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DISCOURSE

Delivered at the Conference of the Salt Lake Stake of Zion, in the Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, Utah, Sunday Afternoon, June 12th, 1898, by
PRESIDENT JOSEPH F. SMITH.

I have been requested to say a few words. I have always an earnest desire to do my duty, and when the Lord is with His servants by the presence and influence of His Spirit, they are generally able to perform their duty, at least to His acceptance. I feel very dependent upon the Lord at his time, and I desire an interest in your faith and prayers, that I may have the good Spirit with me during the time that I shall occupy.

We have met together this afternoon in the capacity of a conference of this Stake of Zion. We have had presented before us the Stake authorities, together with the home missionaries, that we might sustain them by our vote, which means also by our faith and prayers, and to stand by them in the discharge of all the duties that devolve upon them. It is an important duty resting upon the Saints who vote to sustain the authorities of the Church, to do so not only by the lifting of the hand, the mere form, but in deed and in truth. There never should be a day pass but all the people composing the Church should lift up their voices in prayer to the Lord to sustain His servants who are placed to preside over them. Not only should they do this in behalf of the President of the Stake and his counselors, but they should do it in behalf of the High Council, before whom, in connection with the Presidency of the Stake, matters of vast importance to the members of the Church are brought from time to time for their judgment and counsel. These men should have the faith of the people to sustain them in the discharge of their duties, in order that they may be strong in the Lord. These authorities are also presented before the people so that if there is any fault in them worthy of objection to their acting in the positions to which they are called, the Saints who know of these objections may make them manifest, in order that such inquiry may be instituted as may be necessary to ascertain the truth, that those who are not worthy may be dropped, and only such as are worthy and faithful in the performance of their duties be sustained in these exalted positions in the Church. I was pleased to see the unanimity with which the people voted to sustain all those whose names were presented before them this afternoon; and I hope that the feeling or determination of the people is as unanimous and as sincere as the vote would indicate.

We should not permit ourselves to go about from day to day with a spirit of murmuring and fault-finding in our hearts against those who are presented before us to be sustained in responsible positions. If we have anything in our

hearts against any of these brethren, it is our duty, as conscientious members of the Church, first, as the Scriptures direct, to go to them alone and make known to them our feeling toward them and show them the cause of such feeling; not with a desire in our hearts to widen or increase the difficulty, but we should go to them in the spirit of reconciliation and brotherly love, in a true Christian spirit, so that if any feeling of bitterness exists within us it may be absolutely removed; and if we have cause against our brother, that he may be in a position to remedy the evil. We should seek to love one another and to sustain each other as children of God and as brothers and sisters in the cause of Zion.

The presentation of the authorities of the Church before a conference is made obligatory upon the Church. It is the command of the Lord that we shall meet together to transact the business of the Church, an important part of which is to sustain the authorities of the Church, thus renewing our covenant to uphold God's authority which He has instituted in the earth for the government of His Church. And I cannot emphasize too strongly the importance of Latter-day Saints honoring and sustaining in truth and in deed the authority of the Holy Priesthood which is called to preside. The moment a spirit enters into the heart of a member to refrain from sustaining the constituted authorities of the Church, that moment he becomes possessed of a spirit which inclines to rebellion or dissension; and if he permit that spirit to take a firm root in his mind, it will eventually lead him into darkness and apostasy. It makes no difference how much we may profess to love the Gospel and prize our standing in the Church, if we allow the spirit of darkness to take possession of our minds, the light and love within us will go out, and bitterness and enmity will take possession of our souls. Then, oh! how dark, how bitter and wicked we may become!

President Angus M. Cannon, in his remarks, rather admitted that one-half of the people were given to neglect of duty and to practices which are contrary to the requirements of heaven, especially with regard to the observance of the Sabbath day. As I came to this meeting I overtook one of the brethren, and he remarked to me that as he passed by the station he saw a vast crowd of people there ready to go out to some pleasure resort. Now, some of these may have been professedly Latter-day Saints. I do not say they were, because I did not see them; but if any of those profess to be Latter-day Saints, then the course they are pursuing today is contrary to the law of God, contrary to the covenants they have made in the waters of baptism, and contrary to the covenants entered into in the most sacred places to which Latter-day Saints are admitted. They are violating the Sabbath day, they are dishonoring a commandment of the Lord; they are proving themselves disobedient to the law, and they are doing

that which is not pleasing in the sight of God, and which will result eventually in their injury, if not in their apostasy. It is as much the duty of the Latter-day Saints to honor the Sabbath day, and to attend to those duties which are required at their hands upon the Sabbath, as it is for them to be honest with their neighbors and otherwise to live righteous lives. There are many people, especially the young, who are, more or less indifferent in regard to their religious duties. They appear to be thoughtless. They do not understand the necessity for them to observe or keep the commandments of the Lord. And there is connected with this negligence on the part of the young people a greater negligence on the part of the parents of these young people. Where parents have children who are neglectful of their duties and disobedient to the principles of the Gospel, it is the bounden duty of those parents to instruct their children and to urge them to perform the duties which belong to Saints. It is also the duty of the parents to set an example before their children in honoring the Sabbath day, in prayerfulness in the family circle, and in attending to every duty as Latter-day Saints. The father and mother who neglect to teach their children and to encourage them to perform their duties, will live to regret their own folly.

We read in the Book of Doctrine and Covenants that it is required of parents to teach their children "to understand the doctrine of repentance, faith in Christ the Son of the living God, and of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of the hands when eight years old." "And they shall also teach their children to pray and to walk uprightly before the Lord." (And if the parents fail to do this, and the children go astray and turn from the truth, then the Lord has said that the sin shall be upon the heads of the parents. What a terrible thought it is that a father who loves his children with all his heart should be held responsible before God for having neglected those whom he has loved so dearly until they have turned away from the truth and have become outcasts. The loss of these children will be charged to the parents, and they will be held responsible for their apostasy and darkness. I have tried to imagine how it would be possible for one who is guilty of this great crime in the sight of the Lord to reconcile his feelings, should he peradventure be admitted into the celestial kingdom, while knowing that through his neglect his children were in outer darkness. But I came to the conclusion, after reflection upon this subject, that where parents are neglectful of their children, and in consequence of such neglect the children are unworthy to enter into the celestial kingdom of our God, it will be impossible for the parents to enter there. I believe that to be the truth. I do not believe it would be possible for me to be admitted into exaltation and