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NECESSITY OF REPETANCE

Discourse Delivered at the General Conference of the Church, in the Tabernacle, Salt City, Saturday, October 6th, 1894, by

ELDER GEORGE TEASDALE.

[REPORTED BY ARTHUR WINTER.]

I hope that the same Spirit that has inspired the speakers in this conference may be granted unto me while I shall address you.

With regard to the Mexican Mission, my field of labor, I wish to say that we are as successful as could be expected. Some of our settlements require more colonists; especially is this the case in Sonora. Getting out the water and putting it on the land requires some solid bone and muscle. We need good pioneers, men that are practical workers, and who are able to subdue the elements; for in the establishment of settlements, as well as in the preaching of the Gospel, it requires men of nerve and determination. Every organization in the Mexican Mission, I am happy to say, is complete. There is a presidency, there are two patriarchs, a high council, bishops, and teachers, relief societies, young men's and young ladies' mutual improvement associations, primaries, Sabbath schools and day schools. We have all the difficulties to meet that are incident to the formation of new settlements. Our aged brethren, who helped to lay the foundation of this territory, know the obstacles that they had to contend with, and those who have been favored with experience in opening new settlements, and in making the barren places "blossom like the rose," know what a glorious work it is to be engaged in, and fully understand the necessity of hard labor as well as of patience, faith, hope, and sterling integrity.

I have been wonderfully impressed at this conference with the necessity for all of repentance. I think the Saints who have listened to the burning words that have been uttered by the inspired servants of God realize that our Heavenly Father requires us to repent and to turn unto Him with full purpose of heart if we desire to prosper in the land. The promise was made many years ago to the ancient inhabitants who dwelt upon this continent that those who would serve God and keep His commandments should prosper in the land. And this is the word of the Lord to us to day. We are told that if we desire to be a prosperous people we must be a God-fearing people; that we must not be hearers of the word alone, but doers of it also. I tell our little children in our Sabbath

schools that the reason we are here in this state of probation, is for the purpose of making a good record, the record of a well spent life, and that the foundation of such a life is laid in our youth. As we lay the foundation, so are we likely to build upon it. Although we make every allowance for the exuberance of youth, if our children desire to be successful in this life they must not lay the foundation in bad habits. It is easier to resist these habits in youth than it is in after life. It is so satisfactory to men and women to have the record of a well-spent life. There cannot be true liberty without virtue. Chastity, purity of thought and holiness of life alone can produce peace and lasting happiness. Under the influence and power of the Spirit of God we realize our own weakness, our own nothingness, and how dependent we are upon our Heavenly Father for everything that we enjoy or ever expect to enjoy. I have thought what must be the feelings of men in the Church who are under the baneful influences arising from the use of tobacco, intoxicants or from other bad habits? What excuse can be given? What can we say to our file leaders; what can we say to the Lord Jesus Christ, in justification of anything of the kind? Let me ask my brethren, if there are any here under those influences, have you any faith? Do you not believe in God? Do you not believe that it is by His grace that we are able to overcome? Overcome what? Our bad dispositions, our bad habits, our evil propensities. Is not this promised to us in its most literal sense? Our Father hath said, "Though our sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow." Unto whom does he say so? To the sinner. When we go and preach the Gospel we carry these glad tidings of great joy, and what are the conditions required? That we shall cease to do evil. Is it not evil to set a bad example in the midst of Israel? Is it not evil to be under the influence of pernicious habits? Is it not time that we should repent and that we should call unto the Lord that He would give us power over our bad habits, and enable us to set a godly example in the midst of Israel? My fellow laborers, I can assure you that you will have the faith and the prayers of the Presidency and the Twelve Apostles that God will give you grace, to overcome and put away all your evils. My feelings of compassion go forth to men under these baneful influences. When I was engaged in business in this city, a friend of mine on one occasion came to me for some tobacco, and he said to me, "Brother George, I would give all that I possess if I could overcome this baneful habit." A good sister, purchasing tobacco for her husband said, "Brother Teasdale,

we are obliged to have tobacco, for there is no living in the house with the man unless he has his tobacco." In either case was the man a bad man? No, each was a faithful laborer in his sphere. God had gathered them from the islands of the sea. They knew that the gospel was true. But they had not strength of character to overcome this habit. One was a friend of mine, that I had known when I was traveling and preaching the Gospel. He and his family would give the best that they had to the servants of God, and would turn out of their beds that the Elders might have a comfortable place to lay their heads, treating them as they would our divine Master. Do you not think that I have tender compassion for such men? I have. They are my fellow laborers. They are men whom the Lord has thought fit to gather to Zion and to ordain with priesthood, and whose grace is able to give them strength to overcome all evil habits.

A powerful influence rested upon the servants of God while speaking yesterday on the Word of Wisdom and the necessity of paying tithing. What was the word of the Lord to Israel? It was, Repent, O ye, my people, put away all your pernicious habits, sanctify yourselves before the Lord, and prepare for His kingdom and coming. The question is, will we do it? Will I do it? It comes to me as to every individual member of the Church. Will the boys and the young men say, "As for me, I am going to prepare myself for the Kingdom of God and the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ." O, my young brethren, that you would be wise, and that while these habits are yet new to you you would rise in the dignity of the children of Zion, born heirs of the everlasting covenant, and say, "As for me, by the grace of God, I will put away every bad habit, and will separate myself from evil companions and examples." If we want prosperity, if we want to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of the truth, let us hearken to the word of the Lord, and with broken hearts and contrite spirits let us call upon Him in mighty prayer, and ask him to deliver us from our besetting sins. And, as I have said, for our encouragement we have the prayers and the faith of the authorities of the Church, who speak as they are moved upon by the Spirit of God. The Lord knows their hearts; He knows they are touched with the infirmities of the people, and they plead before Him to have mercy upon His heritage. Oh! that we would rise up in the dignity of our calling and plead before the God of Israel, and no longer feel, "I cannot do it," but say, "I will, by the grace of God." It is only by His grace that we are enabled to do anything. What have we but what the Lord has given us? We are so