

SUNDAY MORNING SESSION

The fourth general session of the 165th Semiannual General Conference commenced at 10:00 A.M. on Sunday, October 1, 1995. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music, with Donald Ripplinger conducting and Clay Christiansen at the organ.

To begin the session, the choir sang "Lo, the Mighty God Appearing!" President Hinckley then made the following remarks.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

We welcome you this beautiful Sabbath morning from the Tabernacle in Salt Lake City, Utah, to the fourth general session of the 165th semiannual conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We acknowledge the large audience assembled in the Tabernacle; in the overflow gathering in the nearby Assembly Hall, where Elders Henry B. Eyring, Graham W. Doxey, and Sam K. Shimabukuro are seated on the stand; and in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building, where Elders F. Enzo Busche and Lowell D. Wood are in attendance.

We extend our greetings to those of you who are participating by radio, television, cable, or satellite transmission.

We are grateful to the owners and operators of these various facilities, who are broadcasting this conference.

We acknowledge the presence this morning of government, education, and civic leaders, and members of the Church who have assembled to worship together.

The Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Brother Donald Ripplinger, with Brother Clay Christiansen at the organ, opened these services by singing "Lo, the Mighty God Appearing!" We express appreciation to Brother Ripplinger, who for twenty years has served as associate director and who will retire in January 1996.

The choir will now sing "Lean on My Ample Arm," following which Elder Hugh W. Pinnock of the Seventy will offer the invocation.

The choir sang "Lean on My Ample Arm."

Elder Hugh W. Pinnock offered the invocation.

President Hinckley

We shall now be pleased to hear from President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency.

President Thomas S. Monson

The heavenly virtue of patience

Recently I met an old friend I had not seen for some time. He greeted me with the salutation, "How is the world treating you?" I don't recall the specifics of my reply, but his provocative question caused me to reflect on my many blessings and my gratitude for life itself and the privilege and opportunity to serve.

At times the response to this same question brings an unanticipated answer. Some years ago I attended a stake conference in Texas. I was met at the airport by the stake president, and while we were driving to the stake center I said, "President, how is everything going for you?"

He responded, "I wish you had asked me that question a week earlier, for this week has been rather eventful. On Friday

I was terminated from my employment, this morning my wife came down with bronchitis, and this afternoon the family dog was struck and killed by a passing car. Other than these things, I guess everything is all right."

Life is full of difficulties, some minor and others of a more serious nature. There seems to be an unending supply of challenges for one and all. Our problem is that we often expect instantaneous solutions to such challenges, forgetting that frequently the heavenly virtue of patience is required.

The counsel heard in our youth is still applicable today and should be heeded. "Hold your horses," "Keep your shirt on," "Slow down," "Don't be in such a hurry," "Follow the rules," "Be careful" are more than trite expressions. They describe sincere counsel and speak the wisdom of experience.

The mindless and reckless speeding of a youth-filled car down a winding and hazardous canyon road can bring a sudden loss of control, the careening of the car with its precious cargo over the precipice, and the downward plunge that oftentimes brings permanent incapacity, perhaps premature death, and grieving hearts of loved ones. The glee-filled moment can turn in an instant to a lifetime of regret.

O precious youth, please give life a chance. Apply the virtue of patience.

Patience in adversity

In sickness, with its attendant pain, patience is required. If the only perfect man who ever lived—even Jesus of Nazareth—was called upon to endure great suffering, how can we, who are less than perfect, expect to be free of all such challenges?

Who can count the vast throngs of the lonely, the aged, the helpless—those who feel abandoned by the caravan of life as it moves relentlessly onward and then disappears beyond the sight of

those who ponder, who wonder, and who sometimes question as they are left alone with their thoughts. Patience can be a helpful companion during such stressful times.

Occasionally I visit nursing homes, where long-suffering is found. While attending Sunday services at one facility, I noticed a young girl who was to play her violin for the comfort of those assembled. She told me she was nervous and hoped she could do her best. As she played, one called out, "Oh, you are so pretty, and you play so beautifully." The strains of the moving bow across the taut strings and the elegant movement of the young girl's fingers seemed inspired by the impromptu comment. She played magnificently.

Afterward I congratulated her and her gifted accompanist. They responded, "We came to cheer the frail, the sick, and the elderly. Our fears vanished as we played. We forgot our own cares and concerns. We may have cheered them, but they truly did inspire us."

Wendy Bennion's patience

Sometimes the tables are reversed. A dear and cherished young friend, Wendy Bennion of Salt Lake City, was such an example. Just the day before yesterday, she quietly departed mortality and returned "to that God who gave [her] life" (Alma 40:11). She had struggled for over five long years in her battle with cancer. Ever cheerful, always reaching out to help others, never losing faith, she had a contagious smile that attracted others to her as a magnet attracts metal shavings. While Wendy was ill and in pain, a friend of hers, feeling downcast with her own situation, visited her. Nancy, Wendy's mother, knowing Wendy was in extreme pain, felt that perhaps the friend had stayed too long. She asked Wendy, after the friend had left, why she had allowed her to stay so long when she herself was in so much pain. Wendy's re-

sponse: "What I was doing for my friend was a lot more important than the pain I was having. If I can help her, then the pain is worth it."

The Savior's patience

Wendy's attitude was reminiscent of Him who bore the sorrows of the world, who patiently suffered excruciating pain and disappointment, but who, with silent step of His sandaled feet, passed by a man who was blind from birth, restoring his sight. He approached the grieving widow of Nain and raised her son from the dead. He trudged up Calvary's steep slope, carrying His own cruel cross, undistracted by the constant jeers and taunting that accompanied His every step. For He had an appointment with divine destiny. In a very real way He visits us, each one, with His teachings. He brings cheer and inspires goodness. He gave His precious life that the grave would be deprived of its victory, that death would lose its sting, that life eternal would be our gift.

Taken from the cross, buried in a borrowed tomb, this man of sorrows, acquainted with grief, arose on the morning of the third day. His resurrection was discovered by Mary and the other Mary when they approached the tomb. The great stone blocking the entrance had been rolled away. Came the query of two angels who stood by in shining garments: "Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen."¹

Paul declared to the Hebrews:

"Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us."²

Job's patience

Perhaps there has never occurred such a demonstration of patience as that exemplified by Job, who was described

in the Holy Bible as being perfect and upright and one who feared God and eschewed evil.³ He was blessed with great wealth and riches in abundance. Satan obtained leave from the Lord to try to tempt Job. How great was Job's misery, how terrible his loss, how tortured his life. Urged by his wife to curse God and die, his reply bespoke his faith: "I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God."⁴ What faith, what courage, what trust. Job lost possessions—all of them. Job lost his health—all of it. Job honored the trust given him. Job personified patience.

Joseph Smith's patience

Another who portrayed the virtue of patience was the Prophet Joseph Smith. After his supernal experience in the grove called Sacred, where the Father and the Son appeared to him, he was called upon to wait. At length, after Joseph suffered through over three years of derision for his beliefs, the angel Moroni appeared to him. And then more waiting and patience were required. Let us remember the counsel found in Isaiah: "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."⁵

Stop, look, and listen

Today in our hurried and hectic lives, we could well go back to an earlier time for the lesson taught us regarding crossing dangerous streets. "Stop, look, and listen" were the watchwords. Could we not apply them now? Stop from a reckless road to ruin. Look upward for heavenly help. Listen for His invitation: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."⁶

He will teach us the truth of the beautiful verse:

Life is real! Life is earnest!
And the grave is not its goal;
Dust thou art, to dust returnest,
Was not spoken of the soul.⁷

We will learn that each of us is precious to our Elder Brother, even the Lord Jesus Christ. He truly loves us.

His life is the flawless example of one afflicted with sorrows and disappointments, who nonetheless provided the example of forgetting self and serving others. The remembered verse of childhood echoes afresh:

Yes, Jesus loves me!
Yes, Jesus loves me!
Yes, Jesus loves me!
The Bible tells me so!⁸

And so does the Book of Mormon, and so does the Doctrine and Covenants, and so does the Pearl of Great Price. Let the scriptures be your guide, and you will never find yourself traveling the road to nowhere.

Angels in disguise

Today some are out of work, out of money, out of self-confidence. Hunger haunts their lives, and discouragement dogs their paths. But help is here—even food for the hungry, clothing for the naked, and shelter for the homeless.

Thousands of tons move outward from our Church storehouses weekly—even food, clothing, medical equipment and supplies to the far corners of the earth and to empty cupboards and needy people closer to home.

I witness the motivation that prompts busy and talented dentists and doctors on a regular basis to leave their practices and donate their skills to those who need such help. They travel to faraway places to repair cleft palates, correct malformed bones, and restore crippled bodies—all

for the love of God's children. The afflicted who have patiently waited for corrective help are blessed by these "angels in disguise."

Promises made in eastern Germany

In the words of a well-known song, I wish you could "come fly with me" to eastern Germany, where I visited last month. As we traveled along the autobahns, I reflected on a time twenty-seven years before when I saw on the same autobahns just trucks carrying armed soldiers and policemen. Barking dogs everywhere strained on their leashes, and informers walked the streets. Back then, the flame of freedom had flickered and burned low. A wall of shame sprang up, and a curtain of iron came down. Hope was all but snuffed out. Life, precious life, continued on in faith, nothing wavering. Patient waiting was required. An abiding trust in God marked the life of each Latter-day Saint.

When I made my initial visit beyond the wall, it was a time of fear on the part of our members as they struggled in the performance of their duties. I found the dullness of despair on the faces of many passersby but a bright and beautiful expression of love emanating from our members. In Görlitz the building in which we met was shell-pocked from the war, but the interior reflected the tender care of our leaders in bringing brightness and cleanliness to an otherwise shabby and grimy structure. The Church had survived both the war and the Cold War which followed. The singing of the Saints brightened every soul. They sang the old Sunday School favorite:

If the way be full of trial; Weary not!
If it's one of sore denial, Weary not!
If it now be one of weeping,
There will come a joyous greeting,
When the harvest we are reaping—
Weary not!
Do not weary by the way,

Whatever be thy lot;
There awaits a brighter day
To all, to all who weary not!⁹

I was touched by their sincerity. I was humbled by their poverty. They had so little. My heart filled with sorrow because they had no patriarch. They had no wards or stakes—just branches. They could not receive temple blessings—neither endowment nor sealing. No official visitor had come from Church headquarters in a long time. The members were forbidden to leave the country. Yet they trusted in the Lord with all their hearts, and they leaned not to their own understanding. In all their ways they acknowledged Him, and He directed their paths.¹⁰ I stood at the pulpit, and with tear-filled eyes and a voice choked with emotion I made a promise to the people: “If you will remain true and faithful to the commandments of God, every blessing any member of the Church enjoys in any other country will be yours.”

That night as I realized what I had promised, I dropped to my knees and prayed, “Heavenly Father, I’m on Thy errand; this is Thy church. I have spoken words that came not from me, but from Thee and Thy Son. Wilt Thou, therefore, fulfill the promise in the lives of this noble people?” There coursed through my mind the words from the psalm: “Be still, and know that I am God.”¹¹ The heavenly virtue of patience was required.

Patience brings fulfillment of promises

Little by little the promise was fulfilled. First, patriarchs were ordained, then lesson manuals produced. Wards were formed and stakes created. Chapels and stake centers were begun, completed, and dedicated. Then, miracle of miracles, a holy temple of God was permitted, designed, constructed, and dedicated. Finally, after an absence of fifty years, approval was granted for full-time missionaries to enter the nation and for

local youth to serve elsewhere in the world. Then, like the wall of Jericho, the Berlin Wall crumbled, and freedom, with its attendant responsibilities, returned.

All of the parts of the precious promise of twenty-seven years earlier were fulfilled, save one. Tiny Görlitz, where the promise had been given, still had no chapel of its own. Now even that dream became a reality. The building was approved and completed. Dedication day dawned. Just a month ago Sister Monson and I, along with Elder and Sister Dieter Uchtdorf, held a meeting of dedication in Görlitz. The same songs were sung as were rendered twenty-seven years earlier. The members knew the significance of the occasion, marking the total fulfillment of the promise. They wept as they sang. The song of the righteous was indeed a prayer unto the Lord and had been answered with a blessing upon their heads.¹²

At the conclusion of the meeting we were reluctant to leave. As we did so, seen were the waving hands of all, heard were the words, “*Auf Wiedersehen, auf Wiedersehen*”; God be with you till we meet again.”

Patience, that heavenly virtue, had brought to humble Saints its heaven-sent reward. The words of Rudyard Kipling’s “Recessional” seemed so fitting:

The tumult and the shouting dies;
The captains and the kings depart.
Still stands thine ancient sacrifice,
An humble and a contrite heart.
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,
Lest we forget, lest we forget.¹³

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Luke 24:5–6.
2. Hebrews 12:1.
3. See Job 1:1.
4. Job 19:25–26.
5. Isaiah 55:8–9.
6. Matthew 11:28.

7. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, "A Psalm of Life," lines 5–8.
8. "Jesus Loves Me!" Anna B. Warner, in *Alexander's Gospel Songs*, comp. Charles M. Alexander (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1908), p. 139.
9. "If the Way Be Full of Trial, Weary Not," *Deseret Sunday School Songs* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Sunday School Union, 1909), no. 158.
10. See Proverbs 3:5–6.
11. Psalm 46:10.
12. See Doctrine and Covenants 25:12.
13. "God of Our Fathers, Known of Old," *Hymns*, no. 80.

The choir sang "What Was Witnessed in the Heavens?"

President Hinckley

President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, has just spoken to us, followed by the choir singing "What Was Witnessed in the Heavens?"

President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, will now address us.

President James E. Faust

Priesthood blessings

My beloved brothers and sisters and friends, I wish to affirm my love and appreciation to you for your faithfulness and devotion. I earnestly entreat your faith and prayers as I address a most important and holy subject: the divine, magnifying, and strengthening power that can come to us through priesthood blessings.

A priesthood blessing is sacred. It can be a holy and inspired statement of our wants and needs. If we are in tune spiritually, we can receive a confirming witness of the truth of the promised blessings. Priesthood blessings can help us in the small and great decisions of our lives. If, through our priesthood blessings, we could perceive only a small part of the person God intends us to be, we would lose our fear and never doubt again.

Blessings strengthen and magnify us

As a small boy I remember being intrigued by my grandmother's magnifying glass, which she used in her old age to read and do needlework. When the glass was in focus, everything I looked at was greatly magnified. But I was most in-

trigued by what happened when the lens concentrated the sunlight on an object. When it passed through the magnifying glass, the sunlight's power was absolutely amazing.

This great magnifying effect can be compared to a profound blessing that came to Jacob, who wrestled most of the night for a blessing:

"And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled [with a messenger¹ from God] until the breaking of the day. . . .

"And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.

"And he said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob.

"And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed."²

Jacob received his blessing in this marvelous experience, and as heirs of Abraham through the blood of Israel we also receive our blessings of divine favor. As the Lord said in the Doctrine and Covenants:

"For ye are lawful heirs, according to the flesh, . . .

"Therefore your life and the priesthood have remained, and must needs re-