

Sunday morning session will immediately follow the broadcast.

Daylight saving time begins tomorrow at 2:00 A.M. We encourage you to move your clocks ahead one hour before you go to bed this evening.

As you leave this priesthood meeting tonight, we ask you to obey traffic rules, use caution, and be courteous in driving.

We express our deep appreciation to the Ricks College men's choir for the inspiring music this evening. Following my remarks, they will conclude by singing "Lord, I Would Follow Thee."

The benediction will be offered by Elder Augusto A. Lim of the Seventy, who is president of the Manila Philippines Temple.

Now if I may, I will speak to you for a few minutes.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Urgent need to fellowship converts

I endorse that which has been said this evening. I hope that you have listened well and taken note.

President Monson has spoken on retaining the convert. I endorse what he has said and wish to speak somewhat further on this same subject. I feel very strongly about it.

Each year a substantial number of people become members of the Church, largely through missionary efforts. Last year there were 321,385 converts comprised of men, women, and children. This is a large enough number—and then some—in one single year to constitute 100 new stakes of Zion. One hundred new stakes per year. Think of it! This places upon each of us an urgent and pressing need to fellowship those who join our ranks.

It is not an easy thing to become a member of this Church. In most cases it involves setting aside old habits, leaving old friends and associations, and stepping into a new society which is different and somewhat demanding.

With the ever increasing number of converts, we must make an increasingly substantial effort to assist them as they find their way. Every one of them needs three things: a friend, a responsibility, and nurturing with "the good word of

God" (Moroni 6:4). It is our duty and opportunity to provide these things.

Striving to rekindle a convert's faith

To illustrate, I think I would like to share with you one of my failures. I suppose some people think I have never experienced failure. I have. Let me tell you of one such instance.

Sixty-three years ago, while serving as a missionary in the British Isles, my companion and I taught, and it was my pleasure to baptize, a young man. He was well educated. He was refined. He was studious. I was so proud of this gifted young man who had come into the Church. I felt he had all of the qualifications someday to become a leader among our people.

He was in the course of making the big adjustment from convert to member. For a short period before I was released, mine was the opportunity to be his friend. Then I was released to return home. He was given a small responsibility in the branch in London. He knew nothing of what was expected of him. He made a mistake. The head of the organization where he served was a man I can best describe as being short on love and strong on criticism. In a rather unmerciful way, he went after my friend who had made the simple mistake.

The young man left our rented hall that night smarting and hurt by his superior officer. He said to himself, "If that is the kind of people they are, then I am not going back."

He drifted into inactivity. The years passed. The war came on, and he served in the British forces. His first wife died. After the war he married a woman whose father was a Protestant minister. That did not help his belief.

When I was in England, I tried desperately to find him. His file contained no record of a current address. I came home and finally, after a long search, was able to track him down.

I wrote to him. He responded but with no mention of the gospel.

When next I was in London, I again searched for him. The day I was to leave, I found him. I called him, and we met in the underground station. He threw his arms around me as I did around him. I had very little time before I had to catch my plane, but we talked briefly and with what I think was a true regard for one another. He gave me another embrace before I left. I determined that I would never lose track of him again. Through the years I wrote to him, letters that I hoped would give encouragement and incentive to return to the Church. He wrote in reply without mentioning the Church.

The years passed. I grew older as did he. He retired from his work and moved to Switzerland. On one occasion when I was in Switzerland, I went out of my way to find the village where he lived. We spent the better part of a day together—he, his wife, my wife, and myself. We had a wonderful time, but it was evident that the fire of faith had long since died. I tried every way I knew, but I could not find a way to rekindle it. I continued my correspondence. I sent him books, magazines, recordings of the Tabernacle Choir, and other things, for which he expressed appreciation.

He died a few months ago. His wife wrote me to inform me of this. She said, "You were the best friend he ever had."

Tears coursed my cheeks when I read that letter. I knew I had failed. Perhaps if I had been there to pick him up when he was first knocked down, he might have made a different thing of his life. I think I could have helped him then. I think I could have dressed the wound from which he suffered. I have only one comfort: I tried. I have only one sorrow: I failed.

The challenge now is greater than it has ever been because the number of converts is greater than we have ever before known. A program for retaining and strengthening the convert will soon go out to all the Church. I plead with you, brethren; I ask of you, each of you, to become a part of this great effort. Every convert is precious. Every convert is a son or daughter of God. Every convert is a great and serious responsibility.

Converts should be remembered and nourished

Moroni, long ago, spoke of these people with whom we deal in this day and time. Said he:

"Neither did they receive any unto baptism save they came forth with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, and witnessed unto the church that they truly repented of all their sins.

"And none were received unto baptism save they took upon them the name of Christ, having a determination to serve him to the end" (Moroni 6:2-3).

I believe, my brethren, that these converts have a testimony of the gospel. I believe they have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and know of His divine reality. I believe they have truly repented of their sins and have a determination to serve the Lord.

Moroni continues concerning them after they are baptized: "And after they had been received unto baptism, and

were wrought upon and cleansed by the power of the Holy Ghost, they were numbered among the people of the church of Christ; and their names were taken, that they might be remembered and nourished by the good word of God, to keep them in the right way, to keep them continually watchful unto prayer, relying alone upon the merits of Christ, who was the author and the finisher of their faith" (Moroni 6:4).

In these days as in those days, converts are "numbered among the people of the church . . . [to] be remembered and nourished by the good word of God, to keep them in the right way, to keep them continually watchful unto prayer." Brethren, let us help them as they take their first steps as members.

Everyone can help in this work

This is a work for everyone. It is a work for home teachers and visiting teachers. It is a work for the bishopric, for the priesthood quorums, for the Relief Society, the young men and young women, even the Primary.

I was in a fast and testimony meeting only last Sunday. A 15- or 16-year-old boy stood before the congregation and said that he had decided to be baptized.

Then one by one, boys of the teachers quorum stepped to the microphone to express their love for him, to tell him that he was doing the right thing, and to assure him that they would stand with him and help him. It was a wonderful experience to hear those young men speak words of appreciation and encouragement to their friend. I am satisfied that all of those boys, including the one who was baptized last week, will go on missions.

Nothing of greater importance

In a recent press interview I was asked, "What brings you the greatest sat-

isfaction as you see the work of the Church today?"

My response: "The most satisfying experience I have is to see what this gospel does for people. It gives them a new outlook on life. It gives them a perspective that they have never felt before. It raises their sights to things noble and divine. Something happens to them that is miraculous to behold. They look to Christ and come alive."

Now, brethren, I ask each of you to please help in this undertaking. Your friendly ways are needed. Your sense of responsibility is needed. The Savior of all mankind left the ninety and nine to find the one lost. That one who was lost need not have become lost. But if he is out there somewhere in the shadows, and if it means leaving the ninety and nine, we must do so to find him. (See Luke 15:3-7.)

Now, I think that is all I will say this evening about this, except to say that in my view nothing is of greater importance.

Paul's counsel to young men

I now wish to move to another subject.

I wish to speak to the young men. I have as my text Paul's letters to his young friend and associate Timothy. I have quoted from these letters extensively to missionaries, and now I speak to you as missionaries yet to be.

I picture Paul as the old, battered teacher of truth. He writes to his young friend, in whom he has confidence and for whom he has a great love.

He says, among other things, "We both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe" (1 Timothy 4:10).

Paul was persecuted and driven; he was hated and despised. Eventually his life was taken because he fearlessly bore witness of the Redeemer of all men.

We must be prepared to do likewise.

As Nephi proclaimed, "We talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, we prophesy of Christ, and we write according to our prophecies, that our children may know to what source they may look for a remission of their sins" (2 Nephi 25:26).

Be an example and speak truth

Writes Paul further to Timothy, "Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (1 Timothy 4:12).

Those whom we teach will overlook our youth if in our conversations in charity, in spirit, in faith, and in the purity of our lives, we reflect the Spirit of Christ. We cannot indulge in swearing. We cannot be guilty of profanity; we cannot indulge in impure thoughts, words, and acts and have the Spirit of the Lord with us.

Paul goes on to say, "Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery" (1 Timothy 4:14).

Who are the presbytery? They are the elders of the Church. Each of you deacons, teachers, and priests has been ordained by one having the proper authority, in most cases by your fathers or bishops. You have been given a great and precious gift. You can speak truth. You must speak truth. You can bear testimony of the great and good things of the gospel. This is your gift. Neglect it not!

Paul continues, "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee" (1 Timothy 4:16).

As you work with your associates to help them with their faith, you will save them and also yourselves.

Keep yourselves pure

Again Paul's counsel to Timothy: "Keep thyself pure" (1 Timothy 5:22).

Those are simple words. But they are ever so important. Paul is saying, in effect, stay away from those things which will tear you down and destroy you spiritually. Stay away from television shows which lead to unclean thoughts and unclean language. Stay away from videos which will lead to evil thoughts. They won't help you. They will only hurt you. Stay away from books and magazines which are sleazy and filthy in what they say and portray. Keep thyself pure.

The love of money can destroy you

Continuing with the words of Paul: "For the love of money is the root of all evil" (1 Timothy 6:10). It is the love of money and the love of those things which money can buy which destroys us. We all need money to supply our needs. But it is the love of it which hurts us, which warps our values, which leads us away from spiritual things and fosters selfishness and greed.

Do not be ashamed of your testimony

And now I come to Paul's great statement:

"For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

"Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord" (2 Timothy 1:7-8).

It is not God who has given us the spirit of fear; this comes from the adversary. So many of us are fearful of what our peers will say, that we will be looked upon with disdain and criticized if we stand for what is right. But I remind you that "wickedness never was happiness" (Alma 41:10). Evil never was happiness. Sin never was happiness. Happiness lies

in the power and the love and the sweet simplicity of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

We need not be prudish. We need not slink off in a corner, as it were. We need not be ashamed. We have the greatest thing in the world, the gospel of the risen Lord. Paul gives us a mandate: "Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord" (2 Timothy 1:8).

As deacons, teachers, and priests ordained to the holy priesthood, we can stand tall and, without equivocation or fear, declare our testimony of Jesus Christ.

Turn away from youthful lusts

Further from Paul: "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed" (2 Timothy 2:15).

If we were called upon to stand before God and give an accounting of ourselves, could we do it without embarrassment? This is Paul's great plea to his young friend. It is his plea to each of you. He goes on to say, "Shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness" (2 Timothy 2:16).

He is warning against just fooling around, wasting our time, talking about useless things. Idleness leads to evil.

He continues, "Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart" (2 Timothy 2:22).

It was Sir Galahad who said, "My strength is as the strength of ten, / Because my heart is pure" (Alfred, Lord Tennyson, *Sir Galahad*).

We cannot say it frequently enough. Turn away from youthful lusts. Stay away from drugs. They can absolutely destroy you. Avoid them as you would a terrible disease, for that is what they become. Avoid foul and filthy talk. It can lead to destruction. Be absolutely honest. Dishonesty can corrupt and destroy.

Observe the Word of Wisdom. You cannot smoke; you must not smoke. You must not chew tobacco. You cannot drink liquor. You hold the priesthood of God. You must rise above these things which beckon with a seductive call. Be prayerful. Call on the Lord in faith, and He will hear your prayers. He loves you. He wishes to bless you. He will do so if you live worthy of His blessing.

Become educated and prepare for a mission

You face great challenges that lie ahead. You are moving into a world of fierce competition. You must get all of the education you can. The Lord has instructed us concerning the importance of education. It will qualify you for greater opportunities. It will equip you to do something worthwhile in the great world of opportunity that lies ahead. If you can go to college and that is your wish, then do it. If you have no desire to attend college, then go to a vocational or business school to sharpen your skills and increase your capacity.

Prepare now to go on a mission. It will not be a burden. It will not be a waste of time. It will be a great opportunity and a great challenge. It will do something for you that nothing else will do for you. It will sharpen your skills. It will train you in leadership. It will bring testimony and conviction into your heart. You will bless the lives of others as you bless your own. It will bring you nearer to God and to His Divine Son as you bear witness and testimony of Him. Your knowledge of the gospel will strengthen and deepen. Your love for your fellowman will increase. Your fears will fade as you stand boldly in testimony of the truth.

Be faithful and true

We love you, boys, our dear young associates in this great work. We pray

for you that you may be faithful and true. We count on you to prepare yourselves to take our places in the great work of moving forward the work of God. Get on your knees and pray every day, night and morning. Look to your fathers and mothers, and follow their counsel. Look to your bishop and his counselors. They will lead you in the direction you should go. "Look to God and live" (Alma 37:47).

You have come into the world in a great season in this the work of the Lord. No other generation has had quite the same opportunities that you have and will have. Begin now to establish those goals which will bring you happiness—education in your chosen skill or branch of learning, whatever it may be; a

mission in which to surrender yourself entirely to the Lord to do His work; future marriage in the house of the Lord to a wonderful and delightful companion of whom you will be worthy because of the way you have lived.

May the Lord bless you, my dear young friends. May His watch care be over you to preserve and protect and guide you. He has a great work for you. Do not fail Him. I leave my love and my blessing with you in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Lord, I Would Follow Thee."

Elder Augusto A. Lim offered the benediction.

SUNDAY MORNING SESSION

The fourth general session of the 167th Annual General Conference commenced at 10:00 A.M. on Sunday, April 6, 1997. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music, with Jerold Ottley conducting and Clay Christiansen at the organ.

To begin the session, the choir sang "The Morning Breaks." President Hinckley then made the following remarks.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

We welcome you from the Tabernacle in Salt Lake City, Utah, to the fourth general session of the 167th annual 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, Charles Didier, and V. Dallas Merrell are seated on the stand; and in the

Joseph Smith Memorial Building, where Elders F. Enzo Busche, Ronald E. Poelman, David E. Sorensen, and Lance B. Wickman 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 the stations 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. We are especially grateful to have with us this morning Dr. Anatoly Lashinski, chairman of the committee setting Russian policy for religious organizations, reporting directly to President Yeltsin.

The Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Brother Jerold Ottley, with Brother Clay Christiansen at the organ, opened these services by singing "The Morning Breaks, the Shadows Flee."