

THE LORD IS NO RESPECTER OF PERSONS.

Discourse delivered at the Salt Lake Stake Conference, in the Assembly Hall, Saturday, Salt Lake City, June 15, 1901.

BY ELDER RUDGER CLAWSON.

All Who Love God Are Accepted of Him—The Priesthood the Pearl of Great Price—Sublimity of the Work of God—Grand Destiny of the Faithful—Responsibility Accompanies Authority—Non-Tithepayers to be Labored With—Patient Effort Wins Souls.

I desire, brethren and sisters, an interest in your faith during the time that I shall stand before you, that I may be able to say something that shall be profitable to all who are assembled. I very much rejoice in the spirit of this morning's meeting, but not so much in the attendance. The attendance was light, but the spirit of the meeting was good. The reports given were very interesting and instructive, and were worthy of being heard by all the people of this Stake of Zion, and I regret they were not present to hear them. We have some faithful ones laboring in the presiding callings in the Church, both men and women, and I say, the Lord be praised for these faithful ones! The Church could not get along without them; and who can estimate the influence for good of one faithful man or one faithful woman? To determine that, we shall have to wait until the great judgment day. I rejoice in the faithful ones in the Church, both brethren and sisters, and I feel to be one with them. I desire to unite with them in every good work. I pray for them, and ask for their prayers in return.

ALL WHO LOVE GOD ARE ACCEPTED OF HIM.

One of the most profoundly gratifying features of the Gospel, to my mind, is the thought that God is no respecter of persons. There are of course, in the Church for vaulting ambition, nor for jealousy, strife, envy, or anything of this kind; and when we witness such manifestations we know that they are the result of ignorance. Knowledge brings contentment, satisfaction and gratitude. The path of glory and exaltation is open to all. The Lord has declared that He is no respecter of persons, but that all who love and serve Him are accepted of Him. Those who are dissatisfied will take the opposite view, and will say, "Look at Brother ———; he is called to be the President of a Stake. Just think of the power and influence that he is thereby enabled to exert in the Church! See how much better he must be than his poor brother, because he has been selected to be the President of a Stake; and yet you say that God is no respecter of persons!" Yes, I maintain that God is no respecter of persons. Because a man is called to be the President of a Stake of Zion, it does not necessarily make him better than that poor brother down there who holds the authority of an Elder, or a Secretary, or a High Priest in the Church. The difference between them is simply this: the President of a Stake is called to a higher responsibility, and this responsibility will rest with great weight and force upon him. Greater things are required of him, and he must render an account of his stewardship. The same with the Bishop, and the same with the High Councilors. Sometimes we may draw information from a comparison. Let the United States take the President of the United States. Speaking of him in his exalted position, people would naturally say how much better is the President of the United States than any other man in the nation, because of the great dignity conferred upon him and the influence and power he has among his fellows. We might well reply in this case as in the other, it does not necessarily follow that he is better. The great thing to be desired in this case is citizenship. I do not know that the President really has any greater power—at least, in one respect he has no greater power than the citizen of the Republic. The President has only one vote, and the citizen has one vote; and the vote of the poor man counts for just as much as the vote of the President, or the vote of the congressman. The difference in this case, as in the other, is simply in the responsibility that is placed upon the President of the United States; and at times I fancy that this responsibility does not rest lightly upon his shoulders. I take the view that men who are exalted to such high positions in the nation are called of God to answer therefor, and they will have to answer for the manner in which they exercise this great power. If men are called to more exalted positions in the nation than the ordinary citizen, they will have much more to answer for. Great is their calling, and great will be their fall if they are recreant to the trust reposed in them. God deals in this manner with the people of the nation, and in like manner He deals with the people of His Church. He is no respecter of persons. The Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ is free to all. There is not a man or a woman in the world, no matter how obscure, but is permitted, if faithful, to enter into the house of the Lord and receive every blessing and privilege that is conferred upon the authorities. I do not know that the President of this Stake, or any member of the High Council, or any Bishop in this Stake, is any more entitled to go into the house of the Lord and ask for blessings at the hands of His servants than the humblest member of the Church. The Priesthood is not denied to any who are worthy, and it is by and through the authority of the Priesthood that we are exalted. No man can go into the presence of the Lord and dwell with Him and the heavenly hosts in the celestial kingdom, without the Priesthood. That is

THE PEARL OF GREAT PRICE.

And men are not called to responsible positions in this Church except they have first received the Priesthood. If a man would desire a good thing, if he would desire a blessing at the hands of the Lord, let him desire to receive the Priesthood and to be faithful to his covenants in the Priesthood. Then he need have no fear of the future; and he may rest assured that, if not at present, in time to come he will certainly find his proper place in the Church and kingdom of God. Therefore, I say, God is no respecter of persons. In one of the revelations, the Lord has made use of a very peculiar expression that bears out this idea. It will be found in the 1st section of the Book of Doctrine and Covenants, and is impressive, forceful, and comprehensive. In the very first words of this section the Lord says:

"Hearken, O ye people of my church, faith the voice of Him who dwells on high, and whose eyes are upon all men; ye, verily I say, hearken ye people from afar, and ye that are upon the islands of the sea, listen together."

This is the voice of the Lord, not to the Church alone, but to all men. Now, mark these words:

"For verily the voice of the Lord is unto all men, and there is none to escape, neither ear that shall not hear, neither heart that shall not be penetrated."

I do not understand this revelation to have been given with special reference

ing to you which cannot be taken from you, except by transgression. They are yours by right divine. The least of the members of this Church shall have an opportunity of becoming truly great.

"And when I say truly great I mean not this term as it is used in the world, but truly great in the eyes of God; and he will not have to come before this or any other quorum to have his status defined. He may be a God in eternity; he may become like His Father, doing the works which His Father did before him; and he cannot be deprived of the opportunity of reaching this exalted state. I never sought to be a Seventy, or a High Priest, because this eternal principle was revealed to me long before I was ordained to the Priesthood. The position which I now occupy is nothing compared to what I expect to occupy in the future."

I ask you, brethren and sisters, if I have overruled these words. Are they mere empty words, words of eternal truth, words that harmonize with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and words that should be indelibly impressed upon our hearts? I may forget the words, though they are beautiful to be remembered, but the spirit of the words, the thought that they clothe, will never, I trust, pass from my mind. Happy shall we be, if we will let these words sink deep into our hearts. From them we can see that there is something to live for, something to desire, something to hope for; but I tell you this Church. There is no time to waste in idleness, no time to indulge excessively in the pleasures of the world, no time to be reading novels, though possibly a good, standard novel, in reading a great while, might lead to a person any harm; but I tell you the young men and young women in this Church ought to be reaching out for the knowledge and the hopes expressed in this language.

RESPONSIBILITY ACCOMPANIES AUTHORITY.

Now I repeat, God is no respecter of persons. The greater the authority conferred, the greater the responsibility that is all. The man who is called to be a Bishop, or a High Councilor, or a President of a Stake, or an Apostle, or one of the Presidency, let him tremble, and let him look to the Lord by day and by night, for his prayers should be unceasing for the grace and favor of God. The path of exaltation, however, is open to all. But who shall walk therein? Who shall receive these great promises and enter into this exaltation and glory? Will it be men who reject the Gospel? Will it be men who say, as did a Bishop in this Church, "I do not believe that the Father and the Son appeared to Joseph Smith?" A Bishop actually made that remark, and, strange to say, continued to be a Bishop. I am not sure that I should not see that such non-belief cut right from under him the very foundation of his Priesthood and Bishopric. It was mockery before God that a man with such sentiments in his heart should continue to hold the office of Bishop in the Church. What could the President of that Stake have been thinking about? Will it be men who declare it is not necessary to repent of sin, or who say that baptism is not essential? Will it be men who repudiate the doctrine of the laying on of hands for the reception of the Holy Ghost, or who think that, because of their scholastic education, they do not need the Holy Ghost? Are such men as these on the path which leads to exaltation and glory? I think not.

You say it can not be possible that there are people in this Church repudiating the first principles of the Gospel. There may not be, but I want to tell you of some people in this Church who are repudiating cardinal principles of the Gospel. There are men holding the Priesthood who are turning their backs upon a great commandment, which is binding upon the Church. I refer to the principle of tithing. There are men holding the Priesthood who have said that they do not believe in tithing. There are others who, though not saying it, by word or deed, have said it by failing to pay their tithing. It is useless for a man to say he believes in the law of tithing if he does not honor it; moreover, it is a reflection on his honesty.

NON-TITHEPAYERS TO BE LABORED WITH.

There may be some in the congregation who will wonder at this statement of Zion who fail to honor this law. I would like to satisfy you, if I could, on this point. I can tell you just how many, and what Priesthood they hold; but, if I do so, it will not be because I have a desire to humiliate anyone before the people, but to simply illustrate my remarks and to show the importance of this principle. I have in my hands a list of the number of non-tithepayers in the Stake of Zion. It might be thought questionable to present it here this afternoon, because in all probability there are no non-tithepayers in the congregation. As a rule, the non-tithepayers do not come to quarterly conferences, they do not come to sacrament meetings, nor do they attend their prayers and other duties in the Church. At all events, here is the showing made by this Stake: In the Salt Lake Stake of Zion there are 11 High Priests, 91 Seventies, 366 Elders, 63 Priests, 71 Teachers, 204 Deacons, and 443 members—total, 1,249—who are non-tithepayers. Now, this seems a large number, and it is too large by 1,249; but it is considerably less than last year. Considering the number of men who are High Priests in this Stake, I would not think 11 a bad showing at all. At the same time I wish there were not eleven non-tithepayers among them. I do not, I think, exaggerate when I say that there are 11-17 non-tithepayers in this Stake. Considering the great number of Seventies in the Stake. But it does seem to me that 266 Elders are far too many. In one ward there were 146 non-tithepayers, in another ward 142, in another 110—393 non-tithepayers in three wards, or about one-third of the whole number in the Stake. It is not my purpose, however, to name those wards; for I have no desire to hurt anybody's feelings. But I will name the banner ward of this stake. There are three wards that have the least number of non-tithepayers, and each has eight only; they are the Twelfth, Cannon and Center wards. The Twelfth ward has ten only. These four are what might be termed the banner wards of the Stake, respecting the matter of non-tithepayers.

I have simply called your attention to the foregoing facts and figures in order to ask the question whether you think these non-tithepayers, some of them holding the Priesthood, are on the path of exaltation and glory. I rather think that they are not, and I do not know how much attention the president of the High Priests' quorum has given to this matter; doubtless he has had his most serious consideration; but I would recommend that he exercise continued interest in it, and, if he can find time, take up a special labor with these eleven High Priests. I do not think it is necessary for me to recommend that the Seven Presidents of Seventies take up a labor with the ninety-one Seventies, because I understand that they are giving special attention to this matter and have already accomplished good work. But I do recommend that all serious and sincere members of spirit that the presidents of Elders' quorums of this Stake of Zion take up a labor with the 366 non-tithepayers who are members of their quorums. If the presidents of these quorums are here, I would recommend that they take the matter up, and personally labor with these delinquent members. It is your privilege to do so, and I believe the Lord will bless you in doing it. Reduce the number of non-tithepayers, so that if it shall be necessary to again refer to this subject, your good work may be

known and due praise given it; and let it be said that through the efforts of the presidents of all the Elders' quorums, the number of non-tithepayers, yet I do not know that we shall ever come to a condition where all will be tithepayers, because there is such a thing in this Church as the spirit of apostasy, and this spirit rests upon some who bear the Priesthood. I hope the Lord will be able to reach them by His Spirit, touch their hearts, and bring them back into the right path. We may not be able to do this, but we can labor at it, and that is my recommendation. In the Lesser Priesthood, each quorum should take up this matter with those who are non-tithepayers, that they too may be converted. There is another recommendation I wish to make, and that is this: Let the Elders of the wards take up the matter also. In fact, they cannot avoid the obligation, because these non-tithepayers are members of their wards. With the combined efforts of the Presidents of quorums and the Elders of wards, what may we not accomplish?

PATIENT EFFORT WINS SOULS.

Before sitting down I will relate an incident in this connection. In one of the wards in the Church, the Bishop, a young man who was a non-tithepayer in his ward and sought to convert him to the Gospel, and to the observance of the law of tithing. He labored with the young man assiduously, but failed to reach his heart. He called a second time, with a fixed determination to save the young man from destruction. I think the Lord must have looked with peculiar favor upon that Bishop, who manifested so much anxiety to save the soul of his erring brother. Oh, that that spirit was all through the Church. He did not tell him that he must pay his tithing, but he invited, persuaded, and pointed out the blessings of exaltation and glory which would come through obedience. Nevertheless, on the second visit he failed to accomplish his purpose. Now, you might naturally think that that was the end of it; that the Bishop would make no further attempt to convert the young man who was a non-tithepayer. Not so, however; the Bishop visited him again, and went right into the subject of tithing, as before, determined, yet with a spirit of kindness and love, to try and save this precious soul; and when he left the young man he felt he had made a little impression, though he could get no promise from him. Shortly after, the young man came to the Bishop and handed him a check for one hundred dollars, and the latter was so surprised that he hardly knew what it all meant. He asked for an explanation. The reply was, "What my tithing. Then the young man turned to him and said: 'Bishop, I thank you that you took up a labor with me, that you persevered and were determined that I should see the error of my way, and thank you for the way in which you have many of them. God bless them, for we cannot get along without their help; and we want all the Bishops to be just that way. God bless the presidents of quorums who will labor in this way. We do not need to preach this doctrine to the people so much as we do to the authorities. Let the presiding officers convert the non-tithepayers, and the others will take care of themselves. God bless you. Amen.'

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