

Priesthood meeting
April 4, 1938

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GEN'L PRIEST'D

PRESIDENT J. REUBEN CLARK JR.

My brethren: Once more a sense of deep humility comes to me as I stand facing this great body of Priesthood. May I begin by saying that we miss very much tonight President McKay who is detained at home by a slight indisposition which the doctors told him he is not to trifle with. We have had hard work keeping him at home, but at last accounts he was still there.

I have been tremendously impressed this evening with the practicality of our religion, and once more there comes to me as always when standing before this body a sense of the strength and the power which this Priesthood possesses if it will but act in unison under direction. I pray to the Lord at this time that he will give us that unity and a determination to serve Him and to keep His commandments and obey His laws.

Before going on with two or three matters which I have in mind I should like to mention one small matter of business. Increasingly you Bishops and Presidents of Stakes are sending young men on missions, young men who are not physically fit. The result is that when they go into the field operations are necessary, operations which have to be undertaken and carried through without the presence of the loved ones, the parents, who in such situation play a large part in keeping up the spirits of the one who undergoes the operation. May we not urge upon you Bishops, you Presidents of Stakes, to see to it that all those whom you propose for missions are physically fit. It will save anxiety, it will save expense, it may sometimes save results that we all wish to avoid.

Now, coming back, I want to say two or three words about each of some subjects that are generally mentioned here in Conference, and which have been mentioned this time. They are old, and sometimes we get tired of hearing them, but it seems as if there is no alternative.

The first I am going to speak a few words about is tithing. I am happy to say to you, brethren, that last year you, that is, the Church, reached the high point in tithing of all times. The returns so far this year show that if we maintain our pace we shall this year go beyond 1937. I thought that President Clawson made a very good point today when he pointed out to you that the tithing is all returned to you. You make your gift to the Lord and His work and it is returned to you in manifold blessings. May I say that there has arisen in the Church a great spirit of building, a spirit that is good and wise, but it is also a spirit which sometimes is not wisely handled. Large and extravagant places are sometimes built where they are not necessary. While everyone would not agree with me, yet I personally feel, as I think I expressed myself at the last Conference, that I hope the time will never come that we will build great cathedrals such as are found all over Europe. From Quaker ancestry it may be that I enjoy too much the simple things, but I like a place of worship in which the thought of the worshipper is concentrated not on the beauty of the stained glass window, but on the beauty of the spirituality that is present by those who speak and upon the enjoyment of the spirit of the meeting. This spirit of building of which I have spoken has led us to rather over expand. We have large commitments outstanding to assist in building, and may I say that this building spirit took a spurt when the Church offered to pay 60% of the cost of the building. The spurt was almost equal to the per cent I think.

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We are in a position, brethren, where notwithstanding the increased tithing, increased revenue from tithing, we must this year curtail our further commitments and tell you Bishops and Presidents of Stakes who desire to engage in building enterprises do not be surprised if you receive word back that you will have to postpone your buildings for a time so as to give us opportunity to catch up. We simply haven't the money unless you are willing to double your tithing to carry on this tremendous building program which you brethren are initiating.

I have some figures here which I want to read regarding tithe-paying. I am going to read the percentages. These I have worked out myself. I am not very good at figures, the Presiding Bishop may find them all wrong, but I think they are essentially accurate.

The Patriarchs of the Church on the record of 1937, apparently by reason of non-tithables, paid more than 100% of tithing. They stand at the peak, 30.27% of the High Priests paid a part tithing; 58.9% of them paid a full tithing, and including the non-tithables 84.1% of all paid a tithe.

Seventies: 35.6% paid part tithing; 40.6% paid a full tithing; 70.5% paid tithing.

Elders: 32.1% paid part tithing; 22% full; 49.2 tithed.

Priests: 13.2% part tithing; 13.7% full; 25.7% total, including non-tithables.

Excluding the non-tithables I may say that 51.1% of the Elders paid tithing; 33.1% of the priests paid tithing.

Of the Teachers and young groups of men 7.5% paid part tithing; 15.2% full tithing; 21.7% of the Teachers paid tithing, including non-tithables, and 51.2% paid tithing, if you exclude the non-tithables.

Non-tithables: By that term I mean from whom for one reason or another no tithing is due.

And now the Deacons: The Lord bless them-- 3.99% paid a part tithing; 17.4% paid a full tithing; 20½% of all the Deacons paid tithes, but excluding those who are not tithable 40.5% paid tithing.

I give you these figures, brethren, to show you what the actual record is. I believe it is reasonably accurate. These figures show you where there is a chance to improve. I think the record of the little Deacons is marvelous. If the spirit which is rampant in the hearts of these young boys could be carried on up until they become Elders, the history of the Church might be changed.

Now I want to say a word about the Word of Wisdom, and I want to speak particularly to the young men. I often say to Sister Clark after the stress of a long period of work I am grateful for my health and strength. The Lord is paying me dividends every day now in my old age when I need the dividends. I am being paid thousands and thousand-fold for the fact that I left liquor, tobacco alone,

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tea and coffee alone, and no matter what the pressure was I have never worked under a stimulant, and I do not say it boastingly, brethren, please understand that I am grateful to the Lord that he gave me that power, and without his help I could not have done it, and the help which he gave me he will give to every man who undertakes to keep his commandments.

Another thing: So frequently young men of today feel that as a matter of social amenity they must drink or they must smoke or do the other things which are contrary to the Word of Wisdom. May I say, speaking personally again, I have had some experience in the world, and I have not found it necessary to drink or smoke or use tea and coffee in order to get along anywhere at least fairly well, and to meet those outsiders who do all these things and yet maintain their respect. I recall not one instance in my life where refusal of a cigar or cigarette has ever caused a disrespectful word. Sometimes there have been jokes passed, but they have been harmlessly meant, and were so taken. And may I say this to you young boys, and girls too if they were here, that whenever a man or woman demands of you that you surrender some of your principles as a price of their friendship, then I say to you their friendship is not worth having, it will burn to ashes in your hands at the time when you need it. I say that out of a long experience too.

I want to approve everything, and I endorse all that Brother Bowen, Brother Levi Edgar Young and others have spoken of the evils of dictatorships, and of the effect thereof upon the liberties of the people, and the older I get the more I think of and value the dear human liberty, the right to do within the law what I please, the right to frame my own life, the right to read what I want, the right to do what I want when I want to do it. Abstract liberty to me, the liberty which we have under our divinely inspired Constitution is, next to my God and family, the thing nearest and dearest to my wife. But I want to say just a word if I may by way of caution. There is a deal of propaganda in the country. Those who know something of it tell me that even in the time of our last war there was scarcely less propaganda then there is today by foreign governments and their agents. There is a great deal of pharasaical attitude on the part of governments of the world. Now I have no language to express my abhorrence of war, I have no language to express my opposition to conquest by force. Most of those things are to me anathema. Down in South America where they were trying to build up an anti-American spirit, a very noted lecturer down there used to go and lecture about the imperialism of the United States and he illustrated that lecture by drawing on the screen a picture of the United States as it now is, but all colored black except the thirteen colonies along the east seaboard; and then his picture took us into the Allegheny Mountains; the next to the Mississippi River; then down south to Florida; then the Louisiana purchase; then our acquisitions in the Northwest; then our acquisitions through the conquest of Mexico; then Alaska; Hawaii; the Philippines; and Guam; and Porto Rico, and for good measure he added Cuba. Some of those we obtained by purchase, some by bluff, some by conquest, and I am not so sure that we should get so terribly aroused as an abstract proposition because somebody else is now helping themselves. I love Great Britain, it is the home of my ancestors, I regard it as one of the steady democratic forces of the earth. Sometimes I have thought it was the greatest, but has Great Britain ever seen anything lying loose that she did not pick up? France is in no better position.

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So, brethren, let us be quiet at any rate about this matter, while at the same time holding in our hearts of course the abhorrence of war, the abhorrence of conquest, the abhorrence of the imposition of an alien rule upon people, but let us remember that we live in a glass house and ought not to throw stones.

We have had some excellent talk about farming tonight. I would like to say this, first, a paradox: Farming is one of the most certain industries or occupations in which men can engage, and yet the farmer is the greatest gambler in the world. He gambles on his seed, on the weather, on successful harvest, and lastly and mostly on his market, and yet by and large the return of the farmer is the same kind of return which comes from what are called gilt-edged securities, and it is a law of finance apparently, that the better the investment and the more certain, the lower the rate. I do not believe any Utah man ever got rich on his farm, and I do not believe any Utah man ever will, but he will have a respectable living, he will have an independence, and he may have a spirituality, he may come to a nearness to the Lord which he can hardly come to in any other occupation.

I want to say just a word about the Church Security Program, and then conclude. When the record is read to you on Wednesday you will see that notwithstanding the things that are said about it in criticism we have really made a great achievement. We have engaged in that operation for only two years, and to me the success is marvelous, yet we have only begun, brethren, we must still go on. We have never approached the Church Welfare Plan with any other thought than, first, of course, relieving the wants of as many as we could and putting as many as we could to work. That has always been present and obvious, but behind that and far more importantly has been the desire and the aim to rehabilitate the characters of our people where they have been destroyed or injured and to build up the patriotic, civic and spiritual qualities of the people. There has been no desire of merely substituting a Church gratuity for gratuities of some other kinds, and I shall have occasion again to say that I do congratulate all of you brethren who have in any capacity had anything whatever to do with this Welfare work upon the success which has attended your efforts.

May the Lord bless you, and bless us, and bless all of us, and give us ability to appraise the things which are presented to us from different sources, then give us the ability to choose the right and eschew the wrong, that we may continue to be the people which the Lord would have us be, to the end that we may save not only ourselves and our families and our people, but be instrumental in saving the righteous of the world, for such is our destiny and our proclaimed purpose, I ask in the name of Jesus, Amen.