

## DISCOURSE

BY

PRESIDENT JOHN TAYLOR

DELIVERED AT

Kaysville, on Sunday Afternoon,  
March 1st, 1880.

REPORTED BY GEO. F. GIBBS.

WE have been voting for our officers and for those holding places in the Church and kingdom of God in this stake of Zion. And it is well for us sometimes to understand what we do in relation to these matters. We hold up our right hand when voting in token before God that we will sustain those for whom we vote; and if we cannot feel to sustain them we ought not to hold up our hands, because to do this would be to act the part of hypocrites. And the question naturally arises, how far shall we sustain them? Or in other words, how far are we at liberty to depart from this covenant which we make before each other and before our God? For when we lift up our hands in this way, it is in token to God that we are sincere in what we do, and that we will sustain the parties we vote for. That is the way I look at these things. How far then should we sustain them, and how far should we not? This is a matter of serious importance to us; if we agree to do a thing and do not do it, we become covenant breakers and violators of our obligations, which are, perhaps, as solemn and binding as anything we can enter into.

We frequently pass by many of those important things which we have engaged to abide by, and sometimes begin to whisper by way of complaining or finding fault one with another after we have entered into solemn obligations that we will not do it. What is meant by sustaining a person? Do we understand it? It is a very simple thing to me; I do not know how it is with you. For instance, if a man be a teacher, and I vote that I will sustain him in his position, when he visits me in an official capacity I will welcome him and treat him with consideration, kindness and respect and if I need counsel I will ask it at his hand, and I will do everything I can to sustain him. That would be proper and a principle of righteousness, and I would not say anything derogatory to his character. If that is not correct I have it yet to learn. And then if anybody in my presence were to whisper something about him disparaging to his reputation, I would say, Look here! are you a Saint? Yes. Did you not hold up your hand to sustain him? Yes. Then why do you not do it? Now, I would call an action of that kind sustaining him. If any man make an attack upon his reputation—for all men's reputations are of importance to them—I would defend him in some such way. When we vote for men in the solemn way in which we do, shall we abide by our covenants? or shall we violate them? If we violate them we become covenant-breakers. We break our faith before God and our brethren, in regard to the acts of men whom we have covenanted to sustain. But supposing he should do something wrong, supposing he should be found lying or cheating, or defrauding somebody; or stealing or anything else, or even become impure in his habits, would you still sustain him? It would be my duty then to talk with him as I would with anybody else, and tell him that I had understood that things were thus and so, and that under these circumstances I could not sustain him; and if I found that I had been misinformed I would withdraw the charge; but if not it would then be my duty to see that justice was administered to him, that he was brought before the proper tribunal to answer for the things he had done; and in the absence of that I would have no business to talk about him.

It is well for us to get at some of these little things; they are matters, however, of a good deal of importance. What I have said with regard to a teacher would apply to the priest and the deacon.

Then, again, we have bishops. We vote for them; and they hold a portion of the priesthood which renders their duties many times very unpleasant; that is, naturally they would be unpleasant; but no duty ought to be unpleasant to the servants of God. Now, supposing the bishop should do something that is wrong, what would be our duty? It would be to go to him and say, "Bishop, I have reason to believe that things are thus and so, evidence having been presented to me, and it

is of such a character that I am inclined to think that you have been taking a wrong course, and therefore I have come to talk to you, yourself, about the matter." Who ought to do this? Anybody. What, would not his position deprive us of that right of approaching him? No. Supposing you had been injured by him, or somebody else had been injured by him, or something had occurred that caused you to entertain feelings against him, it would be much better to probe the thing to the bottom and have it straightened out than to foster it and allow it to corrode and interfere with your peace and happiness, because you have covenanted to sustain him; on the other hand, we cannot sustain anything that is unrighteous, impure or unholy. We go to him and say, Bishop so and so, I have come to see you on an unpleasant business—you may be polite about it or you may not—but people can always afford to be polite; I have learned thus and so; I hope I am misinformed, can you explain that to me? If the matter could be explained to your satisfaction you would be glad of it; but whether it could be or not you would have the satisfaction of knowing that you had performed your duty. If not, however, and the matter be of such a character as to call for an investigation, it would be proper that it be inquired into by the proper authorities. Then you are free, and you have not violated any covenant. If any covenants have been violated, it is he that is guilty, and it is for him to account for his acts to the Lord and his brethren; and if no wrong shall be found in him, there is no good man but what would be pleased to see such a man acquitted. But while we seek equity and justice on the one hand, on the other we must not interfere with the rights of anybody; no matter who it is that indulges in iniquity, their iniquity will find them out sooner or later. And it is better for us instead of talking to this one and the other, if wrong exists, to go direct to the persons themselves and have it adjusted, then bring it up according to the rules laid down governing such matters. Then the doer of the wrong is accountable for the wrong, not somebody else. Then when he is dealt with by the Church, whether he be a teacher, priest, deacon, bishop or anybody else, you are free from all responsibility afterwards of sustaining that man. And until the proper course has been taken with such a person, we should be very careful what course we pursue in relation to this kind of thing, so that we do not violate our covenants.

There is an uneasy feeling existing among some people; they can see plenty of wrong all around if they have a mind to; and some will apostatize because somebody else has done wrong. What a foolish course that is to pursue! If we follow God's plan we can bring the sin right home to the man who has done the wrong; and if he did not repent of it, he would have to be cut off. But the devil would say, "I would not stop in a church where there were such folks." He would first influence a number of the people to do wrong, and then he would try to get the others to leave the Church because some of the members were doing wrong. That however would be foolish, and contrary to the order of God.

The Lord has placed in his Church Apostles and Prophets, High Priests, Seventies, Elders etc., what for? For the perfecting of the Saints. Are we all perfect to begin with? No. These various officers are for the perfecting of the Saints. What else? For the work of the ministry; that men might be qualified and informed and be full of intelligence, wisdom and light, and learn to proclaim the principles of eternal truth and to bring out from the treasury of God things new and old, things calculated to promote the welfare of the people. Now, then, these offices having been placed in the Church, every man ought to be respected in his office. I know some of you think we can respect some, and some we cannot respect; we can respect some of the prominent authorities—I do not know who they are, do you? You remember when Jesus was upon the earth, some of his followers were contending, as to who was the greatest; and he took a little child and placed it in their midst, he said, "he that can be most like this little child, is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven." And I will tell you more than that, that the teachers, or deacon that fulfils his duties is a great deal more honorable than a president or any of the twelve that do not. And there are duties and re-

sponsibilities devolving on all of us pertaining to these matters; and we ought to be very careful in all our acts that we do not transgress the laws of God.

In a few remarks yesterday I referred to the various officers of the Church, and to some of the leading duties that devolve upon them to attend to. There are duties devolving upon all of us which we cannot ignore. Duties as Apostles, duties as Presidents of Stakes, duties as Bishops, duties as High Councilors, duties pertaining to all the various officers in the Church. Well, can any man that has received the holy priesthood, and who comprehends the position he occupies before God—which very few of us can do—can he afford to neglect any of those duties? I think not. We call this organization that we are associated with the Church and Kingdom of God. Is it the Church of God? Yes. Then it is God's Church is it not? Yes. Who is at the head of it? The Lord ought to be, and we ought to be subject to him. Who? Why every one of us; myself, say, and all the Twelve, the Presidents of Stakes, the Bishops, the High Priests, the Elders, the Seventies, the High Councilors, and all men in the Church ought to feel that we are the children of God in the Church of God and subject to the law of God. We talk about a priesthood; who are the Priesthood, and what is it? As I understand it, it is the rule and the government of God, whether it exists in the heavens or on the earth; whether we refer to the things of time or to the things of eternity; whether we refer to spiritual things or to temporal things, they are, or ought to be, under the guidance and dominion of God. How and from whom did we receive our authority? Let us go back for a while, and who could we find anywhere upon the earth that had authority even to proclaim the gospel, or to administer in the ordinances of the gospel? Could we find anybody? No, we could not. I could not in my younger days—and I sought diligently for it, but I could not find anybody who possessed it. What, not among the religious professors of the world? No, not among the religious professors of the world. Nowhere among the learned, the intelligent, the scientific? No, nowhere. Very well, how did we come at a knowledge of this? God revealed it through his servant Joseph Smith. And when he did so, he did not say much about it himself. The first thing he did when he appeared to Joseph was to introduce his Son; pointing unto him he said, "This is my beloved Son, hear him." And what did the Son say? We have his teachings in the gospel, in his communications with the Nephites and others. Then there were others who held the priesthood with him, who held it on the earth and who now hold it in eternity, and who held the keys of this priesthood; and those several parties came and conferred the keys which they held upon him, but not until the Lord had come and given them permission to do so. Hence we got our Aaronic priesthood through that means, and we got our Melchisedec priesthood through that means, and any office or ordinance that any of you have received, you received it through that medium, or you have received none at all. Very well, what does it lead us to? To those whom we call sons of God. Just as it was said on former times, "Now are we sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." Very well, we are the sons of God then, the chosen of God, the elect of God, called by him, set apart by him, through the medium of this holy priesthood of which I have spoken. And if we have received any office, or calling, or authority, or any power to administer in any of the ordinances, we have received that from the hand of God, and we can only perform these ordinances according to the priesthood we are permitted to possess. For instance, an Elder cannot perform the labor of an Apostle; a Bishop cannot perform the labor of an Apostle; and a Bishop, as a Bishop, outside of other things, has not authority to lay on hands to impart the gift of the Holy Ghost; whatever he may do in that capacity it is through the Melchisedec priesthood which he holds, and he could not do it without. Can a Priest lay hands upon people and say, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost?" No, it does not belong to him to do it. Well, then, men are necessarily confined to operate within the limits and authority of the various offices of the priest-

hood to which they are called and ordained—an Elder to perform the office of an Elder, a Priest to perform the office of a Priest. In early days it was quite common for a Priest to go out and preach the gospel and baptize people for the remission of sins, and then call upon an Elder to lay hands upon them to confirm them members of the Church, for the Priest did not have the power to do it. And while the Priest could baptize, a Teacher, or a Deacon could not, not having the authority to do it; if they were to do it, it would not amount to anything. There is strict order about these things associated with the Church and Kingdom of God. Well, then, on the other hand, if we perform our duties, each one of us in our proper position, God gives us power to accomplish the object we have in view, no matter what it is, or what priesthood we hold, no matter whether it is the President of the Church, or the President of the Stake, a Bishop, a High Councilor, a High Priest, a Seventy, or an Elder, Priest, Teacher or Deacon; no matter what, if they perform duties with an eye single to the glory of God, he will sustain them in their operations and administrations.

Now, I will refer to a principle which is perhaps one of the greatest manifestations of the power and goodness of God that exists in this Church, and at the same time one that is as little noticed; but one wherein God does manifest himself in a most remarkable manner in the view of all reflecting, intelligent men. For instance, the Elders go forth to preach the gospel; they call upon people to repent and to be baptized in the name of Jesus for the remission of their sins. Did you ever think what the name meant? If a man go in the name of another person, he goes by the authority of that person. If an agent, say, of Z. C. M. I., or any other firm, go in the name of this firm, it is expected that he has credentials from the firm he represents. Or, if a governor come here, he is first appointed by the proper authorities—nominated by the President and confirmed by the Senate of the United States, and he comes with proper credentials to act as Governor of this Territory; he comes in the name or by the authority of the United States; and the government of the United States feels itself bound to back up his acts, the same as a mercantile firm would feel obligated to acknowledge the acts of its agents.

Now, then, the Lord has commenced his Church here upon the earth. He has conferred upon men his holy Melchisedec priesthood; he has told them to go forth and preach and call upon the people to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus, for the remission of sins, and they should receive the Holy Ghost. You all know about these things, it is not necessary to talk much about them.

Very well; now then, this Elder goes forth in the name of God, does he not? That is the way I understand it—by the authority of the Lord, and in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, he preaches this doctrine to the people. "Now," says he, "repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus, for the remission of your sins, and you shall receive the Holy Ghost." A Priest could not say, you shall receive the Holy Ghost; a Teacher or a Deacon could not say it, neither could a Bishop say it by virtue of his bishopric, but he could by virtue of the high priesthood he holds. Now, then, let any of these men go to work and lay hands on anybody for the reception of the Holy Ghost, and they may as well do anything else, it would not amount to anything. But an Elder, or anyone holding the proper authority, comes along and takes the candidate for baptism, and after baptizing him he lays his hands upon his head and says: "In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and by virtue of the holy priesthood conferred upon me, I lay my hands upon your head and confirm you a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; and I say unto you, receive ye the Holy Ghost." Did you ever think of that? It is quite a significant thing, is it not? And you do it in the name of Jesus Christ and by authority which God has given you. You lay your hands upon the individual who has been baptized for the remission of his sins, and say, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost;" and he receives it. If that is not so, tell me, will you, you that have had hands laid upon your heads by the Elders of this Church. You know what I say is true. Now, I propose to show a certain principle, namely,

that God is true to the covenants which he makes with us, and that there is no violation of the law or promises on his part. God will bless a Teacher of this Church when he goes forth in the performance of his duties among the people; he will bless a Bishop in his administration, and others in the discharge of their several duties, no matter what the priesthood may be. But here is an important item: there are some things that I have referred to that some cannot do—they could not lay hands upon people to impart to them the Holy Ghost. If an Elder can, he does it by and through the authority of Jesus Christ, through the medium of the holy priesthood conferred upon him by those who have authority. And when he performs this act, the recipients having repented and baptism—when he lays his hands upon their heads, sanctions his action by imparting the Holy Ghost. Thus proving God is true to his agreement; through that means we become sons of God and belong to the holy fold of faith, and to us properly long the covenants and blessings associated therewith. These are initiatory steps. And we have witness within ourselves, each one of us, in regard to those great principles that God has revealed to the human family. Now, then, are the sons of God? Is he our Father? Yes. Have we received his Spirit whereby we are enabled to cry, "Abba Father," or "my Father?" Yes. What have we done since we have received it? We do not like to look some of our acts when we think of these things; we would rather we could blot them out from our memories, but we cannot; they are there. And when we reflect upon our follies, our imperfections and our iniquities of various kinds, how do we feel? We do not feel pleasant about it. God has conferred upon us the greatest treasure and the greatest boon he could bestow upon the human family, but we have received the treasure in earthen vessels. We often do things we ought not to do, and leave undone things we ought to do; and how often have we grieved the Spirit of God within us! He has done more for us than this. He has placed us here in his Church and Kingdom; he has gathered us together; he has organized us according to the laws and order of the priesthood. He has united us to wives, and our wives to their husbands, with an everlasting covenant that cannot be broken. But break it sometimes, don't we? It has shown us how and in what our wives may be united with us in the eternities to come, and how may have our children sealed to us and be one with us in time and eternity, and has poured blessing upon many of our heads that exist while time shall last and nity endure. It was said of Joseph that to his government and dominion there should be no end. The same has been said of many more; and yet we will do little things to separate us from God, and from our brethren, from our wives and our husbands and break up, and rant and rant, destroy, until we hardly know whether it is us or somebody else. Sometimes we hardly know where we are in the Church and Kingdom of God or not, until in many instances the light within us becomes darkness, and then, oh, how great that darkness! It is necessary we should study well and watch the path of our feet. We are laying the foundation for eternity, and for no other purpose. We here that we may receive blessing that in our bodies and spirits, through them and through the powers of the priesthood and the everlasting gospel, we may gain a portion, by and by, among the gods of the eternal worlds, and with them possess a glory and dominion and authority, power and exaltation that has hardly entered into our hearts to conceive of. And yet, we fritter away our privileges, trifle lightly the things of God, disregard the counsels of God and the precepts of God, and wander in by forbidden paths, and lose sight of these great and glorious principles that God has revealed for the salvation of the human family.

Referring to the principle of unity we ought to be one. We have this come up quite frequently, say, a legislative capacity and other things, and our legislators and others come into certain measures, but the people will not be sufficiently united to carry them out. And there seems to be a spirit, more or less among the people like this: some are brusquely and thoughtlessly stop-