

DISCOURSE

ON THE FIRST PRINCIPLES OF THE GOSPEL, BY
ELDER P. P. PRATT, BOWERY, AUG. 26, 1856.

[Continued from page 372.]

Well, if I have been made a high witness of these things, what brought the truth to me? It was through the ministration of angels, under whose hands these my brethren have been ordained to the holy priesthood, and it brought down with it the blessings of the everlasting gospel, for it could not be in the world without a call; for those who previously held it had gone to another sphere.

The gospel was revealed to ancient men in different climes and countries, whenever there were men to be saved, and it was revealed to modern men because there were modern men to be saved by it. The gospel was to all whom the Lord our God should call in every age and country, and but for this call we would have been as blind as bats in the traditions of our fathers, led away by divers creeds and by the cunning of men who lie in wait to deceive. Where would we have been if it had not been for this call? We might have been good men enough perhaps, but where would we have been?

The introduction of the gospel was worthy of an angel,—yes, the errand was worthy of a corps of them; it was worthy of a host of them! It was worthy of a God! It was an object of importance that called Jesus from the bosom of his Father in the eternal world. A call was necessary then; faith was necessary, and faith comes by hearing the word of God; and how could you have heard it, if nobody had been called to deliver it? We were in the midst of darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not. We could see revelations given in other ages, but we want them in our age; but we wanted a call.

I am aware that some will be thinking of their grandmothers or grandfathers who died in the middle ages, and who died in hope, as far as they could get at it. I know they will be querying all the while to know what has become of them.

Well, it is no matter; it is for us to attend to our own business, and see to our own salvation; if we do this, we shall have no condemnation. We do not know but as we progress in righteousness, that in the provisions made by our great Father we may have to serve them, and to do for those good old fathers and mothers of ours, who did see the light afar off, but could not come at it for want of a call, for want of a priesthood, which is without beginning of days, and men holding the authority of heaven; yes, we may have to do for them what they have not had the privilege of doing for themselves.

Well, what is the provision? Why did I not just name to you, that this eternal priesthood is without beginning of days or end of life, after the order of the Son of God? Do you suppose that when a man passes beyond the veil, he is any less a priest? If angels, or men by the spirit of prophecy, have laid their hands upon him and ordained him to an office in the priesthood of the Son of God, and have given him a call in the name of the Lord to give salvation to others, do you suppose that by passing the veil he becomes unordained?

What did Jesus say to the Jews? Says he, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, is the God you profess to worship; but says he, I want you to understand that he is not the God of the dead, for what glory would there be in that? but, says he, "He is the God of the living." He was speaking to the children of Abraham who were dead, as much as to say that Abraham was living then.

Well, then, when a man holding the eternal priesthood passes the veil, he still holds his authority, and his heart is full of affection and love towards God's creatures, and he is clothed with the power of God, and he is his prophet, apostle, and elder. It is impossible to keep a man silent who is filled with the testimony of Jesus; I would as soon undertake to shut up fire in dry shavings, as to shut up in that man's heart the good news, for he has his mission, which is to preach the gospel to those that were and are in darkness.

The good old fathers and mothers who had not the privileges and blessings of the gospel, for instance; go to deliver your message to them, that they may come to the light of truth, and be saved.

The Apostle, when addressing the saints, says, "But ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered to you; being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness,"—Romans 6, 17 and 18.

There was the freedom of obedience to that form of doctrine delivered to them. Obedience to that form of doctrine made them free, but it did not prevent them from acting as men in a temporal point of view.

The Apostle also speaks of passing from death unto life, because they loved the brethren. Passing the veil does not alter a man; it certainly takes him from the eyes of flesh, but the capacity, the intelligence, the thinking powers, are all alive and quick; and if they hear the gospel, they will be glad, and the promises are made to them, and they will rejoice in them.

Let a man pass the veil with the everlasting priesthood, having magnified it to the day of his death, and you cannot get it off him; it will remain with him in the world of spirits; and when he wakes up in that world among the spirits, he has that power and that obligation on him, that if he can find a person worthy of salvation, why, as soon as he ascertains that, and he remembers what he may teach and who he may teach, he then discovers that he has got a mission, and that mission is to those souls who had not the privilege which we have in this world, that they may be partakers of the gospel as well as we.

And herein, when fully carried out, are the keys of the "baptism for the dead," and the salvation of those not on the earth, a subject into which I need not now enter, although it is among the first principles of salvation; but they are so

lengthy that we cannot dwell upon them all at one time.

But suffice it to say, that when the Lord made provision that there should be one name by which man should be saved; and when he planned glad tidings of great joy to go over the islands and continents, and to the four quarters of the earth, he also remembered the spirits in prison, and he made provision wide as eternity, that it might reach the case of "every creature," under every circumstance that could arise within the reach of mercy.

He so ordered it, that "all manner of sins and blasphemies, in due time, might be forgiven, except that which could not be justly forgiven in this world; nor in that which is to come."

The plan was so devised that every man might have repentance and remission of sins, and the gift of the Holy Ghost in his time and in his place, if he would; but if he would not, very well then, he might do as he pleased, whether in this world or any other, according to the clear freedom that he lives under.

You know you cannot compel one of the dumb animals to drink; you can lead him to the water, direct his attention to the clear, crystal, pure stream, but still he may die of thirst. And men may die because they will not leave off their sins, and lay hold of the cross; and if they will die of thirst, and will not lay hold of the salvation offered by a bleeding Savior, they may die the death of the wicked.

And if, because they will not give up their freedom to do right, they can go; they will die to all eternity, and never be compelled to obey the truth.

Well, friends, here is the gospel; and where is the man's heart so hard that he will not see and embrace it? A man must be hardened in wickedness, that will not abide the law of the gospel. And that portion of you who have not obeyed, my invitation is to you all; and all of you in the church who have not obeyed the gospel in its fullness, see that you obey it in its fullness; I mean to every day attend to the repentance part of it—the leaving off part, forsaking your evils—the conversion part, and bring forth fruits suited to a new new life.

I will have to be judged for my preaching, and you for your hearing. I shall be pretty careful for myself; I can do that, I think. I shall look into things, prepare my mind to discern between the right and the wrong; otherwise I might neglect; and it will keep a man pretty busy to repent and bring forth fruits for a new life. There will be a good deal of watching and praying, and he will have to be pretty careful to live so as to get the Holy Spirit, so that it will not leave him, and he will be without it like a fish out of water, or like a person in hot weather destitute of pure air. If he once loses the spirit, after having received it, it will keep him pretty busy to get it again.

That repentance, and that burial in the name of the risen Jesus, wants a good deal of humility and perseverance; for there is the old man with his deeds to put off, and lay aside, and to walk a new life.

It does not only mean something, but it is shown forth in the actions of the man. Well, won't that keep a man pretty busy? I think it will in such a world as this. Well, in this sense of the word the saints are called upon to obey the gospel and repent all the while, but we talk of dying unto sin and of walking in newness of life. The dying unto sin and rising in the new life, and the baptism were to be for a moment, but the stream that flows from obedience is perpetual!

Well, those out of the church are certainly called upon to obey the gospel; and when people are careless and indifferent respecting their duties, then it is that wicked people rise up amongst us, and we are then called upon to repent and obey the gospel. I will clear my garments as far as one day will do it before I sit down. The little children are called upon to obey the gospel, such as are capable of being taught, and they ought to be taught by their parents, so that they may understand it by the time they are eight years of age. Then they are called upon to repent, to understand and bring forth the fruits meet for the kingdom of God, and be buried in the likeness of death as Jesus was, and then leave off all their foolish and sinful ways, and rise out of their watery grave, understanding that Jesus rose again from the dead, from his grave, and knowing this they should then take up their cross. This is a figure to show us that then commences a new life.

Now you folks that have been brought up in the gospel, in the light of heaven, but have been careless or wicked, rise up and obey the gospel, and don't you be baptized without you repent, for all you hear of the gospel and attend to, unless you are as humble as a little child it won't do you any good, and remember that it is through the name, and the atoning blood of Jesus Christ that you can have remission of sins through the ordinance of baptism which represents the burial. And those people that have not been brought up within this call and influence, I say come and obey it and do not call yourselves outsiders and aliens, but fellow heirs to the promises made to Abraham, and which were established by him and given to him for an everlasting covenant.

You may suppose that it was a part of the law given to Moses, and therefore done away in Christ. Let me tell you that the everlasting covenant made with Abraham and mentioned in the scriptures was made four hundred and fifty years before the law was thundered from mount Sinai. Separate and apart from the gospel the law was given to Moses, but not to disannul that covenant, and when the Lord Jesus Christ came he never disannulled it, but commanded his apostles to preach it. It is much older than the law for it applied before Moses was born and also afterwards, and all we have to do is to come into it, and be faithful as Abraham was faithful, and then we shall become sons, and if sons the sons of Abraham, and if daughters, the daughters of Sarah, because we have embraced the same gospel and principles. And then when we get into heaven with Rachel and Leah they

will not be ashamed of us, and what is more we will not be ashamed of them. Then we shall be hail fellows well met, and we shall sit down in the kingdom of God, and go no more out forever. "And many will come from the east and from the west and will sit down in the kingdom of God," and unless we are faithful we shall be shut out. Therefore I wish you to understand that the promises that are special will not apply to us, and where they go we cannot come except by adoption.

May the Lord bless you: Amen.

I like preaching the gospel this morning. Before I came here I thought what shall I say if they call on me to speak to day and the thought came into my mind, I will preach the gospel, and the moment I came Brother Kimball said, Br. Parley, come preach the gospel to us; I replied that is just what I was thinking of.

SPEECH OF AN ANCIENT (LAMANITE) LORD OF MEXICO, TO HIS DAUGHTER, ON HER ARRIVAL AT THE YEARS OF DISCRETION.

[TRANSLATED FROM THE SPANISH BY P. P. PRATT: BEING AN EXTRACT FROM LORD KINGSBOROUGH'S ANTIQUITIES OF MEXICO, VOL. 5—PAGE 412.]

Thou, my daughter:—precious as a sum of gold—as a rich feather—issue of my loins, whom I have begotten,—my blood and my image;—thou art here present:—hear with attention that which I have to say; as thou hast already arrived to years of discretion.

God, the Creator, who is in every place hath given thee the use of reason and ability to understand, and it is thus then, that thou hast reason to comprehend how the things of the world are, and that in this world there is not true pleasure, or rest, but rather labors and afflictions and extreme toils, and abundance of misery and poverty. O my daughter, thou knowest that this world is a place of weeping and of affliction and unhappiness, where there are colds and damps and heats; and that it is a place of hunger and thirst; and this is a notorious fact which we know by experience. Note well what I have to say, my daughter, that this world is evil and painful, not a world of pleasure, but of sorrow.

There is a proverb which says: That there is no pleasure in this world without its accompanying pain or affliction.

This was said by the ancients that no one might mourn and sorrow too much. Our Lord gave us laughter and sleep and to eat and to drink that we might grow and live. He gave us also the office of generation by which we might multiply in the world.

All these things afford us some happiness for a little time, that we might not afflict ourselves with continual weeping and sorrow.

And although it is thus, and this is the manner of the world, that there are a few pleasures mixed with many sorrows and fatigues yet do not be afraid to face the world, nor yet be fearful and regret that we live in it and that there are kingdoms, and dominions and dignities, and offices of honor, some connected with governments and kingdoms, and others with the art of war. It is a notorious truth that this is the way of the world: but no one considers it, no one thinks about death: they only consider the present—that is, about food and drink, and to look after a living, and to erect houses and work for a livelihood, and to hunt after women to marry; and the women give their thoughts to marriage as they are passing from the state of girlhood to that of womanhood.

This, my daughter, is as I have said; then note now, and hear with attention, that here is thy mother, and lady from whose bosom thou camest forth, as a rock is quarried from another; thus thou wast born of thy mother.

Thou hast been until now as one sleeping; but now thou hast awakened. Look and hear and know that the affairs of this world are as I have said. Pray to God that thou mayest live many days. It is also necessary that thou shouldst know how to live, and how thou hast to walk in the path: for the road of this world is very difficult; and observe, my daughter, my dear little dove, that the road in this world is not a little difficult.

Understand thou, my daughter, my firstborn, that thou camest of a noble people: thou art of the blood of lords and senators that lived and died many years since; and that reigned and set in order the throne and kingdom; and shed a lustre and an honor on the dignitaries they obtained; and aggrandised their nobility. Note, my daughter, I wish to impress upon thee what I am saying: know thou, that thou art of noble and gentle blood,—consider and recognise thyself as such; and although thou art a little girl, yet thou art precious as a chalcidony and as a sapphire; and thou wast wrought and sculptured from noble blood and from generous parents:—thou camest from a princely and illustrious house; and this that I say to thee, my daughter, I wish thee to understand, so that thou needest no longer to go romping over the earth, and fooling with the tiles, and with the earth with other children, because thou hast already come to years of discretion and the use of reason.

See that thou dishonorest not thyself,—see that thou dost not bring shame on thyself,—be careful not to disgrace thine ancestry, the ancient lords and senators: be careful not to do any vile thing; see that thou dost not make thyself vile, but that thou art noble and generous.

Thou seest here the order that thou hast to observe to live well in this world, among the people that live in it: see to it that thou art a woman: mark well what thou hast to do.

Day and night thou oughtest to pray many times, and sigh and breathe out thy desires to God, invisible and impalpable, whose name is "Yoahehecatl." Demand of him with crying, with earnest desires, in the depth of thy bosom, in thy retirement: see that thou art not a sleeper; awake and arise at midnight and prostrate thyself upon thy knees and upon thine elbows before him: bow thyself and cross thine arms: call with cries

of heart to our Lord God, invisible and impalpable; because in the night he rejoices, or takes pleasure in those who call upon him. Then he will hear thee,—then he will show thee mercy; then he will give thee what thou needest and those things of which thou art worthy: and if, peradventure, before the foundation of the world, there was appointed to thee any bad luck, or if there were any adverse circumstance connected with thy birth, as it is said,—prayer and repentance will make amends and our Lord God will better thy condition.

See to it, my daughter, that thou arise by night (or very early) and wash thyself, dress quickly: wash thy face,—wash thy hands,—wash thy mouth; and quickly take the broom and sweep,—sweep with diligence. See that thou art not lying in the bed:—arise and wash the mouths of the gods, and offer them incense; and mind that thou dost not neglect this through laziness; for with these things we demand of God, and cry to God; that he may give us that which we seek, or fulfill our request. Having done this enter quickly upon thy duties, or business: make cocoa, or grind the corn, or learn to spin and weave. See to it that thou learnest well the art of cooking, of making the good food and drink, that is considered delicate, and adapted to lords, and such as they only eat; and look that with much diligence and with much attention and advise, thou learnest how this food is made. For this thou shalt be honored, beloved and enriched wherever God shall see proper to cast the lot of thy marriage.

And, lest peradventure thou shouldst come to want, and to poverty—take care to learn very well, and with much attention the calling of women which is to spin and weave. Open thine eyes well to see in what a delicate manner they weave, and how they place the colors on the warp, and how they place the threads in it; and how they put the reeds between one warp and another, that the shuttle may pass in the midst. See that in this thou art well instructed, and very observing and diligent.

Be careful that thou dost not fail to know, by negligence or laziness; because now thou art young and hast a good time to learn in this; because thy heart is simple and skillful, and is as a fine chalcidony or sapphire, and it has aptness to learn because it is not hardened by any sin: it is pure and simple and clean, without mixture of any bad affection; and because we yet live who engendered thee: for thou didst not make thyself, neither form thyself,—I and thy mother took this care, and we made thee because this is the way of the world:—it is not the invention of any one,—it is an ordination of our Lord God, that there be generation for the life of man and woman, to cause multiplication and generation:—and forasmuch as we exist and still live, and in thy presence, and before we die, and before our Lord calls us, it becomes thee much, my daughter, my beloved, my dove, and my firstborn, that thou understandest these things and sayings, and know them very well; so that, after our death thou canst live honored, and among persons honored.

Because to go and gather herbs, and to sell wood, or to sell agave, or salt, or saleratus in the sheets is by no means becoming to thee; because thou art generous, and descended from a people noble and genteel.

Peradventure things may happen which we do not look for, and that no one thinks of: that some one will be in love with thee; and will ask for thee in marriage; and if thou art not expert in thy womanly calling, what will be then, will they not throw it in our faces? And will they not laugh us to scorn that we have not taught thee the things necessary for thee to know? And peradventure I and thy mother will then be dead, and they will murmur against us because we have not taught thee while we were yet alive. And they will say it was a bad age because they had not taught their daughter; and thou shalt provoke against thee ridicule and curses,—thou shalt be the cause of thine own evil. But if thou art already handy and skillful in that which thou hast to do there will be no occasion then for any one to laugh at thee,—there will be no place for blame, then with reason thou shalt be lauded and honored; and thou canst presume that they will esteem thee as if thou wert in the ranks of those whose acts in war merit honor; and thou canst presume they will bow the knee to thee, as they do to good soldiers. And if thou art already handy in thine office, as is a soldier in the war, then wherever thou shalt be, remembrance will be had of us, and they will bless us and honor us for thy sake. But if perchance thou doest nothing well they will maltreat thee, and abuse thee; and it will be said of thee: It is with difficulty she washes herself, and she has not time to comb her hair.

Of these two things God only knows which is thy doom, or whether, being diligent and wise in thine office, thou shalt be beloved and cared for; or whether being lazy and negligent and foolish, thou shalt be maltreated and hated.

See, my daughter, that thou observest with care that which now I wish to say: see that thou dost not dishonor thine ancestors, or sow filth and dust upon their pictures, which signify their good works and fame; look well that thou dost not defame them. See that thou dost not give thyself to carnal delight. See that thou dost not rush upon the filth and stench of lewdness; for if thou hast to come to this it is far better that thou shouldst die soon.

Look, my daughter, that little by little, thou improvise in these things that I have said to thee: because, would to God that if he wishes anything of thee, or asks anything of thee, that thou wouldst not reject it, nor despise or undervalue the will of our Lord; because he sends it,—receive it,—take it,—do not excuse thyself,—do not reject it,—do not despise it,—do not wait till they tell thee three times that which they tell thee: it will not hurt thee. Do not cast it off by burlesque, although thou art our daughter, and although thou camest of relations noble and generous do not joke and make light of it, because thou wilt offend our Lord; and they will have thee