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DISCOURSE

DELIVERED BY

ELDER FRANKLIN D. RICHARDS,

at the Sixty-fourth Semi-Annual Conference of the Church, in the Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, Friday morning, October 6, 1893.

(REPORTED BY ARTHUR WINTER)

It is exceedingly pleasant and refreshing to hear the words of consolation and comfort which our brethren have been dispensing unto us, and I testify that they are true as to those things which I know of my own experience, and the others are true of my knowledge and belief. I testify by the Holy Spirit that they are the truths of heaven. I rejoice this morning in the progress of the glorious latter day work, and in so far as we have been blessed to witness, I rejoice greatly in the triumphs of the truth, in the manifestation of the wisdom, and the knowledge and the power of God which He has shown forth unto His people in these latter days.

It is a remarkable fact that at various times in this dispensation, when the Saints have been brought down into the most trying circumstances and have in temporal things, and apparently in spiritual things, been greatly humbled in the sight of each other and in the estimation of the world, and when it has seemed as if the gates of hell had prevailed against God's people, then has been the outpouring of the Spirit of God upon His children, and when they have manifested the greatest love to each other. In the times of their great distress in Missouri, when their properties were wasted and destroyed and they were expelled from the state, and everything looking like destruction, every brother and sister in that part of the country came forward and entered into covenant with each other that they would not cease their labors until they had helped the last of the Saints out from the place of their exile into a freer and a better place.

It is needful that we should experience times of what we call adversity, and realize things which for the time being are not joyous, but grievous; but to this bitter exercise in righteousness whereby work out a far more exceeding and eternal

weight of glory. Therefore, we have reason to rejoice in these things; and if we will notice our past experience we will see that after every such time of trial, oppression and adversity the people of God have emerged into a greatly enlarged sphere of existence and usefulness. It has been exemplified to us in this land more than in any other. The last most difficult trial has brought us the most and greatest enjoyment and the most widespread possession of benefits and blessings, not only of things temporal but of things spiritual. We have been brought here to the enjoyment of homes, lands, farms, possessions, and comforts which the Saints had not enjoyed up to that time in any other place. The blessings of God have abounded unto us in temporal things, as they have also in spiritual and eternal things; for He has given unto us to build four temples in this land where to manifest His good pleasure in their holy courts unto His people, and to encourage us to take hold and labor, not only for the living, but to have a broad charity to labor for them that are dead,—because there is an eternal principle, that they without us cannot enter into the fulness of joy, neither can we. Therefore, our labors are extensive. And we need not look upon this as any phantom, either. None who are permitted to labor in the temples can entertain such a view. But there are some who feel that these things are vain and ephemeral, and have no particular significance or meaning of importance to them. They are, however, of the most vital importance to us. We might go until we have gone as far as we can short of going into the temples, and if we refuse to go there and do these higher and more exalted and spiritual duties by administering ordinances for our deceased our light will go out, our faith depart, the testimonies that we have realized and felt will pass away, and we shall lose the gem, the light, the diadem of glory that awaits the faithful that are coming and hoping to become not only the ministers of the Most High God, but kings and priests unto Him for ever and ever.

While it was mentioned concerning what the Lord said to Peter, there was a very extended signification in that answer which He made when Peter told him, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." The Savior took that as a full answer of his faith and hope, and how quickly He spoke back the glorious promise to him that the gates of hell should never prevail against him. The testimony of Jesus, which is the

spirit of prophecy, had come upon Peter, and he knew that Jesus was the Christ. He realized the verification of those words when in the hour of the darkest trial; when he saw the holy Jesus ready to be taken away and nailed to the cross, and when, to all human appearances, hope was gone, he in his weakness was led to say, "I know not the man;" yet when he sat in that court and the Savior's eye rested upon him, just as the cock was crowing, how it went through him! The Savior had said, "All ye shall be offended because of Me this night;" but Peter felt so certain with the brightness of that testimony in him that he said, "Though all men shall be offended because of Thee, yet will I not be offended." He realized perhaps that he had the glorious promise of the Savior, and felt the burning influence of that testimony; and although in that weakness and in that trying time he was led to speak as he did, the words of the Lord Jesus Christ came true, and the gates of hell could not prevail against him, though, as he said in his letter afterwards, hope had well nigh gone when he saw the Master led away. Yet the Lord held him; "I have prayed for thee Peter that thy faith fail not." His promise was secure, and He made him to bear the keys of the dispensation after He himself went away. How potent and how important that glorious promise! I hold it that that promise stands good to everybody who had obtained that testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ and lived so as to keep that bright and burning within him, that same testimony stands that the gates of hell shall not prevail against him individually or the church collectively. Then let us hold to that. Let us abide and endure as seeing Him that is invisible.

It was a mighty work that the Savior did in the three days that His body lay in the grave—a work that we have but a very feeble conception of. We read in the Book of Mormon that He told the brethren on this continent that He must go to the people in Jerusalem, and He must call on the brethren of the ten tribes, and on the morrow he would be with them again. Think of it! Traveling at this rate with His exalted immortal body. What was He doing three days in the spirit when His body was lying in the tomb and did not cumber his rapid, powerful transit? He went and opened the prison doors to them that were bound; He declared the Gospel to the captive; He started the work to that dispensation that had been so wicked as to be cut off, that the earth might be