

influence of the Spirit, that they will be blessed with feelings of happiness which will permeate their whole souls. And these, my brethren, are blessings that mold and build us and that can never be taken away.

I leave you with my testimony of the truthfulness of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and my testimony of the blessings which accompany unself-

ish service and hard work that is done in his holy name, and I say it in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

We have heard from Elder John Baird Dickson of the Seventy.

President Thomas S. Monson will now speak to us.

President Thomas S. Monson

What a glorious sight is before me tonight! Here in the Tabernacle on Temple Square, in the Assembly Hall, at the BYU Marriott Center, and gathered together in chapels scattered throughout the world is a mighty army of men—even the royal army of the Lord. We have been entrusted with the priesthood. We have been prepared for duty. We have been called to serve.

Samuel's response to the Lord's call

The experience of the boy Samuel, as he responded to the Lord's call, has ever been an inspiration to me, as it has no doubt been to each holder of the priesthood. We remember that the child Samuel ministered unto the Lord before Eli. One evening as the boy slept, the Lord called him by name: "Samuel." And he answered, "Here am I." Thinking that Eli had called him, Samuel ran to him and repeated the declaration, "Here am I." He was advised to return to his sleep.

Three times the voice of the Lord came to him, with the same response. Then the Lord called a fourth time, repeating the boy's name twice: "Samuel, Samuel."

The lad's answer, as before, is a classic example for you and me. He responded:

"Speak; for thy servant heareth.

"And the Lord said to Samuel, Behold, I will do a thing in Israel, at which

both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle" (see 1 Samuel 3:1-11).

Young men, respond as Samuel

Most of you young men will one day receive a call to serve a mission. How I pray that your response will be as was Samuel's: "Here am I. . . . Speak; for thy servant heareth." Then will heavenly help be yours. Every missionary strives to be the missionary his mother thinks he is, the missionary his father hopes he is—even the missionary the Lord knows he can become.

I remember a missionary recommendation for one young man on which the bishop had written: "This candidate is the finest I have ever recommended. He has served as an officer in the deacons, teachers, and priests quorums of which he has been a member. He excelled scholastically and athletically in high school. I know of no finer young man. P.S. I am proud to be his father." President Spencer W. Kimball, then chairman of the Missionary Committee, mused, "I hope his parents will be content with his assigned mission. I know of no opening for him this morning in the celestial kingdom."

The temple in South Africa

Yes, sometimes expectations of those who love us are a bit beyond our capacity. Years ago, before a temple was completed in South Africa, the

Saints planning to visit a temple had to travel the long and costly route to London, England, or later to São Paulo, Brazil. When I visited South Africa, they, with all the strength of their hearts and souls, petitioned me to importune President Kimball to seek the heavenly inspiration to erect a temple in their country. I assured them this was a matter for the Lord and His prophet. They responded, "We have faith in you, Brother Monson. Please help us."

Upon returning to Salt Lake City, I discovered that a proposed temple for South Africa had already been approved and was to be announced immediately. When this occurred, I received a telegram from our members in South Africa. It read, "Thank you, Elder Monson. We knew you could do it!" You know, I believe I never did convince them that though I approved of the proposal, I did not bring it about.

Elder Jensen's decision to serve

Every call to serve is a human drama in the life of the recipient. I am certain that such has been the case with each of the Brethren who earlier today were sustained as new General Authorities. Let me share with you some marvelous lessons from the life of one of these Brethren, Jay E. Jensen, as recently reported in the *Church News* ("Spiritual Foundation Set Early in Life," 8 Aug. 1992, pp. 6, 14).

Elder Jensen speaks of turning points in his life. His spiritual awakening began when he was a small boy growing up in Mapleton, Utah. His parents held family night long before it became a Church program. He recalled that his father read to him lessons from the Book of Mormon. His mother's deep love for books also had a favorable impact on her son. However, it was when he read for himself Joseph Smith's account of the First Vision that the witness of its truth became a reality.

Upon graduation from high school, young Jay and his sweetheart, Lona, decided to get married and not wait for a call to serve a mission. "It nearly broke my father's heart," Elder Jensen related. "Mother told me that Dad just wept."

Two weeks later, and before wedding plans were finalized, Jay and Lona attended a sacrament meeting where a returned missionary reported his mission. The Spirit touched their hearts. They concluded to postpone marriage. Jay arose, went to the bishop's office, and reported for missionary service. The rest is history. Jay served in the Spanish-American Mission.

Lona moved to California for employment and served a stake mission. Upon the completion of Jay's mission, they were married in the Manti Temple. Elder Jensen's father lived long enough to see his son serve an honorable mission and marry in the temple. Sister Jensen has often said that sending her husband-to-be on a mission was the hardest thing she ever did, but that it was the most rewarding. "I would never do it differently. We could never have been as happy otherwise."

Today, Jay and Lona serve in Guatemala. He is a member of the Central America Area Presidency.

Reflecting on these turning points in the lives of Jay and Lona Jensen, we recall the observation, "The door of history turns on small hinges," and so do people's lives.

Temple work for Confederate soldiers

Fathers, grandfathers, are we reading to our sons and grandsons the word of the Lord? Returned missionaries, do your messages and your lives inspire others to stand up and serve? Brethren, are we sufficiently in tune with the Spirit that when the Lord calls, we can hear, as did Samuel, and declare, "Here am I"? Do we have the fortitude

and the faith, whatever our callings, to serve with unflinching courage and unshakable resolve? When we do, the Lord can work His mighty miracles through us.

One such miracle is taking place in the southern part of the United States in the area once referred to as the Confederacy. It pertains to family history and temple work. During the period between 1860 and 1865, this region literally became saturated with the blood of America's youth as soldiers by the hundreds of thousands perished. Even today, the earth here and there reveals a timeworn uniform button, a belt buckle, a spent bullet. But what of the men who fell while in the flower of their youth? Many had never married. Who was to do their temple work? Were they forever to be denied the blessings of eternal ordinances?

William D. Taylor, a Canadian with no ties to either side of the conflict that raged so long ago, found himself, together with wife and family, living in the old South and suddenly filled with a compelling interest in those who died while so young in years. An urgency came upon Brother Taylor to do something personally, a call to silent service.

In a letter to me dated July 20, 1992, Brother Taylor wrote: "It's been approximately one year since I last gave you an update on the extraction work that is being done for the Confederate soldiers (approximately four years since this project was started). The extraction has been progressing at a steady pace. As of this writing, we have sent for temple work just over 101,000 names. I am thankful for being allowed to do this work. It brings me joy unparalleled to anything I have ever known. It's hard to put my feelings into words. I exult when another regiment is prepared and ready to be sent to the temple, and my soul is pained when the information in the regimental history is insufficient for a soldier's work to be submitted."

A poet's words expressed Brother Taylor's feelings:

There I see them marching down the
lane,
One in blue and one in gray,
Now arm and arm again,
And there I see them rising toward
the Son,
Proud Rebels and proud Yankees,
Silent journey just begun.
[David Matthews, "Road to Gettys-
burg"]

Brethren, let me share with you a description of priesthood service pertaining to this work, as described by a priesthood leader. He wrote:

"On Saturday afternoon our Aaronic Priesthood young men and their leaders assembled at the temple to perform the baptismal work for the fallen soldiers. What a marvelous sight it was to see these young Aaronic Priesthood brethren being baptized by their own priesthood leaders. In almost every case, when the young brother had finished his fourteen or fifteen names, he would turn and embrace his leader and shed a few tears of joy. What an example of true priesthood love and service! I had the experience of being a witness at the font and gained firsthand knowledge of this and, in a few cases, the undeniable witness of the Spirit that those young soldiers who had died had accepted the baptisms that were being performed in their behalf by our Aaronic Priesthood brethren.

"We wrote down the name of each soldier who was baptized that glorious day so that the young men could have a brief history of the soldiers for whom they were baptized. I have no doubt that this experience will have a lifelong effect for good for all those who participated."

The statement of President Joseph F. Smith, in speaking of the redemption of the dead, provides a touching explanation of the joy felt by all who

participate in this and other similar endeavors:

"Through our efforts in their behalf their chains of bondage will fall from them, and the darkness surrounding them will clear away, that light may shine upon them and they shall hear in the spirit world of the work that has been done for them by their children here, and will rejoice with you in your performance of these duties."¹

Brother William Taylor, I salute you for your leadership in bringing eternal blessings to your "troops," who must indeed call your name blessed.

Service to Hurricane Andrew victims

When one holds the priesthood of God, he never knows when his moment of service may come. The challenge is to be ready to serve. On August 24, Hurricane Andrew slammed into the Florida coast south of Miami. Wind gusts exceeded two hundred miles per hour. It became the most costly disaster in United States history. Eighty-seven thousand homes were destroyed, leaving 150,000 homeless. Damages are estimated at 30 billion dollars. One hundred seventy-eight member homes were damaged, with forty-six of them destroyed.

A spearhead unit was deployed from the Church welfare facility in Atlanta before the storm hit, and it arrived at its appointed location just as the winds abated. The truck carried food, water, bedding, tools, and medical supplies—the first relief shipment to arrive in the disaster area.

Local priesthood and Relief Society leaders organized rapidly to assess injuries and damage and to assist in the cleanup effort. Three large waves of member volunteers, numbering over five thousand, labored shoulder to shoulder with disaster-stricken residents, helping to repair three thousand homes, a Jewish synagogue, a Pentecostal church, and two schools. Forty-

six missionaries from the Florida Fort Lauderdale Mission worked full time for more than two weeks unloading supply trucks, serving as interpreters, providing security and traffic control, and assisting with repairs.

Time will permit but a glance at several heartwarming accounts pertaining to this tremendous example of the priesthood in action.

1. One morning a call was received at the Kendall chapel. A lady explained that she understood the Church had a group of people who were going out to patch roofs and windows to keep the rains out. She was told that this was true, and she left her address. She was told that volunteers would be out soon to do whatever they could to assist. She then asked if she had to come and pay first and also whom should she pay. She was told that there would be no charge, at which she began to cry uncontrollably, finally managing to say, "I can only thank God for you people, for I have no means of paying anything."

2. Zack, a young man age nineteen who is now in the Missionary Training Center, accompanied a truckload of food, clothing, and other provisions sent by our members in central Georgia to help the victims of the hurricane. As Zack was leaving, his mother gave him some Cabbage Patch and other treasured dolls from her prized collection. Zack took particular pleasure in distributing those dolls to solemn-eyed little girls whose other toys were all destroyed.

3. A brother from Saint Anthony, Idaho, and other leaders in that area saw the terrible devastation suffered by the people of south Florida as the account appeared on television. They felt a compelling need to do something to help those who had been stricken. A decision was soon made to send an eighteen-wheeler filled with Idaho potatoes to Florida. The truck was loaded with boxes and sacks of potatoes and moved swiftly across the country to the site of the disaster.

The potatoes arrived in excellent condition. The missionaries unloaded the potatoes and soon divided them. It was amazing how welcome the potatoes were to the people of south Florida. They were so tired of eating fast foods that the potatoes were described as tasting almost like a dessert. In less than three days all of the potatoes were distributed to members and nonmembers alike. Hearts were tender and stomachs warmed by the kindness of those marvelous members in Idaho who had sent the potatoes.

4. Typical of the feelings experienced by those who put everything aside in their personal lives and rushed to the aid of their brothers and sisters are those expressed by a couple from Huntsville, Alabama. They wrote:

"[Our] second day [at the scene of the hurricane's devastation] was Sunday, but it seemed as crucial that we hurry with the work as it was for those who left the Salt Lake Valley on Sunday to rescue the handcart pioneers in dire straits. On the football and athletic fields of a high school that was our campground, each stake group held its own sacrament [and] testimony meeting before leaving for another day of work. We sang songs we knew. The sacrament was blessed and passed by priesthood holders in work clothes. We partook of the bread from frying pans and the water from picnic cups. The Spirit was still there. Due to a one-hour time limit for the meeting, not all who wanted could bear their [testimonies]. The closing song, 'I Am a Child of God,' reminded us we needed to push on to help His children."

5. One Spanish-speaking brother and his wife approached Elder Alexander Morrison, Area President for the North America Southeast Area, and said, "I have lost my life's savings. I have lost my home, my farm; all my avocados are destroyed. I have nothing." And then he smiled sweetly and

said, "But I have everything. I have the gospel of Jesus Christ."

God bless Elder Morrison, his counselors, and all fellow priesthood leaders; missionaries, both elders and sisters; and all the many thousands who have served so magnificently and unstintingly. Truly these responded as did Samuel: "Here am I."

The cleanup following Hurricane Andrew continues, as does the work of repair pertaining to the devastation wrought by Hurricane Iniki, which struck the island of Kauai in the Hawaiian Islands.

The priesthood in action

In these cataclysmic events and in the quiet challenges of individual lives, the priesthood is truly in action. Let us never despair, for this is the work of the Lord in which we are engaged. It has been said, "The Lord shapes the back to bear the burden placed upon it." The Master's counsel to all of us assembled tonight, to whom priesthood authority has been given and of whom priesthood service is expected, brings peace to the heart and comfort to the soul:

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

"Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

"For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30).

To this divine truth I testify as I leave my witness with you that this work is true, that the priesthood does combine and present to our Heavenly Father a mighty army of righteousness, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTE

1. *Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1939), pp. 469-70.