or a body weakened or distorted by these evil things will not be easily repaired. The drug-induced destruction of self-worth and self-confidence is almost impossible to restore.

Drugs jeopardize posterity

To you who may be partaking, I repeat, stop immediately. To you who at any time in the future may be tempted, I urge you to stand your ground. Reflect on the fact that you are a son of God our Eternal Father, blessed with His holy priesthood and endowed with those faculties of body and mind which will help you to take a place that is significant in the world in which you will live. Do not

throw away your future. Do not jeopardize the well-being of your posterity.

I watched on television the other evening a documentary on what are called cocaine babies. I have seen few things more pitiable. These children, born of addicted mothers, come into the world under a terrible handicap. Their future prospects are hopeless. Many of them doubtless throughout their lives will be cared for at public expense. You will bear this burden as taxpayers. That, of course, is serious. But more serious is the manner in which the gift of life has been so wickedly abused by parents who had not the will to resist the drugs that have all but destroyed their children.

A clear defense against the plague

In earlier centuries there were plagues that swept across England and the nations of Europe. They struck like lightning, carrying tens of thousands to their death.

This modern drug scourge has become as a plague on the world. But in most cases, the death it brings is not swift, but rather, it follows a long period spent in misery and pain and regret. Unlike the plagues of old, from which there was no known defense, the defense is clear and relatively easy in the case of illicit drugs. It lies in simply refraining from touching them.

Stand free from personal holocaust

As I look at you young men in the Tabernacle tonight, I recognize that, in as brief a period as ten years from now, the youngest of you will be twenty-two. Hopefully you will have completed honorable missions. You priests who are here tonight will for the most part have completed your educational programs and will be employed in the vocations of your choice. Ten years pass so quickly. They are almost as sunrise and sunset. Do not blight your future. Do not impair your capacity. Do not offend God, in whose image you were created.

Although I recognize that drugs are not mentioned specifically in the Word of

Wisdom, I am confident that the promise attached to that revelation will apply also to those who refrain from these evil and vicious destroyers. I repeat, therefore, these marvelous words of the Lord:

“And all saints who remember to keep and do these sayings, walking in obedience to the commandments, shall receive health in their navel and marrow to their bones;

“And shall find wisdom and great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures;

“And shall run and not be weary, and shall walk and not faint.

“And I, the Lord, give unto them a promise, that the destroying angel shall

pass by them, as the children of Israel, and not slay them” (D&C 89:18–21).

Let no member of this church, be he man or boy, girl or woman, fall prey to this frightful scourge. Some things are right; some are wrong. You know this as well as do I. God grant you the strength to stand free from this enslavement and from the personal holocaust of destruction which inevitably follows.

God bless you to this end I humbly pray, as one who loves you, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang “The Pilgrim’s Chorus.”

Elder Spencer J. Condie offered the benediction.

SECOND DAY MORNING SESSION

The fourth session of the 159th Semiannual General Conference commenced at 10:00 A.M. on Sunday, October 1, 1989. President Ezra Taft Benson presided, and President Thomas S. Monson, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music, with Jerold Ottley conducting and Robert Cundick at the organ.

Before the session, the choir sang “Jehovah, Lord of Heaven and Earth” without announcement.

President Monson opened the meeting with the following remarks:

President Thomas S. Monson

We welcome you this Sabbath morning from the Tabernacle in Salt Lake City, Utah, to the fourth general session of the 159th Semiannual Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Our beloved prophet, President Ezra Taft Benson, who presides at this and all sessions of the conference, has

asked that I, Brother Monson, conduct this meeting.

We acknowledge the large audience assembled in the Tabernacle and in the overflow gathering in the nearby Assembly Hall, where Elders Marvin J. Ashton, Loren C. Dunn, and Merlin R. Lybbert are seated on the stand. We extend our greetings to those of you participating by radio, television, cable, or satellite transmission. We are grateful to the owners and operators of the stations that are broadcasting this conference.

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.

The Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Brother Jerold D. Ottley, with Brother Robert Cundick at the organ, opened these services by singing “Jehovah, Lord of Heaven and Earth.” The choir will now sing “Lord, I Would Follow Thee,” following which Elder Derek A. Cuthbert of the Seventy will offer the invocation.