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This You Can Count On

Author(s): Richard L. Evans

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Abstract: “The eternal purposes of the Lord shall roll on, until all his promises shall be fulfilled” (Mormon 8:22). In making choices do not be deceived. Trust in the laws of God upon which you can rely.

the war against the evil forces which seem almost to overwhelm us. The eternal verities revealed from God, through his inspired prophets, have not and will not change.

Let us "put on the whole armour of God, that [we] may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." There is no other way of safety.

God is not dead. He lives, for he has

appeared—together with his Beloved Son Jesus Christ—in our day. This I know, as I know that I live, and I bear this humble witness in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen. ○

Saturday afternoon session, October 4, 1969

This You Can Count On

Richard L. Evans

Of the Council of the Twelve

● President McKay, and my beloved brethren and sisters:

My heart has been touched, as I am sure yours have been, by the beautiful singing of this MIA girls' centennial chorus. I am sure that for them, in their loveliness at this time of life, it is wonderful "to discover that they are being discovered!"

Now, with their presence and their participation, it would seem appropriate to turn to this year's MIA theme: "For the eternal purposes of the Lord shall roll on, until all his promises shall be fulfilled." (Morm. 8:22.) This, my beloved young friends, whoever you are, wherever you are, whatever you're thinking, wherever you're going—this, I promise you, you can count on.

We come to you today—to you, our beloved young people everywhere—with an awareness that you face a complexity of choices such as we at your age had never heard of, and yet with an awareness that the principles are as clear-cut as they ever were, as they always were.

And in the few moments I have, I'd like to touch quickly upon a number of subjects:

First, I know of no more complete or important commitment, in time or in eternity, than marriage. In marriage we choose the closest companion of our life. In marriage we choose the parents of our children and the heritage they have. Don't let this choice ever be made except with earnest, searching, prayerful consideration, confiding in

parents, in faithful, mature, trustworthy friends, making sure the person you marry shares your ideals, your convictions; a person with ambition, integrity, and intelligence; a person of cleanliness, of faith, of reverence and respect, to whom you would be willing to trust your children, and your own happiness, forever. Oh, be sure you choose a mate of character and kindness. And don't be stamped by the music and the moonlight.

May I share a quotation from President Tanner that is much worth remembering: "The parents that you should honor more than any others are the parents of your children-to-be. Those children are entitled to the best parents that it is possible for you to give them—clean parents." (Church News, April 19, 1969, p. 2.)

And now on the matter of morality: May I cite two significant sources: "The finest piece of mechanism in all the universe," said Dr. David Starr Jordan, of Stanford University, "is the brain of man and the mind which is its manifestation. . . . The sober man is the one who protects his brain from all that would do harm. . . . The Twentieth Century . . . will be strenuous, complex . . . [and] will ask for men of instant decision, men whose mental equipment is all in order. . . . No one can afford to look downward for his enjoyments. . . . The pleasures of vice are mere illusions, tricks of the nervous system, and each time these tricks are played it is more and more difficult

for the mind to tell the truth. Such deceptions come through drunkenness and narcoticism. In greater or less degree all nerve-affecting drugs produce it: nicotine, caffeine, opium, cocaine, and [all] the rest, strong or weak. Habitual use of any of these is a physical vice. A physical vice becomes a moral vice, and . . . to cultivate vice is to render . . . our mind incapable of normal action. . . . One and all, these various drugs . . . tend to give the impression of a power or a pleasure . . . which we do not possess. . . . One and all their function is to force the nervous system to lie. One and all the result of their habitual use is to render the nervous system incapable of ever telling the truth. . . . Indulgence . . . destroys wisdom and virtue; it destroys faith and hope and love. . . . Whatever you do, . . . count all the cost."

Thus spoke the eminent educator, Dr. Jordan. And this he added: "To be clean is to be strong. . . . To say no at the right time, and then stand by it, is the first element of success. . . . He is the wise man who, for all his life, can keep mind and soul and body clean." (Selected from *The Strength of Being Clean* and *The Call of the Twentieth Century*.)

And now, for the second source: Dr. Frank Crane said: "Nature keeps books pitilessly. Your credit with her is good, but she collects. . . . She never forgets; she sees to it that you pay her every cent you owe, with interest. . . . Every generation a new crop of fools comes

on. They think they can beat the orderly universe. They conceive themselves to be more clever than the eternal laws. They snatch goods from Nature's store and run. . . . And one by one they all come back to Nature's counter and pay—pay in tears, in agony, in despair; pay as fools before them have paid." (*Four Minute Essays: Pay, Pay, Pay!*)

There isn't any way to cheat nature, to bypass law, to run away from life. The commandments haven't been repealed; the laws of morality, the spiritual laws, the laws of life are still in force and effect.

Oh, don't let others drag you down,

and don't drag yourself down. No matter what cynical or immoral or even honestly mistaken people may say, don't let them destroy your faith or your virtue, or lead you to a lower way of life.

And when they try to tell you what you're missing, you tell *them* what *they're* missing: peace and self-respect and a quiet conscience—happiness—and the assurance of the highest opportunities of everlasting life.

Now to turn to the question of love: There are tests to which love should be put. Don't trust the love of anyone who would propose to you what is improper. Don't trust the love of any-

one who would hurt or embarrass you or tempt you to evil, or endeavor to induce you to do that which would lead you to shame or sorrow.

The test of love is in how we live. If we do really love someone, we would do for them, or induce them to do, only what would be for their happiness and peace and protection, for their benefit and blessing.

If we truly love our parents, we will prove our love by living honorable lives and by respecting them, caring for them, taking them into our confidence.

If we love the Church, we will prove that love by how we serve and honor our membership in it.

Sometimes we say we love the Lord, but he has told us how to prove that love: "If ye love me, keep my commandments." (John 14:15.)

Don't be deceived by false or selfish or counterfeit love from any source.

Now, as to faith: Believe me, you can count on all that God has said. More than a hundred thirty-six years ago, to a young prophet he said simply, ". . . tobacco is not . . . good for man. . . ." (D&C 89:8.) It has taken medical science more than a century to prove that the Lord knew what he was talking about. When he tells us something, he expects us to believe it. It doesn't take faith to believe the Word of Wisdom any more. It just takes a little common sense.

I have been privileged to know some of the most brilliant men of the earth, in many countries, worldwide. I have a great respect for research and scholarship and for the skills and talents and minds of competent men. But I have never known a man who knew enough so that I was willing to trust him with my everlasting life. I only know one place to put such trust. Oh, I plead with you to go all the way with your Father in heaven, for you will see—all of us shall—in time and in eternity the promises of God fulfilled. This you can count on.

Now a word about repentance: It seems significant that repentance is given as the second great principle of the gospel: "Faith, repentance. . . ." (Article of Faith 4.)

We all make mistakes. If our repentance is sincere, we have the right to approach Him for forgiveness, but remember we are not entitled to any quota of mistakes. It is *always* better that we don't make them. And surely we shouldn't go on stupidly or stubbornly repeating the same old mistakes over and over again. We ought to have learned our lessons. It isn't enough to be just as good today as we were yesterday. We should be better. The Lord doesn't deal in theories. When



Richard L. Evans

The Spoken Word

A lesson from Huckleberry Finn

Concerning this matter of supposed emancipation from morality, may we forthrightly face and reaffirm this fundamental fact: that unhappiness, frustration, and impairment of the minds and lives of young and old alike come with failure to keep the commandments. Explain it any way you will, in technical or in commonplace terms, or in the jargon of those who want to rid themselves of all restraint, yet it all adds up to an overwhelming evidence that in this we are dealing with eternal truths, and that men cannot escape the consequences of their own conduct—that, indeed, they pay a heavy price when they degrade their bodies, minds, and morals. Well, we cannot leave it there. There has to be an answer—and there is: The answer is the simple, honest process of repentance. But to be relieved of any burden at all, a person's repentance must go deep beyond the surface—a repentance that is honestly sincere; an actual change of heart, of life; a real and literal departure from the errors of the past. And those who try to lift the load in any other way will not find the peace they so much seek. This point is made by Mark Twain as, in ungrammatical and vernacular language, this simple, honest message comes from Huckleberry Finn: "It made me shiver," he said. "And I about made up my mind to pray and see if I couldn't try to quit being the kind of boy I was and be better. So I kneeled down. But the words wouldn't come. Why wouldn't they? It warn't no use to try and hide it from Him. . . . I knowed very well why they wouldn't come. It was because my heart warn't right, it was because I warn't square, it was because I was playing double. . . . I was trying to make my mouth say I would do the right thing and the clean thing, . . . but deep down in me I knowed it was a lie, and He knowed it. You can't pray a lie—I found that out."¹ So much for a lesson learned by Huckleberry Finn—a lesson all of us must sometime learn.

¹Mark Twain, *Huckleberry Finn: You Can't Pray a Lie*, ch. 31.

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he says perfection is possible, we'd better be improving. But one of the most devilish doctrines that anyone could advocate would be to say that because someone had made a mistake, it wouldn't matter if he made one more, or many more. The best time to repent is now, before the next time.

But don't let anyone tell you ever that you are beyond repenting, or that there is no point in repenting, or that it is all right to postpone repentance.

I think it was our beloved Brother Harold B. Lee who said that the heaviest burden in the world is the burden of sin. Don't carry it around with you. Don't tamper with evil. Don't flirt with temptation. Don't live with a quarreling conscience. Confide in those who love you, who can help you—your parents, your bishops, your stake presidents. Clean out the clutter of the past and live to have peace and a quiet conscience.

Many centuries ago Mencius said, "Let men decide firmly what they will not do, then they will be free vigorously

to do what they ought to do." (*Discourses*, iv.) All of us ought to decide firmly what we will *not* do. We shouldn't have to argue with ourselves at each time of temptation. Taught as we are, our decisions against evil ought to be more or less automatic.

In the words of Marcus Aurelius, "If it is not right, do not do it; if it is not true, do not say it." (*Meditations*, Bk. xii, sec. 17.)

And now, as to law: We have seen men walk on the moon and we have marveled at the minds of men. But remember this: It was possible to go to and from the moon because there are laws that can be counted on, because the Creator keeps creation in its course.

I witness to you, my beloved young friends, that the moral and spiritual laws are as much in force and effect as are the physical laws.

Study, learn. Don't drop out. Seek wholesome knowledge. Develop your talents. Increase in competence. Take counsel. There is safety in counsel. Don't stubbornly and rebelliously de-

cide to go it alone in life. Keep your sense of humor. Keep your standards. Love and respect your parents. Keep close to the Church. Be active in it. Love and serve your country, your community. Love and enjoy life. Choose the right. Keep the heritage you have. Seek the guidance of your Father in prayer. Be happy. Have faith: "For the eternal purposes of the Lord shall roll on, until all his promises shall be fulfilled."

This I witness to you as I witness that God lives; that you are his children; that he sent his divine Son to show us the way of life and redeem us from death; that the gospel has been restored to earth. This you can count on—and your life can be as happy and wonderful as anyone would ever want—"not for just an hour, not for just a day, not for just a year, but always." (Irving Berlin, "Always.")

God bless you and be with you, my beloved young friends, this day—and always—I pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen. ○

The Way, the Light, and the Life

Bernard P. Brockbank

Assistant to the Council of the Twelve

● My dear brothers and sisters: It is a joy to be in the atmosphere of peace and love, and that is what seems to be radiated here today. I would like to give a few general thoughts in the few moments that I occupy. I would like to quote a few statements from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Jesus said, "For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me." (John 6:38.)

"For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved." (John 3:17.)

Brothers and sisters, our assignment is not to condemn the world, but to help save the world.

"I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.

"I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep." (John 10:10-11.)

". . . I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." (John 14:6.)

". . . I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." (John 8:12.)

In Jesus Christ and his teachings and example we have God's truth; we have God's way and God's example for full and abundant life.

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is the Savior of the world, the Messiah and Redeemer of all mankind, and the only mediator between God and mortal man.

Jesus said, ". . . no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." (John 14:6.)

The apostle Peter said, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4:12.)