

Press Forward

PAUL H. DUNN

What a wonderful sight to see so many young Latter-day Saints assembled in one place. I can't help but contrast this with the days when I was about your age growing up in the South and in California when Latter-day Saints were not so numerous. I grew up in a stake where there were few girls my age. I had a bishop who was interested in youth, and quite frequently he'd stand at the pulpit and say, "Now you young people [all five of us], when you grow up I want you to marry in the Church and in the temple." And I would look around and ask, "Who?" You are fortunate in that you don't have to look very far. We're thrilled about this great university and the environment in which you find yourselves.

I know President Kimball is deeply touched that this building is being named for him. He's the last person who would seek this honor, but obviously he's the most deserving; so I would say, on behalf of all General Authorities, what a wonderful selection.

Looking at these delightful missionaries—and you can tell who they are, can't you—prompts just one other observation: I've had the privilege now for eight years of touring with the Osmond family, whom we honored this morning, and they are real missionaries. Some half-million people in that eight-year

period have listened to their testimonies in special firesides that we have conducted all over the world—five hundred thousand people. I have on file in my office letters and responses from thirty thousand converts whose baptisms have come as a direct result of that exposure. I think it would be quite fitting for a few moments to invite this wonderful family, my friends, to come and say a word. We are sorry that Donny, Virl, and Brother and Sister Osmond can't be here. They are on other assignments. I think it would be exciting to have each one in turn, starting with Jim, give you a little response and let you feel their spirits in a different vein than they did at their recent concert at BYU. Now family, you know me well enough to know that I'd do this to you, don't you? Jim, why don't you start.

Jimmy Osmond

It's a great opportunity for me to speak to all of you today. I just want to say how much

Paul H. Dunn was a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints when this devotional address was given at Brigham Young University on 12 February 1980.

my family means to me. All my brothers and my little—I mean my big—sister (sorry, Marie) are great examples to me, and I love them so much. They've always been there to help me through my problems. I started performing when I was three years old and have been performing for thirteen years now, and I know I couldn't have done it without them behind me because they have helped me so very much. Backstage they have encouraged me, and it's just terrific to have their support.

I'd like to share with you a little story about examples. There once was a father and his son flying a kite in a field. The kite had gone really high, and the father had let out all the string when the little boy said to his father, "Let the kite string go so that the kite will fly higher and higher." The father said to the little boy that the kite wouldn't fly higher but that it would fall to the ground. The little boy didn't believe his father, so he begged him to let go of the string, and sure enough, the kite fell to the ground. Now, comparing this little story with the laws today, we see that the things we sometimes think are holding us down are really the things that are keeping us up.

I want to thank my parents publicly for teaching us the proper principles, for having family nights, for helping us grow close as a family.

I would also like to bear my testimony of this gospel, and I bear it very boldly because I know of the truthfulness of it. I know that Spencer W. Kimball is a prophet of God. I've met him several times, and he is a wonderful man. I'm very grateful that the Church has taught me the principle that my family can be together forever, and I say these things in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Marie Osmond

Hello. I'm very grateful for this opportunity to bear my testimony to you. To start with, I'd like to clarify a couple of things. Being in the entertainment business and being in it at a

young age can present many challenges. I'd like to set the record straight about some of the things that have been written about us recently and to let you know that I am not rebelling against my family, that I do have a very strong testimony of this gospel, that I sustain the General Authorities, and that I know Spencer W. Kimball is a prophet of God. I am so thankful for my family and for the example they have been to me and for my brothers and my wonderful mother and father.

I'd like to talk for a moment to the girls. Right now is such a great time to be a woman, but it's also a challenging time. There is everything out in the world that we could possibly want, but there is much opposition as well. I think that Satan is working very hard at breaking down the family and the role of women. Now is the time to develop and educate ourselves and to study issues. I admire all of you so much; in fact, I wish I had more opportunities to attend college (I try to attend every chance I get). I really respect all of you for the ambition that you have shown by being here at this university.

I heard a little story once that has helped me to live the way the Lord would want me to live. It was a story about a salmon that was swimming upstream. He saw a little fish in the water that he could eat, and he said, "Ummmm, what good aroma! High protein content! Just the right size—I could take it in one mouthful. What could be wrong with that?" And of course, what was wrong with it was that the little fish had a hook in it. And I think that many times, as we go through life, we have to be very careful of the hooks, which is why it's important to know what's going on and to trust in our Father in Heaven. I have such a testimony of prayer, for it has helped me through so many difficult times in my life and in making many important decisions. I want you all to know that we appreciate you, and we love you, and I love the gospel with all my

heart. And I say these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

Jay Osmond

It's a great privilege for me to be here and to share my testimony with you. It is great to be in your presence. You know, as we have traveled around the world we've met lots of different kinds of people and been to many different places, and one thing I've learned is how closely the Mormons are being watched. We are not only a peculiar people, but we are respected throughout the world for our beliefs and our standards. Being twenty-four years old (and still available), I've also realized how important it is for me to make decisions now about what I'm going to do in the future and how I'm going to cope with temptations when they come. I know it's important to decide to make these decisions. And as I see how Mormons are being watched, I realize how important it is to keep ourselves humble, to be prayerful, and to study the gospel. There is a little poem that I keep in the back of my mind as I go through my life, and I'd like to share it with you. It says,

*Dare to be a Mormon,
Dare to stand alone,
Dare to have a purpose,
And dare to make it known.*

I want you to know that I have a testimony that God lives and that Jesus is the Christ and that Joseph Smith is a true prophet of God who was instrumental in restoring the necessary gospel truths, keys, and authority to this earth. We have a prophet today, and we should sustain him as well as all the General Authorities. And I say these things in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Merrill Osmond

Over seven years ago I had the opportunity and the privilege of meeting a person who

came from BYU and who is now my wife. We were married for time and all eternity by Brother Paul H. Dunn, and since that time we have had three wonderful children. Although marriage is put down by so many, I can testify that marriage has brought a depth and meaning to my life that you cannot find in any other way. And as glorious as this entertainment business may be, the real meaning of life lies in seeing my family in our family home evenings gathered around together to be taught the truth about why we are here and what we are doing and how we can get back to our Father in Heaven. I do have a testimony of this gospel. We have met many powerful people—from the Queen of England to the president of the United States—but my greatest blessings are knowing that I have the power of the priesthood in my family and having the testimony that I can accomplish anything that I need to accomplish. And this testimony I leave with you in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Tommy Osmond

Good morning, my brothers and sisters. It's good to be here. I want you to know that I have felt the wonderful spirit that is here. I want you to know that the Osmond family has been so good to me and has been patient and understanding in discussing my problems. I want to thank my Heavenly Father for the wonderful blessings he has given me, one of which is the problem of deafness that happens to make me a better person. I thank my Heavenly Father for my wonderful wife and for my beautiful kids; they are a joy to be with. I want you to know that my testimony of the gospel has grown tremendously every day. I know that the only way we gain a testimony is by studying the gospel and doing things we are supposed to do. Remember, obeying God's commandments is the only way we will ever be truly happy. I love you all, my brothers and sisters. I understand that each of us is a special child of our Father in Heaven and that we are

here to gain experience and to grow until we overcome temptation so that we can be worthy to meet our Father in Heaven someday if we live faithfully and righteously. I thank Heavenly Father, also, for the struggle I have to improve my speech, communication skills, and everyday conversation. I understand I still have a long way to go, and I bear testimony to you in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Alan Osmond

Tommy's a very special boy, and we all love him dearly. As he mentioned, he is profoundly deaf and has had a tremendous obstacle to overcome. We all admire him greatly for the tremendous example he is to us when we feel like things aren't going quite right.

Brothers and sisters, the thing most on my mind right now is how thankful I am for this wonderful, wonderful gospel. The reason I am thankful is because it gives us all the guidelines necessary to keep our lives in order and to direct us toward eternal goals. Without it, brothers and sisters, I think we all realize where we'd be right now—certainly not here. I love the gospel so much. I'm deeply thankful for it, and I have a testimony of its truthfulness. I'm thankful also for my sweet wife—I met her here at BYU—for my two sweet, wonderful children, and for so many choice blessings that Heavenly Father has poured out upon our family. I just hope that I can live the kind of life that will make me worthy to go back to my Heavenly Father someday and stand before him and receive the blessings that he has in store for all who truly love him. As Jesus has said, "If you love me, keep my commandments." I'm thankful for this gospel and its precepts and for this opportunity to speak to you today. And I say these things in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Wayne Osmond

I too am very thankful to be here today and to take some of Brother Dunn's precious time

to share with you my feelings and my testimony. It's great to be here in Utah. A lot of people ask us why we are here. To the entertainment field it seems like kind of a funny place to be because it is so out of the way. But we want you to know that our decision to come to Utah was a matter of prayer, which has always been very important in making the decisions that we have made.

I'd like to let you all know that it's fun to be a Mormon; it's fun to have something to believe in. The things that are worth having aren't always the easiest to keep; you have to stand up for them, but they are worth standing up for. We've had an opportunity to travel around the world and do many things, but the things that give us the most joy are having our families and the gospel of Jesus Christ and knowing that the Lord hears us when we kneel to him in humble prayer. We've had to call on him many times. We've had airplane engines go out on us, we've had stages collapse on us, at times we've been so sick we've hardly been able to make it on stage. We've had to call on him often, and it's good to know that he's there. How great it would be if everyone had a personal relationship with him. It's so important that we maintain that relationship, especially today.

Some of the hardest decisions I've ever made I have arrived at through fasting and prayer and then through listening. Once I've received the confirmation, I like to write it down so that I will never doubt my feelings later on. Then we stick by that confirmation as a family or individually. President Harold B. Lee gave us some good advice many years ago when he said, "Choose that which will bring you closest to the celestial kingdom. No matter what decisions you have to make, you'll always have at least two choices, so choose that which will bring you closest to the celestial kingdom." And that's why we're here in Utah, and we're so happy to be among friends today. We're filled with emotion, and we thank you

for that, but we want you to know that the gospel and our families are important to us. These are the things that make us happy, and we leave these testimonies in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Elder Paul H. Dunn

Thank you, Osmonds; you are great. I couldn't help but pull from my notes a little verse that seemed appropriate as they were talking about their testimonies and the Lord. Let me share it with you.

*He was just a little lad
And on the Sabbath Day,
Was walking home from Sunday School
And dawdling on the way.*

*He scuffed his foot upon the grass,
And saw a caterpillar,
He picked a fluffy milkweed pod,
And blew out all the filler.*

*A bird's nest in the tree o'erhead
So wisely placed and high,
Was just another wonder
That caught his eager eye.
A neighbor watched his zigzag path
And hailed him from the lawn.
And he asked him where he'd been that day
And what was going on.*

*"Oh, I've been to Sunday School," he carefully
Turned the sod and found a snail beneath.*

*"Ah, a fine way," the neighbor said,
"For a boy to spend his time.
If you can tell me where God is,
I'll give you a brand new dime."*

*Quick as a flash his answer came,
Nor were his accents faint—
"I'll give you a dollar, mister,
If you can tell me where God ain't."
[Author Unknown]*

For many of us, particularly at this time of year in school, I suppose there is no greater gulf than that between what we started out to achieve and what we will finally settle for. There is not a person here, I'm sure, who hasn't spent some of his time in childhood dreaming of what he had hoped to be someday. I heard a seven-year-old boy the other day on the airplane who said, when he heard that O. J. Simpson had retired, that he wanted to apply for the job. I think that's showing high hope and real spirit, and without doubt a young man with that kind of goal will work it out. But life has a way, sometimes, of besetting us with discouragement and, as I mentioned in an assembly not long ago, the "blahs." We thought we were going to be somebody, and then it didn't turn out that way.

Sometimes dreams have a way of fading, don't they? Negative thinking takes over, and we start to be satisfied with just getting by. You know, success and failure always start in the mind. The game of life can be lost before the starting whistle if we think of ourselves as losers. Unfortunately, some of us do. We watch ourselves fall on our faces, make mistakes, and start over again on our diet tomorrow and again tomorrow. Our self-confidence gets dashed; we give in; we throw in the towel; we holler "Uncle." Oh, we may call our giving up on ourselves by different names such as facing up to reality or understanding our limitations, but it's giving up all the same.

Someone once pointed out that if you heat water to 211 degrees Fahrenheit all you've got is a lot of hot water, but just add to it one more degree to bring it to the boiling point and you've got steam—steam that can move trains and boats, steam that produces power. It's all in one little degree. Anyone who has ever tried to start a car knows that the engine can be in perfect working order, the tank full of gas, the parts of the motor perfectly tuned and ready to roll, but nothing will happen if the battery

doesn't lend a little spark to start the whole process. Without that spark there is nothing but an assortment of useless parts. Wouldn't it be sad to fall short of your best expectations in life because you were missing some little thing like will power, perseverance, or self-confidence? You and I, for the most part, have grown up in a church that has taught us through song and verse and sermon that "I Am a Child of God." Do you really believe that? Or does it mean no more to you than a tender moment that comes when you hear a Primary chorus sing? No, it's true. God has sent you and me here to succeed. Sometimes there are forces at work against us—both within and without—that contribute to our defeat.

Sometimes it's a well-meaning person who doesn't understand. Do you remember the story of little Timmy, the slow learner who was taken to an ungraded school? The teacher asked why he was sent to her. He said, "I was sent because I am a moron. Teacher, what is a moron?"

The teacher said, "A moron is one who does not know all the answers."

"I guess I'm a moron because there are a lot of things I don't know. My father must be one, too. Just this morning at breakfast my mother told Dad that he would never learn to eat like he ought to. I like my father, though, because he always says, 'Timmy, what do you think?'"

The teacher inquired, "What do you think, Tim?"

"Just let a bird sing two notes, and I can tell you what kind of a bird it is. I can tell you its color, what the papa looks like, how many eggs the mother lays, the color of the eggs, and how long it will take for them to hatch. I know all the birds that stay here and when and where they go. I even know when the birds are here and when they are going somewhere else."

The teacher said, "Timmy, you're a genius."

Timmy said, "Teacher, you know more about me already than my teacher did last year. She never asked me what I thought; she always

told me what I didn't know. She must be a moron."

A great leader once said, "Great works are performed not by strength but by perseverance. He that shall walk with vigor three hours a day will pass in seven years a space equal to the circumference of the whole earth." I think in order to do that you and I need to develop even more faith than we already have, to rely, as the Osmonds have suggested, on a higher power. One day a small boy tried to lift a heavy stone, but he couldn't budge it. His father, watching, finally said, "Are you sure you are using all of your strength?"

"Yes, I am," the boy cried.

"Oh, no, you're not," said the father. "You haven't asked me to help you."

Think about it.

Some of you old sports fans remember Babe Ruth; most of you would have to read about him. He's still revered today as one of the great sluggers of all time. Seven hundred and fourteen home runs was the standing record until Hank Aaron came and broke it with a few more. But did you know that while Babe Ruth was making all those records he struck out twice as many times as he hit a home run? I remember reading about the incident that happened in Scheib Park in Philadelphia late in the season in 1927 when the Yankees were trying to secure another pennant. On the mound that day for the Athletics was perhaps one of the greatest left-handed pitchers the game had ever produced, Lefty Grove. He had fanned Babe Ruth on two successive tries at the plate; and, of course, the Philadelphia fans were overjoyed. Every time that Babe would come up to bat they would jeer at him, and he was such a colorful player he would take off his cap and wave back to the crowd. In the eighth inning, he came to bat for the third time, and this time the situation was extremely critical. The Athletics were ahead of the Yankees three to one, and the bases were loaded with two outs. He could win or lose the game for the

Yankees as he went to bat. He selected his favorite bat, strolled out to the batter's box as only he could do it, and faced Lefty Grove. Now it all depended on him—the man who had just struck out twice, the man who had earned the insults of the crowd. The excitement was tremendous. All eyes were upon him. The pitcher threw the first pitch across the plate, and with all his power Babe swung and missed. The next pitch was equally good, and Babe swung so hard that he fell down, creating a cloud of dust. The crowd went crazy. But the third time Babe swung, he connected with a loud explosion that sent the ball hurtling out of the park, beyond the houses, and across the street; and it was recorded later as one of the longest hits in the history of baseball. You see, brothers and sisters, Babe Ruth had a basic ingredient that produces winners. We call it “staying power.” He stayed in there and wouldn't give up. He didn't measure and remeasure his failures, as we sometimes do. He didn't declare himself a loser and curl up and die in the dugout. The great slugger kept trying, putting his whole heart into the effort until he succeeded.

Do you remember reading about little Patty Wilson of La Palma, California? She's another winner, and she's an inspiration, I think, to every person who has tried to win. Patty comes from a family of athletes, but she is an epileptic. That by itself, I suppose, would stop some of us, but not Patty. She began running with her father in her early teens despite the fact that she occasionally had seizures. Once she finished a high school race standing up, even though she was semi-conscious. She continued to run despite the odds, despite the challenges. Then just two years ago, when Patty was fifteen, she and her father decided to run 1,310 miles from California to Portland, Oregon. On June 19 television crews, reporters, and state and local officials gathered to wish the Wilsons well.

Now, Patty's run to Portland presented challenges that would have stopped most athletes. During the first twenty-five miles she suffered a stress fracture in the metatarsal bone of her left foot. It would sometimes swell so much that she could barely get her shoe on, but she would not quit. She knew what she represented not only to thousands of athletes, but also to thousands of handicapped people who were watching her on television all over the country.

Patty averaged thirty-one miles per day. She arose every morning at 4:30. Her mother spent the first hour every morning draining twenty blisters on her feet. That process was repeated every noon and evening. She and her father ran mile after lonely mile only to encounter hecklers who pelted them with garbage, dirt, and thoughtless insults. Sometimes she and her father would have to pull each other along, but they would not quit. As they approached Portland on July 29, one and a half months after they had begun, the crowds poured out to meet them. People with handicaps came to run beside Patty and to talk to her. People with epilepsy shouted their encouragement. During the last hundred yards her father looked over to see if Patty wore a smile of victory, but she could only grimace from the incredible pain. Then it was over, and they were swooped up by the welcoming ceremonies. Some people in the crowd fought back tears; others wept openly. It was a victory of immeasurable proportions. Think of it: a run of over thirteen hundred miles by a fifteen-year-old girl with epilepsy. Doesn't it make you proud to be a part of the human race? Babe Ruth kept slugging, Patty Wilson kept running, and you and I must do the same.

I cut out of a newspaper some time ago an encouraging little formula.

“Did” is a word of achievement.

“Won't” is a word of retreat.

“Might” is a word of bereavement.

"Can't" is a word of defeat.

"Ought" is a word of duty.

"Try" is the word of each hour.

"Will" is a word of beauty.

"Can" is a word of power.

This is the way the Lord said it, and I quote: "Wherefore, ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men. Wherefore, if ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life" (2 Ne. 31:20). Press forward. That's not just a piece of nice advice, brothers and sisters; it's a commandment. Press forward, one step at a time, always believing that you can do a great and excellent work here

on the earth and that your life matters, maybe more than you imagine. Progression is an eternal law, and those who are managing just to get by in life will find in eternity that they are eons behind those who were willing to plod along undaunted, one step at a time. May you have the confidence to keep slugging when you are striking out and to keep running when blisters fill your shoes. May you be undaunted in reaching for the Lord's kingdom where the righteous dwell and not end up in some halfway house for those who gave up too soon. Remember, my young brothers and sisters whom I love very dearly, we're counting on you, and so is the Lord. God bless you wonderful youth and marvelous teachers, I pray, as I bear witness to these things in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.