

Make Up Your Minds

MARION G. ROMNEY

I would like to express my appreciation and commendation to the musicians, to the brother who offered the prayer, and particularly to you people who had the courage to come out to listen to me. This is a great audience. I hope the Lord will bless you while I talk that we may be edified.

Brothers and sisters, my effort today will be to induce you to make up your minds, with a real commitment, on several important issues. We are privileged to live in one of the most momentous periods in the history of the world. The signs of our times portend the second coming of the Savior. His gospel has been restored that men might know how to prepare themselves to receive him. We are among the elect who know what we must do to receive the blessings of the great millennium which approaches. The question for each of us to respond to is "Will we do what we know must be done?"

Edgar A. Guest has expressed this idea in these lines:

*You are the fellow who has to decide
Whether you'll do it or toss it aside.
You are the fellow who makes up your mind
Whether you'll lead or will linger behind—
Whether you'll try for the goal that's afar*

*Or just be contented to stay where you are.
Take it or leave it. Here's something to do!
Just think it over. It's all up to you!
Nobody here will compel you to rise;
No one will force you to open your eyes.
No one will answer for you, yes or no,
Whether to stay there or whether to go;
Life is a game, but it's you who must say
Whether as cheat or as sportsman you'll play.
Fate may betray you, but you settle first
Whether to live to your best or your worst.*

*So whatever it is you are wanting to be,
Remember, to fashion the choice you are free.
Kindly of selfish, or gentle or strong,
Keeping the right way or taking the wrong.
Careless of honor or guarding your pride,
All these are questions which you must decide,
Yours the selection, whichever you do;
The thing men call character's all up to you.*

Marion G. Romney was second counselor in the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints when this fireside address was given at Brigham Young University on 3 November 1974.

Choose Good and Forsake Evil

Our individual success or failure in this life and in the life to come depends on whether or not we *make up our minds to choose the good and eschew the evil*. Let us face up to this fact and not deceive ourselves by pretending that we cannot distinguish between right and wrong. Every normal person instinctively knows good from evil. Mormon, in teaching this great principle, said:

Take heed, my beloved brethren, that ye do not judge that which is evil to be of God, or that which is good and of God to be of the devil.

For behold, my brethren, it is given unto you to judge, that ye may know good from evil; and the way to judge is as plain, that ye may know with a perfect knowledge, as the daylight is from the dark night.

For behold, the Spirit of Christ is given to every man, that he may know good from evil; wherefore, I show unto you the way to judge; for everything which inviteth to do good, and to persuade to believe in Christ, is sent forth by the power and gift of Christ; wherefore ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of God.

But whatsoever thing persuadeth men to do evil, and believe not in Christ, and deny him, and serve not God, then ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of the devil; for after this manner doth the devil work, for he persuadeth no man to do good, no, not one; neither do his angels; neither do they who subject themselves unto him.

And now, my brethren, seeing that ye know the light by which ye may judge, which light is the light of Christ, see that ye do not judge wrongfully; for with that same judgment which ye judge ye shall also be judged. [Moroni 7:14–18]

Some people call this faculty to judge between good and evil a conscience. Whatever its name, however, every person has one. The Lord confirmed this truth in this dispensation when he said in the Doctrine and Covenants, “The Spirit [of Christ] giveth light to every man

that cometh into the world; and the Spirit enlighteneth every man through the world, that hearkeneth to the voice of the Spirit. And every one that hearkeneth to the voice of the Spirit cometh unto God, even the Father” (D&C 84:46–47).

Knowing good from evil, my young friends, you just cannot be happy doing evil. We all accept the truth so simply and yet beautifully expressed in the lovely Primary song “I Am a Child of God”:

*I am a child of God,
And he has sent me here,
Has given me an earthly home
With parents kind and dear.*

*I am a child of God,
And so my needs are great;
Help me to understand his words
Before it grows too late.*

*I am a child of God,
Rich blessings are in store;
If I but learn to do his will
I'll live with him once more.*

Pray

Because we know that we are the children of God, one of the most important things we must *make up our minds* to do on our way to success and happiness is to *pray* regularly and fervently to him for guidance and strength. Long before the Church was organized, the Lord emphasized the importance of prayer in speaking to the Prophet Joseph. He said, “Pray always, that you may come off conqueror; yea that you may conquer Satan, and that you may escape the hands of the servants of Satan that do uphold his work” (D&C 10:5). Later on, but still before the Church was organized, he said to Martin Harris, “And again, I command thee that thou shalt pray vocally as well as in thy heart; yea, before the world as well as in secret, in public as well as in private. . . . Pray always,

and I will pour out my Spirit upon you, and great shall be your blessing—yea, even more than if you should obtain treasures of earth and corruptibleness to the extent thereof” (D&C 19:28, 38). In September 1830 the Lord counseled Thomas B. Marsh to “pray always, lest you enter into temptation and lose your reward. Be faithful unto the end, and lo, I am with you. These words are not of man nor of men, but of me, even Jesus Christ, your Redeemer, by the will of the Father” (D&C 31:12–13).

I suppose you are all acquainted with Amulek’s moving exhortation to pray as recorded in the thirty-fourth chapter of Alma. Personally, I never tire of his admonition:

Therefore may God grant unto you, my brethren, that ye may begin . . . to call upon his holy name, that he would have mercy upon you;

Yea, cry unto him for mercy; for he is mighty to save.

Yea, humble yourselves, and continue in prayer unto him.

Cry unto him when ye are in your fields, yea, over all your flocks.

Cry unto him in your houses, yea, over all your household, both morning, mid-day, and evening.

Yea, cry unto him against the power of your enemies.

Yea, cry unto him against the devil, who is an enemy to all righteousness.

Cry unto him over the crops of your fields, that ye may prosper in them.

Cry unto him over the flocks of your fields, that they may increase.

But this is not all; ye must pour out your souls in your closets, and your secret places, and in your wilderness.

Yea, and when you do not cry unto the Lord, let your hearts be full, drawn out in prayer unto him continually for your welfare, and also for the welfare of those who are around you. [Alma 34:17–27]

Now, young folks, when you pray, follow the counsel Jesus gave to his disciples on the mount when he said:

And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. [Matthew 6:5–6]

I have found in my life that there is great power in secret prayer. There is, of course, power in family prayer and prayers in groups anywhere. But when we pray in the presence of others, our words may be tempered to their ears. When we pray in secret, we know that only our Father can hear. It always humbles me to seek and obtain a private interview with him. Make up your minds to pray with such humility, earnestness, and faith that you can intimately commune with the Lord.

Observe the Word of Wisdom

Another thing you must do if you would merit the blessings of the great millennium is to *make up your minds to live the Word of Wisdom*. Make up your minds to implement its positive counsel, as well as to avoid the use of liquor, tobacco, and all other drugs. Consider for a moment the greatness of the need for the blessings promised to those who live the Word of Wisdom. Listen to these blessings and ponder them:

All saints who remember to keep and do these sayings, walking in obedience to the commandments, shall receive health in their naval 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.

And I, the Lord, give unto them a promise, that the destroying angel shall pass by them, as the children of Israel, and not slay them. Amen. [D&C 89:18–21]

Each of these four promised blessings—health, wisdom, strength, and protection against the destroying angel—is invaluable. I shall comment on but one of them, “wisdom and great treasures of knowledge.” Our civilization is disintegrating for want of wisdom. The wisdom of our wise men has perished, and the understanding of our prudent men has come to naught. The seriousness of our plight is widely acknowledged. For example, speaking at the University of Utah Hinckley Institute of Politics just a week ago, Dr. Benn Wood, a Columbia University professor, said:

Unless we develop politicians who are both wise and honest, we may be doomed as surely as were the dinosaurs who once were the overlords of [this] earth.

. . . problems that now threaten the world have the possible outcome of a major atomic war.

We have to realize and keep in mind that we are all citizens of the world. We are on a boat in space, and if the boat goes down [we’re] lost no matter which end of the boat [we] happen to be in. [Deseret News, 17 October 1974]

Kurt Waldheim, secretary-general of the United Nations, spoke in a like vein in introducing his report on the work of the United Nations, issued on August 30 of this year:

I do not wish to conceal . . . my profound concern about the situation which now prevails in the world, a concern which I know to be shared by responsible people everywhere. There is an almost universal sense of apprehension about where the tumultuous developments of our time may take us, a sense of deep anxiety [of] phenomena which we do not fully

understand, let alone control. In all the speculation, much of it depressing, about the shape of the future, there recurs a note of helplessness and fatalism which I find deeply disturbing. This is not a new phenomenon. Dire prophecies have often before been the symptoms of periods of transition and change in human society. What is new is the scope and scale of the problems which give rise to these apprehensions. They are problems of the world as a whole. . . .

Many great civilizations in history have collapsed at the very height of their achievement because they were unable to analyse their problems, to change direction, and to adjust to the new situations which faced them by concerting their wisdom and strength. Today the civilization which is facing such a challenge is not just one small part of mankind—it is mankind as a whole. [In “Introduction to the Report of the Secretary-General on the Work of the Organization,” 30 August 1974]

If you were to go into the councils where the decisions for ruling the nations of the earth today are made, you would find precious few men in them who could claim the blessings of “wisdom and great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures,” by reason of having obeyed the Word of Wisdom.

Pay Your Offerings

Now, having made up your minds to pray and to obey the Word of Wisdom, make up your minds to be honest with your Heavenly Father in paying your tithing. One of the sisters told me not to preach about tithing tonight, nor about the paying of fast offerings. Well, double your fast offerings and now listen to this on tithing. Tithing is a debt which we owe to the Lord. It’s not merely a voluntary offering. Great are the promised rewards for paying tithing. Here is one which the Lord gave through the prophet Malachi:

Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now

herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.

And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the Lord of hosts.

And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the Lord of hosts.
[Malachi 3:10–12]

That this promise of a material reward for the payment of tithing has universal application is evidenced by the fact that it was repeated by the resurrected Lord himself to the Nephites and by the further fact that he instructed them to write what he said in their records so that it might come down to us in the Book of Mormon (3 Nephi 24). Furthermore, when Moroni visited the Prophet Joseph Smith on the evening of September 21, 1823, he quoted to him “part of the third chapter of Malachi,” which is the chapter in which this promise is made. In harmony with this scripture, I have heard President J. Reuben Clark, Jr., a modern prophet, say that the Lord would never let any of his Saints who had been faithful in the payment of tithes and offerings go without the necessities of life. That the Lord faithfully fulfills this promise is witnessed by all peoples who have obeyed the law. The record, as far back as 700 B.C., says that Hezekiah

Commanded the people that dwelt in Jerusalem to [pay tithes and offerings]. . . .

And . . . the children of Israel brought in abundance . . . the tithe of all things . . .

. . . and laid them by heaps. . . .

Then Hezekiah questioned with the priests and the Levites concerning the heaps.

And Azariah the chief priest . . . answered him, and said, Since the people began to bring the offerings into the house of the Lord, we have had enough to eat, and have had plenty: for the Lord hath

blessed his people; and that which is left is this great store. [2 Chronicles 31:4, 5, 6, 9–10]

I myself, and I have no doubt that you also, have heard many people tell of temporal blessings resulting from the payment of tithing.

Another blessing for paying tithing is immunity from the burning which is to accompany the Lord’s imminent second advent:

Behold, now it is called today until the coming of the Son of Man, and verily it is a day of sacrifice, and a day for the tithing of my people; for he that is tithed shall not be burned at his coming.

For after today cometh the burning—this is speaking after the manner of the Lord—for verily I say, tomorrow all the proud and they that do wickedly shall be as stubble; and I will burn them up, for I am the Lord of Hosts; and I will not spare any that remain in Babylon.

Wherefore, if ye believe me, ye will labor while it is called today. [D&C 64:23–25]

Be Chaste

Another must for us Latter-day Saints is to *make up our minds to obey the sixth commandment, “Thou shalt not commit adultery”* (Exodus 20:14). In this connection, let us remember that the Lord has made no fine distinction between adultery and fornication. Alma, speaking to his son Corianton, emphasized the importance of this great commandment:

And this is not all, my son. Thou didst do that which was grievous unto me; for thou didst forsake the ministry, and did go over into the land of Siron, among the borders of the Lamanites, after the harlot Isabel.

Yea, she did steal away the hearts of many; but this was no excuse for thee, my son. Thou shouldst have tended to the ministry wherewith thou wast entrusted.

Know ye not, my son [“Know ye not?” young folks], that these things are an abomination in the sight of the Lord; yea, most abominable above all

sins save it be the shedding of innocent blood or denying the Holy Ghost? [Alma 39:3–5]

Pornography, sex permissiveness and perversion, fornication, adultery, and abortion will lead every person and community that surrenders to them to perdition. Make up your minds to avoid them at the price of your lives if need be. Remember President Clark’s powerful plea:

And now you young people—May I directly entreat you to be chaste. Please believe me when I say that chastity is worth more than life itself. This is the doctrine my parents taught me; it is truth. Better die chaste than live unchaste. The salvation of your very souls is concerned in this. . . .

To you young men I say that any woman who comes to you offering her person outside of legal wedlock, is playing the harlot.

I ask you young women to believe me . . . when I say that any young man who demands your chastity as the price of his love, is spiritually unclean, and is offering something that is not worth the purchase price; his love will turn to ashes under your touch; it will lead you to misery and shame; and too often it will curse you with dread disease. [Conference Report, October 1938, p. 138]

Ella Wheeler Wilcox emphasizes this penalty of disease in her poem “The Price He Paid”:

*I said I would have my fling,
And do what a young man may;
I didn’t believe in a thing
That the preachers had to say.
And I didn’t believe in a God,
That give us blood and fire,
Then flings us into hell
Because we follow the call of Desire.*

*And I said, Religion is rot—
And the laws of the world are nil;
And the bad man is he who is caught;
And cannot foot the bill.
And there is no such place called hell,*

*And heaven is only a truth,
When a man has his way with a maid
In the fresh keen hours of youth;*

*“And the money can buy us grace
If it rings on the plate of the church;
And money can quickly erase
Each sign of a sinful smirch.”
For I saw men everywhere
Hot-footing the road to vice;
And women and preachers smiled on them
So long as they paid the price.*

*So I had my joy of life
And I went the pace of the town,
And then I took me a wife
And started to settle down.
I had gold enough to spare
For all of the simple joys
That go with a house and a home
And a brood of girls and boys.
I married a girl with health,
And virtue, and spotless fame;
I gave in exchange my wealth,
And a proud old family name.
And I gave her the love of a heart
Grown sated and sick of sin,
My deal with the devil was up,
And the last bill handed in.*

*She was going to give me a child;
And when in anguish she cried
With love and fear I was wild;
But now, I wish she had died;
For the son she bore me was blind,
And crippled, and weak, and sore
And the mother was left a wreck.
Aye it was so, she had settled my score.*

*I said I would have my fling,
And they knew the paths I would go.
But no one told me a thing,
Of what I needed to know.
Folks talk too much of a soul,
From heavenly joys debarred;*

*But not enough of the babes unborn,
By the sins of their father scarred.*

Another poem, "To Be Happy," emphasizes the importance of high standards:

*You've go to be straight to be happy,
You've go to be square as a die.
Through wrong may come infinite pleasures,
But they fade, and they fly.
You've got to take life at its noblest
If you want to have gladness that counts,
Want the verve and the zeal of the spirit
That lifts you along as it mounts.
And, Oh! how it pays out of goodness
To draw for each day as we strive
Some measures of clean, healthy gladness,
In our work, and for being alive!
You've got to be true to be happy,
Be true to yourself over all,
And be blind to the lure of evil,
And deaf to its powerful call.*

To set up high standards and keep them,
With the records so straight and so true,
For nothing can ever condemn them,
If that is your creed, it will do.
*You've got to be clean to be happy,
You've go to be steadfast and pure.*
If you want what life gives that is earnest,
That will help, and will hold, and endure.
[Author unknown, quoted from the *Baltimore Sun*; emphasis added]

No matter what others say and do, our own consciences are the final arbiters. We will never be happy living below our own personal standards. That each of us will make up our minds, with real intent, to pray, live the Word of Wisdom, be an honest tithe payer, and strictly obey the sixth commandment, I humbly pray. leave you my blessings, my beloved young folks, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.