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However Faint the Light May Glow

Vaughn J. Featherstone
Of the Seventy
4 April 1980

I am delighted to be here. I have a son who is in Scotland: in fact, just arrived in Scotland. I understand that over there on the golf courses they have a little sign as you drive in that says, "Please do not pick up any loose golf balls until they stop rolling."

I also heard recently about the young man who was dutifully, dullfully practicing the piano. A salesman came down the street, knocked on the door and said, "Young man, is your mother home?" The boy replied, "What do you think?" At this early hour we may be dutifully gathered, but I hope not dullfully.

I'm here this morning and I'd like to spend some time and share some things—a couple of philosophies. The first one is by President J. Reuben Clark, whom I admire. I suppose for sheer pleasure reading, I enjoy his writings. I've taken the title of this talk, "However Faint the Light May Glow" from his quote I will now give. You will find that it is packed with things that I think are very applicable to you in your profession.

Every human being is born with the light of faith kindled in his heart as on an altar and that light burns and the Lord sees that it burns, during the period before we are accountable. When accountability comes then each of us determines how we shall feed and care for that light. If we shall live righteously that light will glow until it suffuses the whole body, giving to it health and strength and spiritual light as well as bodily health. If we shall live unrighteously that light will dwindle

and finally almost flicker out. Yet it is my hope and my belief that the Lord never permits the light of faith wholly to be extinguished in any human heart, however faint the light may glow. The Lord has provided that there shall be there a spark which, with teaching, with the spirit of righteousness, with love, with tenderness, with example, with living the Gospel, shall brighten and glow again, however darkened the mind may have been. And if we shall fail so to reach those among us of our own whose faith has dwindled low, we shall fail in one of the main things which the Lord expects at our hands.

As I have thought about this and thought about my own position, I think both in your profession and in our priesthood assignments we have received some pretty strong direction in these matters.

Joseph Addison, in a modern day parable, took the following ideas somewhat from the thoughts of Socrates. The parable is entitled "The Mountain of Miseries." He had been pondering over the celebrated thought of Socrates that if all of the misfortunes of mankind were cast into a common stock and then equally distributed to everyone, those who now think themselves the most unfortunate would be even more miserable with their allotment of new troubles. Socrates contended that the hardships and misfortunes that so concern us now would be far more agreeable than those we would get if we traded with any other person.

Mr. Addison says that as he was turning this idea over in his mind he fell asleep and dreamed that Jupiter issued a great proclamation that every mortal should bring his griefs and calamities to a great plain appointed for this and throw them down together in a common pile. In his dream, Mr. Addison was stationed in the center of the plain where he could observe everything that took place. His heart was melted as one by one he saw the whole human species marching by, groaning, and moaning under their burden of griefs and miseries. Then, in obedience to the decree and with great joy they threw down their various loads of care in the place appointed.

The resulting pile grew quickly into a prodigious mountain. One man threw down his poverty, another laid down his ill health, and another dropped his unsavory reputation. There was a multitude of old people who with great delight threw down their

wrinkles and their aches and pains. Many put down disabling worries, haunting fears, and distracting guilt complexes. A most interesting part of this procedure, Mr. Addison observed, was that many of the problems disposed of by this vast throng were more imaginary than real. Some threw down occupations which they despised, and some used this opportunity to get rid of an incompatible spouse, a dominating parent, or a disobedient child.

Mr. Addison was greatly surprised to learn that the largest part of this growing mountain was made up of bodily deformities. In the pile were great heaps of red noses, large lips, rusty teeth, crooked backs, protruding stomachs, glass eyes, and wooden legs. But he was even more greatly astonished by the fact that there was not a single vice or folly thrown into the heap. He had assumed that everyone would take this opportunity to get rid of his passions, his prejudices, and his various moral frailties. One profligate fellow came loaded down with his crimes, but upon searching into his bundle it was found that instead of throwing away his guilt, he had merely laid down his memory. Another worthless rogue flung away his conscience but hung onto his ignorance.

Mr. Addison tries to describe the delight with which each relieved himself of the burden that had so long oppressed him. There was another peculiar thing about this ordeal. When the sufferers were free from their own burdens they surveyed the heap of the miseries of others with great interest. When they discovered the kind of things that the others were discarding, they could not understand why the owners had looked upon these things as burdens or grievances at all. Each sufferer regarded his own miseries as immense and almost insufferable, though he usually felt that the problems of others were so much smaller in size that they were fairly insignificant.

But while this confusion of miseries and chaos of calamities was taking place, Jupiter issued a second proclamation in which it was ordered that each one should now pick up his exchange affliction and return to his habitation. A poor galley slave who had thrown down his chains now replaced them with a case of the gout. Some exchanged their sickness for poverty. Some traded their hunger for

a lack of appetite. Some traded care for pain, and some traded pain for care.

The females in the group were busily engaged among themselves bartering for figures and features; one was exchanging her grey hair for a carbuncle; another was taking over a short waist for a pair of round shoulders; and a third was trading in a homely face for a bad reputation. But strangely enough as soon as the blemishes were in the possession of their new owners somehow they also became very unsatisfactory. The sufferers now seemed to think that their new misfortunes and calamities were more disagreeable than the old ones had been.

I would like to suggest to you that vanity may possibly be—and I'm talking outside of the Holy Ghost, the Church, and spirituality in our lives—the great motivator. For vanity's sake, people even have surgery performed which they feel will change their image. We deal with people in our professions and hopefully relieve them of their burdens. We've got to get right into the heart, soul, and character and change lives. You see, the thing that really makes a man with a poor self-image happy, contented, and carefree, is service. We find in President Kimball the greatest example of service. When we talk about solving problems, I'm not sure we'll really solve anything for anyone unless they serve others. Dr. Carlton Malz talks about the great change that comes to patients who have plastic surgery, and that great change is in their confidence. When we really want to bring about a behavioral change, I believe it is through increasing integrity and strengthening character that we can help them obtain confidence.

As I mentioned, this is an extremely difficult group to whom we speak, because we realize you are very professional and talented. We wonder how we may add more to what you have done. As we think about you and your profession, there are some things that may deserve some counsel from those who walk in high places as we do. We do a great deal of counseling and suggest some things that might be important to you.

I would like to share three different verses with you. Please think of them not from the standpoint of listening to the rhyme or

to the words, as they are all beautifully constructed, but listen to them from a counseling standpoint. In a very real sense the great musician, the great poet, the great writers are all dealing from a great depth of understanding of the needs of men and women. The first 100 pages of *Les Miserables* by Victor Hugo has been as powerful an influence for good in my life as anything outside of the scriptures. Although in most cases they do not have your professional backgrounds, the poets may have an insight to human nature and other things that may help in counseling and dealing with people. Rudyard Kipling has written a beautiful poem entitled "If."

If you can keep your head when all about you
 Are losing theirs and blaming it on you;
 If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,
 But make allowance for their doubting too;
 If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,
 Or, being lied about, don't deal in lies,
 Or, being hated, don't give 'way to hating,
 And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise;

If you can dream—and not make dreams your master:
 If you can think—and not make thoughts your aim;
 If you can meet triumph and disaster
 And treat those two impostors just the same;
 If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken
 Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,
 Or watch the things you gave your life to broken,
 And stoop and build 'em up with worn out tools;

If you can make one heap of all your winnings
 And risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss,
 And lose, and start again at your beginnings
 And never breathe a word about your loss;
 If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew
 To serve your turn long after they are gone.
 And so hold on when there is nothing in you
 Except the Will which says to them: "Hold on;"

If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,
 Or walk with kings—nor lose the common touch;

If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you;
 If all men count with you, but none too much;
 If you can fill the unforgiving minute
 With sixty seconds' worth of distance run—
 Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,
 And—which is more—you'll be a man, my son!

Now, from my point of view, every single line of that is great counsel and becomes a healing experience when put into practice. The second verse I would like to discuss with you I share quite often. It is by Francis Loveland and is entitled "Opportunity."

Who do you walk through the field with gloves
 Missing so much and so much?
 Oh, thoughtless woman whom nobody loves,
 Who do you walk through the field with gloves
 When the grass is as soft as the breast of doves
 And shivering sweet to the touch?
 Why do you walk through the field with gloves
 Missing so much and so much?

The first time I heard this I was deeply impressed. I analyzed my own life and the poet blessed me with her counsel. Last week a special birthday party was held in the tabernacle for President Kimball. As I sat there I was deeply impressed. When it finally concluded and President Kimball walked out we were all standing. It was impressive to me that no one hurried for the doors to leave. It also impressed me that everyone must have felt somewhat as I did, all of a sudden it was over and we didn't want it to end. It was really a great spiritual experience as well as being informative about President Kimball. Then the following night at the special evening prepared by the community leaders to honor President Kimball at the Hotel Utah we heard Norman Vincent Peale speak. He told a story that happened in the Chicago Airport. The planes had been grounded and a woman who had somehow missed her plane was trying to get another. She was many months pregnant and the doctor had told her not to carry her other child who was not very old. As she stood in the long line she just pushed her baby up with her foot as we often do with our bags. Mr. Peale said

no one seemed to notice the plight of this poor woman. The baby was dirty and unkempt because of all the traveling. Finally, one man noticed her condition. Norman Vincent Peale said this man walked over and picked up the baby and held it. He then talked to the people in the line to see if this woman could move to the front of the line. They got to the front of the line and he assisted this woman in getting her tickets. He walked with her out to the gate and helped her get on the plane and then went about his business. That man was President Kimball. This touched me deeply. Mr. Peale was talking about President Kimball and all he represents.

This next verse went through my mind over and over again as I sat in the banquet for President Kimball. It is written by Ella Wheeler Wilcox and is entitled "Gethsemane."

All paths that have been, or should be
 Pass somewhere through Gethsemane.
 All those who journey, soon or late,
 Must pass within the garden's gate;
 Must kneel alone in darkness there,
 And battle with some fierce despair.
 God pity those who cannot say,
 "Not mine, but thine," who only pray,
 "Let this cup pass," and cannot see
 The purpose in Gethsemane.

If someone had a heavy heart and was going through a trial in life, I think a wise thing would be to hand them a copy of a poem such as this. It may give them a little different perspective to life.

When we are dealing with problems on a constant basis, it may be easy to develop an attitude that most everyone has that problem to some greater or lesser degree. This may not be true. Someone said that if you walk with a lame man for a year you'll walk with a limp. I met a psychiatrist back east who was also on the high council. His wife wanted an interview with me. She asked, "How do you feel about masturbation?" I said, "What do you mean?" She said, "How serious is it in the Church?" I told her, "It is serious. The Spirit withdraws," and I went on to explain. She said, "I disagree with you and so does my husband. He's a psychiatrist and

he says that most everyone does it.” She must have been about fifty years old and she herself had been involved in the practice and she didn’t feel one particle of guilt. Her husband came and I talked with them together. I asked him if this was the kind of counsel he was giving and he told me that it was. I said, “That is not according to the Church standards, let’s talk about it.” So, we talked about it. At that time I had not yet been a mission president, but later on when I was called to preside over a mission I saw that nearly 80% of the missionaries literally go through their entire mission and do not have the problem. Yet this woman and her husband would not think it possible. Maybe they were too close to those few who have the problem. Those that he interviewed, that came to his office, those he dealt with all day long were so involved with the problem that he “lost his perspective.” Let me suggest to you that we ought to be careful when we start coming across problems in our counseling. As recent as last night, I heard someone talking about homosexuality and how rampant it is in the Church. Of course, there are far too many cases, but of all the men I’ve interviewed (and they ask us every time we interview a bishop, high councilors, stake presidencies, or prospective stake presidents to ask that question), and all that we’ve interviewed to serve missions (approximately 30,000), few have ever been involved in homosexuality. If we went on that basis we would hardly find any in the Church. I realize there are a lot undercover and there are far, far too many in the Church, but there aren’t as many as people would lead us to believe.

When I was twelve I was ordained a deacon. My older brother was ordained a teacher. He was ordained first. I had come from a background, as many of you know, where my folks were inactive. My mom wasn’t even a member of the Church and my dad was an alcoholic. I don’t think we had prayer in our home until after I was eighteen. So, I went to the ordination appointment. I had been involved in Primary and I felt like if ever a little kid of twelve was tempted, I was tempted. I thought there has been no one that has been as tempted as I have. I sat there and listened. The fellow that ordained my brother gave him a blessing and promised him that he would have the power to overcome temptation. That

absolutely thrilled me. I plead in my heart, "Dear God, please give me the same power to overcome temptation." The man who ordained me did not say those words. I went home and thought, "Well, he was right, he really knows I do not deserve that blessing." I went through the next two or three years feeling that I might fall at any moment. At that age the problems were not all that serious, but later on it could have led to something really serious. Then I came across the verse by Paul. I don't remember whether someone quoted it to me or whether I just happened to read it, but I do remember it was just like clear, crystal water to parched earth. Paul said, "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able" (I Corinthians 10:13). I knew I was included in the deal. All of a sudden, I realized that I had the power that God would never let Satan tempt me more than I could withstand. I can't tell you what that did for me. I guess because of that verse, whenever I bless someone, I always bless them with the power to overcome temptation, knowing that I have a right. I think it's important for us to know that, as Longfellow said, "Give what you have to give, for to someone it may be more important than you would ever dare to suppose." Now, if I could have had that assurance three years earlier it would have made a lot of difference. Thank goodness I understood when I did and not after I had committed some great transgression feeling that I didn't have enough will power to withstand the temptation.

We have impressions come to us. I interviewed a homosexual just this past week who is just beginning college and is living with a returned missionary. They have sexual relations three times a week. His father has been active in the Church. He came to me in agony and despair, having pled with the Lord literally for six months. He wondered if I would help them. I interviewed the young man for one hour and fifteen minutes. May I suggest to you that during the past six months I have not had more direct revelation than I did in this hour and fifteen minutes. I do not have the talents and skills you have, but I know that the God of heaven, because the father was doing everything he could, poured into my mind words and knowledge and understanding and

rebuttals. I of myself do not have the ability to do or the knowledge to say what I said. I don't know whether we turned him around or not, but at least I knew that all of the powers of heaven for that moment seemed to rest on me to try to bless him. We do have our free agency, that cannot be taken away from us. Worlds without end, free agency will not be taken from us. It is impressive to me how the Lord does bless us with revelation.

Now, to turn to your theme today, "Oh, that cunning plan of the evil one, oh the vainness and the frailties and the foolishness of men. When they are learned they think they are wise and they harken not to the counsels of God, for they set it aside supposing they know of themselves, wherefore their wisdom is foolishness and it profiteth them not and they shall perish." What a blessing when you meet together as you do and have the wisdom of the world along with the kind of power of which I have a testimony. When you combine those, professionalism and inspiration, then everything is right.

President Lee was in Southern Utah some years ago, possibly in the early sixties or the late fifties. He went to a stake and they told him of an incident that occurred in their area. They had not had rain for months and they just had to have rain. So, the whole community, all of the members of the Church, came together and fasted and prayed on a particular Sunday. It was the whole objective of the stake and even of the community to pray for the needed water. They spent the whole day fasting and praying Sunday and the rain didn't come; and Monday, the rain didn't come; and Tuesday. So, the community leaders and some of the Church leaders got together and hired a plane and all of the facilities to seed the clouds. After they did that, the rains came. The stake president said to President Lee, "I don't know if the rain that came was the rain we prayed for or the rain we paid for." I wonder, too. I wonder just how much faith we really have. I wonder if they couldn't have just turned it over to the Lord and left it with Him, after all the fasting and prayer. The whole Church united in prayer for rain a couple of years back. The prayers and fasting were answered and before the year was over we had more rain than normal.

In Part II, Chapter XXII of Cervantes' *Don Quixote de la Mancha*, Sancho Panza has just listened to Quixote discuss the divinity of man. Now, I'm not very good at Spanish, but I want to use his words: "Bien predica quien bien vive y no se otras tiogias." A loose translation would be, "He teaches well who lives well."

This past week I've done some research and study so that this Sesquicentennial year will mean a little more to me. I want to share with you one incident that I have read. Edward Partridge had been taken into the town square and had been bedaubed with tar and feathers and ridiculed. He, along with five other men, had offered themselves as a ransom for the Church. They had said they would give their lives for the Church and for the Prophet Joseph, anything to stop the cruel punishment the Church was receiving. "Leave our people alone, do with us as you may, punish us, take our lives, anything. We offer ourselves as ransom for the Church." I cannot tell you the feeling I had as I read that. I read it a second time and then closed the book to do some serious thinking. Elder Faust offered his life for two missionaries who had been kidnapped in Uruguay and taken across the border into the jungles of Paraguay. When the ransom note and letter from the kidnappers was received, Elder Faust and the mission president contacted these men and said, "Would you turn those two young men loose? They are just missionaries, let us take their place." They would have been willing to give their lives.

What I am saying is that this is a magnificent church, the teachings are true, and we are guided by a prophet. Again, the light is there in every single soul who is born into this life. The light is there through their early years until they are accountable. The Lord makes certain it does not go out during this time. When we are accountable we each are responsible for what we do with that light.

Think about President Kimball and his light and all that he has done in this life for you and for me with the service he renders. I don't think we even begin to understand it. The other night, following the conclusion of the special Tabernacle program honoring him, I thought about him. During the half an hour it

takes me to drive home, I thought that I am a disciple of Christ. I love Him with every particle of my heart and soul. I thought about the great and noble thing Edward Partridge was willing to do for the Church. I am also a disciple of President Kimball. He has literally given his life for the Church in a different way. I would really like to be filled with the kind of love, care, and concern which he has. I am a disciple of President Tanner. I suppose no man I've ever met exemplified integrity like President Tanner does. I am a disciple of President Romney, who has the greatest faith. I've never known anyone, save the Prophet himself, with greater faith. I am a disciple of each one of the members of the Twelve. President Benson is a man of great courage, great conviction, and absolute humility.

God bless you that you will see things within the appropriate parameters that the Lord has set and follow those principles. When anyone gets outside of those boundaries, their counseling may be questionable. Someone questioned Elder McConkie the other day about a certain policy. He said, "If you will just follow the present practice of the Church, that is the interpretation of that scripture."

Again, know that I know with all my heart and soul that this is the Lord's work. God bless you for the great care you have and the wonderful rehabilitation you give to heavy hearts, minds that are clouded and dimmed, and to those who really need. I believe you are in the most Christlike service, because yours is a healing service. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.