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## OUR PRESENT DUTIES.

*Discourse delivered at the Tabernacle,  
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ruary 2nd, 1896, by*

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[REPORTED BY ARTHUR WINTER.]

I am gratified to see the goodly number of Latter-day Saints who are in attendance at this meeting, and I trust that the Lord will be pleased to give unto us that which will strengthen our faith and help us in the great work which He has called us to perform.

I wonder if there is any member of the Church who realizes the great responsibility that rests upon us as a people. I doubt this very much indeed; and I am sure that many of us have but a slight comprehension of our duties and obligations, if we may judge from the conduct of those who profess to be Latter-day Saints. I have wondered what our condition would be in a century or two, if God did not now and again interpose to bring to us a realization of the importance of the principles which He has revealed; for you know that we now and again become careless and indifferent, when something occurs which is inexplicable to us and sometimes very trying, to arouse our thoughts and to impress us with the importance of some forgotten or neglected duty. I am reminded of a story told by the Greek and Roman churches. It runs in this wise: At the time the persecutions were raging so bitterly against the early Saints, seven youths sought escape in a remote and lonely cave. After a time the Lord mercifully permitted them to fall asleep; and so deep and long was their slumber that they did not waken until two hundred years had passed. When they were aroused from their sleep they went forth into the city of Ephesus, to which they belonged, and timidly they began to enquire of the people if there were any Christians in the city. "Christians!" was the response, "why, we are all Christians," and as evidence of it they pointed out the beautiful churches surmounted by the cross, wherein the worship of God was held; and as these young men visited the schools of learning they found the principles of the Gospel there taught according to the written word. They found it was popular to be Christians, instead of unpopular, as it was when they hid themselves. Emperors with their wealth, professors with their learning, even the humble workmen, were followers of the cross and professed disciples of Jesus. For a time they greatly rejoiced in the changed condition of

things; but as they mingled among the people they found that while the professions were abundant, the Spirit of the Gospel was not with them, the signs and gifts of faith were not manifested among the people, and sorrowfully they retired to their cave, where their prayers moved God to take them unto Himself.

I do not know, because I have not lived sufficiently long to compare conditions with what they were, whether we are drifting away from the faith which characterized the people of God in early days; but I am led to believe, from what I read, and see, and hear, that in some respects we are going into the same condition that prevailed when these young men came forth from their slumber. I ask myself if there is among us that simple, undeviating, unquenchable faith which we hear was manifested in the early rise of the Church. It was then considered an evidence of weakness in the faith for Latter-day Saints to depend other than upon God for the restoration of their sick unto health. I remember reading—and you doubtless have read also—that whenever the people were afflicted, the first thought of the relatives, and of themselves, if they were capable of thinking, was to seek the ministrations of the Elders of the Church, believing in the words of the ancient Apostle, that the prayer of faith shall save the sick. Now, however, I find many hundreds of families, among this people whose first thought is, not for God and His power, not for the Elders of the Church, but for human skill and wisdom to relieve them from the pain and sickness with which they are afflicted. True, when human power fails and human agency has been exerted to its utmost, then the people will send for the Elders as a last resort, instead of as a first resort; and if their sick die under such circumstances, too often they complain at the lack of faith among the people and the loss of power among the Elders, and the decrease of the gifts of the Gospel in the Church, when if they would seek the cause of many of the afflictions which come upon them they would find it in their own faithlessness and neglect of duty.

We are much in the condition of the two fishermen of whom the story is told that they found themselves one day, as the tide was coming in, surrounded by water upon some rocks just off from the English shore, and as the waters rose around them they began to think of prayer. One asked the other to pray; but he refused, saying he did not know how. His companion finally decided to offer a prayer, and he began pleading with the Lord for deliverance. He promised to devote his life to His service; he promised Him all his sheep and his lambs, at which his companion

whispered to him that he did not own any sheep or lambs. "Oh!" says the man, "I'm just stuffing Him." He was trying to deceive the Lord because he was in danger; he was trying to deceive his Maker with an outward show of sanctity and humility. It seems to me that sometimes we as Latter-day Saints are in this same condition, that when trouble comes and disaster overtakes us, we seek God, covenanting with Him to keep His commandments and to do His will, while in our hearts there is no real intention of doing as we promise.

I know that with the faith which belongs to this Gospel the sick can be healed today. I know that when human skill is powerless, is unsuccessful, God is near to hear and answer the petitions of His children. I know that the gift of healing is within the souls of men and women here in the flesh, and they could exercise it if the people who appeal for their help and ministration as servants and handmaidens of God were only in a condition to receive these blessings.

Yet I would not say a word against the use of the wisdom which God gives to us. I delight in seeing men study the human organism, to learn its functions, to be capable of relieving pain, to assist suffering humanity in their distresses; but I feel that our Elders who study medicine and who desire to acquire skill in surgery should be men of faith in God, dependent above everything else upon the assistance which the Lord is willing to give to the learned and the skillful as well as to the unlearned and awkward. Yet with all our learning as physicians and as surgeons, we have only crossed the threshold of the science of medicine. New theories are coming into acceptance in the medical world; new discoveries are being made, that put to shame the present and the past learning of physicians. You who have followed this profession know the changes that have occurred; you know that new discoveries are occurring almost daily to relieve suffering humanity. Why, there is a large body of people in this country today who do not believe in the use of medicine at all in relieving sickness and pain. The man who instituted the system of osteopathy, as it is called, was ridiculed when he first announced his belief that by manipulation disease could be cured, pain could be relieved, and health and strength be instituted; but now he has a large following. You know of the discoveries that Pasteur and Edson and others have made; and now comes a new revelation to scientists and the medical fraternity—the discovery whereby a human skeleton, covered as it is with flesh, can be photographed, and surgeons will be able to examine diseased bones or other parts of the sys-