

President Gordon B. Hinckley

A personal consecration

My brethren and sisters, thank you for your sustaining hands and hearts and for your expressions of confidence and love. My faith in this great work has been strengthened by what I have seen and heard as I have traveled among you during the past six months.

I have a desire to get out with the Latter-day Saints across the world, to look into your faces, to shake your hands wherever possible, to share with you in a more personal and intimate way my feelings concerning this sacred work, and to feel of your spirit and your love of the Lord and His mighty cause. I wish I had some way to thank you individually for the kindness you have shown us in so many ways. I know that your respect, confidence, and love are to be earned through the service that we give. I have only one desire, and that is that while the Lord gives me strength I may serve Him faithfully and well through service to His sons and daughters, you my brethren and sisters. To that end I consecrate my strength, my time, and whatever talent I may possess.

Expressions of love and faith

I love this church. I love the Prophet Joseph, to whom God our Eternal Father and the Risen Lord spoke with that same intimacy with which I speak with you today. I feel love for all of those who accepted his testimony in those early and difficult years. Their lives in large measure constitute the early history of this work. It is a wonderful thing to have strong and deep roots. From them has grown the great worldwide movement we know as The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

I thank the Lord that He planted in my heart while I was yet a boy a love for the Prophet Joseph Smith, a love for the Book of Mormon, a love for those great

men and women who endured so much in establishing a foundation on which to build this cause and kingdom. I love the priesthood which is among us, this authority given to men to speak in the name of God. I am grateful for its power and authority, which reach even beyond the veil of death. I love the Saints wherever they walk in faith and faithfulness. I am thankful for the strength of your testimonies and for the goodness of your lives. I love the missionaries who are out on the front line of the world bearing testimony of the restoration of the gospel. I pray for them that they may be protected and that they may be led to those who will receive their message.

I love the youth of this church, so very many of them who are eager in their ways, who are searching for truth, who pray and try to do the right thing. I feel great love and respect for the women of the Relief Society, for the young women in their organization, for the Primary children, who are beautiful wherever they are regardless of the color of their skin or the circumstances in which they live.

I feel a great sense of gratitude for our bishops and those who serve with them, for our presidents of stakes and their associates, for the newly called Area Authorities, and for my brethren of the General Authorities.

Expansion of the Church

I have a strong, uplifting sense of optimism concerning this work. I have lived long enough now to have seen the miracle of its growth. Mine has been the favored lot of assisting in its establishment across much of the world. Everywhere it is growing stronger. Everywhere it is touching an increasing number of lives for good.

Our statisticians tell me that if the present trend continues, then sometime in February of 1996, just a few months

from now, there will be more members of the Church outside the United States than in the United States.

The crossover of that line is a wonderfully significant thing. It represents the fruit of a tremendous outreach. The God of Heaven, whose servants we are, never intended that this should be a narrow, parochial work. John the Revelator "saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people" (Revelation 14:6). That angel has come. His name is Moroni. His is a voice speaking from the dust, bringing another witness of the living reality of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We have not as yet carried the gospel to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. But we have made great strides. We have gone wherever we are permitted to go. God is at the helm, and doors will be opened by His power according to His divine will. Of that I am confident. Of that I am certain.

I cannot understand those of small vision, who regard this work as limited and provincial. They have no expanding view of it. As certainly as there is an Almighty Father in Heaven, as surely as there is His Son, our Divine Redeemer, so certainly is this work destined to reach out to people everywhere.

Joshua and Caleb bring a good report

The story of Caleb and Joshua and the other spies of Israel has always intrigued me. Moses led the children of Israel into the wilderness. In the second year of their wandering, he chose a representative from each of the twelve tribes to search the land of Canaan and bring back a report concerning its resources and its people. Caleb represented the tribe of Judah, Joshua the tribe of Ephraim. The twelve of them went into the land of Canaan. They found it to be fruitful. They were gone forty days. They brought back

with them some of "the firstripe grapes" as evidence of the productivity of the land (Numbers 13:20).

They came before Moses and Aaron and all the congregation of the children of Israel, and they said concerning the land of Canaan, "Surely it floweth with milk and honey; and this is the fruit of it" (v. 27).

But ten of the spies were victims of their own doubts and fears. They gave a negative report of the numbers and stature of the Canaanites. They concluded that "they are stronger than we" (v. 31). They compared themselves as grasshoppers to the giants they had seen in the land. They were the victims of their own timidity.

Then Joshua and Caleb stood before the people and said:

"The land, which we passed through to search it, is an exceeding good land.

"If the Lord delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it us; a land which floweth with milk and honey.

"Only rebel not ye against the Lord, neither fear ye the people of the land; for they are bread for us: their defence is departed from them, and the Lord is with us: fear them not" (Numbers 14:7-9).

But the people were more willing to believe the ten doubters than to believe Caleb and Joshua.

Then it was that the Lord declared that the children of Israel should wander in the wilderness forty years until the generation of those who had walked with doubt and fear should pass away. The scripture records that "those men that did bring up the evil report upon the land, died by the plague before the Lord.

"But Joshua . . . and Caleb . . . , which were of the men that went to search the land, lived still" (vv. 37-38). They were the only ones of that group who survived through those four decades of wandering and who had the privilege of entering the promised land concerning which they had reported in a positive manner.

Gospel is good news, not doom and gloom

We see some around us who are indifferent concerning the future of this work, who are apathetic, who speak of limitations, who express fears, who spend their time digging out and writing about what they regard to be weaknesses which really are of no consequence. With doubt concerning its past, they have no vision concerning its future.

Well was it said of old, "Where there is no vision, the people perish" (Proverbs 29:18). There is no place in this work for those who believe only in the gospel of doom and gloom. The gospel is good news. It is a message of triumph. It is a cause to be embraced with enthusiasm.

The Lord never said that there would not be troubles. Our people have known afflictions of every sort as those who have opposed this work have come upon them. But faith has shown through all their sorrows. This work has consistently moved forward and has never taken a backward step since its inception. I think of the boy Joseph persecuted and ridiculed by those his senior. But the pain of the wounds of that persecution was tempered by the declaration of Moroni, who told him that God had a work for him to do and that his name "should be had for good and evil among all nations, kindreds, and tongues, or that it should be both good and evil spoken of among all people" (Joseph Smith—History 1:33).

He and his brother Hyrum were murdered June 27, 1844. Their enemies thought that this would end the cause for which they had given their lives. Little did they realize that the blood of the martyrs would give nurture to the young roots of the Church.

Pioneers' faith rose above doubts

I stood the other day on the old docks of Liverpool, England. There was practically no activity the Friday morning

when we were there. But once this was a veritable beehive. During the 1800s, tens of thousands of our people walked over the same stone paving on which we walked. They came from across the British Isles and from the lands of Europe, converts to the Church. They came with testimony on their lips and faith in their hearts. Was it difficult to leave their homes and step into the unknown of a new world? Of course it was. But they did it with optimism and enthusiasm. They boarded sailing vessels. They knew the crossing at best was hazardous. They soon found out that for the most part it was miserable. They lived in cramped quarters week after week. They endured storms, disease, sickness. Many died on the way and were buried at sea. It was an arduous and fearsome journey. They had doubts, yes. But their faith rose above those doubts. Their optimism rose above their fears. They had their dream of Zion, and they were on their way to fulfill it.

With a great overpowering spirit of optimism, based on a solid bedrock of faith, they built this Tabernacle in which we meet this day. Through forty years they constructed the temple just to the east of us. Through all their travail was a shining, bright, and wonderful vision concerning the growth of this work.

I can scarcely comprehend the magnitude of Brigham Young's faith in leading thousands of people into the wilderness. He had never seen this country, except as he had seen it in vision. It was an act of boldness almost beyond comprehension. For him their coming here was all part of the grand pattern of the growth and destiny of this work. To those who followed him it was the pursuit of a great dream.

So it was in the latter part of the last century. It seemed the whole world stood against us. But the faithful knew there was sunlight behind those dark clouds and that if they held on the storm would pass.

To those who have drifted away

Today we walk in the sunlight of goodwill. There is a tendency on the part of some to become indifferent. There are those who drift off, seeking the enticements of the world, forsaking the cause of the Lord. I see others who think it is all right to lower their standards, perhaps in small ways. In this very process they lose the cutting edge of enthusiasm for this work. For instance, they think the violation of the Sabbath is a thing of unimportance. They neglect their meetings. They become critical. They engage in backbiting. Before long they have drifted from the Church.

The Prophet Joseph once declared, "Where doubt is, there faith has no power" (*Lectures on Faith* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1985], p. 46).

I invite any who may have so drifted to come back to the strong and solid moorings of the Church. This is the work of the Almighty. Whether we as individuals go forward will depend on us. But the Church will never fail to move forward. I remember an old song rendered in stirring tones by a male chorus: "Start me with ten who are stouthearted men, and I'll soon give you ten thousand more." (Oscar Hammerstein II, "Stouthearted Men").

When the Lord took Moses unto Himself, He then said to Joshua, "Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest" (Joshua 1:9). This is His work. Never forget it. Embrace it with enthusiasm and affection.

Let us not be afraid. Jesus is our leader, our strength, and our king.

A call to move the work forward

This is an age of pessimism. Ours is a mission of faith. To my brethren and sisters everywhere, I call upon you to reaffirm your faith, to move this work

forward across the world. You can make it stronger by the manner in which you live. Let the gospel be your sword and your shield. Each of us is a part of the greatest cause on earth. Its doctrine came of revelation. Its priesthood came of divine bestowal. Another witness has been added to its testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is literally the little stone of Daniel's dream which was "cut out of the mountain without hands [to] roll forth, until it has filled the whole earth" (D&C 65:2).

"Brethren, shall we not go on in so great a cause? Go forward and not backward. Courage, brethren; and on, on to the victory!" (D&C 128:22). So wrote the Prophet Joseph in a psalm of faith.

How glorious is the past of this great cause. It is filled with heroism, courage, boldness, and faith. How wondrous is the present as we move forward to bless the lives of people wherever they will hearken to the message of the servants of the Lord. How magnificent will be the future as the Almighty rolls on His glorious work, touching for good all who will accept and live His gospel and even reaching to the eternal blessing of His sons and daughters of all generations through the selfless work of those whose hearts are filled with love for the Redeemer of the world.

Stay the course; keep the faith

Back in the days of the Great Depression, an old sign dangled by one staple from a piece of rusting barbed wire. The owner of the farm had written:

Burned out by drought,
Drowned out by flud waters,
Et out by jackrabbits,
Sold out by sheriff,
Still here!

So it is with us. There have been makers of threats, naysayers, and criers of doom. They have tried in every con-

ceivable way to injure and destroy this church. But we are still here, stronger and more determined to move it forward. To me it is exciting. It is wonderful. I feel like Ammon of old who said: "Now have we not reason to rejoice? Yea, I say unto you, there never were men that had so great reason to rejoice as we, since the world began; yea, and my joy is carried away, even unto boasting in my God; for he has all power, all wisdom, and all understanding" (Alma 26:35).

I invite every one of you, wherever you may be as members of this church, to stand on your feet and with a song in your heart move forward, living the gospel, loving the Lord, and building the kingdom. Together we shall stay the course and keep the faith, the Almighty being our strength. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Where Love Is."
Elder Carlos H. Amado offered the benediction.

SUNDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The fifth session of the 165th Semi-annual General Conference commenced at 2:00 P.M. on Sunday, October 1, 1995. President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music, with Craig Jessop conducting and John Longhurst at the organ.

President Monson made the following remarks as the meeting began.

President Thomas S. Monson

President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Monson, conduct this session.

We welcome you this lovely afternoon to the fifth and concluding session of the 165th semiannual conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We note that Richard G. Scott, John H. Groberg, and James O. Mason are seated on the stand in the Assembly Hall, and Elders Angel Abrea and Lance B. Wickman are in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building.

We send our greetings and blessings to members of the Church and to many

friends everywhere who are participating in these proceedings by radio, television, cable, or satellite transmission. We also welcome distinguished guests who are with us.

The Tabernacle Choir, directed by Craig Jessop, newly appointed associate director, and accompanied by John Longhurst, will provide the music for this session. The choir will begin this service by singing "For the Strength of the Hills." The invocation will then be offered by Elder Rex D. Pinegar of the Seventy.

The choir sang "For the Strength of the Hills."

Elder Rex D. Pinegar offered the invocation.

President Monson

Thank you, Brother Pinegar.

The choir will now sing "Saints, Behold How Great Jehovah." Elder David B. Haight of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will then be our first speaker.

The choir sang "Saints, Behold How Great Jehovah."
