

# “In the World”

L. TOM PERRY

We are privileged tonight to have a very honored guest. I’m sure none of you will notice him unless I point him out to you. L. Tom Perry IV, my grandson, is on the floor over here. You notice his position—right underneath the basket, if the basket were there. I have great confidence in this young man. Judging by his present rate of growth, I think between 6’10” and 7’ is about where we could expect him to be. If anyone from the P.E. Department is here, if you’d like to see me, we’ll sign a letter of intent immediately following the meeting.

I’m delighted to be back with you again to begin a new year. I think I’ve had the privilege three out of the last four years of being here as a new calendar year starts. It doesn’t seem possible that another one has passed. Where did it go? They seem to go by rapidly as we have opportunity to grow and experience life in this exciting time in which we live.

## “In the World”

Tonight I’d like to talk to you about a subject that I think we need in the Church. I think we need to be reminded of it, to prepare ourselves more all the time for our responsibilities in the world in which we live. The Savior once said:

*If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because you are not of the world, . . . I have chosen you out of the world. [John 15:19]*

From the teachings of the Savior, we have adopted the common saying in the Church: “To be in the world, but not of the world.” The phrase has two distinct parts, the first being “in,” and the second being “not of.” Too often, I think, we use them together and think of them as justification to remain somewhat detached, somewhat removed, from the world. I would like to separate this phrase tonight and give emphasis only to the part of being “in the world.” It is far better to view the two parts as separate, equally important admonitions. Of course, we must stay free from the sins and materialism of the world around us. But is it equally important to live “in the world”?

It is “in the world” we have had the privilege of coming to have a mortal experience. It is “in the world” where we are tested and

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*L. Tom Perry was a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints when this fireside address was given at Brigham Young University on 4 January 1981.*

tried. It is “in the world” that we have the opportunity of partaking of sacred saving ordinances which will measurably determine our postmortal life. It is the world that must be saved; it is to the world that the Christ must come again. It is the world that will be our eternal home.

### Encouragement from Prophets

We will play no part in saving our world, in preparing it for its destiny or in making it a better place in which to live, if we refuse to be a part of it and make our contribution to it while we live. Our prophets in this day have encouraged us to be mindful of our obligations while we are here in the world. I would like to quote from just two of them. First, President Heber J. Grant, who said:

*What a wonderful power we shall have with the Lord in furtherance of His mighty purpose in the earth, if we keep His commandments. Our influence will be not only with the world, but with our own young people. Their strength and power will be multiplied if we shall succeed in having them feel the necessity of observing the commandments of God and particularly . . . the Word of Wisdom and the principles of clean and righteous living.*

*It is not out of place to predict that the people of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints will continue to thrive and prosper, spiritually and temporally, as long as they (1) keep the commandments of God and (2) walk in the way which He shall point out through His inspired servants holding the Holy Priesthood. They are a people whose faith, teachings, thrift, and temporal and spiritual progress will be a blessing and an advantage to the whole [world]. [Gospel Standards (Salt Lake City: Improvement Era, 1942). p. 101]*

And then President McKay said this:

*The responsibility of showing to the world that the gospel of Jesus Christ will solve its problems rests upon the men who make the claim, who believe*

*that [every world problem may be solved by obedience to the principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ.] . . .*

*The solution of the great world problems is here in the Church of Jesus Christ. Ample provision is made not only for the needs of individuals, but also for the nations and groups of nations. I grant that we may be arrogating to ourselves superior wisdom, but we are not. It is simply the application of God’s plan to the world problems. You who hold the priesthood have greater responsibility today, now that you live in this creative moment in the world’s history, than ever the Church has had before. I repeat it. If we make the claim to hold the truth, it is obligatory upon every Latter-day Saint so to live that, when the people of the world come, in answer to the call, to test the fruit of the tree, they will find it wholesome and good.*

*The Lord will help us to be able to prove to the world that we possess just what the world today is longing for, and when they see it, they will know, as you know, as I know, that the everlasting gospel is a light to the world. [Gospel Ideals (Salt Lake City: Improvement Era, 1953), p. 5]*

### Scriptural Example: Daniel

Now, in looking for a way to illustrate this topic that I’ve selected for tonight, I searched the scriptures to try and find an example of one who was required to live “in the world” and yet was able to make his contribution for the good of the people among whom he lived. I found a classic example in the Old Testament. The birth of this young man came at a time when his kingdom, Judah, was having great difficulty. It seems improbable that anyone from this nation could make much of a contribution to the world as it existed at that time.

After the death of King Solomon in 975 B.C., Israel, the northern kingdom, separated itself from Judah. The two kingdoms were not able to hold their own against the other powers of the region, and Israel was destroyed by the Assyrians in 721 B.C. Egypt and Assyria would take turns overrunning the land of Judah. In the year 607 B.C., the Medes entered into an

alliance with the Babylonians to besiege the Assyrians, whose capital city, Nineveh, fell, and the two conquering nations divided up the spoils of Assyria. Assyria proper in the northern provinces fell into the hands of the Medes, and Syria lay open to be seized by the Babylonians.

While the struggle was going on, it seemed an appropriate time for Egypt to move through Judah. When the king of the Babylonians heard of Egypt's move, he sent his son, Nebuchadnezzar, to drive the Egyptians back to their border. While the battle raged with the Egyptians, the king passed away, and Nebuchadnezzar became the ruler of Babylonia. He was successful against the Egyptians and became the ruler over all of Syria to the Egyptian border.

These nations were powerful in destruction, but they were never able to build up much of a stable political structure. They ruled by terror. They crushed their enemies by fire and sword. Then they would weaken a conquered foe by deporting some of the choice people of that land to other parts of their empire so that the leadership would be stripped from the land.

It was in this bloody climate that Daniel was born. As a youth he was selected to be deported from his home in Judah to Babylon, the center in which Nebuchadnezzar was building his empire. The king was determined to make it the center of the universe, the most beautiful city in the world, with beautiful parks and buildings and, in the city center, a temple to the worship of the gods of Babylon. Thus Daniel was brought into a strange land as a youth—a land with strange customs, a strange tongue, strange environment, and a strange religious foundation, for the Babylonians believed in nature worship.

### **First Test: Law of Health**

His first test in being “in the world” came when the king ordered that the ones who had been captured drink of his wine and eat of his rich food. Daniel understood from the

commandments that he had been taught by his parents, the commandments of the Lord, that these things were not good for his body. In their homes Daniel and his friends were taught to keep the commandments of God, and they knew it would be wrong to eat and drink of unhealthful things. But how could he explain this knowledge to the leaders of Babylon who did not believe as they did, who even had different gods?

“The king has commanded that thou shalt eat and drink the same as the others,” argued the servant who was responsible for training these young men.

“If thou doest not eat this, and the king sees that thou art growing weak and thin, he will surely have me killed,” was the servant's reply to Daniel when he came to have his diet changed.

But Daniel begged that he and his friends be allowed to follow the health rules that had been given to them. His response was, “Prove us for ten days. Feed us upon the grains, and let us drink of water; then see if we are not as healthy as the rest.”

The response of this young man was most interesting. He did not try to discount or to argue against the beliefs of the Babylonians. He volunteered to a test to try the two ways to see which would be the better.

The servant agreed to the test. For the next ten days Daniel and those with him ate and drank only the things that they should. At the end of ten days Daniel and his friends were found healthier and stronger than all the rest (See Daniel 1).

Now, the Lord has declared to us that some of his commandments deal with the effects they will have on the body and temporal things, which are, after all, in essence, really spiritual. The largest measure of good which is derived from following the code of health prescribed by the Lord is the increase of faith, the development of more spiritual power and wisdom. The two cannot be separated. A healthy

spirit will draw much strength from a healthy body. Spiritual laws are rules of conduct from God, the violation of which brings penalties, while obedience thereto brings a communion with God and eventually life eternal. When one governs his life by divine law, he becomes more perfect. To break that law and to become a law unto himself are sins.

Listen to just a few of the admonitions of the Lord to his children, beginning with the early recorded history in the scriptures down even to the present, concerning our responsibility to live the Lord's law of health:

*Do not drink wine nor strong drink.* [Leviticus 10:9]

*Thou shalt not eat any abominable thing.*  
[Deuteronomy 14:3]

*Drink not wine nor strong drink, and eat not any unclean thing.* [Judges 13:4]

*If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.* [1 Corinthians 3:17]

*And all saints who remember to keep and do these sayings, walking in obedience to the commandments, shall receive health in their navel and marrow to their bones;*

*And shall find wisdom and great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures;*

*And shall run and not be weary, and shall walk and not faint.* [D&C 89:18-20]

Yes, Daniel met the challenge of being "in the world" and still living the Lord's law of health, thus becoming stronger than all the rest. The responsibility for that example has not diminished with time. We continue under the same obligation. When the Lord has revealed to us a better way, it must be shared. The opportunity for a better life must be given to all his children who are willing to receive it. Is this not part of our responsibility? We have been given the law. Experience has demonstrated its fruits. "In the world" we should be the strongest, the healthiest, the most vigorous

of all the people on the earth. Our example in the code of health should be a light unto the world.

### **Second Test: Mental Growth**

The second challenge that came to Daniel was the challenge to grow in knowledge, skill, learning, and wisdom. He was placed in competition with all of the other young men who were coming in from the various parts of the world that the Babylonians and Nebuchadnezzar had captured. They were being weeded out to see who would be worthy to stand as an adviser to the king. The scriptures record:

*Now at the end of the days that the king had said he should bring them in, then the prince of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar.*

*And the king communed with them; and among them all was found none like Daniel . . . in all matters of wisdom and understanding, that the king enquired of them, he found [Daniel] ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm.* [Daniel 1:18-20]

Imagine that. This young man taken as a captive had the determination and desire to qualify himself so he became ten times better than all the advisers of the king. So Daniel met the second challenge of being "in the world." Not only did he perfect his physical body so that it was fairer and stronger than all the rest, but he took advantage of every learning opportunity to develop his mind so that it became ten times better than the minds of those who had equal opportunity.

Again, the scriptures are replete with admonitions to stretch our minds, to increase our knowledge and understanding. Again let's quote just a few passages. In the Old Testament we find:

*A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels. [Proverbs 1:5]*

From the New Testament:

*Ask and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For everyone that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. [Matthew 7:7-8]*

And again, from the Book of Mormon:

*Teach them to never be weary of good works, but to be meek and lowly in heart; for such shall find rest to their souls.*

*O, remember, my son, and learn wisdom in thy youth; yea, learn in thy youth to keep the commandments of God. [Alma 37: 34-35]*

Then the Lord, in speaking to his prophets today, has declared:

*Whatever principle of intelligence we attain unto in this life, it will rise with us in the resurrection.*

*And if a person gains more knowledge and intelligence in this life through his diligence and obedience than another, he will have so much the advantage in the world to come. [D&C 130:18-19]*

*It is impossible for a man to be saved in ignorance. [D&C 131:6]*

I stand before a group tonight that is having one of the greatest opportunities ever given to the children of men. You have been allowed to come to earth when there is more truth in existence than any other generation in the history of time. Think of the sacrifice of the widow, the parent, the worker, the Church, in making a great investment in you, providing you with facilities and instructors to give you a good education. What kind of a return are they receiving on this investment? Is it an

investment in time for fun and games, or do you show a real appreciation for the sacrifice that is being made for you by taking advantage of every opportunity to grow in knowledge? You will probably never have a better opportunity to expose your mind to more variety of truth than you will during the next few years while you pursue your education. What will you do with this parade of information? Will it really become a part of you, or is it just a process of cramming in a session before an examination to get a passing grade? Are you building a reservoir of knowledge needed for your total life experience? Have you developed a storage system to retain in orderly fashion the information that will be of value to you in your exciting life ahead? Have you started a library, a file, a catalog system to retain this vast amount of knowledge that will be available to you during this educational phase of your life in a form that will be accessible to you in time of need? If not, your education will benefit you only in small measure in relationship to the great potential available to you at this very special time in your life.

There is a real need in the world for individuals who are willing and have the determination to stretch their minds, to be of service in bringing solutions to the many problems that face the world. I hope you follow the example of Daniel and learn to take advantage of the opportunities that are given to you to grow in knowledge and understanding, to be prepared mentally to serve the world.

### **Go Forth to Serve**

Daniel's training and spiritual strength enabled him to be of service to the king in time of need. One of the most interesting stories in scripture, I think, occurred when Nebuchadnezzar had the dream. The dream startled him so much he awakened, and it troubled him greatly. He called in his counselors and said, "I've had a dream, but I can't remember what



it was. You tell me the dream and give me the interpretation thereof.”

How would you like to get an assignment like that? When they could not, the king was so angered that he commanded that his wise men would not only lose their positions, they would also lose their heads. Hearing these things, Daniel rushed to the king and asked permission to have time to provide an interpretation. The king agreed. Daniel knew that the only way he could learn about the dream and its interpretation was to turn to the Lord. He asked those who believed as he did to entreat the Lord, and they prayed together. The Lord answered their prayers by telling Daniel the dream and its meaning. Everyone was astonished when Daniel told the king not only what the dream was but also what it meant. Daniel’s ability on this occasion not only served the king, but it saved all those great wise men in that country for continued service in that government. You see, Daniel was able to make application of the training he had received in service to his government and in service to his fellowmen.

Again we find admonitions from the Lord that after preparation comes service. In Old Testament times, Joshua told his people:

*And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. [Joshua 24:15]*

And the Savior said:

*And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant. [Matthew 20:27]*

And again in the Book of Mormon we find King Benjamin teaching his people to serve:

*And behold, I tell you these things that ye may learn wisdom; that ye may learn that when ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God. [Mosiah 2:17]*

And Joseph Smith in this day received these instructions:

*He that is ordained of God is set forth, the same is appointed to be the greatest, notwithstanding he is the least and the servant of all. [D&C 50:26]*

Further, the Lord counseled:

*Wherefore, be faithful; stand in the office which I have appointed unto you; succor the weak, lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees. [D&C 81:5]*

### **Wide Field for Service**

I’m afraid, all too often, when we think of service, it is only in the Church context—to teach a Sunday School class, go home teaching, conduct a Church meeting, or sing in sacrament service. Of course these are important. The other day I had the privilege of having breakfast with Senator Hatch and Richard Eyre. We were discussing service—service in the nation in which we live. I asked Brother Eyre to make a few notes of that conversation because I was so impressed with what these two men had to say to me. This is what he sent to my office.

*What we must remember is that the Church exists within the world and has the purpose of saving and preparing the world. If we who are within the Church associate only with each other, give our time and our means only to internal Church causes, we remove ourselves from the world. Then two particularly negative results occur: First, we become more parochial, more narrow, less compassionate. We lose our perspective and have fewer chances to use and to spread the real gospel. Second, the people around us and the causes around us lose the*

*potential benefit of our association and our help. The world becomes for them, and for us, a less happy place to live. The fact is that our tendency is to dwell on the things that make us different from the world. Our basic belief is in Christ. The traditional values we embrace, our hopes, our dreams, our freedom of liberty all are shared by right-minded, principled Christian people throughout the world. If we build bridges rather than walls, we begin to see that the gospel principles always unite and never separate.*

As we discussed these items of service, I was thinking of my missionary experiences. I thought back to the times when I was most successful, when I would give true Christian service. Often on our days off—what they call preparation days today—we’d don our work clothes and go out into the widow’s cornfield and help her weed her corn or go help a family move. When we’d put the real Christian principle of service into action, it was easy to teach the gospel of Jesus Christ. For when we set the example of the process of service, it was easy to go the next step of teaching why we gave that Christian service.

As we prepare for life, of course, we should be preparing for service in the Church. But we should also be preparing for service “in the world.” Throughout the world we hear the cries for sound leadership, for Christian service. We must be ready to answer these pleas for help. Our public school systems need our input and our involvement. Our local, state, and national governments need the service of principled people, grounded in the faith of the gospel of Jesus Christ. How long has it been since you really became interested in a civic cause or attended a city council meeting or supported with your time and also your means a campaign in which you believed?

### **Opposition to Be Overcome**

Yes, Daniel met the challenge of being “in the world.” He lived to become a trusted

counselor to the king whom he served. His service, however, was not without opposition, and we will find it too as we go forward in life. He made his way to a position of prominence under three kings. Finally, in serving one of the kings, he was appointed the head of all the princes. The other princes were jealous of Daniel, and they plotted against him. They tried to find something he did that was wrong, that they could take and present before the king. When they found nothing, they had to devise another plot. The wicked princes presented a new law to the king which stated that for thirty days no one in the kingdom would be allowed to pray. It said they should praise only the king. The king seemed to think that was a good idea. What greater honor could come than to have all these people praising him for thirty days? So he put a penalty on the law: anyone found praying to any god or any man except the king would be cast into the lion’s den.

When Daniel heard the new law, he was greatly troubled. Prayer was more important to Daniel, the communication with his God, than the fact that he might be cast into the den of lions. Still he continued to pray three times every day. Those who wanted to have Daniel out of the way spied on him in his house, and, when they saw him praying, the message was taken to the king.

The king loved Daniel, and he realized what a terrible trick had been played on him by the wicked princes. He tried to change the law to save Daniel from the lions, but the princes reminded him that no law that the king had made could be changed. When evening came, Daniel was thrown into the den of the hungry lions. The sorrowful king, in bidding Daniel farewell, said:

*Thy God whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee. [Daniel 6:17]*

Imagine that. Daniel had set such a great example before the king that he trusted the Lord God of Daniel that he would deliver Daniel from the den of the lions. The king spent all night fasting for Daniel.

In the morning he rushed to the den of lions and cried out:

*Daniel, O, Daniel, . . . is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?* [Daniel 6:20]

And how pleased he must have been to hear Daniel's voice answer:

*My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me.* [Daniel 6:22]

The king was joyous and commanded that Daniel be brought up out of the lion's den. Because of Daniel's faith in God, he had not even been scratched by the hungry lions.

Even with the challenge that was continually before Daniel to live his religion, he was able to rise above the conflicts which came before him. And the Lord blessed him in his service and spared him and protected him in all that he was able to do. So much was he able to live "in the world" and be of service to the world that the king, in his reorganization, selected three princes to be over all his empire, and chief among those princes was Daniel. He had gone from being a humble servant taken out of a strange land into a strange environment to becoming the second most powerful man in that great nation. Not only did his service benefit the king, but because of his faith in the Lord, he literally affected the whole land, for the king sent forth a proclamation that all the people of his kingdom should worship the true and living God, the God whom Daniel worshiped. You see the power of service of one righteous man as he was able to serve "in the world" in which he lived.

### **Challenge Today**

So tonight we begin another new year. The pages of history of 1981 are white and unrecorded before us. What will history record this new year concerning our contribution to mankind? Will the pages of history almost completely omit our names, the fact that we were "in the world," because we fail to make a contribution to our fellowmen this year? Or will there arise from this body another Daniel who is prepared physically, who understands the Lord's law of health, who has prepared himself so well that he will be an example to all with whom he comes in contact by the way he lives, the way he takes care of his physical body. Or mentally—will we be noticed for our mental contributions, the way we study, the knowledge we acquire, the wisdom that is ours to have as we sojourn in life? Or emotionally—will we be prepared to serve, to give of ourselves to others, to help lift a soul, to touch a life, to increase the happiness of another one of our Heavenly Father's children? Or spiritually—will we be so strong in the faith that what we do will be noticed because of that strength? Will we demonstrate by the life that we live that, yes, God our Eternal Father will still hear and answer prayers and abundantly bless those who will serve?

Will we be prepared to be of service in the Church and "in the world" and prepare better than those around us to set the example because of our will and our determination?

Just think of the problems that face our great nation today to which we could give time and attention in helping to find solutions: the deterioration of family life, individuals living in fear because of crime and violence. I was back visiting in the East a short time ago and watching the news. They had made a survey on the east coast, and it had been discovered that in our large cities, 60 percent of the people live in constant fear. I think that's appalling for a nation as enlightened as ours. Or think about the lack of a value system among people in



morals, in honesty, in industry. Or the energy shortage, or the growing lack of confidence in our economic system, the lowering of educational standards in many of our schools, of wars and rumors of wars, and we could go on and on and on. Surely one cannot present the alibi for poor performance that there is a lack of opportunity. So at the beginning of this new year, let the trumpets sound from the tops of the mountains; let again the cry be heard, "Charge," into another new year of making our contribution, of being "in the world" in which we live. Let us do it humbly, grateful for that which the Lord has given to us, that we can serve, that we have been given the light and truth and understanding necessary to make our contribution to our fellowmen.

I declare again to you that God lives, that Jesus is the Christ. His voice can still be heard giving direction to mankind in the only way

that will bring peace to a troubled heart and eternal happiness to those who will follow his path. May we determine this year to live "in the world," to be a part of it, to set the standard and example that we have learned at the feet of those who have been trained in the ways of the Lord in order that that influence can permeate the lives of others.

I bear witness to this glorious principle. It is the answer to world problems. The fruits are sweet for the taking; they will bless mankind. Let's share those great blessings with them, as we continue and sojourn here. God lives; Jesus is the Christ, the Savior of the world. His gospel is on the earth today. We have the glorious opportunity of sharing that way of life with others. May we be valiant in our responsibility of living "in the world," I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.