

already see the operation of these things among ourselves, and the dreadful results of disobedience. And so it will be from this time onward. The Lord has said that His Spirit will not dwell in unholy tabernacles. We may be baptized, we may be ordained, we may have our endowments, we may have the sealing ordinances, we may have all the blessings that pertain to the Gospel and to the Priesthood; but if we do not live so as to enjoy these and to receive the fulfillment of the promises, they will only prove a condemnation to us, and they will prove our eternal damnation, I may say; for the Lord has not spoken in vain concerning these things. Therefore, we should give heed to the words of life and salvation which God reveals to us through His servants from time to time, and we should teach our children to do the same.

One of the most earnest desires that I have, and I have been deeply impressed with it of late, is to see a cessation of apostasy. The reflections that I have spoken of concerning the number of people who have lost their standing in the Church have produced very peculiar feelings within me. I have asked myself, when will this cease? When will apostasy cease? When will the people be true to God and keep His commandments? When shall the reign of righteousness be ushered in? When will Satan be bound? How long shall this be deferred? There must be on the part of the Latter-day Saints a determination not to listen to Satan, not to be governed by him, not to allow him to lead them into sin, because it is sin that causes apostasy. No man ever apostatized from this Church who had not committed sin. God does not desert those who are faithful and keep His commandments. But when they commit sin, when they transgress the commandments of God, when they defile themselves, then they have no claim upon the promises of God. Do we want apostasy to cease? If we do, then we must break away from sin, and we must teach our children to do the same and not commit sin in any form, or if they do not, they will apostatize and be destroyed; for God is going to cleanse the earth of the wicked, until there will be but few men left. We read in the Book of Mormon that prior to the manifestation of the Savior to the Nephites there were great destructions. The earth was almost rent asunder by the convulsions of nature. Darkness spread over the land for the space of three days, so dense that even fires could not be kindled; and when the light returned there were comparatively few people left. The result was that a new era dawned upon the land and upon the people. Three generations passed away in righteousness, not a soul being lost; and a number of the fourth generation also passed away in righteousness. But after they fell away, and continued to increase in wickedness until the nation was blotted out. Now, I want to impress you if I can with that which awaits us. We are told that the Lord intends to have a reign of peace and righteousness on the earth that shall last for one thousand years. Enoch saw it and prophesied concerning it; and a number of other prophets foresaw it and left on record their testimony concerning it. The Lord himself, by direct revelation, also has spoken concerning it, and has taught His Church in this day that this period will come, and Satan will be

bound. But we must understand that we cannot be deprived of our agency. God has given it unto us. We have it just as much as He has it. We have our agency to do right or to do wrong. Therefore, if there be a reign of peace for one thousand years it will be because mankind use their agency in the right direction and in favor of righteousness. What will produce the change at the end of the thousand years, when Satan will be loosed again? The same cause that produced the change among the Nephites of the fourth generation. Satan regained his power over that people because they chose to exercise their agency in listening to him instead of listening to the Son of God. So it will be at the end of the thousand years; man's agency will be exercised to do wrong, and Satan will regain his power, at least over some portion of the human family. Let us not misunderstand this, my brethren and sisters. Some have had an idea that God is going to bind Satan regardless of men's righteousness. That is a mistake. God does not coerce His children. He does not force them to do right; but He entreats and persuades them. He cannot, according to His purposes, take away from any of us our agency. This being the case, you may depend upon it that when the Millennial glory is ushered in it will be because man's agency is exercised in the right direction; and when Satan regains power at the end of the thousand years it will be because man chooses to listen to him. At the same time I would not have you think that God does not help in this matter. We cannot do anything of this kind without God. God will bind Satan and will remove his power to tempt, seconding the efforts of His children to be righteous and to exercise their agency in the right direction. The point that I am trying to bring to your mind is this: that if the destruction of the wicked among the Nephites was necessary in order to bring about a reign of peace and righteousness for three or four generations, do you not think that there will have to be great and overwhelming destructions to cleanse the earth of the wicked and to lay the foundation of a thousand years of peace and righteousness? Will wickedness be allowed to flourish? I tell you, no. The wicked will be destroyed, according to the words of all the prophets, and the righteous only will survive. There will be a cleansing of the earth from the wicked, as great in its place as the cleansing of the earth by the flood that came in the days of Noah, though this time it will be by fire. Malachi says the day will come when the wicked shall be ashes under the soles of the feet of the righteous. Already, as I have said, you can see the operation of this cleansing process among us. The wicked are gradually being purged from among us. It is not very perceptible; we have got to think about it and call it to mind to become aware of it; but we can become aware of it if we will reflect. And this will be more and more the case as the power of God increases and the responsibility of the Latter-day Saints becomes greater. Therefore, I am looking for destructions and for judgments; I am looking for the cleansing power of God among us as well as among the nations of the earth, in order that the foundation of that great and glorious time shall be laid when Jesus shall reign upon the earth.

I have spoken about the effects of wickedness. Let us now look at the

other side. There is not a people upon the face of the earth today, so far as I know, over whom Satan has less power in some respects than he has over the Latter-day Saints. For instance, how many men are there in this congregation who have reached such a point in their feelings that they are determined with the help of the Lord that they will rather die than commit adultery? Is there a Latter-day Saint here that would commit adultery rather than face death? I believe there are men here who could not be tempted to commit adultery; they have obtained such strength and reached such an understanding concerning the terrible consequences of that sin, that they would not submit to such a temptation. I believe there are thousands of men in the Church in that position. So in regard to whoredom. Adultery is the greatest sin that man can commit, excepting the shedding of innocent blood. Terrible consequences attend the commission of that sin with a woman who belongs to another man. Next to this comes whoredom, which involves improper association with unmarried women. There are men who have reached such a condition that Satan has no power over them in that direction, because they thoroughly understand the consequences of yielding to that temptation. Is not this something to be thankful for? In the world Satan has great power in these directions. Adulteries and whoredoms are exceedingly common, and among some people they are looked upon as trifling sins. Not so among the Latter-day Saints. A man may trust his wife, his daughters or his sisters in another man's care with the utmost assurance that their honor will be preserved while in his charge, and they will be entirely free from any approach of an improper character. I know a great many men with whom I would feel perfectly safe to entrust any of the other sex belonging to my household, and I have no doubt you are in the same position. So that, so far as these sins are concerned, Satan has not full power among the Latter-day Saints. The same may be said so far as theft and falsehood are concerned, as well as other things. In fact, Satan has very little power where the people obey the commandments of God and live the principles of the Gospel, because they shrink from doing anything that is wrong. I know many people have been greatly tempted in trading horses and wagons and cows, etc., and they have concealed defects, thinking it was all right if they made a good bargain, even though they knew they were imposing on their brethren. But that feeling, I believe, is decreasing among us. We are getting away from the traditions we have inherited. I have heard President Young say that some men, after they had cheated a poor widow in the trade of a cow, would go aside and thank the Lord for the good trade they had made. I believe, at least I hope, that that feeling is decreasing among us, and that we are disposed to not take advantage of the ignorance or necessities of our brethren and sisters, because whenever we yield to such a temptation the devil has power over us, and whenever we resist that, he is bound so far as that instance is concerned.

My brethren and sisters, I believe we are progressing, and that Satan is exercising less and less power over the Latter-day Saints. Those over whom he does have power leave us. Those who