

DISCOURSE

By President BRIGHAM YOUNG, Tabernacle, April 20, 1856.

[REPORTED BY GEO. D. WATT.]

Sometimes I think it quite strange that the children of men are so constituted as to need to be taught one lesson all the time, and again it is not so marvelous to me, when I reflect upon and understand their organization, and the designed effect thereupon of this state of probation. Men are organized to be independent in their sphere, are organized for an independent being, yet they have, as soldiers term it, to run the gauntlet all the time. They are organized to be just as independent as any being in eternity, but that independence, in order for them to occupy a position in the sphere of an independent being having control over all things, must be proved and tried while in this state of existence, must be operated upon by the good and the evil.

It is not so strange to me that the people should continually need talking to, that they should continually need instructing, when I take this view of the matter. Mothers when bringing up their children, if they will observe and reflect, can see and understand the feelings of the whole human family. The mother says to the child "don't do that; you must not handle those things;" but the little child thinks itself just as capable of handling a tea cup, or a tumbler, as are father and mother. The little girl takes up a broom to sweep the hearth, but if mother is not watching her she may let the broom take fire and set it by the bed, and thereby the bed and then the building be set in a blaze. In the actions of their children parents can detect the course of all, from the king upon his throne to the humblest peasant, they are all performing their part on the theater of the earth.

People may be advanced far in life, and yet be surrounded by weaknesses comparatively like those of children. The man or woman of eighty, sixty, forty, twenty, or the child of two or five years of age, have something ahead of them to attain to, and which they are striving to accomplish. There is a principle in the feelings of people which is implanted in their organization expressly for them to become independent, to become Gods, and it is continually urging them to reach forward and to wish to do and perform that which they do not understand. These weaknesses are in the organization irrespective of age. True, persons can do many things at twenty-five years of age which they could not do when but five years old, and men may know much more at fifty than at twenty, yet the same common weakness is apparent which you can see exhibited in the little child. There is one rule to adopt, one course to pursue, one lesson to be learned, and it is applicable alike to all ages from the child of one or two years old to the gray haired veteran, and which if they would learn would prove highly beneficial, and that is, to do those things which they know they can do, and when required by a superior to do a thing they never have done, to take the advice of those who have successfully performed the same act, and then with the best skill they can command do as they are told, and thus further their education in life and be satisfied.

If the child could understand and be satisfied that the mother knows better than it does, when it is told to let the dishes alone, the broom, or the pin-cushion, or not to swing on the table lest it be turned over and break the dishes, or not to do this or that, and that such and such things it might do, it would be a great aid to it to take the course laid down by a judicious parent, and would save it much trouble while passing through its mortal career. I ask myself why it is that people do not learn to be satisfied and contented with what they do know, until they are instructed and learn more, and practice this principle in their lives. We are taught here all the time to be passive and contented, to do the things we know how to do. Still I have no question but what, if I could unobserved and unknown to them listen to the remarks of many of the Elders, or of brethren and sisters, I should hear doctrines taught and suggestions made which God never designed to have his servants teach. At the same time remarks such as these might be dropped, "I am impressed and the spirit leads me thus and so; true I believe all that is written and taught, but I tell you that br. Brigham does not tell us all of it; he says he does not, but that he tells us as fast as we can understand and practice what he does teach." Now that is true; but all do not stop and reflect, neither do they fully understand the principles of the gospel, the principles of the Holy Priesthood; and from this cause many imbibe the idea that they are capable of leading out in teaching principles that never have been taught. They are not aware that the moment they give way to this hallucination the devil has power over them to lead them on to unholy ground; though this is a lesson which they ought to have learned long ago, yet it is one that was learned by but few in the days of Joseph.

I was speaking about this matter last night, about the feelings of the people towards the Prophet Joseph. The mass of the people never realized, to the day of his death, but what Joseph was made by them. They actually believed that he was amenable to the people, that he did not know it all, and that other men knew things which he did not know concerning the kingdom of God on the earth.

Here let me give you one lesson that may be profitable to many. If the Lord Almighty should reveal to a high priest, or to any other than the head, things that are, or that have been and will be, and show to him the destiny of this people twenty-five years from now, or a new doctrine that will in five, ten, or twenty years hence become the doctrine of this church and kingdom, but which has not yet been revealed to this people, and reveal it to him by the same spirit, the same messenger, the same voice, and the same power that gave revelations to Joseph when he was living, it would be a blessing to that high priest, or individual; but he must rarely divulge

it to a second person on the face of the earth, until God reveals it through the proper source to become the property of the people at large. Therefore when you hear elders, high priests, seventies, or the twelve, (tho' you cannot catch any of the twelve there, but you may the high priests, seventies, and elders) say that God does not reveal through the President of the church that which they know, and tell wonderful things, you may generally set it down as a God's truth that the revelation they have had is from the devil, and not from God. If they had received from the proper source, the same power that revealed to them would have shown them that they must keep the things revealed in their own bosoms, and they seldom would have a desire to disclose them to the second person. That is a general rule, but will it apply in every case, and to the people called the kingdom of God at all times? No, not in the strictest sense, but the Spirit which reveals will impart the proper discretion. All the people have not learned this lesson, they should have learned it long ago.

As I have already observed, comparatively few learned, in the days of Joseph, that he was placed between the people and God, that they had no more right to dictate him than they had to dictate the angel Gabriel, that they had no more business to interfere with him, or call him to an account, than we have to call to an account the angel Gabriel.

This we all ought to understand, and also how and when to teach and practice what we do know, and when we have done that much then stop until we learn more.

I know, and so do many others, by experience, by what we have seen and passed through, by what has passed before us and by what we have seen in others, that when the devil cannot overcome an individual through temptation to commit wickedness, when he sees that a person is determined to walk to the line and travel straight forward into the Celestial Kingdom, he will adopt a course of flattery, will strive to exercise a pleasing influence and move along smoothly with him, and when he sees an opportunity he will try to turn him out of the way, if it is only to the extent of an hair's breadth. And if he cannot keep a person this side the gospel line, he will walk with that individual on the line and strive to push him over.

That is so invariably the case that people need eyes to see and understanding to know how to discriminate between the things of God and the things that are not of him. Will this people learn? I am happy and joyful, I am thankful, and can say of a truth, brethren and sisters, that the manifestations of goodness from this people are not to be compared, in my opinion, with those from any other people upon the face of the whole earth since the days of Enoch.

Old Israel, in all their travels, wanderings, exercises, powers, and keys of the priesthood, never came nigh enough to the path this people have walked in to see them in their obedience that was and is required by the gospel. Yet there are thousands of weaknesses and overt acts in some of this people, which render us more or less obnoxious to each other.

Still, you may search all the history extant of the children of Israel, or that of any people that ever lived on the face of the earth since the days of Enoch, and I very much doubt, taking that people with their traditions and comparing them with this mixed multitude from the different nations now in the world with our traditions, whether you would find a people from the days of Enoch until now that could favorably compare with this people in their willingness to obey the gospel and to go all lengths to build up the kingdom of God.

I have said a great many times, and repeat it now, and whether I am mistaken or not I will leave for the future to determine, and though, as I do, Joseph when living reproved the people, that I believe with all my heart that the people who gathered around Enoch, and lived with him and built up his city, when they had traveled the same length of time in their experience as this people have, were not as far advanced in the things of the kingdom of God.

Make your own comparisons between the two people, think of the traditions of the two. How many nations were there in the days of Enoch? The very men who were associated with him had been with Adam; they knew him and his children, and had the privilege of talking with God. Just think of it.

Though we have it in history that our father Adam was made of the dust of this earth, and that he knew nothing about his God previous to being made here, yet it is not so; and when we learn the truth we shall see and understand that he helped to make this world, and was the chief manager in that operation.

He was the person who brought the animals and the seeds from other planets to this world, and brought a wife with him and stayed here. You may read and believe what you please as to what is found written in the Bible. Adam was made from the dust of an earth, but not from the dust of this earth. He was made as you and I are made, and no person was ever made upon any other principle.

Do you not suppose that he was acquainted with his associates, who came and helped to make this earth? Yes, they were just as familiar with each other as we are with our children and parents.

Suppose a number of our sons were going to Carson Valley to build houses, open farms, and erect mills and workshops, and that we should say to them that we wish them to stay there five years, and that then we will come and visit them, when I go there will they be afraid of me? No, they would receive me as their father, just as Adam received his Father.

The very man who walked and talked with and knew the God of heaven, and knew and understood all about making this earth had associates who were associated with Enoch, and yet twenty five years of the travel and experience

of Enoch with his people had not advanced them so far, in my opinion, as this people have advanced in the same time, taking into account the difference of traditions and other advantages.

They had not a diversity of languages, but all spoke one language; they were not trained in the various traditions in which we have been, for they received only one from Adam; they were as intimately associated as we would be in living in this city two hundred years, with the gates shut down upon all egress and ingress, and under such circumstances do you not think that our traditions would be all alike?

Yet Enoch had to talk with and teach his people during a period of three hundred and sixty years, before he could get them prepared to enter into their rest, and then he obtained power to translate himself and his people with the region they inhabited, their houses, gardens, fields, cattle and all their possessions. He had learned enough from Adam and his associates to know how to handle the elements, and those who would not listen to his teachings were so wicked that they were fit to be destroyed, and he obtained power to take his portion of the earth and move out a little while, where he remains to this day.

You know that I sometimes reprove you because you deserve it, yet there is a constant and rapid increase of willingness to build up this kingdom.

Where is there a woman that would say to her husband, or to her son, "I do not wish you to go on the mission you have been called to perform?" That would say, "it is true you were called, but I do not like to have you go, cannot you get excused and stay at home?" I do not believe you could find five such women in this Territory.

There may be a few who are going to California that would say, "Yes, you may go on your mission, but I will go with you." All they desire is to get away. Can you find five such women?

I care not if they should be old ladies of seventy-five years of age and had not the first thing to subsist upon, and though their whole dependence was upon their sons or husbands, they would say, "go John, my son; or, go husband, if you do not we shall suffer; but if you go and do your duty God will provide for us in your absence." Are not these the feelings of every wife and mother?

In the midst of all this some talk about sacrifices, but upon that point I wish to be allowed to differ from the class who view the matter in that light.

There may be some few exceptions, but I have made no sacrifices. 'Mormonism' has done everything for me that ever has been done for me on the earth; it has made me happy, it has made me wealthy and comfortable; it has filled me with good feelings, with joy and rejoicing. Whereas, before I possessed the spirit of the gospel, I was troubled with that which I hear others complain of, that is, with at times feeling cast down, gloomy and desponding; with everything wearing to me at times a dreary aspect.

But have the trees, the streams, the rocks, or any part of creation worn a gloomy aspect to me for one half minute since I came in possession of the Spirit of this gospel? No, though before that time I might view the most beautiful gardens, buildings, cities, plantations, or anything else in nature, yet to me they all wore at times a shade of death.

They appeared at times as though a veil was brooding over them, which cast a dark shade upon all things, like the shade of the valley of death, and I felt lonesome and bad. But since I have embraced the gospel for one half minute, to the best of my recollection, has anything worn to me a gloomy aspect, under all circumstances I have felt pleasant and cheerful.

When surrounded by mobs, with death and destruction threatening on every hand, I am not aware but that I felt just as joyful, just as well in my spirit, as I do now. Prospects might appear dull and very dark, but I have never seen a time in this gospel but what I knew that the result would be beneficial to the cause of truth and the lovers of righteousness, and I have always felt to joyfully acknowledge the hand of the Lord in all things.

When I was among the wicked they looked to me as do the wicked, and when I saw devils possessing the bodies of the children of men I knew that God permitted it, and that he permitted them to be on the earth, and wherein would this be a state of probation, without those devils? We cannot even give endowments without representing a devil.

What would we know about heaven or happiness were it not for their opposite? Consequently we could not have got along so well and so rapidly without those mobocrats. And if mobbers should happen to come here do not look too sour at them, for we need them.

We could not build up the kingdom of God without the aid of devils, they must help to do it. They persecute and drive us from city to city from place to place, until we learn the difference between the power of God and the power of the devil.

But does it then follow that we should say to them, "Come on here, we are good fellows well met?" By no means, care must be observed that we do not overrun the rule; we only need enough of them to help us do the work.

If we should get too many here they would overcome the good, and the saints would have to flee.

Some of our elders desire all the time to say, as I plainly phrase it, "how do you do brother Christ and how do you do brother devil? Walk in and take breakfast with me."

I consider such men useful in their places. This fact was very clearly exemplified to me in a dream which I had while so many were going to California, at a time when many of the brethren were under quite an excitement about the saints' going there to dig gold.

I thought considerably about the movement, and there had been a feeling abroad among the people that when the saints got into the mountains "judgment would be laid to the line and righteousness to the plummet," that the axe would be laid at the root of the tree, and that every person who did not meet the measure would, in accordance with the iron bedstead rule, be chopped off if too long, and stretched out if too short.

Several supposed that this would be the case; and perhaps thought that they would be able to so sanctify themselves that in one year they could take Great Salt Lake Valley and the regions round about up to Enoch, or have him come here. I did not so view the matter, and did not give any special instructions upon it.

At that time I dreamed that while I was a little below the road and just north of the Hot Springs, about four miles from here, I saw br. Joseph coming and walked up to the road to see him, and asked him where he was going? He replied, "I am going north."

There were two or three horsemen along, and some men were riding with him upon a few boards placed loosely upon the running gears of a wagon, upon which were also a tent and camp utensils. I wished to talk with him, but he did not seem inclined to conversation, and it occurred to me that he was going to Captain James Brown's to buy all his goats.

I had been promised ten or a dozen of them, but I thought that he was going to buy every one, and that I should not get a single goat to put with my sheep, and I laughed in my sleep.

Pretty soon he came back, with a large flock of sheep and goats following the wagon, and as I looked upon them I saw some sheep that were white, pure and clean, and as large as a two year old cow, with wool from ten to twenty inches in length, as fine as silk and as white as the driven snow.

With them were all lesser sizes down to the smallest goat or sheep I ever saw, and all mixed up together. I saw some sheep with hair like that of goats, and goats of all colors, red, black, white, etc., mixed with the sheep; and their sizes, colors, and quality of fleeces seemed to be almost innumerable.

I remarked to Joseph that he had got the strangest flock I ever saw, and looked at him slyly and laughed, and asked him what he was going to do with them. He looked at me in his usual shrewd manner and replied, "they are all good in their places."

On awaking I at once understood the dream, and I then said, go to California, or where you please, for goats are as good in their places as sheep, until the time for them to mingle is over. And in striving to guide and improve the flock we sometimes have to cry out, shoo, and at other times to draw them nigh by calling, sheep, sheep.

We are trying to train the flock, and to turn the goats into sheep and the spotted, ring-streaked and speckled into beautiful white, and how shall we succeed? Perhaps we shall see rather a curious flock at last, but we will do the best we can.

Sometimes I rise up here and really feel to storm at some who are in this community, for their conduct is awful, it is outrageous. I presume I could come here this afternoon and eat bread and drink of the cup, in the name of Israel's God, with men who would go straight from the communion and steal my property.

Let us consider this point a little, for this matter has been through me, round me, over me and under me; I have turned it inside out and round about and looked at it, and then I have turned it over again. Bro. Fullmer has just alluded to the rails' disappearing from fences. Are not your fences taken? Is not your clothing taken when it is hung out to dry? And is not wood taken from your wood piles? How many have to lock up their wood, or loose it? Taking property without leave from the owner is what I call stealing, but many who practice that do not so understand it.

Even if I had to work by the day for bread, wood, clothing and comforts for myself and family, and should then without authority go and take wood from br. Joseph's wood pile, were he living here and President of the Church, my judgment, what I know of right and wrong, the traditions of my fathers and the teachings of my parents and of the neighbors where I was brought up would all confirm me in the belief that I was stealing. Do all persons feel so? No, they do not.

During two or three of the past winters, except the last, I have no question but that women and children carried from one to three cords of wood per day from my wood yard, and when the wood was scarce they would take my fence poles. I have myself seen them take back loads of wood and then fill their bags with the chips and small sticks, but when they took my fence poles and posts I stopped them, and told them that if they were not satisfied with taking my wood without taking my fencing to leave my yard, and not to come there to steal any more.

But do I see some there yet? Yes, you may see women and children carrying away my wood every day. If my workmen ask them what they are doing, they reply "br. Brigham said I might have some wood, he will not say anything." Do you suppose that those persons fully realize that they are stealing? No.

I will tell you a little that I know about the difference in traditions and customs, and will go no further than where I have traveled and preached. A large number of the inhabitants in the old countries are tenants, renting houses for longer or shorter periods, generally for from three to twelve months.

Now suppose that A, when vacating a house, accidentally leaves his pocket book in a cupboard, and that B, who next occupies the same building, finds A's pocket book with, perhaps, 20 sovereigns in it; what does the custom of that country warrant in such a case? Their traditions are