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THE DUTY OF PRAYER.

Remarks made at the General Conference of the Church, in the Tabernacle, Salt City, Friday, October 5th, 1894, by

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[REPORTED BY ARTHUR WINTER.]

There are so many subjects upon which an Elder, if he can but enjoy the influence of the Holy Spirit, may speak, that unless the promptings are direct to him it is difficult sometimes to make a selection. Up to this point the Lord, by His Spirit, has aided every one of our brethren that have either prayed or spoken to us, as also our brethren and sisters who have given us sweet strains of music to gladden our hearts.

The theme thus far in this Conference, if I have been enabled to partake of the spirit of the Conference, has been a reformation in our lives; curing ourselves, so far as possible, and seeing to it that in the example we set among our fellow creatures it shall be of that character that no reflection shall come upon us because we preach something that we do not practice; that when we occupy a station among the Latter-day Saints, whether it be President, Apostle, Patriarch, Bishop, High Priest, Seventy, Elder, or of the lesser Priesthood, or whether perchance it be as mothers of the sons and daughters of Zion, each of us can look into our own souls, consider the circumstances in our own homes, the necessary reformation therein, and seek in prudence, wisdom and judgment to overcome those besetments that are in our pathway and that hedge up our influence.

Among the requirements laid upon the Latter-day Saints by our Father in heaven is the obligation to attend to our prayers; to pray not alone in the family circle, not alone to teach our children to pray, but that they who have become conversant with the will of our Father should retire to their secret places and in the humility of their souls should ask Him, the Giver of all good, to bestow upon them the faith, the fortitude and the strength to overcome within themselves those things that He has pronounced improper for us to say or to do. I am fearful that in the midst of the excitements that attend us in our experiences many of us become unmindful of the responsibilities that attach to us in this respect. Too frequently we go to our labors in the morning having failed to bow with our households and return to our Father in heaven gratitude that He has permitted us to rest in peace during the night. I am fearful also that

too many of us, before we retire to that rest which is so desirable after the labors and cares of the day, forget to get down upon our knees and, casting our eyes back over the experience of the day, ask our Father to forgive us for the wrongs or for the mistakes that we may have committed, and thank Him that He has preserved us and our households from sickness and death. Probably there is greater neglect of this among the Latter-day Saints than of any of our other duties. Yet it is a simple requirement, for which there is no outlay of our worldly means, and only calls for the simple expression of our gratitude to the Being whom we reverence; thanking Him that we have life, that we have families, that we have some knowledge of the truth; thanking Him that upon us, in the midst of our weaknesses, have been bestowed the rights of His Priesthood, and that in His providence, if we can be but faithful in the discharge of the duties that rest upon us, we shall stand at the latter day in the presence of the Living God, the saviors of the races from which we have sprung. But if perchance, in the midst of the cares, temptations and trials of life we become forgetful of the Being who planted within us that faith that caused us to leave the lands of our birth and to unite our destinies with the Latter-day Saints, believing in the promises of the Father and in the hopes inspired by the knowledge of the Gospel—if we forget Him and cease to importune Him for the aid of His Holy Spirit, and permit the cares that press upon us in the morning to shut us off from the discharge of this responsibility, or if perchance we find ourselves at the close of the day worn and tired and so annoyed with things that have arisen during the day that we dare not upon our knees present ourselves before our Father, we shall find that step by step as the days roll by this sacred requirement of our Father will grow to be disregarded by us until we permit ourselves to drift away entirely. I am wondering whether, in the midst of this experience of ours, our sisters are as mindful in regard to this responsibility today as they were wont to be in the days of the past, when they were seemingly more dependent upon the goodwill, love and esteem of our Father than in these times when around them are more of the comforts and blessings of life. I regard this requirement as resting upon the Latter-day Saints in the most sacred form; that it enters into our very lives; that it is the source of spiritual life itself, and that in a little period of time the neglect of this requirement will shut them off from accomplishing the sweetest mission ever given to them—the hope of becoming indeed the uniter of their race under the laws and ordinances

of His house and in harmony with the rules that He has given by which the hearts of the fathers are to be turned to the children and the hearts of the children to be turned to their fathers.

My brethren and sisters, the principles of everlasting life are indeed harmonious in every respect. The man who ceases to pray and pour out to God the necessities of His own life and the conditions of his own soul is taking a step that leads him to cease in striving to fulfill the obligations that rest upon him in honoring the primary laws given for our government, and by which we may stand free before our fellow men, such as the words of wisdom, upon which the brethren have dwelt with such telling force, and the payment of our tithes and offerings.

Let us reflect upon the great plan that has been presented to us by our Master himself, the Father introducing His Son, and the Son directing the introduction and spread of this work, and giving us the rules and regulations, principles and doctrines by which the people of the world may hear the truth, and by which the hosts who have gone before, in the justice and mercy of our Father, shall hear the Gospel and shall receive or reject, as they elect, having placed before them the principles of everlasting life so clearly and so distinctly that there can be no misunderstanding. These, my brethren and sisters, are principles of eternal life. They lay the axe at the root of the tree. Therefore, say your prayers in honor before God and in honesty of heart. Enter the sacred precincts of the places dedicated to His worship. Feel as you enter there that you have done your part in fulfilling every obligation. There is no question in regard to the sacredness of this work. Our Father himself introduced it. He sent His Son to see that they who should herald it should know that He lived; to point out the way by which the evils of the world might be cured, and that men should be lifted up and redeemed by obedience to law, through the exercise of their agency. And many of us are deceiving ourselves, because forsooth we believe we can tamper with these laws, neglect the fulfillment of these requirements, and forget our prayers. When He comes to make up His jewels such ones will discover that they are not among them. The road to repentance is ever open to the Latter-day Saints, and it is a good time now to see to it that so far as possible their lives shall be spotless. Therefore, my brethren and sisters, I plead with you who stand at the head of a house to be praying men. I plead with you, my sisters, who preside in the home in connection with your husbands to be praying women. I say to you that I am an absolute believer in the doctrine