

## SERMON

By Elder Amasa Lyman, Tabernacle, Sunday Morning, October 11, 1857.

[REPORTED BY J. V. LONG.]

The circumstances of our meeting this morning has brought me to this place to occupy a portion of the time allotted for the worship of to-day. I cannot say as I have heard men say at times, that I have thought of nothing to say, for it has been my study and my labor since my connection with the work of God in the last days to learn what to say in order that I might have something whereof to speak in case that I should be required to say anything, and I would always wish to be able, through the blessing of God and the manifestation of his Holy Spirit, to say, at any time when it might be my duty to speak, something that will be calculated to benefit those to whom I may speak. I know of no other blessing, or glory, or wealth accruing from our living and our labors in the world but that which we learn of the truth that will bless us and make us free from the dominion and influence of error.

We talk about experience, and we have had a great deal of experience and we are constantly in the school of experience, but I am inclined to think that it may be the case with us in that school as in other schools. We sometimes improve by what we experience, adding to our store of knowledge, and then again we may experience very considerable from which we derive no particular benefit, like the scholar that attends school, but from inattention, a failure to apply himself properly to his lessons and to the acquirement of the knowledge that is imparted, he fails to comprehend the truth to the extent that he might otherwise have done and hence he is not benefited to the extent that he might have been, although he has been in the school.

Well, as Saints and as children of God, we are in the school and if there is any higher purpose connected with our being in the school, connected with living in the world and connected with all our labors in the world and what we are supposed to here for, if there is any higher object than the attainment of the knowledge that will save us I do not know it, I never have heard of anything greater nor more glorious nor more to be esteemed than our being saved. It is simply for this that we are being taught and that we are learning; it is for this that we are required to be obedient, it is for this that we are obedient.

When we have been obedient to every requirement, made every possible attainment that can be made, what is our condition? We are saved from the bondage of sin and darkness, the consequences of ignorance. Well, then it will be profitable for us to think of what we experienced, to think of the experience through which we have passed. Has it been a varied scenery embracing an almost countless variety of changes, and of circumstances involving a good deal of comfort, pleasure and happiness with a corresponding amount of sorrow, affliction and wretchedness?

Have we profited from it all? When we have supposed that the hand of chastisement was upon us and we have been afflicted, has that affliction been to us a source of knowledge to benefit and to perfect us in our sphere of action? We were passing through this as a necessary school of experience. And when we have passed through it, has it left with us an increase to the store of our knowledge? Has it profited us to an extent that we have comprehended more of the truth that influences our Father in the heavens? And have we learned more of the principles which constitute our happiness and that will be the bliss and the glory of the saved and the sanctified? Has this been the case with us, or have we done as many others have, passed blindly through the school of experience, passed through the sufferings, endured the sorrow and experienced the joy, the pleasure and the happiness and still are unenlightened, still are ignorant?

I believe we may with profit to ourselves look over our experience, and why? So long as we have been connected with the church if we have not been following as Saints in the path of our own making, in yielding obedience to the requirements of the work of God, if we have been obedient to the counsel that has been given, if we have acted up to the calls that have been made, if we have done these things, we have done them for this purpose, for our salvation, our deliverance and for our improvement that it might tend to increase our happiness and our comfort.

Under this view of the matter should we to-day really conclude that we have really been made sufferers and that we have in reality been afflicted and that we have really been made to participate in some wretchedness and misery, we cannot conclude that we have passed through these things for any other purpose than that we should have been brought to a comprehension of the truth by them.

If it was not our misery that prompted our Father in his dealings towards us, that gave character to his operations with us, then he had an object in view. He commenced with us to accomplish his own purposes, to bring about an increase of his own glory in our salvation. Well, when that increase shall be accomplished, we shall know that it was not our sorrow or our affliction that he has sought, it was because he wished our salvation that we were made to partake of the cup of suffering, that we should partake of sorrow before we could reach happiness and bliss as a reward for it.

Well then, in what way should we look at what we have endured, and at what we have suffered? Why simply as lessons, as admonitions imparted to us for our benefit, for our profit and for our learning, and that we might increase in knowledge and this might produce an increase of the legitimate principles of happiness, and it was simply a conscientiousness that we were free from sin that led us to persevere in the pursuit of further happiness by endeavoring to obtain a more extensive knowledge of the truth. It is for

this then that we have endured all that we have endured. Have we regarded this in this light while we have been passing through those scenes that have marked our history from the commencement of the work of God to the present moment.

It was said of the Saints anciently that they took joyfully the spoiling of their goods and no doubt they did. It has probably been the case in this dispensation that the Saints have taken joyfully the spoiling of their goods, but to how great an extent have we taken patiently the spoiling of our goods as trials that were calculated by our Father in heaven only for our good?

We have been in the habit, in consequence of the feelings that pervaded our minds, of looking at the doings of our Father in a limited light and we have been in the habit of looking at his operations in this way, and that whatever was required of us to-day we regarded as being the fullness of his purposes and of his operations with us, and that if we should comply perfectly or readily to-day with the requirements made of us, that we had attained all that was to be obtained.

Well, is this so? No, he has been making requirements of us continually; requirement after requirement has been made of us, he has required us to accomplish a work to-day and something else the next day, and each succeeding day from the beginning to the present time has brought some change in his requirements. He has required us to travel in one direction, for instance, to-day, and then the accomplishment of the same work which he has to do requires us to take a directly opposite course to what we were pursuing. Well then, if taking up one course to-day and another to-morrow seems to be undoing the work of yesterday, and to be diametrically opposed to the work of yesterday, can we recognize the hand of God in it? If we have recognized his hand in these things we have had a profitable experience by them.

But says one, 'how can it be that God should require one thing to-day and then something else to-morrow? We thought he was a straight forward dealing individual, that there was no variability nor shadow of turning in him.' Well, this is the character of him, but perhaps we have been in difficulty and could not recognize the hand of God, and could not recognize the blessing in the present apparent suffering. We could not recognize the hand of God as on yesterday when we thought we were in better circumstances than we are to-day. Where is the difficulty? It is simply that we have not recognized the hand of God so clearly as in the day that we have considered to be more rich with blessings and prosperity, and what is the reason? 'Why,' says one, 'we could not see the design of these things.' Well, if we could not see their ultimate design, there must have been a reason why we could not see, and we will consider that there was a purpose in this as well as in the Lord sending the gospel which has reached our ears.

Suppose that we should have known that it was his purpose to bring us to this place, why we never could have believed that we were following his counsel when we were traveling to every other place, for in our journeyings we traveled towards almost every other place before we came here, and in fact every other place that we have visited we visited before we came here, and still we were following the purposes of God every time and in all those windings. Well, if we could not know it then it will be good to know it now, to discover it and to look at it in a way and to an extent that will profit us. It will be well to look at the true position we have been in, now that we understand that all the scenes that we have passed through have been for the accomplishment of his purposes.

If we did not understand his purpose at the beginning we must at some time comprehend it, or we never can see his hand in it, we never can be blest with that freedom from ignorance, from error and from darkness, but the chains that have hitherto held us in error and in bondage will continue to hold us until we reach that point. Then to see and to comprehend by the light that dwells within us that God is with us, and that he is round about us, and that he is fulfilling his purposes all the time, however varied our circumstances may be, however they may change from time to time; if we can but know that God is in it, what will be the result? Why, contentment that will be unbroken; it will be a feast to our souls; it will be the banquet of happiness for our minds to feast upon, and then however difficult our circumstances may be considered we shall have an inward joy, a peace, a satisfaction and resignation to the will of our Father that we could not have while we were bound down by the chains of ignorance and error.

Well, is there anything that we should know? Yes, if we would be happy we should know that if the clouds of adversity lower around us, if there are indications of a storm continually threatening us, then if we have not assurance and a knowledge of the truth that will enable us to look through the clouds that have thickened around us to the triumph of the cause that we are engaged in, the scenery will become discouraging to us, and consequently we will become unhappy. The consequence will be that we shall be fearful, and it will be that fear that produces unpleasant feelings and which is the result of ignorance; it is required of us not so much to read and comprehend the future which is not revealed, but like the schoolboy that is rapidly passing over lessons given by his preceptor, and who glances over them without seeing their importance, but simply commits the words to memory and passes rapidly along to something else, we should read and learn these lessons in our experience, and let us in all these windings see that there is an importance attached to every lesson of experience through which we are called to pass.

Then if we can see the hand of God in all these changes and trials, and if we can see to the extent that the relationship is perfect in our com-

prehension, between the purpose of God and its accomplishment, then we are settled upon a basis from which we cannot be moved, and we are then standing upon a rock which cannot be shaken; and while the Spirit of God is upon us, we will not become wretched, but so long as that Spirit can find a place in us, we cannot become alienated from the things of God.

It was said in old times that when the Lord commenced his work in the latter times that he will actually accomplish it. Well now, we have actually come upon the stage of action to take our part when that work is about to be done, and we are to constitute a portion of his agents to accomplish that work. And when we have done that which is needful for the accomplishment of his work, then we will see the consistency of God's hand dealing with us.

For the last 25 years and especially when the kingdom of God was first established it became necessary with our Father, as with any other workman, to have the requisite material for the building, and then in the next place to have that material in a suitable condition to accomplish the work with. The same as when the Presidency of the Church designed to build a Temple, a holy place to the name of the most High, what is requisite? In the first place it is requisite to prepare for a foundation, and then in the next place the material to lay that foundation is required, and the Temple commences to be built, and as the material is prepared the work of the building goes on, and the material is adjusted in the foundation of that Temple according to the plan of the Architect. Well, so with our Father, to accomplish his work in the last days, his first move was to find men that would engage in it, and then to send men forth to attract the attention of others, of those who would give heed to it.

This called forth the preaching of the gospel as it was first sounded in our ears. Did we understand anything of the work of God in the last days? I speak from my own experience, and answer no. We believed the truth as it was first announced to us, but not in all its extent nor of what it really amounted to, but what developments it would show we were ignorant of. But still being attracted by the sound that brought with it the Holy Spirit, we followed it, and what has been the result? We are here to-day, we have passed through all the varied scenes that have filled up the history of this people, we have been associated with all the changes and vicissitudes that fill up the work of God for the last 25 years, and we are here to-day, and our experience is what we have passed through in that length of time.

And how have we profited by it? Is the great superstructure of the Kingdom of God built up? Is the organization of the Saints complete? Are they perfect? No; then what has been doing? Why, the people have been receiving instruction, they have been taught from year to year, lesson after lesson has been given, one field of experience has followed upon the track of another; we have been practising upon those things revealed through the priesthood upon the earth, and following this priesthood it has brought us to these times and to this place. Well, it has done how much of the work of God? How much of the foundation is laid? How much of the Temple is built?

Why, you can go out here and see the Temple that is being built on this ground, and you can see how much. Just as much has been built as there has been material brought on to the ground and adjusted in its place according to the design of the Architect. Is this all that has been done towards the building of the Temple? No, there has been a canal built, and there has been rock quarried and laid on the way in almost every place from here to Big Cottonwood Canyon, but is the Temple built? No, but just so much as is adjusted there to-day tells us that so far the Temple is built.—Will it be any different when the topstone is laid? Will it make any difference with the parts that are already adjusted? No, they will still maintain the position that was assigned them, but that was not given them until they were every whit prepared according to the plan of the architect, to take their place in the building.

Well, look at our place as Saints of the Most High God, what is there developed in relation to the building of it? The gospel has been preached, perhaps to every nation under heaven, or they have heard the sound borne by our own report, either in Zion or in the nations abroad; but what has been done? Why the people of the Saints have been wandering from State to State, from country to country, unsettled, having no abiding place, no permanent home.

Was it necessary for us to wade through all these scenes? Yes, it was necessary that we should move and remove, until we gained the place we now occupy. It is necessary, before the kingdom of God can be built up in strength and in power, to stand for ever, that there should be developed in the people a sufficiency of the knowledge of salvation to hold them to the truth, just as firmly and as steadfastly as these rocks are held to their place in the foundation of the Temple, so that there will be no disposition to apostatize. And the people must be possessed of capacity, like the rock in the building; they must be possessed of strength to bear the weight upon them in the superstructure.

This is the work that has been going on, and we have to learn, experience and appreciate this, and until we do, we only learn as the brute beasts, who may experience, but know no reason.

The Lord has been leading us for our profit and for our learning; he has been leading us in a course of experience, and we will be continually subject to changes and vicissitudes until our experience becomes sufficiently fruitful in knowledge that we will be bound to the work of God. 'How,' says one, 'why, by a knowledge of the truth; and when we know the truth in relation to the work of God, will we cherish a desire to depart from it? Does a man ever apostatize when he knows the work is true, and that God is work-

ing for his own glory, and when he all the time sees this? No, never; you never see a man apostatize that in the days of his apostasy ever knew this or appreciated it. Why, if he knew this he would not apostatize.

Apostates are found as we pass through the country, and they will say, 'I knew the work to be true twenty years ago, when you, br. Lyman, or somebody else came through our section of country and preached the gospel; I knew that it was true then.'

Then why did you apostatize and leave the church?—have you found out that it was false?

'Well, I do not know that I have, but it was that 'Mormonism' that was preached twenty years ago that I knew.'

Well, if you knew that which was preached twenty years ago you would have recognized it to-day, because this is the first fruit of that which you were acquainted with, and if you had have known it you would not have departed from it. You did not know the gospel, you did not understand it; you might have known or felt conscious that what some man told you was true. But what is the spirit of the gospel to that man that comprehends it? It is that which comprehends all truth and all good, and there is no truth, neither is there any good outside of it, and there is consequently no chance for the individual that views the gospel of Jesus Christ in this light to adopt those kind of conclusions that lead men away from the truth, and that cause them to apostatize.

If we realize this, then we are secure, and we are prepared for any contingency that may arise, and if God does not build up his kingdom with us and with the people that are gathered together to the place that he has appointed, there is but one reason why he does not do it, and that is, they do not understand enough of the principles of salvation, therefore his kingdom cannot be built up entirely and completely.

Now the fact of a man's being gathered together in the church and with the Saints does not constitute him saved in the kingdom when the kingdom shall triumph, for men will apostatize and go away from the church until they know that it is worth everything else, that it is everything that is good, and that it is all that can bestow permanent happiness upon man. Until they understand this they are in danger, because there are agencies in the world, throughout the world, and a train of corrupt influences that are in lively exercise among men, and that have gained power in consequence of the ignorance of mankind, so that until there is so much of the knowledge of the truth within the people that constitute the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints as will sustain them, till there is no disposition to look after anything else, until they consider nothing outside of the kingdom of any value, they will be in danger of stepping aside and doing wrong.

What is it that will save us? Why, simply knowing that the truth is so broad that it fills the infinitude of space, and embraces all true happiness, glory, immortality and eternal life—all that man will possess when he is associated with the redeemed and sanctified.

When we have this understanding and these views of the subject, will we ever go away from the truth? I say no, we will not. What will we go away for? There is no money to be made, there is no blessing to be obtained, there is no power or riches that can be gained or acquired, or that can be hoped for; there is nothing outside of the truth.

Does a man get away from the truth by apostasy? No, he simply revels in the darkness, with truth all around him; the truth pervades the whole country where he may dwell and where he may travel; he cannot get outside of it. Then what has he done? He has closed his eyes and said, 'I will not see,' and by doing so, what has he effected? He has only run around the circle of truth until he is worn out and comes back and finds that the truth is still there. When he opens his eyes there is the truth, God is there, his influences are there, his Spirit is there, his work is there, and he finds that he is not gone away from God, neither is he gone away from the truth, but he has simply closed his eyes and refused to see that light and truth which were presented to him.

What has he got to do? He has got to take up the truth where he thought he had left it, be obedient to its requirements, live to it and put it on like a garment; he has got to shake off the shackles of darkness and emerge into the light and liberty that the gospel brings.

'Well,' says one, 'where?' Why, in that very place where a long time ago you closed your eyes against the light and the truth. You may apostatize, go away and stay as long as you please, but you must get a good deal of money or you will not have enough to get through with. I have never seen an individual that could get enough that would last him through.

Men may go round the world and they cannot get away from the truth; it is simply because we do not understand the gospel as a system of truth that we are subject to doubts and fears. If we did understand it in that light, we would not be carried away, for the best of all reasons, that we would not have any inclination to go away from the truth. If we love it, do you think we will apostatize or become alienated from it? No, never.

Do you see what is requisite to learn, to prepare for those dangers to which we are liable? Why, it is simply to comprehend the truth, and when we do this, what will we see? We will see that God has a hand in all things, that he designs to build up his work and to establish it with us, but not until there is a sufficiency of the light and manifestations of the Spirit of truth in us that we could not be separated from it.

All this scenery that we have been passing through has been preparing us, just as the laborer, in taking the rock from the mountain, has been preparing it for its proper place in the House of God.