

RELIGIOUS.

Sunday Services.

Religious services were held at the Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, Sunday, October 25th, 1891, commencing at 2 p. m., President Angus M. Cannon presiding.

The choir and congregation sang the hymn commencing:

The Spirit of God like a fire is burning,
The latter-day glory begins to come forth.

Prayer was offered by Counselor Joseph E. Taylor.
The choir sang:

Come, dearest Lord, descend and dwell
By faith and love, in every breast.

The Priesthood of the Fourth Ward officiated in the administration of the Sacrament.

ELDER JAMES E. TALMAGE
was called upon to address the congregation.

He said he found himself suddenly and unexpectedly placed before the people to discharge one of the duties belonging to an Elder in the Church and Kingdom of God. He would not undertake to comply with the request to address the audience if he did not feel that the Latter-day Saints were exercising their faith and prayers in behalf of those called upon to instruct them. He had long ago given up the idea that a speaker ought to be given an opportunity to prepare his address beforehand. The more a speaker relied on the inspiration from God, the more humble he would be, and the more likely to please our heavenly Father and benefit his brethren and sisters as well as himself. We must have faith in God in order to receive His gifts and blessings.

The term "faith" is frequently used among us. The word is almost an every day word. We have been taught that faith is the first principle of revealed religion. It is the chief cornerstone of the superstructure of the Gospel. Without it, it is impossible to please God. It is, therefore, well worth while to inquire into the full meaning of that word. Faith is older than the human race, yet many may not have comprehended its real significance.

Considering the word itself, it may be observed that it signifies almost the same as the word "belief." Faith is a species of belief. But setting philological considerations aside, for the time being, it may be said, that faith in God is implicit confidence in Him, a means whereby we may know Him, recognize Him as the Father of our spirits and the author of the whole universe, without which knowledge we cannot worship Him acceptably or intelligently.

It is true, we cannot fully comprehend all the powers and attributes of God, for man is capable of understanding only those attributes of which he can form his ideas by means of comparison. This is recognized as a true philosophic principle. For instance, to form a correct idea of the length of ten yards, is necessary to know the real length of the unit, one yard; any one who has this can easily, by comparison, comprehend the longer measure. In the same way we obtain knowledge of abstract things by comparing them to concrete; of unseen

things by comparing them to that which is seen.

Thus we are enabled to understand, to some extent, the attributes of God. For He has been pleased to allow us to compare some of them to attributes of which we have already formed an idea. We have been told to call Him Father. Everybody understands what that means. It is a name familiar and dear to all of us. We know Him to be an individual with all the attributes which we have, though in higher perfection. He is loving, He is just. This we can perceive both from His words and His actions. And as we obtain such knowledge, we can exercise faith in Him. Those who had erected an altar to an unknown God, thereby declared that they could have no faith, for we can place no confidence in a being whom we do not know.

Seeing that faith is absolute confidence in God, we may ask the question, How can we learn to exercise faith? Holy writ abounds with instances setting forth the results obtained by placing implicit confidence in God. These can be studied to great advantage. It is always good to study the biography of good men and to imitate their example.

Abraham is an illustrious instance. That man with whom God delighted to walk was called to leave his native land and go to a country he knew not. But he trusted in God and obeyed the call and went, guided by the Lord.

The speaker here dwelt at length upon the remarkable history of that great patriarch, showing how he was tried but that he, in the most severe trials, placed implicit confidence in his God, a faith that was rewarded with an abundance of the choicest blessings.

Referring to the command of the Lord to Abraham, to sacrifice his only child—a test which must have touched his heart strings to their utmost tension—the speaker remarked, that many have thought it unfair of God to command Abraham to do such an act. It has been held up as an instance of God demanding a servant of His to defy the laws of the land in which he lived, and infidels have said, it is impossible to have confidence in a God who can command such violation of law and of nature. But we must consider the circumstances under which Abraham lived. The government at that time was patriarchal. The head of the family was not merely the owner of his property, but of his household too, and life and death of the children were to a large extent confided into his hands. During the journey in the wilderness, the Lord sometimes called upon the heads of the families to exercise this power, in order to exterminate blasphemers and other sinners from among the people. Such was the law at that remote time, and the Lord's command was no violation of any existing law. The first instance of the Lord requiring His servants to defy the laws of any land, remains yet to be found. Revelations, both ancient and modern, have always been in compliance with the just laws of the country. The Lord never called upon His people to set such laws at defiance. Abraham, in this great trial, no doubt felt like Job—the Lord gave and the Lord had a right to take that back which He had given.

When one places implicit confidence in the Lord, the result cannot be but beneficial to man. We must not judge the Almighty according to ourselves. He who holds, subject to His control, the flash of the lightning, and to whom time and space are no obstacles; He who controls even the hearts of men and can change them to conform to His plans and purposes—His promises can never fail. He will fulfil them in His own time and in His own way. It has been observed that to know some men is in itself a good education, and there is a great deal of truth in that. But if this is so, what is it to know the Lord. It is indeed life eternal. And the more we know of Him, the more faith, the more confidence we can place in Him.

Faith is the great principle by which all things in the universe are operated. Paul says the worlds were made by faith. The Father and the Son, who organized these worlds, had to exercise their faith in order to accomplish this great work. Yes, for God never asked us to do anything which he would not do Himself. Christ always told His disciples to follow Him. When He preached the necessity of baptism, He proved it by going down into the water Himself, and it is therefore but reasonable to suppose that God, our Father, and His Son exercise faith, since we are required to do so. The Lord exercises faith in the principles and laws whereby He operates. He spoke because He had confidence in the power He possessed, and creation was organized. He may speak again to us, and the power of persecution may be stayed. His power. His faith are now the same as they were before.

If we are His children we may expect to find in us, to a certain extent, some of the attributes belonging to Him. Think of the mechanic who has breathed, as it were, his own genius into the work he has completed. He speaks, because he knows the exact nature of his work and the laws governing it; he has faith in it, and at his commanding word the machine moves. So does the Creator command the work He has made.

A man who doubts is not perfect. But he who has absolute faith can exclaim, "Though He slay me, yet I will serve Him." It is not always easy to trust in the Lord, for sometimes He tries His children, but in trials it must be remembered, that God often turns the greatest difficulties into blessings.

Faith is a gift of God. Is man, then, accountable for not exercising faith? The Son of God has said that pearls should not be cast before swine. He does not lavish His gifts on those who do not appreciate them, but those who open their hearts shall have them filled with this heavenly gift, and God is no respecter of persons. The centurion, Cornelius, and many others had no right to the blessings of God by means of their connection with the chosen seed, yet when they prepared themselves for the acceptance of faith, they received it. Their prayers were answered. Even a heathen, who will live up to the light he has, will receive faith, while a Saint who does not live according to his light, will lose it. Everybody will be held accountable for what light and other spiritual