

Elder M. Russell Ballard's talk given Hyrum Smith's 200th Birthday Program in the Assembly Hall on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, Feb.13, 2000

My brothers and sisters and family, may I express on behalf of all of us our deep appreciation to all of those who have had anything to do with this program tonight. I have the sense and assurance that Hyrum is looking upon our proceedings and I think he is pleased.

How pleased we are, and how honored we are, to have President and Sister Hinckley join us tonight. We hope you children will record in your journals tonight that the President of the Church in his expression of love for our forefather, Hyrum, joined us in this birthday celebration. President Hinckley, as near as we can estimate, and it certainly in an approximate estimate, we think there is about 31,000 living descendants of Hyrum Smith. Probably somewhere in the proximity of 35,000 total descendants of Hyrum. When you compare that with the approximate estimated posterity of the prophet Joseph, his would number somewhere between eight hundred to nine hundred. So, from the family of Hyrum Smith, there rests a great responsibility for the carrying on of the great work of building the kingdom of God. I think these words spoken by Pres. Heber J. Grant are words that we should all be familiar with.

"There is no better example of an older brother's love than that exhibited in the life of Hyrum Smith for the prophet Joseph Smith. They were as united and as affectionate and as loving as mortal men could be. There never was one particle of jealousy that oft times fills the hearts of older brothers toward younger brothers who seem to be preferred ahead of them. There was no place for jealousy in the heart of Hyrum Smith. No mortal man could have been more loyal, more true, more faithful in life or in death, than was Hyrum Smith, to the prophet of the Living God."

We've already heard the tender experience of Joseph F. saying good-bye to his father at the age of five. I think the words of John Taylor after the Martyrdom are words we should have centered into our hearts and into our minds.

As he recorded, "I had full view of our beloved and now murdered brother Hyrum, there he lay as I left him. He had not moved a limb. He lay placid and calm, a monument of greatness even in death, but his noble spirit had left its tenement was gone to dwell in the regions more congenial to its exalted nature.

Now if you have studied your family history at all you are acquainted with these words of Joseph and Hyrum's mother, Lucy Mack Smith, when she cried out upon learning of the death of her sons, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken this family!"

She reported hearing a voice, "I have taken them to myself, that they may have rest." Then she looked upon the mortal remains of her two sons, she said, "I seemed almost to hear them say, 'Mother, weep not for us, we have overcome the world by love; we carried to them the gospel, that their souls might be saved; they slew us for our testimony, and

thus placed us beyond their power; their ascendancy is for a moment, ours is an eternal triumph."

The Times & Seasons, upon the passing of Hyrum Smith, recorded, He lived so far beyond the ordinary walk of man that even the tongue of the wildest slanderer could not touch his reputation. He lived godly and he died godly. Of Hyrum, Brigham Young said, "Hyrum was as good a man as ever lived. His integrity was of the highest order. I used to think, and think now, that angels in the presence of the Father and the Son possessed no more integrity in their hearts than did Hyrum Smith."

And of course the tribute of his younger brother, Joseph, "I could pray in my heart that all my brethren were like unto my beloved brother Hyrum. Who posses the mildness of a lamb, the integrity of a Job, and in short the meekness and humility of Christ. I love him with that love that is stronger than death for I have never had occasion to rebuke him, nor he me."

And the Lord's tribute to our marvelous grandfather, "Blessed is my servant, Hyrum Smith, I the Lord love him because of the integrity of his heart because he loveth that which is right before me sayeth the Lord."

I found these words of Joseph F. Smith that I think would apply to all of the family. He said in a letter he wrote to one of his children, "Now it seems to me a most dreadful thing for any of the children of these martyrs to dishonor their names or tarnish their sacred memories by deserting the righteous cause for which they lived and died. What would they think of us if we were to deny the faith that they had freely gave their lives for? They could only look upon us with pity and sorrow. We are their children and they love us as we love one another. We should seek to honor them and to follow their footsteps.

May the Lord bless us my beloved brothers and sisters and family members that we may bear the name of Hyrum Smith as his sons and daughters that we may carry forward this great work in whatever capacity we may be called to serve; that we may do it with the same dignity, the same strength and courage; that we may do our part so when that day comes, as it surely will, when each one of us will pass through the veil, that we might be embraced by him and that he might smile upon us because we have carried his name as he deserves us to carry it.

I witness and testify to you that I know this is the church of Jesus Christ; the Savior of the world lives; that he's appeared to the prophet Joseph Smith and he's restored to the earth the fullness of the ever lasting gospel and that he and Hyrum carried the banner fully because our Father in Heaven had called them and commissioned them to do.

May the peace of the Lord abide with us. May we remember this celebration of Hyrum Smith's 200th birthday is my humble prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.