

Church so long as the Latter-day Saints are united. We shall triumph. Our trials will probably be severe, and we will have to pass through ordeals that will test us to the very centre; but we shall emerge from them victorious in every instance, if we are faithful to the truth which God has revealed to us. The Lord will have a tried people. We shall have dark hours; we shall have times when it will seem as though the Lord had apparently forsaken us; when the whole heavens will be covered with clouds, and it will seem as though we cannot escape; but if we are faithful to the Lord He will bring us through, and after testing our faith He will crown us with success and triumph. He has done it in the past; He will do it in the future. But if any Latter-day Saint thinks he can get through without being tested, then he makes a sad mistake.

We have had tests here of late. As I said in my remarks yesterday morning, we have been threatened with division. Men have become unsettled in their views; darkness has taken possession of many minds, and they have doubt about that concerning which there ought never to be any doubt, namely, the Priesthood of the Son of God. When you doubt that, where are you? What are you to rely upon? Why we had better distrust the solid earth itself on which we stand and think it trembling and unreliable, than to think that the Priesthood cannot be relied upon—that Priesthood which God Himself, accompanied by His Son Jesus, came to earth to prepare the way for its restoration. I would just as soon think of the starry heavens falling into chaos; I would just as soon think that the throne of our Father in heaven was in danger of being shaken to its foundations, as I would think that the Priesthood of God, through which all this wealth of blessing which God has bestowed upon us has come, would be permitted by the Lord to mislead this people. Never! Never! The Father did not come down from heaven Himself, accompanied by His Son Jesus, for any such purpose as this. The Lord did not pour out His Spirit as He has done upon the honest in heart wherever the Elders have gone, to leave this work alone, to be mismanaged, and the people to be led astray. The Lord has not led us to these mountains and blessed us as He has done for this purpose. No, no! Though impenetrable darkness should surround us, we ought, as a people and as individuals, to cling to that truth which the Lord has revealed concerning this work; cling to the Priesthood; cling to the "rod of iron," which is the word of God, and the word of God comes through the Priesthood. Let each one say: "I will serve God, no matter what happens; I will cling to His Priesthood, which God has put in His Church to govern it, no matter what the consequences may be." That is the integrity we should cherish, and which we should teach to our children. Unless we do, we will never accomplish that which God designs for us.

I feel, to some extent, keenly upon this point, because I love the Latter-day Saints. No heaven would be heaven to me unless the Latter-day Saints were there. I would rather die any time than to see this people turned away from the truth. I love the Latter-day Saints better than I can express, and I desire exceedingly to see them do right. I have, therefore, felt grieved to the bot-

tom of my soul when I have seen them wavering, and I have asked myself, Has it come to this, that in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints a prophet of God will not be listened to? that a prophet of God shall be limited in his authority, and shall not counsel the Latter-day Saints as God shall inspire him? To me the thought of this has been terrible. And yet men who bear the Priesthood have manifested that spirit in Zion. They did not want to listen to the voice of God through His prophets. They did not want the First Presidency, nor the Twelve, to counsel them. In effect, they said: "Keep off. There is a limit to your authority. We do not want you to exercise it beyond certain limits." It is awful to think of, but that has been the condition. Would you have believed it if you had not seen it? Why, things have come to our ears of the most shocking character concerning the exercise of the authority of the Priesthood. It has been plainly and publicly stated that the men who lead the people were exceeding their powers and were putting fetters on the people; and one man has risen up and denounced the servants of God, untruthfully, and there have been those who have felt to sustain him and to justify him in it. I say that unless they repent in the name of the Lord Jesus, God will withdraw His Spirit from them, and they will go down into darkness. It is a serious thing to fight against the Priesthood of the Son of God, no matter who holds it. The men who do bear it are fallible men, and when they bear it properly, are conscious of their own weaknesses and infirmities. They feel not only as if they were utterly unworthy of the authority the Lord has placed upon them, but incapable of exercising it. But they have been chosen by the Lord, and He will sustain them and bear them off triumphant always, as He has done thus far. And no man can lift his heel against the Priesthood of the Son of God without the curse of Almighty God coming upon him, unless he repents. Why, ye Latter-day Saints, what blessing is it that you enjoy of a spiritual nature, aye, and of a temporal nature, too, I may say, that has not come to you through the Priesthood. Can you think of any? I am sure you cannot. Its fruits comprise the whole of our lives, our interests, our prosperity, individually, and as a people.

I feel to say to the Latter-day Saints who have been guilty of indulging in this spirit, that they must repent, if they want to regain the favor of God; for I tell you it is a dreadful sin to fight against or in any manner oppose the Priesthood of the Son of God, and everyone of us should repent of such opposition with all our hearts.

Some men imagine, that God having restored His authority to the earth, there is danger of it being exercised in an improper manner. That is the charge which our enemies frame against us. They say we are a pretty good people, but there is danger in men having the authority which we claim to have—danger of it being exercised in some manner to injure the community. Now, I say, and say it boldly, that no such instance can be found in our history. When men have attempted to exercise the authority of the Priesthood in an improper manner, the Lord has withdrawn His Spirit from them, as Brother Grant read this morning from

the Book of Doctrine and Covenants, that the Lord would do. He will have a pure people, and He will have a people who will be led by His servants. When a man ceases to be a true servant of the Lord, the Lord withdraws His Spirit from him, and leaves him to himself. Happy would that man be if he should die before he did this. But men have seen priestcraft in the world, and they confound that with Priesthood; but I want you to understand that there is a wide distinction between Priesthood and priestcraft. Men who exercise priestcraft become wrong-doers and oppressors, and commit great sins under the guise of religion, while trying to appear in the eyes of the world as being in the service of God. But the Priesthood is not of that character. It is beneficent in its operations. It blesses, it upholds, it strengthens, it diffuses love, union, peace, and every godlike quality among mankind. Has not that been its operation among us? I leave it to you to say. Has not the influence and labor of the Priesthood among the Latter-day Saints been of a beneficent character? (Cries of "Yes.") Undoubtedly it has. I have no doubt that this whole congregation would say with one voice, "Yes, we know its operations have been beneficial." You never heard the Prophet Joseph Smith say a thing that would in the least degree be oppressive to any human being. He was a friend of liberty. Of all men, I think, that ever lived, Joseph Smith was the strongest advocate of human liberty and giving every human being his full rights. He contended for this continually. He believed in the exercise of man's agency. President Brigham Young had the same spirit. His labors are before us in these mountains to show the spirit that he was of. No man could love his fellow man seemingly more than he did, or be more willing to have the people exercise their agency to the fullest extent. So it has been with President Taylor and President Woodruff, and throughout the Church in all its ramifications. Of course, there have been men who have abused their privileges and their power; but they have not lasted long; they have lost their influence and their positions in the Church of Christ. But, take it as a whole, the influence of the Priesthood has been most beneficent in behalf of the children of men. Any attempt to show anything contrary to this must fail. Of course, we are, as I have said, fallible men. We are yet in a state of probation, subject to the fall. We have not overcome the consequences of this yet. But, taking this into consideration, the exercise of the Priesthood has been kindly, loving, diffusing peace, encouraging union, and making the people better all the time.

There are, of course, as you can well understand, very great reasons why Satan should seek to curtail the influence of the Priesthood. Satan does not want this power and authority perpetuated, because it is a menace to his kingdom and dominion. It was this that prompted him to seek the life of the Son of God, and the lives of His apostles and inspired servants in ancient days. He did not want the Priesthood to be on the earth. He stirred up men to hate it, and to hate the men that exercised it, and the bearers of this power were slain. It has been the same ever since this Church was organized. The men that bear the Priesthood are hated by Satan.