

My beloved Brethren, my dear wife and I are still prepared to go wherever you want to send us and to do whatever you ask of us. We pray only that we might be instruments in the hands of the Lord to assist you in your awesome assignment to build the kingdom of God, to sanctify his people, and to prepare the way for Christ to come in his glory, when every knee will bow and every tongue confess that he is the Savior of the world, which I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. (See Conference Report, Apr. 1978, p. 109; or *Ensign*, May 1978, p. 72.)

The chorus sang "Rejoice, the Lord Is King!"

President Hinckley

Elder Robert L. Backman of the Seventy has just addressed us, and the chorus has sung "Rejoice, the Lord Is King!"

Elder L. Tom Perry of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will now speak to us.

Elder L. Tom Perry

Thank you, Elder Backman, for those stirring remarks. How I've enjoyed these last seven years, being closely associated with you.

Brigham Young once counseled us to use the scriptures as follows:

"Do you read the Scriptures, my brethren and sisters, as though you were writing them a thousand, two thousand, or five thousand years ago? Do you read them as though you stood in the place of the men who wrote them? If you do not feel thus, it is your privilege to do so, that you may be as familiar with the spirit and meaning of the written word of God as you are with your daily walk and conversation" (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1941], p. 128).

Moroni's voice of warning

The Book of Mormon has many special accounts with lessons which can be applied to all ages. It is a book of great passion and feeling. Let us take Brigham Young's advice and imagine we are standing in the place where Moroni, the last of the great Nephite prophets, stood. The assignment his

father gave to him to complete the record, which was entrusted to his care, was very difficult. He must have been in a state of shock as he described the total destruction of his people.

He must have felt compelled to describe how his people had been hunted by the Lamanites until they were all destroyed. In his feeling of loneliness, he reports that his father was among those who were killed. We sense that the only thing Moroni is living for is to complete the record, as he writes, "Therefore I will write and hide up the records in the earth; and whither I go it mattereth not" (Mormon 8:4).

All he has is the faith that the Lord will preserve him long enough to complete the record and that someday it will be found by one chosen of the Lord. He realizes that the record will be a voice of warning to future generations of what occurs when nations like his own turn away from the teachings of the Lord. It is from the depths of his heart that Moroni cries out to those who will eventually receive the record. He wants to spare those who read his account the heartache and misery which come from disobedience.

Warning to Church members

He writes first to the members of the Church and then to those who have not embraced the gospel of Jesus Christ. Moroni's last words to the members of the Church are written as a voice of warning. He writes as one who sees the history of his people repeating itself in the future. From the Book of Mormon we read:

"Behold, the Lord hath shown unto me great and marvelous things concerning that which must shortly come, at that day when these things shall come forth among you.

"Behold, I speak unto you as if ye were present, and yet ye are not. But behold, Jesus Christ hath shown you unto me, and I know your doing.

"And I know that ye do walk in the pride of your hearts; and there are none save a few only who do not lift themselves up in the pride of their hearts, unto the wearing of very fine apparel, unto envying, and strifes, and malice, and persecutions, and all manner of iniquities; and your churches, yea, even every one, have become polluted because of the pride of your hearts.

"For behold, ye do love money, and your substance, and your fine apparel, and the adorning of your churches, more than ye love the poor and the needy, the sick and the afflicted.

"O ye pollutions, ye hypocrites, ye teachers, who sell yourselves for that which will canker, why have ye polluted the holy church of God? Why are ye ashamed to take upon you the name of Christ? Why do ye not think that greater is the value of an endless happiness than that misery which never dies—because of the praise of the world?" (Mormon 8:34–38).

I guess one of the greatest mysteries of mortality is why mankind fails to learn from history. Why do those who profess to be true followers of Christ so often become victims of the enticements of the world? The evidence is so

strong regarding the blessings which accrue to those who trust in and follow the ways the Lord has prescribed for us.

Successes in Utah

Several recent articles in the news and business press have reported on the success of Utah, the place where we still have the greatest concentration of members of the Church. They emphasize that we are seen as "a repository of old-fashioned values, an American success story" (Peter Steinfelds, "Despite Growth, Mormons Find New Hurdles," *New York Times*, 15 Sept. 1991, sec. 1, p. 1).

One article reported: "If religion, as Karl Marx once wrote, is 'the opium of the people,' in Utah it is the amphetamine. Thanks largely to the influence of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints . . . Utah has become the envy of its neighbors" (Sally B. Donnelly, "Mixing Business and Faith," *Time*, 29 July 1991, p. 22).

From another magazine, *Business Week*, we read: "Utah at its best. Of the 50 states, Utah has the highest literacy rate, the youngest population, the highest percent of high school graduates, the highest percent of persons with college education, the ninth highest percent of college graduates, a state population with the highest average number of years of school completed, the highest birth rate, the lowest death rate, the fourth longest life expectancy, one of the three lowest cancer rates, one of the lowest heart disease rates, the lowest consumption of alcohol, the lowest consumption of tobacco, the shortest average hospital stays, the healthiest population, . . . [and] the best-run state government" (*Business Week*, 16 Dec. 1991, p. 118J).

Notice both what is being said and not being said in these articles. They are honoring collective accomplishments, not individual achievements. It is noteworthy of what the citizens of

Utah have been able to do together. As communities they have become a beacon to the world. As a people they have demonstrated an ability to overcome much of the divisiveness of special interests, uncontrolled individualism, and selfishness.

Many members seek worldly pursuits

How I wish I could feel comfortable with all this special attention we are receiving. In the midst of this favorable publicity, we see so many members seeking worldly pursuits contrary to the words of the Lord's prophets through the ages.

Many of us are more concerned about our fine apparel, the size of our homes, and our cars and their gadgets than we are about the needs of the poor and the needy. We also have seen the threats of legalized abortion, gambling, and pornography, and challenges to public prayer undermining the values that bind us together as a community of Saints.

Stand firm in your convictions

Clearly the members of the Church face tremendous challenges in the latter days. We must not only resist, but mount a counteroffensive against the temptations of the world and its teachings if we are to preserve our uniqueness.

Despite the challenges we face, I plead with each one of you to stand firm in your convictions. There is no way to escape the whirlwinds of the judgments of God that He will unleash on the heads of His children who choose to pursue a course that is against His will. We need to heed Moroni's warning to avoid the fate which destroyed his people.

Warning to unbelievers

Part of what Moroni was feeling should also be translated into a re-

newed desire to do missionary service. Moroni also witnessed the wickedness and destruction which come from unbelief, when men's and women's souls are not anchored to the teachings of the gospel. After warning the believers, he pleads with the unbelievers. Again we read:

"And now, I speak also concerning those who do not believe in Christ.

"Behold, will ye believe in the day of your visitation—behold, when the Lord shall come, yea, even that great day when the earth shall be rolled together as a scroll, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, yea, in that great day when ye shall be brought to stand before the Lamb of God—then will ye say that there is no God?

"Then will ye longer deny the Christ, or can ye behold the Lamb of God? Do ye suppose that ye shall dwell with him under a consciousness of your guilt? Do ye suppose that ye could be happy to dwell with that holy Being, when your souls are racked with a consciousness of guilt that ye have ever abused his laws? . . .

"O then ye unbelieving, turn ye unto the Lord; cry mightily unto the Father in the name of Jesus, that perhaps ye may be found spotless, pure, fair, and white, having been cleansed by the blood of the Lamb, at that great and last day" (Mormon 9:1-3, 6).

Who would not want to heed the voice of warning of one who has witnessed such heartache and misery? Is it any wonder that his words are to declare that there is a better, happier, and more fulfilling way to live?

Moroni's voice of hope

Moroni's words are not just a voice of warning but also a voice of hope as he lets us know that every one of God's children is precious to Him. He desires that every soul enjoy immortality and eternal life. Again we read:

"Because of the redemption of man, which came by Jesus Christ, they

are brought back into the presence of the Lord; yea, this is wherein all men are redeemed, because the death of Christ bringeth to pass the resurrection, which bringeth to pass a redemption from an endless sleep, from which sleep all men shall be awakened by the power of God when the trump shall sound; and they shall come forth, both small and great, and all shall stand before his bar, being redeemed and loosed from this eternal band of death, which death is a temporal death.

"And then cometh the judgment of the Holy One upon them; and then cometh the time that he that is filthy shall be filthy still; and he that is righteous shall be righteous still; he that is happy shall be happy still; and he that is unhappy shall be unhappy still" (Mormon 9:13-14).

We are here to declare that the restored gospel of our Lord and Savior is here to bless all of our Father in Heaven's children. We are anxious to share it with you. One of our recent prophets has declared:

"Our objective is to bring the gospel to all the world.

Brethren, this is an ambitious project we have, but as you know, we are but planning to do what the Lord has already seen and which He has charged us with" (Spencer W. Kimball, Regional Representatives' seminar, 5 Apr. 1976, p. 1).

We invite you to come and join with us to find the real fulfillment life has to offer.

Obey and serve to overcome gloom

Today we find ourselves surrounded with so much depression, despair, lack of confidence, and loss of hope. I ask myself, For what purpose is all this gloom? Consider with me for a moment the great blessings which have been promised us in a covenant with the Lord. He has entered into a solemn and binding contract with each of us from the very beginning to give us all that He hath according to our faithfulness. He

has declared, "I, the Lord, am bound when ye do what I say" (D&C 82:10).

By solemn covenant He will perform His part of the agreement. The opportunity to receive these great blessings is ours to control based on our individual performance. What is required of us?

First, we need to be obedient to the laws of the Lord. This is one of the first lessons taught to Adam and Eve: obedience brings faith. It brings forth the blessings of heaven. Disobedience brings forth heartache and despair.

Following the law of obedience comes the requirement to give of ourselves in service to our Father in Heaven's children. Sacrificing what we have to benefit our brothers and sisters is the crowning test of the gospel. One of the purposes of the mortal experience is to see if we will follow the Savior's counsel to "seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33).

Finding the joys of eternity

We live in the most glorious era in the history of mankind. The opportunity to reap the blessings of the Lord has never been greater, as is the opportunity to serve Him and experience the eternal satisfaction which comes from that service.

Let the words of Moroni and the voices of all the prophets fill our hearts and our souls that we may escape the errors of the past caused by disobedience to the eternal laws of God. Let us remember that it is in our power to enjoy the fruits of the gospel, for He has promised us that if we will be obedient to His law and be willing to render unto Him what He requires of us in service and sacrifice, we will find the joys of eternity.

It is my witness to you that God lives, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Eternal God, and I do declare it in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, amen.