

A Glimpse of Glory

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Brothers and sisters, this is a very imposing and thrilling sight, and if you haven't stood here before, I might add that it's a little frightening. I don't know what I'd have done if I'd been an all-star football player and had you looking down on me while I was trying to play football. Fortunately I wasn't a very good football player.

I have just one desire this evening, and that is to strengthen your faith and testimony by sharing with you some experiences and thoughts that would be appropriate for this Sabbath day. I had outlined some things I was going to try to speak on, but on the way over my wife said, "Why don't you tell them a few things about this past weekend?" I would like to give you just a few thoughts about what's been happening.

Our Living Prophet, President Kimball

Yesterday morning the Presidency of the Church, President Benson, Elder LeGrand Richards, and myself went to Calgary, Alberta, Canada. President Kimball is a most dynamic prophet, and I guess my purpose in telling you some of the things that happened this weekend would be to give you a little closer personal look at President Kimball.

We boarded the plane to Calgary for the purpose of going up there to attend a solemn assembly. President Kimball has instituted, and there will be held in various parts of the United States in the months to come, several solemn assemblies. As you may or may not know, most of the solemn assemblies are convened in the temples. Now, we have had solemn assemblies in the Tabernacle when we sustain new Presidents of the Church, and you're familiar with those. But, because there aren't enough temples in the world yet and because there are priesthood brethren that need to be instructed, the President has outlined a very ambitious schedule of solemn assemblies.

The solemn assemblies are for the purpose of instructing the priesthood. Those who are invited to come need a temple recommend and a ticket; there are men placed at the doors, just as you would find if you were to go to the temple here in Provo, who check recommends and tickets.

H. Burke Peterson was a counselor in the Presiding Bishopric of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints when this fireside address was given at Brigham Young University on 3 August 1975.

We arrived in Calgary yesterday, right after noon. As we came off the plane and were walking through customs, President Kimball reached over to carry Elder Richards' briefcase for him. (President Kimball is eighty, while Elder Richards will soon be ninety.) Unless you've been associated with President Kimball, you've never seen a more thoughtful, humble, unpretentious, unimposing man—one who doesn't try to stand above anybody else.

We were driven to the stake center where we were to have the meeting. As we came, I saw the lawn covered with about five hundred little Primary children who had assembled there to sing to the prophet. They sang, concluding with that wonderful primary hymn, "I Am a Child of God." There aren't many things that make the President lose his composure, but this touched his heart. He spoke to those wonderful little children. We then went inside, and there were over nine hundred brethren, priesthood leaders—elders quorum presidencies, bishoprics, high councils, stake presidencies, and seventies and high priests leaders—from the nine stakes in Alberta and the mission districts. It was a great experience to sit there for four hours. We partook of the sacrament first. Elders quorum presidencies passed the sacrament; the presidencies of the stakes administered to it. It was a great experience. All of these brethren had come fasting for one purpose: to be in tune with the Spirit as they were instructed by those assigned, particularly the prophet. I appreciated all that was taught by the great men who were there. But there was a difference when the prophet stood up to teach the priesthood. There was a spirit about it that I'm sure you can imagine, but it was unusual. For one hour President Kimball, with a few notes but without a prepared script, instructed the priesthood. This was a thrilling experience.

Afterwards we had a fireside. I was assigned to speak at the fireside with some young people. As we were having dinner before, President Kimball asked me, "Bishop,

do you think it'd be all right if I came to the fireside for just a few minutes?"

I said, "I'm sure it'd be all right, if you want." So he did. He didn't come in right at the beginning because he had some other duties, but we were right in a break when I saw him come in. I went to the microphone and said, "If you young people want to have a great thrill, look back and see who just walked in the door." And five hundred of them looked around. When they saw President Kim all had come in, both the girls and the boys started wiping their eyes. They were thrilled by a once-in-a-lifetime experience. Having a prophet come in and give them a blessing and speak to them.

He really is a prophet. There's no question about it. You have every right to know, as do we who work so closely with him, that he is a prophet. How fortunate we are that we can feel the security of knowing that we have a real prophet leading us! He is a very human individual, too. One of the people was surprised to see that he ate his soup with a spoon, like the rest of us, and that he liked pie and other things that we all like.

I'll just tell you one more thing. This morning, as we gathered at the airport in Calgary, many of the families of the stake leaders were there to bid President Kimball goodbye. They brought their little children, of course, and waited outside by the sidewalk, where we were shaking hands and saying goodbye. Presently the plane was about to leave, so we hurried inside and started down toward the plane. One of the Brethren commented that President Kimball was missing. We were told that the President had seen a young lady, the daughter of one of the stake leaders, and said, "I forgot to tell her goodbye." So he had gone back outside and shaken her hand. We thought the plane would have to wait for him, but he didn't want to dismiss anyone. He's sensitive to everyone.

I don't know, brothers and sisters, if you've ever shaken his hand. Those of you who have, and those who have looked into his eyes, have gotten a special feeling. I remember the first time it happened to me. As he shook my hand, he didn't say anything except hello, but he said it with a love that overpowered me. We're fortunate to have a prophet leading us today. May the Lord bless us to recognize him as such and to listen and obey the things he tells us to do.

One of the brethren from the newspaper here on campus called me and asked, "What are you going to talk about? What's the subject?"

I said, "I don't have a subject. I'm not sure what I'm going to talk about." As we talked a little more, I got some idea. He began to tell me what he was going to write down for the paper, and so I got these ideas. I think I'd like to give you folks tonight a glimpse of the glory that is available to all of us.

Joan of Arc, a Woman Who Died for Her Faith

I'd first like to tell you a story. This is a story that you're familiar with. It's one that Elder Sill has repeated. It's a story about Joan of Arc. You've heard this story, and you've studied about this young lady. As you know, she was a French peasant maid who heard angelic voices calling her to aid her country. Unlike the fictional story of Don Quixote, the story of Joan of Arc was taken from the court records of the great trial that convened in her behalf in 1431. Her biography comes to us under oath, from the witness stand.

Joan of Arc found her bankrupt country helpless and hopeless, lying in chains, enslaved by an alien conqueror. Joan said to the uncrowned king, "Be not afraid, for God has sent me to help you." Then she laid her inspired hand upon her withered country and by the power of her calling broke the siege of Orleans, drove out the British, saved France, and crowned the Dauphin the king of Rheims.

Louis Kossuth says that Joan of Arc was the only person of either sex who ever held

supreme command over a great national army at the age of seventeen. By nineteen this untaught girl had become the deliverer of France and the savior of her country. She explained her power by saying something that's significant: "When God fights, it's of small consequence whether the hand that holds the sword is big or little." Everyone knew that in her heart was something that raised her above the greatest men of her day. She had the mysterious ability to turn mobs of cowards into armies of patriots. Her soldiers went into battle with joy in their eyes and a song in their hearts. Her own soul was the embodiment of nobility and righteousness. Although she lived in the most brutal, wicked, and rotten period since the Dark Ages, she did her job as well as anyone that any nation has ever produced. She was perhaps one of the few entirely unselfish persons whose name holds a high place in history. She lived when crime was the common business of mankind. She was truthful when lying was the ordinary speech of man. She was honest when honesty was a lost virtue. She maintained her personal dignity unimpaired in an age of fawning and servility. She had dauntless courage when even hope had perished in the hearts of her countrymen. She was spotlessly pure in mind and body when most of society was foul in both. She was the genius of patriotism. She said that even the rude business of war could be better conducted without profanity and other brutalities of speech. Few could understand why Joan continued to be alert, vigorous, and confident while her strongest men were exhausted by long marches and severe extensive exposure.

On one occasion, with an almost impossible objective ahead, she said, "I will lead the men over the wall." One of her generals said, "Not a man will follow you." Then she said something else that's very significant. Joan said, "I will not look back to see whether anyone is following or not." Then, with a flash of her sword, she gave the signal and led the way, and the

soldiers of France followed her. With her unshakable belief in her mission glowing in her heart, she swept everything before her. She sent a thrill of courage and conviction through the French army such as neither King nor patriot could produce.

When her country was safe, she declined the highest honors and the most profitable employments that a loving and grateful country could bestow upon her. As she was planning to return to her family, she was treacherously betrayed into the hands of her foreign enemies. For many weary months she was kept in chains as she underwent a long and wicked trial on trumped-up charges of witchcraft and sorcery. She was threatened and abused. The judges and jurors were carefully selected enemies; she was finally condemned to die for witchcraft. As the fires were being lighted around the stake at which this nineteen-year-old French peasant maid would be burned alive, she was given an opportunity to obtain her freedom by denying what she believed. In choosing the fire above her freedom, she said this, and this is significant:

I know this now. Every man gives his life for what he believes. Every woman gives her life for what she believes. Sometimes people believe in little or nothing, and yet they give their lives for little or nothing. One life is all we have, and we live it as we believe in living it, and then it is gone. But to surrender what you are and live without belief is more terrible than dying, even more terrible than dying young.

And, may I add, particularly is it more terrible when there's so much to believe in. We have some among us today who are in the process of dying young—in a spiritual sense.

The Spiritual Versus the Physical

We should understand that the spirit isn't killed with the sword. The spirit isn't killed with the bullet from a gun. But a spirit dies

gradually. One of the responsibilities I have in the Presiding Bishopric is to review the minutes of courts that come in from all over the world to headquarters of the Church. The Presiding Bishopric is the repository of these minutes. I've noted, as I've reviewed these minutes, that people, young and old, don't fall into sin and transgression in an instant. It's a gradual step-down process.

I've used the example before that the moment we come to the earth—the moment our spiritual body entered the physical body and we were born on the earth—that very moment a conflict began between the spiritual body and the physical body. The conflict, of course, is for the physical to try to overcome the spiritual, and the spiritual to try to rise above the physical. We all have things we'd like to do that aren't good for us. Our bodies want to do them. We all have appetites, passions, and desires. Every day there is a conflict that goes on when our physical body says, "I want to do this," and the spiritual body says, "no, we shouldn't do it. We *won't* do it." The physical body says, "Yes, we will." This argument goes on and on, as you've all experienced.

When the physical body finally overpowers the spirit and says, "Well, we will do it," and the spirit isn't strong enough to withstand, then the spirit steps down. Every time the physical body overcomes the spirit, the spirit continues to step down and down and down. Every time one fails to get on his knees in prayer in the morning, the spirit steps down. Every time one is unkind or dishonest, the spirit steps down. And in a gradual process, brothers and sisters, the spirit can step down, step by step, until there can come a time in your life when the spirit can lose the power to change, when your spirit has stepped so low that it loses the power to repent. The Lord tells us that this is possible in the scriptures.

Every time a conflict goes on the spirit has this toe-to-toe argument with the physical.

When the spirit controls and says, “No, we will *not* do this,” then the spirit climbs. Every time it controls again, it climbs again. Of course, you know what happens as the spirit continues to climb: it ascends to our Father, who sent us here.

This is our great challenge in this life: to learn how and then to *do* the things that will strengthen our spirits so they continue to climb. It isn’t an easy thing. It’s a very difficult thing, because we do choose to do some things that aren’t right for us. It seems, as we get lower and lower, our ability to resist becomes less and less, and the physical takes over the spirit more and more.

Now, I’d like to give some suggestions to you, and they’re very simple. There are just two or three really, that may help you strengthen your spirit so that when the time comes to make a decision, your spirit will be strong enough to say yes or no—whichever would be the correct answer.

Pray

I think the most important thing to do is to learn to pray. I’m amazed how many don’t understand this. As you can imagine, I interview a lot of missionaries, particularly now. I interview a lot of brethren who are to be called to be bishops, counselors, and so on. Long ago, I stopped asking the question “How often do you pray?” and started asking the questions “Brother So-and-so, Sister So-and-so, when was the last time you were on your knees?” “Brother and Sister So-and-so, how often do you get on your knees?” Because, you see, this is the real, down-to-earth prayer. Now, I agree that we all spend time during each day when we go to the Lord—as we’re driving somewhere or before a test for which we haven’t studied as we ought to. Those times are important, but every day, in the morning and in the evening, he deserves to have us kneel, acknowledge him as our Father, acknowledge

him as he really is. Now that’s one thing that each of us can do.

I know that some of you live in crowded conditions, but there is always a time and a place where you can go to be alone every day in prayer. Praying is probably the most important thing you will do any day.

Now, if you’ve tried, and it hasn’t worked—you didn’t get the answer immediately—then you try it again. If the answer still doesn’t come, then keep trying and don’t give up. You see, there’s a companion to praying, and that’s pleading. There are many who pray, but few who plead. You can read many examples in the scriptures about those who have learned to plead with the Lord as they’ve wanted special blessings.

There’s also a great lesson to learn in the praying process; this is the lesson of patience. I decided that one of the greatest lessons we learn on the earth is patience. We want things now. We don’t want them when the Lord wants us to have them, we want them right *now*. “Can’t he understand that?” This is sometimes the way we act.

In one of the recent meetings we had in the Temple the President and the General Authorities were together. President Kimball had turned the meeting over for testimonies. President Romney was bearing his testimony to us and telling us how much he enjoyed kneeling in prayer with the Brethren, how much he loved us, and what a great uplift it was to him to kneel and pray together. Then he went on to say how much he loved his wife and the great experience he had every morning and evening of kneeling with her in prayer. “But,” he said, “Brethren, the greatest experience I have every day, above all others, is when I go by myself into a room and close the door. I kneel down and I talk with the Lord.” That’s the greatest experience a prophet, a counselor in the First Presidency, has—to kneel in prayer. We could do no less than that. That’s one of the most important things we can do in

strengthening our faith and strengthening our spirits.

Study the Scriptures

Another point has to do with study of the scriptures. I know you've heard this time and again, and I know you probably have rationalized that you're busy in your life with school: you have many important things to learn, if you don't study them you won't pass, and you won't complete the educational process you came here for. But may I suggest to you that there isn't one of you who doesn't have time to read from the scriptures every day. I'm not suggesting a two- or three-hour study course every day. Even if it's only five minutes, it will give you a rejuvenation and a strength to your spirit that will help as the conflict of decision comes to you.

You know, your mind is an unusual instrument with tremendous capacity. You can put into your mind whatever you want to. You can put in good or you can put in garbage, yet your mind will take every bit of it. Everything your eyes see or your ears hear or your lips utter affects your spirit. If you see something that isn't good, it stays with you. If you see a picture that isn't right or hear words that aren't right, they stay with you. If you physically take something in that isn't good for you, such as poison or trash, your physical body has a way of getting rid of it, but your mind doesn't get rid of it that quickly. This great reservoir you have will just fill with whatever you're going to put into it. Sometimes there are things you can't help seeing or hearing. I don't mean you look for them, but occasionally you happen on something that wouldn't be good for you to hear or see. Thus it's important for you to keep your mind, your reservoir, filled with good things so that, as these things come in that aren't right, they'll come into a clear stream of water, as it were, and have little effect because of the purity of what's already there.

Make Correct Decisions

Even though you have learned to pray, and even though you learned to study, there comes a time with each of us when he must make the decision. The Lord has told us, as we read the scriptures, about the house built on the sand as well as the one built on the rock. The storms came to the house built on the sand as well as to the one built on the rock. The trials come to the faithful as well as to the unfaithful. The trials come to the pure as well as to the weak. The trials come to all, but this fortification we're talking about will help us make the right decisions. Still, the time comes when you must act, when you must do certain things.

For instance, the time comes when you must decide whether you will involve yourself in a petting situation or not. Now, no matter how you look at it, no matter how you rationalize, no matter how much you're in love, nor matter whether you think it's harmless, petting is wrong. There is no first step in petting that's right. It's wrong. The Lord is displeased and I'm sure he sheds many tears in behalf of those who have fallen into this trap, but you have to be the one to say no. This is the time when you can't turn around to your mother or your father or your bishop and say, "Should I or shouldn't I?" This is the time when *you* finally have to say, "No, it's wrong. I won't do it."

The fortification to say no comes as you prepare your spirit, as you strengthen it. You have to say, "No, I won't go to this X-rated or R-rated movie or many of the PG movies." You have to say no. You can't go to your stake president. He's not there on every date you have, and *you* have to decide (lucky for him and lucky for you.) You have to ask, "Am I going to leave when stories start getting vulgar?" You have to say, "Yes, I will," or, "No, I won't." You have to find out whether you have the courage to get up and walk out of a situation. You're the one that has to decide if you are going to repeat a dirty story or not. There

are things *you* have to do because of the great principle of free agency.

Sisters (if some of you need to squirm, why, go right ahead and squirm), you have to decide how modestly you're going to dress. You have to decide how you're going to wear your skirts and your blouses and all that goes with them. The time has to come when you have to decide that.

You also have to decide on the principle of confession. The principle of confession is an eternal principle. I'm honestly persuaded, brothers and sisters, to believe than any of us, of any age, who's had any sexual relations outside the bonds of matrimony and hasn't confessed them can never be exalted until he goes to his stake president, bishop, or branch president to confess them. Part of the repentance process is acknowledging and confessing to the proper priesthood leaders.

I have had some wonderful experiences, and I consider them such, when I have had people come to me as I was the bishop or stake president. I remember one sister who had been carrying this burden on her shoulders for fifty years. She came on time and said, "How do I get rid of it?" How can I feel relieved?" I told her what she needed to do. I have talked with others who have had similar experiences.

I can plead with you, and I can tell you what I know about the eternities to come (which all of us would know if we studied), but *you* have to decide—you have to do it. There's no way you can accomplish on the earth the things you're to accomplish, or enjoy the things of eternity you're to enjoy, until you have taken this step of confession.

The Lord bless you to understand this, and the Lord bless you to do the things that will give you the strength to do what's necessary. One is to pray, to plead with the Lord, every night and every morning. Another is to study from the scriptures every day. Another is to make correct moral decisions and to confess transgression if necessary. Still another is to be

of service to others, to look for someone that you can help. It's amazing what it does to you to help someone who needs help. Another is to fast as you need to. I've seen some tremendous things happen in the lives of people who have done these simple things in preparation. Before I conclude, let me tell you two or three of them.

We have a group of members of the Church in Vietnam. During the recent exodus, about a third of the members left. As they left, a branch president in Saigon sent out his wife and children, not knowing if he'd ever see them again, and he stayed behind because he knew the remaining members of the Church would need a leader to help them in a time like that. He was also translating the holy scriptures into that language, so he decided to stay. He's a simple man, as you are, but that kind of faith he has is developed in these very simple ways.

I met an elderly couple in the mission field not long ago. The man, when they left for the mission field, was blind in one eye. But when he was called on a mission, it was felt all would be well. The couple went to the mission field, and after they'd been out for two or three months, the man lost the sight of his other eye. He was now blind in both eyes. The mission president called him in and said, "I believe we should send you home because you can't see and do what you're supposed to do." But the man, very straightforwardly, said to the president, "President, don't send me home just because I can't see. I was called by the Lord to fulfill an eighteen-month mission. When I was called, he knew that I would be blind even if I didn't, yet he still called me. Now, please let me stay and finish my mission. My wife is my companion, and she'll help me see what I need to see, through her eyes. Don't send me home. Let me finish what I'm here to do." And he did. He stayed. His faith was developed in the very simple way we're talking about.

Experiences in the Mission Field

Some of the most interesting and rewarding experiences I've had have been in the mission field as I meet with the missionaries—the elders and the sisters. I have really thrilled at these experiences. I've seen evidences of faith that you wouldn't believe. Maybe I could tell you two that are kind of humorous and then one that's for real, too. They're all real.

While visiting a mission, we were in the mission home and had just had testimony meeting. The missionaries, instead of going back home to work the rest of the day, were exchanging experiences. There was a missionary there from Idaho; he was a farm boy with arms that were about twice the size of mine—just a really husky young fellow. They were doing some arm wrestling on the table. As each new contender came up, he'd put his arm up and put the other's down easily. No one could take him. Then one little fellow that looked about half my size said, "Elder, why don't you let me try?" The big farm boy got hold of him, and then started to push. The more the farm boy pushed, the more it was as if he had hold of a piece of steel: he couldn't get the little fellow's arm moving. His eyes started to get wider and wider, and pretty soon his own arm started to go back. This little 100-pound weakling started pushing his arm back and back, and the first thing you know, he had him down. As his arm went down, the elder from Idaho said, "He's beating me. I can't believe it. He's beating me!" But he did! You have great experiences in the mission field.

I've eaten some of the most interesting meals at the hands of the missionaries. After we'd had some Saturday afternoon meetings in one mission, the missionaries had invited the mission president, his wife, and me over for dinner; "dinner" is either an understatement or an overstatement. We went into their flat, where they had the table set, but we could see nothing on the table except a big bowl of sliced, cooked carrots. I saw a bunch of elders

in the kitchen really working. They were poking in a big boiling pot with knives. As I got close I could see they had potatoes in it. It looked as if they were hitting rocks. There was no way we would eat those potatoes that day, so we sat down at the table with the bowl of carrots (that was all there was on the table), and we started to eat.

The mission president leaned over to me and said, "Bishop, do you taste something unusual?"

And I said, "I do, President."

And he said, "Bishop, I believe they have their whole year's supply of salt in these carrots."

And I said, "I believe you're right, President, but let's keep eating, They'll never know the difference."

After a while they remembered that they'd forgotten to bring us our salad (it was Jello, and we had to drink it). Then we went on with the rest of the meal. I hope you brethren have learned what to cook by now!

These same kinds of missionaries, though, have the faith of Alma. I'll conclude with one more story about faith in the mission field. I was in Mexico a few weeks ago. One of the missionaries stood up to bear his testimony, and he let us know that he knew why he was there and that the Lord was watching over him. Then he told us about a family he and his companion were teaching. The father had had an operation two or three months earlier. The incision had opened up his stomach from his breastbone down to his belt. Because of the poor medical facilities there he hadn't healed, and he had a large open wound. He was not even able to sit up. The physicians seemed to be doing nothing to correct it, so he had to lie down again in bed for two months. The missionaries were teaching him and his family the gospel. The family liked what they heard, they accepted what they heard, and they were ready to be baptized the next Saturday. The father, of course, couldn't be, because he couldn't get out

of bed. The elder said that evening, after the family had accepted the challenge of baptism, they went home and were thinking about and reading some stories about missionaries of former days. They read about Brother Matthew Cowley and his great healing experiences down in the South Pacific. The elder said to his companion, "You know, Brother Cowley was a missionary. We're missionaries. He wasn't an apostle when he was out there on that first mission, yet the Lord helped him heal. Why can't he help us? Why won't he help us heal?"

Then the elders did something that's significant, and we must remember this: they decided to *prepare* themselves to call down a blessing from the Lord in behalf of this man. They spent a day in fasting and prayer. Before they left their home that evening, the knelt down and prayed, "Heavenly Father, now please bless us to say what thou wouldst have us say." They went to that family's home, laid their hands on the man, and administered to him in the power of the priesthood. They blessed him to get well, and they said they felt full confidence that he would. As they got up, the man also got up and walked around the bed for the first time in two months. He was tired, so he went back to bed, but three days later he went down into the waters of baptism and was baptized along with his family. This is the faith of the elders. This is the faith of those who prepare themselves to receive the blessings of heaven.

Now, lest you be discouraged, the Lord doesn't always come to our rescue that quickly. He doesn't always answer our prayer immediately, even after many pleadings. We could tell story after story of some babies that have been born after years of pleadings. One young couple had been married eleven years, and still no children. Finally they started to plead and plead, as they've never pled before, and it happened. The Lord holds back his answers sometimes for a very special reason, and that's so we'll be tested and tried and our faith will be strengthened.

The Lord bless you, brothers and sisters. The Lord bless you to get a glimpse of the glory that is available to all the children of our Father in heaven. But you have to do your part to get that glimpse of glory. I want to testify to you that whatever effort it takes to live righteously, whatever effort it takes to say no at the right time or to say yes at the right time, it's worth it. I testify to you that Jesus is the Christ, that he really does live, and that this is his Church. I know this without any reservations. I pray that you'll have the blessings that will sustain you as your testimony is strengthened, that you might have the happiness that will come to those who are faithful and devoted to our Father in heaven, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.