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## DISCOURSE

*Delivered at the Bear Lake Stake Conference, Paris, Idaho, Sunday, November 17th, 1895, by*

**PRESIDENT JOSEPH F. SMITH.**

[REPORTED BY ARTHUR WINTER.]

I will take the liberty to read a few words from the New Testament:

Then said Jesus unto them, when ye have lifted up the Son of Man, then shall ye know that I am He, and that I do nothing of myself, but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things.

And He that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please Him.

As He spake these words, many believed on Him.

Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on Him, if ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed;

And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

They answered Him, we be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man; how sayest Thou, ye shall be made free?

Jesus answered them saying, Verily, verily, I say unto you, whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.

And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever.

If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

I know that ye are Abraham's seed; but ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you.

I speak that which I have seen with my Father; and ye do that which ye have seen with your father.

They answered and said unto Him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham.

But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God: this doth not Abraham.

Ye do the deeds of your father. Then said they to Him, we be not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God.

Jesus said unto them, if God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but He sent me.

Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word.

Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.

And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not.

Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me.

He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God.

Then answered the Jews, and said unto Him, say we not well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil?

I call your special attention to these two verses:

Then said Jesus unto those Jews which believed on Him, if ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed;

And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

I do now know that I shall speak to this text; I may speak a long way from it; but I have read these passages of Scripture this morning that we may, if we are led by the good spirit, reflect upon the words that Jesus spoke and the truth which is conveyed therein. For we are told that if we continue in His word, then are we His disciples indeed; and we shall know the truth, and the truth shall make us free. We are also told that he who is in sin is a servant of sin, and if he be a servant of sin, then he cannot be free; but if a man receive the truth and abide in it, he is no longer a servant but a free man in the house of God, because the truth hath made him free. Then if we are members of the house, and if we continue in the word of God we are His disciples; and we shall know the truth, and to know the truth and abide in it is freedom. But he that has not freed himself from sin is in bondage to sin, and is theretofore the servant of him who is the master of sin and the father of lies; and he cannot be free so long as he continues in that bondage.

The object we have in view is to learn the truth; for it is the truth that will make all men free—free in this life, free in the life to come, like the Son of God; not a servant, but a son and heir, a joint-heir with Jesus Christ, and entitled to the blessings of the Father's house—the blessings of peace, of love, of charity, of righteousness and of humility before the Lord, loving one another and seeking to do good one to another, and thus endeavoring to build up the Zion of God in the land to which He led our fathers and some of us who are still living; for it happens that I am one who was led to this land; and though a child at the time, yet I was led here by the hand of Providence, and by the blessing of the Almighty I have been preserved as one of the children of God in this goodly land. Those of the people who were not led here by the Spirit of God, but who have been so fortunate as to be born in this land, are still under the same obligations to serve God and to work righteousness as those who have been led here. So far as that is concerned, there should be no difference in regard to our fidelity to the truth or our obedience to the commands of God. We should all be one in works of righteousness. If there can be any difference at all between those who have been led here and those who have been born here, the latter should

be a little in advance of those who have come here from abroad. For many of us that have come from the fatherlands to this land which the Lord has chosen for the gathering of the people, have come with many of the traditions of our fathers clinging to us; and it is difficult sometimes for men who have been born, brought up and educated in the ways of the world and the traditions of the fathers, to overcome those traditions and to bring themselves entirely into subjection to the requirements of the Gospel. But the children that are born in Zion—who have the privilege of coming upon the earth in this goodly land unto which their fathers have been led, should be at least freer from these traditions and ways of the world than their fathers; and it should be easier for them to serve the Lord, to learn the truth and become free men, than it was for their fathers. For so long as any tradition of error clings to me and so far as I yield to the influences of that tradition, just so far I am still in bondage to that sin—for where the truth has been revealed and where men have the opportunity to learn the ways of the Lord, error is sin. A man may err in judgment because of a lack of knowledge—to him that is not sin; but where the light is and men continue in darkness, where the truth is and men continue in error, then they are under the bondage of sin and in transgression, and the traditions of the fathers hinder their progress to the extent to which they yield to them.

Now, in the Gospel of Jesus Christ we are taught principles of truth. The word of God is truth. There is no word that God hath spoken to the children of men for their guidance that is not true. And it is the business of men and women especially those in this Church to learn what is the word and will of God. When they have learned it, it is their duty to accept it in their hearts, incorporate it in their lives, and abide by it. Then they become the disciples of Christ in very deed. Then they shall know the truth. They shall not merely believe the truth because it is stated by one in whom they have confidence; but they shall know the truth, and the truth shall make them free. It is only the truth that can make men free. Sin and error will not; nor will tradition, unless the tradition be right and come down through the proper channel. There are holy traditions that have been transmitted to the children of men as well as erroneous traditions. One of the holy traditions that has come down from Adam to the present day is, that there is a God in the heavens, and that He is the ruler of the heavens and of the earth; that He has sent His children upon this earth to in-