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DISCOURSE

Delivered at the General Conference of the Church, in the Tabernacle, Salt City, Friday, October 5th, 1894, by
PRESIDENT JOSEPH F. SMITH.

[REPORTED BY ARTHUR WINTER.]

I feel that I can certainly bear my testimony to those things which I have heard this morning, and I am very grateful to our Heavenly Father that we have so many evidences of His kindness and mercy towards Zion. We are constantly called upon from almost every quarter of the globe for more Elders to be sent out to preach the Gospel, and we have found it somewhat difficult to supply the demand, although the calls that are made upon the Elders are as a rule responded to with pleasure and alacrity. The general answer made by the Elders is, "I feel honored to be considered worthy to be called to go on a mission, and with the help of the Lord, I will be on hand at the time appointed." But all of the answers are not of this kind. Occasionally, and especially of late, we receive replies that run somewhat in this way, "I am pleased to be honored with a call to go on a mission. But I am sorry to say that at present I do not see how it is possible for me to respond. I am in debt, and my affairs are in such a shape that it would be impossible for me to arrange them so that I could leave upon the mission at the time appointed, and I would be pleased if you could grant me six months' or a year's time, and I will endeavor to straighten up my affairs and by that time be ready to respond to the call." Of late we have had quite a number of responses of this kind from the Elders. Of course, we regret this, not only because we need their services in the missionary field, but because it grieves us to know that our brethren are in debt. As we are passing through a time of stringency and scarcity of means, it is the best time, probably, that we will experience to pay our debts, to get square with the world, and then resolve in our minds that for the future we will keep out of debt as far as possible. I have noticed that in times when money is plentiful and everything is flourishing the people are more prone to incur obligations that they are liable to fail in meeting them. In times of scarcity it is easier to economize, to retrench and to settle up our obligations as far as we can.

We have demands for missionaries for Holland, and we search all over the country to find Hollanders who can go back to their native land to preach the Gospel. We find it difficult, however, to

meet the calls that are made upon us for missionaries to that land. We are constantly called upon for Norwegians and Swedes to go to their native land to preach the Gospel, and we find it somewhat difficult to obtain sufficient number for this purpose. It is not so difficult to find Danes to go to Denmark. We are generally pretty well supplied with Elders of this nationality. We need Elders to go to Germany. It seems hard to find good, bright, intelligent men who can speak the German language and who can go to Germany to preach the Gospel. The Gospel is being opened up remarkably in that land, and religious toleration is enlarging there. We have had calls made upon us for Elders to go to the Holy Land, and we find it difficult to supply the demand. It is the same in other directions. Not that Elders are scarce; but to find those who are really suited for these calls is what makes it difficult. When a man is wanted to go to Sweden, we want to send a man that can talk Swedish; to Norway, a man who can talk Norwegian; to Germany, a man who can talk German. When we send Elders to the islands of the sea we are under the necessity of calling young men who are capable of acquiring with facility a knowledge of a foreign language. In consequence of this it is not an easy task to obtain a sufficient number of Elders to meet the calls that are made upon us. In addition to this, as I have said, when Elders are called upon, one is in debt and cannot go; another has married a wife, must make a home and cannot go; another has bought him a farm and he cannot go; and another has entered land and he has to stay until his time to prove up shall come; and there are a number of excuses of this kind, which adds to the difficulty we experience in meeting the many calls that are made upon us. But it must be said that these are the exceptions. The rule is that those who are called upon respond cheerfully, and this is very gratifying.

You will please excuse me for talking a little about missionaries. There is a committee of Apostles appointed to look directly after the calls that are made for Elders to go out to preach the Gospel, and I happen to be a member of that committee; therefore, I have something to do in relation to these matters. The word of wisdom, also, concerning which Brother Young has been speaking, has something to do with these matters. For when we call upon a young man to go upon a mission and we find that he is addicted to the pernicious habit of using tobacco, it is an obstacle to his going. It will not do to send a man out to preach the Gospel with a cigarette, or a cigar, or a pipe in his mouth. It is a sorry thing to know

that numbers of the young men of Zion who ought to be fitting themselves for any position in the Kingdom of God are addicted to this pernicious habit of smoking tobacco. Brother Heber J. Grant, probably, when he shall talk to you, will tell you about how many hundred thousand of dollars worth of tobacco is smoked every year. The amount would astonish you. Brother Heber is a mathematician, and he has been making calculations upon this subject, the result of which will astonish you, I think. A young man who is addicted to these habits of using tobacco and drinking is not a fit subject for a mission. He is under the necessity of reforming before he can become qualified to go out to preach the Gospel to the world. Then think of it for a moment—the idea of calling a young man to go out to preach the Gospel who needs to be preached to, and to reform! Is it not a sad reflection on the youth of Zion that there should be a single young man in Israel who, when called upon to take a mission, would have to undergo radical changes in himself in order to be prepared for that glorious work? We do not send young men abroad to preach the Gospel, if we know it, who are addicted to any pernicious practices. We must send young men that are exemplary in every way; who are pure-minded and faithful, and who will go out into the world and do good, not only by precept, but by example also. I do not know whether there are any young men in this conference who need preaching to upon this subject, but there may be a good many fathers here who have sons that will be called to go out to the world to preach the Gospel, and I would like to enjoin it upon the young men that are here and upon the fathers and mothers of the young men that are not here that from this time forth they will set their minds upon pruning out all these dry branches and bringing themselves to the standard that is set for us in the Kingdom of God, that when we are called upon for anything we shall be ready and be willing to say, "Here I am; the Lord can command me, and I am ready to obey His commands."

It is important, therefore, that we should observe the Word of Wisdom that has been given to us. If the members of the Church were to abstain one year from the use of tobacco, intoxicating drinks, and tea and coffee, there would remain in this country enough money to pay every debt owned by the people. Talk about hard times and scarcity of money, when we are paying hundreds of thousands of dollars every year for these articles that are injurious and hurtful, unfitting us for the ministry and for good standing in the Church of