

DISCOURSE

BY

PRESIDENT GEORGE A. SMITH,

DELIVERED

At the Adjourned Semi-Annual Conference, in the New Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, Sunday Morning, October 11, 1874.

REPORTED BY DAVID W. EVANS.

THIS being the closing day of the Conference, and as we are administering the sacrament, we naturally call our minds up in a way of discipline for ourselves, on various subjects which pertain to our everyday life. The Apostle James tells us that "faith without works is dead, being alone," and good works are certainly the best illustrations of that faith which prompts us.

As our brethren will soon scatter through the different wards and settlements of the Territory, and to other parts of the world, we wish them to carry forth just and wise impressions in relation to the simple principles of faith and practice which pertain to the holy gospel, and to disseminate the instructions they have received, that all may be benefitted thereby. When we come here and take bread and drink of the cup in memory of the death and sufferings of our Savior, we witness unto him that we remember him, that we love his law, that we are determined to abide by his gospel and that we will do all in our power to walk in the principles of faith and patience, forbearance and longsuffering, and of truth and righteousness in which we are engaged. As a short illustration, and to draw the minds of the congregation directly to the points of instruction, I am disposed to read a portion of the rules of the United Order.

Rule one says, "We will not take the name of the Deity in vain, nor speak lightly of his character or of sacred things." I am sorry to say that many professed Latter-day Saints are careless in the observance of this rule, which every Latter-day Saint, and every person who has respect for his own character must certainly consider most wholesome and wise, and absolutely obligatory. Let us be very careful, and never indulge in profane language or use the name of the Deity except in such a manner as becomes his high and holy position and our dependence upon him for every breath we draw; and let us also inculcate in our children a respect for that chaste, discreet, upright and pure language which is becoming Saints of the Most High.

Rule two reads—"We will pray in our families morning and evening, and also attend to secret prayer." Now brethren and sisters, remember this. Those of you, if any, who have been careless and negligent on this subject, remember how often God has heard our prayers and how dependent we are upon him for every blessing we possess and enjoy, and for the protection which has been extended unto us. While almost all the world has been ready to destroy the Latter-day Saints from off the earth, the Lord has answered our prayers and has protected us, as it were, in the hollow of his hand. Let us not forget to call upon him morning and evening, that our families may learn, from their childhood, to observe this great and important duty. And before we lie down to rest or rise in the morning let us lift up our hearts in secret prayer to the Most High, asking his protection and blessing in all things, that by united faith we may be able to perform the great and arduous duties which are placed upon us. And in our prayers let us remember our bishops and teachers and those in authority—the President of the church, his counsellors and all those who act in the holy priesthood, that the Spirit of the Almighty may rest upon them as well as upon us, that with one heart and one mind we may have a knowledge of the things of God; and that by observing these duties of prayer and preserving ourselves in purity before the Lord, when teaching, instruction, or counsel is sent forth among the Saints, or revelation is proclaimed unto us, we may have enough of the Holy Ghost in our hearts to know, each for himself or herself, whether these things are true or not; and that when false spirits go forth and lead men astray into darkness, error and folly, we may know the true from the false, detect those who are liars, and expose them as may be necessary.

The third rule is—"We will observe or keep the word of wisdom, according to the spirit and meaning thereof." Remember this, brethren and sisters. I hear occasionally of brethren indulging in intoxicating drinks, and I see many of them yet, even young men, who indulge in the use of tobacco, a habit which is very pernicious and injurious to health, and a violation of the word of wisdom. There are also other violations of this rule among us which should cease, for we are told in the word of wisdom that if we will observe it with all our hearts, keeping the commandments of God, we shall have faith, health and strength, marrow in our bones, and have wisdom and great treasures of knowledge, and the destroyer will pass by us and not slay us. Brethren, how general it is with us when persons are sick and afflicted, or when our children are sick, to say to the elders—"Brethren, come and lay your hands upon them," and in thousands of instances they are healed. Perhaps we are losing some of our faith. We read in the Scriptures that King Asa, whom God had healed and blessed, when he was diseased he trusted not to the Lord, but sought physicians, and King Asa died. While we recommend and approve of using every reasonable means within our power to preserve our lives and those of our children, we do depend, first of all, upon faith in the holy gospel, the administration of its ordinances and the fulfillment of the promises of God; and inasmuch as we observe the word of wisdom and keep the commandments of God we have faith, and we have the promises of God, upon which we can rely, and by which thousands and thousands are delivered from the afflictions which prey upon them.

"We will treat our families with kindness and affection; and set before them an example worthy of imitation. In our families and in our intercourse with all persons we will refrain from being contentious and quarrelsome. We will cease to speak evil of one another, and cultivate a spirit of charity towards all. We consider it our first duty to keep from acting selfishly or from covetous motives, and we will seek the interests of each other and the salvation of all mankind." This is rule four, and in calling your attention to it I wish it to be remembered that it enters into our business transactions and every-day life. I have noticed in the course of many years that I have traveled and preached, being in hundreds of families, that some men were pleasant and agreeable, while others were crabbed, cross, ill-natured and surly in their dispositions; the very tone of their voice would show it. This is all wrong. We should cultivate kindness, forbearance, and patience in our families, and a spirit that will incline them unto us, and in all things set such an example before our children that we may be as shining lights unto them, that as they grow up imitating our examples they may become pillars of society, plants of renown and ornaments in the kingdom of God, and not be led by covetousness, dishonesty, idolatry or any corrupt motive whatever. Consider all these things, and remember this as one of the rules of the United Order which it is of special importance that we should observe.

Rule five teaches—"We will observe personal cleanliness, preserve ourselves in all chastity, refrain from adultery, whoredom and lust, and discountenance and refrain from all vulgar and obscene language and conduct." In regard to this rule, I am sorry to say that the influx of so-called civilization and Christianity in our midst has shown its effects upon some portions of our community, and that strict and firm adherence to the principles of chastity, for which the Latter-day Saints have been remarkable ever since the organization of the church and the gathering of the people, seems, in some instances, to be wanting. We call upon all such persons to repent and humble themselves before the Lord; and we exhort all Latter-day Saints to maintain such a high position before God that every act of their lives may be approved of him. Never let us be guilty of any word or deed that we will be ashamed of before our father, mother, brother, or sister, or before our heavenly Father. This is a principle that we should cultivate, maintain and abide by in all things; and wherever any have been foolish enough to fall or go astray, through the tithes or snare that

have been set for them, let them repent and humble themselves before the Lord, and let a spirit of unity, harmony, peace, stern integrity, purity and chastity abide in every heart, for if we ever inherit blessings and glory, if we ever are made partakers of the thrones, dominions, principalities, powers and endless lives which pertain to the exaltation of the kingdom of God, we shall do so by maintaining a purity like that of Joseph who was sold into Egypt.

The sixth rule is—"We will observe the Sabbath day and keep it holy." I regret to say that I have noticed a great many instances of laxity in the observance of this rule, and I wish the Elders and teachers in all the branches and settlements to preach and practise the observance of the Sabbath. Brethren, work six days, and on the seventh rest and observe the Sabbath according to the revelation; and impress this principle upon the Saints everywhere by practice. I remember once I was in a hurry to come to Salt Lake City. Fillmore was then the only settlement between my place in Parowan, Iron Co., and the settlements in Utah County. The Sunday was very fine; we had attended meeting and, having been a long time away from the brethren in Salt Lake City, we wanted to hurry on. I certainly thought we could travel twenty miles on Sunday evening, as well as not, so we started. I was a little conscience-stricken; I said to myself—"This is not exactly right, and I am afraid we shall not get along as well as we would to have staid until Monday morning." We drove about twenty or twenty-two miles that evening. I told the brethren to tie up the horses, but some of them got loose and went clear back, and in the morning the brethren had to go the whole distance after them. That is what we gained at the start by breaking the Sabbath; but it did not end there. The next day we broke a wagon, and then we got into a storm, and we were six days in reaching Fillmore, and it took us some twelve days to reach this city. Now, I do not believe that, as a general thing, anything is gained in property or in time by working on the Sabbath; and I advise and exhort all men professing to belong to the United Order, or to be Latter-day Saints, to observe the Sabbath; keep it holy, devote it to worship, to the study of good books, to rest, to imparting instruction, to attending meeting, and do not, under any circumstances, lapse into a habit of thinking that you can do as you please on the Sabbath, and that so doing is clear gain. We have, some day, to meet our Father in heaven, and that day is not very far off with many of us. I meet here at this conference quite a number with whom, forty years ago this summer, or last spring, I marched on the Zion's Camp journey—a thousand miles. That does not seem long, but we are marching steadily to our last account, and we should not let our love for self, our desire for gain, or our anxiety for pleasure so mar our path that when we come into the presence of our Father in heaven we shall be smitten with the reflection that, instead of observing the Sabbath, according to the command, we went off speering, or hunting, or we went looking after cattle, or getting wood, or dashing around and breaking the Sabbath time and again, for if our conscience reprove us, God is greater than our consciences, and he surely will condemn us.

Rule seven—"That which is not committed to our care we will not appropriate to our own use." That is a very modest way of agreeing or promising that we will not steal or take that which does not belong to us. One of the ten commandments teaches—"Thou shalt not steal;" and in the Book of Doctrine and Covenants we are informed that he that steals shall be cast out and delivered to the law of the land. These things should never be forgotten by those professing to be Latter-day Saints. I have noticed, in the course of my life, a great many men professing a great deal of piety, who have been very dishonest. In the neighborhood where I was raised there were men who would charge a good round price for a bushel of wheat, and then use a false measure. In that way they reared children to be dishonest. If there are fathers or teachers in Israel who indulge in this covetous practice, or who take that which does not belong to them, they set examples before their

children which cause them to grow up a generation of thieves. I was once conversant with an incident illustrative of this principle. A young man was cut off from the church for stealing. When he came home his mother upbraided him for it, "but," said he, "mother, you have yourself to thank for it. My father always told me not to steal; he commanded me not to touch a thing that did not belong to me, but you used to send me to the neighbors to steal eggs; you taught me to steal, and you are measurably responsible for my disgrace." This was rather a bitter pill for the mother, but it contains an important lesson, if we will consider it. "That which we borrow we will return according to promise, and that which we find we will not appropriate to our own use, but will seek to return it to the proper owner." There is too much of a want of confidence in the midst of the Saints. When some promise they too often fail to keep their word; and those who are in business do not feel as free to trust their brethren as outsiders do. I have had brethren come to me and say—"They are not as accommodating to me as outsiders are," and I sometimes answer them by saying—"Perhaps you are not as punctual to pay your brethren as you would be to pay an outsider." Many of our brethren are not, and this is all wrong. Confidence should be established in each other by fulfilling what we undertake. What we borrow we should return; what we agree to do we should fulfill. We should be careful to make our agreements so that we can fulfill them, and then do so, and if through some unforeseen circumstances we are unable to do so, we should immediately make known the facts of the case, and be honest. I hope these cases are by no means common, but I am satisfied they are more numerous than they ought to be.

The ninth rule requires us, as soon as possible, to cancel all indebtedness, and thereafter to avoid getting into debt. For the last few years, owing to the opening of mines, the construction of railroads, and the good crops that have been raised, the prosperity of the people has been very great, and as a wise and prudent community we should have taken a course to have had the benefits of all this means without being involved in debt, for, notwithstanding we have been put to vast expense in consequence of persecution and oppression from our enemies, we have been in a condition to have saved a great deal. But many of our brethren are in debt, notwithstanding all this prosperity. Now this rule requires that we take measures to pay, or cancel, our debt as soon as possible, and then avoid getting into debt by living within our means. Ambition to push forward and make wealth should not induce us to involve ourselves in debt, but we should, with economy and prudence, live within our means.

The residue of these rules I will not read, but commend them to the consideration of all the brethren, as being of the utmost importance. There is one, however, to which I will just call your attention. It refers to our manner of dress and living, and requires us to use proper economy and prudence in the management of all things intrusted to our care. I exceedingly regret to see the disposition to extravagance which exists among us, as also a disposition to purchase from abroad a variety of articles that are not of the first necessity. I do think that it is right and proper that we should take the utmost pains in our power, as a United Order and a united people, to provide everything that we can produce within ourselves, and not be sending away all the money we can get to buy things that we can make ourselves. Our brooms, for instance, and a great deal of our clothing and most of our shoes can be made here. With all the ridicule that has been expended in relation to wooden soled boots and shoes, I sincerely advise every man who is afflicted with a cough, or who is subject to colds or rheumatism, asthma, or any ailment of that kind, to put wooden soles under his feet this Fall. They will preserve health a great deal better than rubbers; and if they happen to be paid for it will be much better than to owe a trader for them, or to wear leather that is like a sponge, through which the damp will penetrate, striking directly to and promoting cough or rheumatism. I am of the belief that wooden soled shoes worn in winter will cure nine cases out

of ten of rheumatism and will save the lives of many of our children, by keeping their feet dry and warm. I feel like preaching up wooden shoes as a medical prescription, if you please, as well as on the score of economy.

I wish you brethren when you return to the settlements to look after the schools. See that they are established in all the settlements for the winter, that no child be left without a chance to acquire a knowledge of the common branches of education. See that all the poor are provided with the means of sending their children to school, that no child be deprived of the privilege of attending school through the poverty of its parents. Make your school houses comfortable and pleasant. Make the seats of the proper height and comfortable, so that the children may not become numpbacked or round-shouldered, nor contract spinal complaints, or anything of that kind through their seats being awkwardly constructed. There is plenty of lumber in the mountains, and plenty of workmen; let them make good comfortable seats for the children. See that your school rooms are properly warmed, and be careful as to the characters of the men you employ for school teachers. Do not hire a scoundrel, a seducer, or blackleg for the position, for if you employ as teachers of your schools those who are foul, wicked, and corrupt in their habits, you assume a terrible responsibility, for the impressions made upon, and the lessons taught to, the children while attending school have a great influence for good or for evil, upon their future lives and welfare. I believe I have preached upon this subject almost every conference since I can remember, or since I began to speak at conferences, and I shall continue to do so. Let parents be stirred up in regard to the education of their children, and provide for their welfare. In the early days of the Territory the first house built in every settlement, as a general rule, was a school-house. Let this rule still be followed, and let our children receive their education directly within ourselves; and if we want them to study the advanced branches, fill up our home universities; instead of sending them abroad to be educated in foreign schools, uphold your own university and sustain your own schools.

After the close of this Conference meetings in this building will be discontinued during the winter and will be held, under the direction of the Bishops, in the ward assembly rooms every Sunday afternoon and evening. The forenoons will be devoted to Sunday Schools, and I exhort the brethren and sisters to have their children ready, so that they can be at school in time. And I invite the young men and especially the young sisters, to attend Sunday schools; I want to stir up the young men to go there and form Bible classes. And I exhort the Elders to be present as teachers, that there may be no lack of teachers. I want to express my admiration of Brother Goddard and a number of other school superintendents and teachers, with whom I am acquainted, because of their efforts to spread among the young throughout the Territory a knowledge of the principles of the gospel, as taught in the Bible, Book of Mormon, Book of Doctrine and Covenants, and in the standard works of the Church. And I say to the young men, that if they will attend the Bible classes and study the catechism in use in our schools, and make themselves familiar with it, they will become so thoroughly informed in the principles of the gospel and the evidences of it, that when called upon to go abroad to defend the doctrines of Zion they will be well prepared to do so. I invite the Elders to see that these classes are formed in all the settlements.

I will again repeat the idea that has already been presented, to sustain our own literary institutions and publications—the *Juvenile Instructor*, the *Woman's Exponent*, the *DESERET NEWS*, which contains discourses by the First Presidency and Twelve, and also the publications in the several Counties. They are conducted by men who take pains to disseminate the truth, as well as the general news of the world, and they ought to be sustained, that their influence may be extended and increased. Do not spend your money in buying lies, nor your time in reading yellow-covered literature, or in studying