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Delivered at the Morgan Stake Conference, Morgan, Sunday, February 16th, 1896, by

PRESIDENT JOSEPH F. SMITH.

[REPORTED BY ARTHUR WINTER.]

I can say, my brethren and sisters, that it is with some degree of pleasure that I have the privilege of meeting with you on this occasion, as it has been a number of years since I last met with you. We have all, no doubt, passed through varied experiences since then. A number of us, to my certain knowledge, have grown much older and greyer, if not better; and I presume a large proportion of this congregation have grown up from comparative childhood to man and womanhood since I was last here and that to such I am comparatively a stranger, and they strangers to me. But I hope that we have grown, at least a little, in the right direction during the lapse of these years. We are here upon the earth for the purpose of growing, of progressing, of developing, and of fulfilling the measure of our mission upon this footstool of our Father. We are born into the world in a very helpless condition, one of great dependence and ignorance. We have to begin at the very foundation and learn all that we know in the course of a lifetime. We have not only to develop the body, but also the mind, the spiritual or immortal part; for we are dual beings, possessing mortality and immortality—a body and a spirit. While the body may reach the limit of its development in a few years, the spirit is of a different character. It, too, may reach the limit of its dimensions; but never perhaps will it reach to the limit of its capacity to acquire knowledge, power and understanding. There is no limit to growth and development in this direction, so far as we have any knowledge; for there is no end to progression. God our Heavenly Father is still progressing. While He knows all that is, all that has been, and possibly all things that He designs for the future and what will be in the future, yet He is constantly adding to His dominion, constantly increasing His power, constantly developing in His resources and in His glorious aspirations. This, at least, is our understanding of the condition of our Father in heaven. The thought has been expressed and accepted as a truth, that as we are now, God has been, and as God is now we may be; and if we admit this to be a truth—and I have no disposition to dispute it—then I repeat, that even God our Heavenly Father has not reached the ultimatum of His greatness, His power, or His capacity, but

that He is continually increasing and expanding in power, in dominion, in glory and in greatness, if I may be permitted to use such terms as these which some people who knew no better would call blasphemous, in connection with the Supreme Being, the Father of us all. All of us have had more or less experience in the world; and from the time we were born until now there has been opportunity for us to improve our mental and spiritual condition, to enlarge ourselves, intellectually and spiritually, to increase our powers of comprehension and our knowledge, and to profit by our experience in the world. Those of us who have not improved our opportunities as we should have done, ought to be aroused, if possible, to renewed determination, to form resolutions that we will begin again in the school of life on the road to spiritual and mental growth and development in every way that is good. The man who is still groveling under the weaknesses of mortality should resolve that from this time forth he will begin anew to try to rise above those weaknesses. Let him pick out an object in life if he can, for an example unto himself. Let him study the character and attributes of that chosen example, and see if it is not possible, weak and prone as he is to evil, to overcome his weaknesses, imperfections, and burst the fetters that bind him to these groveling things, and rise above them, and emulate the example of one who is more perfect, more noble, and better in some if not in every respect than he is. If any man has been guilty in the past of doing wrong, let him say at once, "I will seek for an exemplar, who will be as a beacon light to me, to guide me in the right path, that henceforth and forever I may rise above the evil that I have been guilty of, and become a better man than I have ever been." This is the mission that we have come to fulfill in the world. The man who slackens his hold and loses heart in this great battle of life proves himself a coward in the performance of the great mission that he has come to fulfill. A man should determine in his heart that he will emulate the examples of the good; that he will never cease to try, and to try again, however oft he may fail in the attempt, until he shall attain to the high mark he has set for himself, no matter what the obstacles may be. If a man feels thus in his heart, he will succeed; there will be no such word as fail in his vocabulary. Though he may not succeed at first, nor again and again, yet each time he does not succeed he will gain strength for the next attempt. The blacksmith's arm at first becomes weary in wielding the hammer, but every blow it strikes prepares it better for the next, and by and by it becomes strong and

well adapted to the labor which it has to perform. So it will be with us in our resolutions and determination to overcome evil and to establish ourselves in works of righteousness. As I said before, we are here to progress and increase in every good word and work. The purest and best standard that has ever been set for men in this world is the man Jesus Christ, the Son of the Living God. He has given precepts and laws which the world today, after eighteen hundred years of experience and culture in reading the word of God, still fail to comprehend or appreciate. Some of the most important principles laid down by our Savior and the most easily to be understood are today among the least practiced and conceived of in their true light by those who profess to be the followers of the meek and lowly Jesus. It is a comparatively easy thing for a man to say he believes in God and in the atoning blood of Jesus Christ, that he believes in repentance of sin, in baptism for the remission of sin, and in the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost. It is apparently easy for a man to progress thus far. But when it comes to loving one's neighbor as oneself, it is not so easy. Here we come to the difficult hill to climb, where we find all our powers taxed to the utmost to get to the top of it; and climbing as we may have been for many years of our lives, I will venture the assertion that we woke up this morning and found ourselves climbing still at the foot of the hill, we have not even approached the summit. For few men indeed, or women, even in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, can say truthfully, "I love my neighbor as I love myself." We do not as a rule love our neighbor as we love ourselves. Professor Holding once said, "Of all my mother's sons I love myself the best." So it is with God's children upon this earth. Though our Father has many of them, and we are all of one blood, and we are members perhaps of one community, of one faith believing in one God and in one Lord Jesus Christ, yet each of us loves himself or herself the best. This feeling crops out in our daily life, in our hourly association with each other. It too often crops out even between husband and wife; often between father and children, and it is very prevalent among children. Is this Christianity? Is this the doctrine of Jesus Christ? Not according to the way I read the books and understand the principles of life and salvation. The scriptures tell us that we should prefer one another in love; that we should yield our own comfort, our own convenience, our own desires, our own happiness to the desires, the comfort and happiness of our neighbors,—to say nothing of our kindred and loved ones.