

TRUTH AND LIBERTY.

SATURDAY, JUNE 10, 1897, SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH.

DISCOURSE

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(REPORTED BY ARTHUR WINTER.)

I have been very much interested in the remarks which have been made this morning and this afternoon, and have been greatly pleased to hear such reports concerning the Stake, and the words which have been represented. It is very gratifying to hear of the condition of the Saints and of their disposition to perform their duties as members of the Church. We have had instruction given to us concerning seeking the Spirit of the Lord and having it to be with us. It is a source of constant surprise to those who pay attention to the subject, that the Latter-day Saints are as united. It has been one of the great objections urged against us at times, and has caused people to fear us. They have looked upon the union of the people and their willingness to be governed as almost a menace to the rest of the world, and have thought there was something very wrong in the influence that has been exercised and in the people being willing to be governed by the counsel of the living men, because this is contrary to the usual practice in the world. It is very uncommon to find a large body of people so united and willing to listen to the counsel and advice of their living men; and, as I have said, it is looked upon by many as something dangerous, and many evils are supposed to result from such combinations. They forget, or, at least, if they do not forget, they do not understand that if the people had evil designs and if the leading men were actuated by improper motives, that union would be impossible. The union of the Latter-day Saints is only possible through doing right. We would not be united if we had wrong objects in view or were prompted by wrong motives. But the world do not believe that. I repeat, however, that the only cause of the union of this people is the disposition to do right and to keep the commandments of God; and if the leading men of this Church had wrong objects in view and sought to accomplish them, their influence with the people would cease. So that really the union of the Latter-day Saints is not a menace; it is not to be feared; we can have no harm to mankind by this union. We are not bound together by improper ties, nor combined for any evil purpose. A people scattered as widely as the Latter-day Saints are, and occupying such an extent of country, could not be held together by evil bonds. It would be an impossibility for a few men, living, say, in Salt Lake City, to control two or three hundred thousand people and keep them united by the means that men ordinarily use for that purpose. Therefore, as I say, it must be understood the nature of the tie that binds the Latter-day Saints together, that we should see that the union of the people is only possible under one condition, and that is, upon the principle of righteousness. No man can have influence among this people to any extent who is a wicked man, or who has wicked ends in view. Of course, we are all sinners; we are imperfect; we are subject to all the frailties of humanity; but there must be a disposition among the leading men to keep the commandments of God and to teach righteous principles, or they could not succeed in leading this people together.

It is of the utmost importance that we should be united. If we are not united, we are not the Lord's. The Lord has commanded us to be united, and He has placed the means of union within our reach. Every unit of which this whole body is composed has access to the means of union, and when every unit avails itself of the opportunities which God has placed within our reach, then we form a compact whole, and we assume like so many drops of water and become one. It is the power of God that does this; not the power of man. Man cannot do it. We are man's incapability to do this exhibited in all organizations of which he is the author. There is no power of human origin that can bind men to men for any length of time. There are occasions, when some great calamity or evil arises, when people will cling together, and when nations are attacked, and when all their liberties and perhaps their lives are at stake, they will then move forward united by one common impulse, and they will cling together with wonderful tenacity. There are numerous instances of the kind in history. We have seen it in our own day. But apart from these great crises in the history of individuals and nations, there is no power among men that will unite and hold men together. They will differ in a little while; they will separate. We see this in the world. As soon as men are united to reform religion; as soon as they dissent from the mother church, and begin to establish reformed religions, they begin to differ, and they went on differing and separating until the whole of Christendom is filled with churches, among which there are no real, notwithstanding they call themselves the churches of Christ. They are not the secret of union with them.

Now, the difference between this Church and other churches is this: when man receives this Gospel, wherever they may be, however wide y separated they may be, as soon as they are confirmed members of the Church they receive a gift that binds them to that union, and when they are brought together from the ends of the earth, they feel alike and are drawn together. True, they have their sins and their weaknesses, but they receive a spirit of union that no human being is able to impart unto his fellow-men. It is the power that binds them to God. It is the power that binds them to each other. It is the power that binds them to the glorious place that is described to be, by all who have any conception of it, in the contradiction to a hell, the place of misery and torment. God has restored this secret through

the power that He has bestowed. It is possible through that power to effect these great results. It is outside of man's power. It requires the power of God. And this power of God has been manifested among the Latter-day Saints in an evidence that is God's work. If we were not united, we would not be the people of God. It is the sign by which the people of God may be found. I do not care what we may claim, or what our pretensions may be, we are not a people of God when we are not united. Union is one of the fruits of the Spirit. The Savior, in that memorable prayer of His, prayed to the Father that His disciples might be one, as He and the Father were one. Imagine the oneness that existed between God the Father and God the Son. They are one and indivisible, so far as union is concerned. We cannot conceive of the least difference existing between the Father and the Son. It is possible for men to attain to that union. If it is not, then Jesus' prayer was vain, and His prayer was a waste of words; but Jesus did not waste words in that way, and He prayed that they might be one as He and the Father were one. From this we can imagine how close we ought to be together, and how necessary it is that we should be united. We can perceive too that it is not a sin, nor a menace to any human being, or community, or nation, to be united. We can see that we are one as the Father and the Son are one, we could not be guilty of wrong-doing and remain one—we would inevitably divide and separate.

When a household is united—the husband and wife and the children are one—that is the family that has the taste of heaven. Those who live in that condition are much nearer to the throne of God, far more so, and extend that union from one family to another until it embraces the whole community, and so far as they are concerned it may be said that the kingdom of God is come, and God is there, because God loves, and love begets this union. So far as we do not live in this condition, so far as we are removed from God. There is no better test within our reach than this to judge as to the condition of an individual or a community.

I know some people think this unnatural, and, in fact, impose it. They are especially opposed to it because, in order to have such a condition as this there must be authority and power from God recognized in the community. I cannot conceive of a condition of society like this that does not have an authority in it that is recognized as the authority of God. Were it not so, it would be every man for himself.

Now, the question is, is it a bad condition of society for one man or a number of men who are united and who have authority from God, to be recognized in a community as authority, and their words to be recognized as words of weight, because of their being inspired of God? Is a community in a dangerous condition with an authority of that kind, and with it recognized? This is an important question that we as Latter-day Saints have had to ask ourselves a great many times of late, because it has been openly avowed that such an authority in the midst of this people is a dangerous authority, and one that should not be compromised or obeyed. This has been told us time and again, until many of our own people, especially the young and inexperienced, have almost been convinced that the statement is a correct one. If it is correct, then how are we to bring to pass that which the Lord has promised? How are the great results to be achieved of which Prophets, and even poets who never pretended to be inspired, have written? There is an almost universal desire among men for a better condition of things than exists now on the earth. Every man that has had any desire for the welfare of his fellow man has dreamed of it; has indulged in hopes that, by some means, incomprehensible perhaps to him, a change would be wrought in the affairs of the earth, and the evil under which mankind groves would be corrected. There is no righteous man that ever lived that has not had this desire and this anticipation. And by what means shall it be accomplished? Shall God Himself come down from heaven among men? He did once, in the person of His Son, and He was slain. He has come down also through angelic messengers. They could not be slain; but those whom they visited, and unto whom they imparted their power, have been slain. The inhabitants of the earth have seemed determined that no man claiming the authority necessary to bring about a better condition of things should live upon the earth. They have warred against every man of this kind, in almost every age, until they have been extirpated from the face of the earth.

But God in these last days has again stretched forth His hand in accordance with His work. God himself has visited the earth, accompanied by His Son Jesus! He has sent holy messengers from on high to restore the key that has been lost, the power and the authority that has been taken from the earth, by means of which the great changes and glorious things that are promised may be accomplished. And no sooner were men ordained to receive this power than the evidences of its divine origin immediately appeared. The spirit of union to which I have referred descended upon the people, producing a union unexampled in the earth, a union that had not been seen for centuries, which holy men had desired, but had not been able to obtain. What was it, my brethren and sisters, that brought this change? It was the authority of the Son of God—the authority of the over-riding Priesthood. It was that authority that transformed a mortal man, possessed of all the weaknesses common to mortality, into an agent of the Almighty, and gave him almighty power for molding the world of the power of God would have been sufficient. Angels who read the authority and power, by the laying on of hands, entered men with it. These men were touched as it were, by the finger of God, and powers were bestowed upon them that no mortal man possessed. In that sense they became as gods in the midst of the people; for

that which they did God did confirm and seal, and their words were infallible to the very letter, so long as they continued themselves to this power. Up to this point Joseph Smith, the Prophet of God, had been a translator and a seer. He had received revelations; but he had not power to give unto men the Holy Ghost. He did not have the gift of him (the gift); he was a seer and a translator, and, of course, not having received it himself, he could not impart it to others. And when the angel laid down his hand upon his head, as I say, he bestowed it upon an agent of the Lord, as an ambassador, fully empowered to act in the name of heaven, having authority to seal up in the books of his fellow men, if they complied with the requisite conditions, the necessary blessing to make them the children of God. Strange and marvelous, is it not to think that a man endowed as he was, a man that had beheld the face of God, a man that had been ministered unto by angels, a man that had such great and precious gifts as these, should have authority that he did not have—the authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood, him when he received the Melchizedek Priesthood, then he was able to seal that precious

gift of the Holy Ghost upon the heads of those into whom he solemnly ordained. All those men, when he and his fellow Apostles administered received this gift. And from that day to this it has spread. Men of the most humble origin, uneducated, and without anything in their appearance to convince people that they were more than ordinary men, have gone forth carrying the message of salvation and promising the people, without a doubt ever entering their hearts that the promise might be left, that if they would repent of their sins, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and be baptized, their sins should be remitted, and if they had laid last upon them, they should receive the Holy Ghost. How wonderful! How God-like! One man baptizes another, and through the administration of that ordinance the sinner have his sins remitted! Lay hands upon a man, and that man receive the Holy Ghost, that grand gift, which was so mighty in the days of the ancient disciples!

Now, this thing has been done in our day, and is being done. By this power the nations of the earth are being warmed, and the heart in heart are being gathered. They are drawn to Zion by a magnet, if I may use that illustration,

—a magnet that is irresistible—drawing them here from all lands, and everyone that receives it bearing witness that it is from God. They testify that they have a spirit within them that they never had before, and that the Bible seems like a new book to them. So in fulfillment to other things they look upon everything pertaining to God in an entirely new light. They testify that they know for themselves that this is the work of God. They do not say they believe; they say they know. Of course, there is a difference in individuals; some receive a stronger testimony than others. Some are moved upon in a different manner to others. Some are convinced from the very moment that they hear the voice of the servant of God; I have known instances where they were stirred men as servants of God before they even knew they were preachers. Others have said, "I have seen you in a dream, and which I met you, I knew you were a man of God." Others are slow in receiving a testimony. Still others are very cautious and do not fear of deception, open their hearts to believe all at once. They perhaps want something unusual; they would like an angel to come and minister unto them—

as though angels had nothing else to do; or they would like some great manifestation of power, not extending the presence of the Holy Ghost as a sufficient evidence. We find this difference existing among the people. But speaking generally, the Latter-day Saints have received a testimony concerning the Gospel. They know it to be true. They know it by every sense in fact, it seems as though a new sense were bestowed within them. It is not the sense of sight, nor the sense of hearing, nor the sense of touch, nor the sense of taste. It is outside, or inside, I may say, of all the senses, more convincing than all of them combined, and something that they cannot explain, only they know it is there, a gift from God, which assures them that the Gospel is true. They are convinced that this is so, and they cannot be persuaded otherwise, because the power and testimony they have is fire within, and they know it is not from men. And that sense remains with every Latter-day Saint so long as he or she is pure. Here is another evidence that this is the work of God. As long as men and women are pure, that sense to which I refer will al-

ways remain with them, because it is the Spirit of God, and it dwells only where purity exists. It will not dwell, as one of our said, in an unholiness. Hence you see this remarkable thing in this Church; even who have testified that they knew this was the Church of Christ have fallen away from it, and taught it. Cases of this kind are almost too numerous to mention. They are familiar to all the people. Men in the humbler walks of life, men who have been preachers of the Gospel, men who have occupied leading positions in the Church, men who have been looked up to as guides, as prophets and apostles—men of every class, where they have lived, have fallen away from the Spirit of God, have lost that sense to which I refer, and they have been left to depend upon their natural senses, resulting in their going into darkness.

Union constitutes our great strength and our acceptance with God. The Latter-day Saints cannot be united without purity. They would be as weak as water if they were impure. I want to say to you all this afternoon, as a warning, that it is impossible for you to re-

(Continued on page two.)



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