

I speak in this strain to impress upon you, if possible, the folly of indulging in a spirit of that kind, and drinking it in as though it was something delightful. God has spoken so plainly to us concerning the many influences that are abroad that we ought by this time to have understanding concerning them. President Woodruff yesterday dwelt upon the many evil influences that have gone abroad in the world. I have known good men and women, sincerely desirous of doing right, who have been brought into subjection to these evil influences, and they have not known it themselves, because they had not discernment enough to distinguish between the true and the false. It is the case with a great many Latter-day Saints. Yet there is this about the Latter-day Saints: they do know the voice of the true shepherd; they are able to distinguish between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not. There is a great deal of the spirit of discernment among this people, and they are a hard people to deceive; but they do get deceived occasionally. Cunning men mislead and deceive them, and wrong spirits get possession of them. The spirit of falsehood is abroad, and it frequently attributes to the best of men conduct that is vile and low. It did it to the Lord Jesus Christ; it did it to the Prophet Joseph Smith; it did it to all the prophets that have lived. The aim is to destroy them, and what better way can you get an influence into operation that will destroy a man than to blacken his character and tell lies enough to make him appear as a devil incarnate? That is what Satan tries to do. Those have been his tactics from the very beginning. He would make out the servants of God to be devils incarnate. And he will deceive, if possible, the very elect by his lies and misrepresentations. The only thing for men of God to do is to trust in Him. You cannot meet these falsehoods. They are manufactured faster than they can be exposed. No man can defend himself against lies. His protestations amount to nothing, because they are not believed.

In my early life, in publishing, I was always on hand to combat every lie that made its appearance. I thought it my duty to do it, and I do not know but it was My mission was to publish the truth and to oppose falsehood. But as I grew older, there was such a volume of lies that I found it hopeless to reply to them. I have not done so for years, except in one instance, and then I did it at the solicitation of my brethren. If Satan lets loose a stream of falsehood, it is useless for a man to attempt to stem it; you may as well let it flow on, and leave the vindication to the Lord. And so with us as a people. We have been lied about until there is no crime in the calendar that we have not been accused of. But we are outliving them, and we will leave them behind. The adversary, however, still lives. He still manufactures falsehood, and finds agents who are willing to propagate them; and he finds them among the Latter-day Saints, too. I have heard the most abominable falsehoods told about the First Presidency of the Church by those who call themselves Latter-day Saints. What will be the result of this? If those people do not repent, they will lose the Spirit of God, if they have

not lost it already; they will go into darkness, and will lose their standing in the Church. When a man loses the Spirit of God, the life that binds him to the Church is severed; and he wonders after a while how he could have thought as he once did concerning it.

My brethren and sisters, I would like to impress you this afternoon with the importance of retaining the Spirit of God, and not allowing other spirits to take possession of you. You should live so that the Spirit of God will reign within you, and that when an evil spirit seeks to take possession of you, you will feel it as sensibly and it will make such an impression upon you as the disturbing of a smooth pond of water. Our minds should be in such an unruffled condition and so free from any disturbing influence that when anything contrary to the mind of the Lord seeks to enter into us we will realize it as quickly as does the pond of water when it is disturbed. When anything comes along that is not right, we should stop to question ourselves. We should not admit a wrong spirit into our hearts, nor think evil of anyone. There is too much of it in the world—telling tales about men and women, and when you examine them, in nine cases out of ten you find they are not true. There may be some element of truth in them; but truth can be distorted into a falsehood. We as a people should seek, above all people, to love the truth.

The authorities of the Church have known concerning this that was spoken of yesterday, and we have been satisfied as to the course that would have to be taken unless there was a change. But we did not want to expose this matter to the public, and to weaken the confidence of the Saints; for we wanted them to exercise their faith. But it is necessary that something should be said to the Church, that the people may not go on yielding to wrong influences and indulging in remarks and feelings contrary to the Spirit of the Lord.

Now, I ask you, if any of you have indulged in this spirit of condemnation and censure, to repent with all your heart, and ask the Lord to forgive you. Where you have said wrong things publicly, go and correct them. If you have spoken evil about your neighbors, go and confess it to them and ask their forgiveness. Apply the principles of the Gospel to our every day lives. Let us not think that we can cover up these things. The Lord will expose them. If there is something that we do not understand suspend our judgment and the expression of our views until we can understand it.

I rejoice exceedingly in the testimonies that have been borne during this conference. I know that this is the work of God. I know that God lives. I know that Jesus lives; for I have seen Him. I know that this is the Church of God, and that it is founded on Jesus Christ, our Redeemer. I testify to you of these things as one that knows—as one of the Apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ that can bear witness to you today in the presence of the Lord that He lives and that He will live, and will come to reign on the earth, to sway an undisputed sceptre. I say that it is our duty to keep the commandments of God, and to be faithful in all things. The world may say that you are submitting to men; but it is not so; you are submitting to God. This is God's work, and He only asks

from you and from me that obedience which every child should render to its father. We do not owe any obedience to the rebel Satan. He would fill us with all sorts of ideas against God, and he would bind us in chains of darkness and lead us down to destruction, if we would listen to him. That would be all right in the estimation of those who have his spirit; but it is wrong. It is right to listen to the Lord, and to obey Him. He is our Father, our Creator; He is the source of all our blessing and power, and we should submit to Him. If He says to a certain man, "You are my servant, and I want all my children to do as you say," it is our duty to respect that appointment. I frequently ask my boys to listen to one of their brothers, and if he does not do right they can tell me and I will attend to it. I teach my children to respect their brothers who are their seniors in age, and to respect one another; and I caution the older boys not to trespass upon their younger brethren, but to respect them. I do that in my small family—small compared with the family of God. Has not God the right to choose one of His children, as He has done Joseph Smith, and Brigham Young, and John Taylor, and Wilford Woodruff, and ask the rest of us to obey His counsel as He gives it through the one whom He chooses? "Well, but," says one, "how do we know that He has given him this authority?" You can know it, if you will do the things that He requires at your hands. If God chooses the weakest among His children, and says to the rest, "obey him, and I will sustain and bless you in doing it," He has a perfect right to do so. He has done this with this people from the days of Joseph Smith down to the present, and we have been prospered, blessed and delivered in listening to the counsel of the men whom the Lord has chosen. We were blessed and prospered in listening to the Prophet Joseph during his lifetime. After his death, how wonderfully were we blessed and prospered in listening to the counsels of President Brigham Young. He led us across these dreary plains to this inhospitable land (for it was inhospitable then) and laid the foundation of all that has been done here, until today the State of Utah is the admiration, it may be said, of the whole nation, and men wonder at the wisdom and shrewdness that President Young exhibited. Therefore, we not only have our own experience to testify how prospered and blessed we have been in listening to counsel, but we have the testimony of many others. God blessed us also in listening to President John Taylor during his lifetime; and He has blessed us and borne testimony to us by the outpouring of His Spirit since it has been the privilege of President Woodruff to stand in this exalted station. I repeat, the Lord has a right to exact this from us. We are His children, and when we have called upon Him He has listened to us and has answered our prayers. That is the way I view it. Satan tempts me, as I suppose he does you all; but I tell Satan that I have nothing to do with him. I tell him that he is a rebel, that he has tried to ruin the purposes of our Father, and I want nothing to do with him; I will try and not listen to any of his blandishments, nor let him whisper anything into my ear or my heart that would weaken my attachment and my devotion to my Father and to His kingdom.