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DISCOURSE

Made at the Sixty-eight Annual Conference of the Church in the Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, Utah, Thursday morning, April 7th, 1898, by

PRESIDENT JOSEPH F. SMITH.

My brethren and sisters, I desire the faith, the goodwill and the prayers of my hearers, that I may be able to speak the truth, and that the Lord may give me a knowledge of His will, that what I say may be in accordance therewith and for the benefit of all of us. If I should fail to speak toward that pillar in front, I ask my brethren behind me to call me to order; for it is one of my failings to turn to the right and to the left when I am speaking. Not that I am disobedient in my spirit, but I do not bear in mind always that which is for the best good.

I will take the liberty of re-reading a portion of the Scripture that was read this morning by President Lorenzo Snow; not that I expect to throw any additional light upon the subject, but may perhaps continue it to some little extent:

"For whoso is faithful unto the obtaining of these two Priesthoods of which I have spoken, and the magnifying their calling, are sanctified by the Spirit unto the renewing of their bodies;

"They become the sons of Moses and of Aaron and the seed of Abraham, and the Church and kingdom, and the elect of God;

"And also all they who receive this Priesthood receiveth me, saith the Lord;

"For he that receiveth my servants receiveth me;

"And he that receiveth me receiveth my Father;

"And he that receiveth my Father, receiveth my Father's kingdom; therefore all that my Father hath shall be given unto him;

"And this is according to the oath and covenant which belongeth to the Priesthood.

"Therefore, all those who receive the Priesthood, receive this oath and covenant of my Father, which he cannot break, neither can it be moved;

"But whoso breaketh this covenant, after he hath received it, and altogether turneth therefrom, shall not have forgiveness of sins in this world nor in the world to come."

This makes a very serious matter of receiving this covenant and this Priesthood; for those who receive it must, like God himself, abide in it, and must not fall, and must not be moved out of the way; for those who receive this oath and covenant and turn away from it, and cease to do righteously and to honor this covenant, and will to abide in sin, and repent not, there is no forgiveness for them either in this life or in the world to come. That is the language of this book, and this is doctrine and truth which was revealed from God to men through the instrumentality of Joseph Smith the Prophet. And

this word is reliable. It is God's word, and God's word is truth; and it becomes necessary for all those who enter into this covenant to understand this word, that they may indeed abide in it, and may not be turned out of the way.

In connection with this Scripture which I have read, I will take the liberty of reading a little more, upon a similar subject, from the Book of Mormon. And while these words which I shall now read were the words of a Prophet who lived anciently upon this continent, and were given before the coming of Christ in the flesh, and before the Gospel was established in its fullness, with the Holy Priesthood, in the earth, yet it relates to the same oath and covenant that is spoken of in the Book of Doctrine and Covenants.

"And now it came to pass that when king Benjamin had thus spoken to his people, he sent among them, desiring to know of his people, if they believed the words which he had spoken unto them.

"And they all cried with one voice, saying, Yea, we believe all the words which thou hast spoken unto us; and also, we know of their surety and truth, because of the Spirit of the Lord Omnipotent, which has wrought a mighty change in us, or in our hearts that we have no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually."

What a glorious condition was this! a condition in which the Lord God Omnipotent, by the power of His Spirit, had wrought a mighty change in the hearts of that people, that they no longer had any desire to do evil, but were filled only with a fervent desire to do that which was good. This was indeed a great change, and yet it is precisely that change that comes today to every son and daughter of God who repents of his or her sins, who humbles themselves before the Lord, and who seek forgiveness and remission of sin by baptism by immersion, by one having authority to administer this sacred ordinance of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. For it is this new birth that was spoken of by Christ to Nicodemus as absolutely essential that men might see the Kingdom of God, and without which no man could enter into the Kingdom. Each of us can remember, perhaps, the change that came into our hearts when we were baptized for the remission of our sins. Perhaps it is not proper for one to speak of himself or of his own experiences, because there may be those within the sound of my voice who object to a man speaking of himself, and especially when he shall say any good of himself; yet I speak not of myself, I speak of the influence and power of the Holy Spirit that I experienced when I had been baptized for the remission of my sins. The feeling that came upon me was that of pure peace, of love and of light. I felt in my soul that if I had sinned—and surely I was not without sin—that it had been forgiven me; that I was indeed cleansed from sin; my heart was touched and I felt that I would not injure the smallest insect beneath my feet. I felt as though I wanted to do good everywhere to everybody and to everything.

I felt a newness of life, a newness of desire to do that which was right. There was not one particle of desire for evil left in my soul. I was but a little boy, it is true, when I was baptized; but this was the influence that came upon me, and I know that it was from God, and was and ever has been a living witness to me of my acceptance of the Lord.

Oh! that I could have kept that same spirit and that same earnest desire in my heart every moment of my life from that day to this. Yet many of us who have received that witness, that new birth, that change of heart, while we may have erred in judgment or have made many mistakes, and often perhaps come short of the true standard in our lives, we have repented of the evil, and we have sought from time to time forgiveness at the hand of the Lord; so that until this day the same desire and purpose which pervaded our souls when we were baptized and received a remission of our sins still holds possession of our hearts, and is still the ruling sentiment and passion of our souls. Though we may at times be stirred to anger, and our wrath move us to say and do things which are not pleasing in the sight of God, yet instantly, on regaining our sober senses and recovering from our lapse into the power of darkness, we feel humble, repentant, and to ask forgiveness for the wrong that we have done to ourselves, and perchance to others. The great, earnest, overwhelming desire, which is born of the truth and of the witness of the Holy Spirit, in the hearts of the people who obey the truth, assumes sway and again takes possession of our souls, to lead us on in the path of duty. This is my testimony, and I know it is true.

"And we, ourselves, also, through the infinite goodness of God, and the manifestations of His Spirit, have great views of that which is to come; and were it expedient, we could prophesy of all things.

"And it is the faith which we have had on the things which our king has spoken unto us, that has brought us to this great knowledge, whereby we do rejoice with such exceeding great joy." [Mosiah, Book of Mormon, chap. 5, vs. 3 and 4.]

Here now in the following words is what I wish to call your attention to, it being especially in harmony with the reference I have read from the Doctrine and Covenants in relation to the oath and covenant of the everlasting Priesthood:

"And we are willing to enter into a covenant with our God to do His will, and to be obedient to His commandments in all things, that He shall command us, all the remainder of our days, that we may not bring upon ourselves a never ending torment, as has been spoken by the angel, that we may not drink out of the cup of the wrath of God.

"And now, these are the words which King Benjamin desired of them; and therefore he said unto them, Ye have