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REMARKS

MADE BY

PRESIDENT WILFORD WOODRUFF

At Paris, Idaho, (Near Lake State Conference) Monday Afternoon August 10, 1891.

[REPORTED BY ARTHUR WINTER.]

I am very pleased indeed to meet with so many Latter-day Saints in this tabernacle on a working day, and I hope you will get paid for coming to meeting today. I have felt amply paid myself for my journey from Salt Lake City in listening to the instructions which our brethren have given unto us. I told Brother Cannon this morning that if, when a young man, I could have attended a meeting of this kind and heard instructions as we have had given to us, I should have felt that I was in heaven; I should have been satisfied that I had received what I had prayed for and desired from my childhood. When I was a boy I read in the New Testament concerning Jesus Christ and His Gospel, and the gifts and graces that were then manifested, and I felt that the principles there taught were the ones that I desired to live to hear taught. I prayed for this earnestly in my early manhood. I have read the Bible through a good many times in my life. I have read the Book of Mormon through a number of times; and I have felt that God had never given unto us stronger principles and more glorious instructions in any of the revelations of God than are recorded in the Book of Doctrine and Covenants. They are all by the same author, but in different ways and at different times. I will just a few verses from the Election of the Doctrine and Covenants. This section contains the prayer and revelation of the Prophet Joseph while he was in Liberty Jail, and the truths embodied therein are among the sublimest that God has ever revealed to man.

For there is a time appointed for every thing, according as his works shall be.

And shall give unto you the Spirit, which shall be poured out upon you, and the unspeakable gift of the Holy Ghost, that has not been revealed since the world was framed.

Which our forefathers have waited with anxious expectation to be revealed in the last times, which their minds were turned to, by the angels, as held in reserve for the fullness of their glory.

A fullness, in which is all things; nothing shall be withheld, whether there be one God or many Gods they shall be manifested.

All thrones and dominions, principalities and powers, shall be revealed, shall not hath upon all who have endured valiantly for the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

And also all those who have received not the testimony of Jesus, shall be revealed in the day when the Lord comes, that he may reward every man according as his work shall be.

Behold, there are many called, but few are chosen. And why are they not chosen?

Because their hearts are set so much upon the things of this world, and aspire to the honors of men, that they do not learn this one lesson—

That the rights of the Priesthood are inseparably connected with the powers of heaven, and that the powers of heaven cannot be controlled nor handled only upon the principles of righteousness.

That they may be confirmed upon us, if it be your will, when we undertake to exercise one, or to gratify our pride, our vain ambition, or to exercise control, or dominion, or compulsion, upon the souls of the children of men, in any degree of unrighteousness, behold, the heavens withdraw themselves; the Spirit of the Lord is grieved; and when it is withdrawn, Amen to the Priesthood, or the authority of that man.

Behold! we be be aware, he is left to himself, to kick against the pricks to persecute the Saints, and to fight against God.

We have learned, by and experience, that is the nature and disposition of almost all men, as soon as they get a little authority, as they suppose, their will immediately begin to exercise unrighteous dominion.

Hence many are called, but few are chosen.

Who can comprehend this grand language? Scarcely any person. The Lord says in this revelation that Whether there be one God or many Gods, they shall be revealed; and all kingdoms, thrones, principalities and powers shall be revealed unto those who have the examination. Can we comprehend this? Why, there is not an astronomer that can tell us exactly anything that is done in Mars, or Venus, or Jupiter, or in any of the planets, aside from the earth. Here we behold upon worlds—millions of them—and who do we know about them? Our own little planet, upon which we live, is about as much as we can comprehend. Look at the extent of the blessings and these revelations are worthy the attention of the Latter-day Saints.

In this revelation it is shown that the Priesthood of which we have been speaking, has power. It has power with the heavens; it has power on earth. And so was said this morning, it does not make any difference what station of this Priesthood a man holds whether it be a President, an Apostle, an High Priest, a Seventy, an Elder, a Priest, a Teacher or a Deacon—when he goes before God in prayer, upon his poor heart, that Priesthood has power with the heavens. If a man magnifies that Priesthood, the blessings of God are with him.

The first sermon that I ever heard in this Church was in 1840, by old father Zera Pulsipher, died in the south, after having lived to be considerably over eighty years old. That sermon was what I had prayed for from my childhood. When I heard it I had a testimony for myself that it was true. I received it with every sentiment of my heart. He preached it in a school house upon a farm that we owned in Oswego County, New York. He opened the door for my remarks to be made. The house was crowded. The first thing I knew I stood on top of a bench before the people, and knowing what I got up for. But I said to my neighbors and friends, "I want you to be careful what you say or treating those men (there were two of them) and their testimony, for they are servants of God and they have testified unto us the truth—principles that I have been looking for from my childhood." I went forth and was baptized. I was ordained a Teacher. I was always sorry that I was not a Deacon long; for I had a desire to bear the Priesthood in its various degrees, as far as I was worthy. I had had a desire for years, not only to hear the Gospel, but to have the privilege and power of preaching it to my fellow men. I was a miller by trade, and I spent many a midnight hour to the mill calling upon the Lord for light and truth, and praying that I might hear the Gospel of Christ and be able to teach it to my fellow men. I rejoiced in it when I did receive it. I afterwards went with Zion's Camp to Missouri in the spring of 1834, with the Prophet Joseph, his brother Hyrum, and over two hundred of the flower of God. That was a great missionary age. I was with the Prophet. I had read his revelations. I had read the vision recorded in this Book of Doctrine and Covenants, and had given me more light and more knowledge with regard to the dealings of God with men than all the revelations I had ever read, in the Bible or elsewhere. I had been taught that there was one heaven and one hell; and everybody that was not sprinkled or baptized in Britain and all would have to go to hell. It made no difference whether the individual had committed no wrong, if he had not been received into the church by sprinkling or baptism, he would have to go to hell with the murderer, with the whoremonger, with the wickedest of men. On the other hand, everybody that was sprinkled would go to heaven. No matter if they had never made a single sacrifice for the Gospel of Christ, they would have the same glory as Peter, James and John, who had sacrificed their lives for the Gospel's sake. That was the kind of teaching I heard in my boyhood. I did not believe one word of it then and I don't now. But this vision of which I speak opened my eyes. It showed me the power of God and the righteousness of God in dealing with the human family. Before I was in Joseph I said I did not care how old he was, or how young he was; I did not care how he looked—whether his hair was long or short. He was a man advanced that revelation was a prophet of God. I know it for myself. I first met Joseph Smith in the streets of Kirtland. He had on an old hat, and a pistol in his hand. Said he, "Brother Woodruff, I have been out shooting at a mark, and I wished to see if I could hit anything," and says he, "Have you any objection to my pistol?" I said, "No." Says I, "there is no law against a man shooting at a mark, that I know of." He invited me to his house. He had a wife also, which he wanted me to help him to tan; he wanted it to sit on while driving his wagon team. Now, many might have said, "Is this a prophet? Is this a man with a pistol and tanning a wolf skin?" Well we tanned it, and used it while making a journey of a thousand miles. This was my first acquaintance with the Prophet Joseph. And from that day until the present, with all the experience that we have had, and with all the difficulties and afflictions we have been called to pass through, I never saw a moment when I had any doubt with regard to the work. I have had no trial about this. While the people were ejectating on the right hand and on the left, and while Apostles were urging me to turn against the Prophet Joseph, it was no temptation to me to doubt this work or to doubt that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God.

As I have said, while holding the office of teacher, I went to Missouri in company with Zion's Camp. After in Missouri, having gone through many trials and tribulations, and suffering from cholera, which caused us to lay in the grave fifteen of our brethren, we stayed at brother Lyman Wight's. While at Lyman Wight's, I attended a meeting in his house, I was acquainted with David Whitmer, with Oliver Cowdery and other leading brethren of the Church. David Whitmer was President of the State of Zion. Brother Joseph reproved him very sharply, as well as some of the other brethren, because of their lack in fulfilling the commandments of God and doing their duty. While at that place I had a great desire in my heart to go and preach the Gospel. I went one moonlight night by myself into a hickory grove, several hundred yards from the settlement, and I asked the Lord to open the door for me that I might go and preach the gospel. I did not want to preach the gospel for any honor; I might get on his earth; I might be mistaken as far as a man could in my condition, what a preacher would have to pass through. I was not hunting for honor, nor glory, nor strive that I desired; but I knew this was the gospel of Christ, revealed to me by the power of God; I knew this was the Church of Christ; I knew Joseph Smith was a prophet of God; and I had a desire that I might preach that gospel to the sons of this earth. I asked the Lord to give me this privilege. The Lord answered that prayer and said I should have my desire granted. I got up rejoicing, I walked about two hundred yardsand in the open road, and when I got into the road, there stood Judge Higbee. Says he, "Brother Woodruff, the Lord has revealed to me that it is your duty to be ordained to go and preach the gospel." Says I, "Brother Higbee, what do you mean?" Says he, "if the Lord wants me to preach the gospel, I am perfectly willing to go and do that." I did not tell him I had been praying for this. The consequence was, I attended a council at Lyman Wight's, and was called and ordained to the office of a Priest in the order of Melchizedek, which other brethren were ordained Elders. I was called by Bishop Partridge to go to the Southern country on a mission, Bishop Partridge asked me a great many questions, and I asked him questions. It was then dangerous for any of our brethren to go through Jackson County. He wanted me to go to Arkansas, and the road lay square through Jackson County. I said to him, "If you have got faith to do it, you may; I am ready." I thought that was a strange remark from a Bishop. "Well," says I, "the Lord says we must travel without purse or scrip, and I know of no wages, but, if you have faith to do it, you can do it." He said he had hardly got faith to go into Jackson County. However, we started and went through Jackson County. We came near being our lives, and were saved almost by a miracle. We travelled through Arkansas and other parts.

But I do not want to dwell on these things. I simply want to say that I was ordained a Priest, and my companion as an Elder, and we traveled thousands of miles and had many things manifested to us. I desire to reflect upon you the fact that it does not make any difference whether a man is a Priest or an Apostle, if he magnifies his calling. A Priest holds the keys of the ministering of angels. Never in my life as an Apostle, as a Seventy, or as an Elder, have I seen, I rejoiced in the protection of the Lord than while holding the office of a Priest. The Lord revealed to me, by visions, by revelations, and by the Holy Spirit, many things that my brethren.

I was once moved upon to go and warn old Father Hubbard, living in Petty John Creek, Arkansas. He had been in Jackson County during the persecution period. His wife died there, and he finally emptied of five sons, all over six feet tall. Most of them had been whipped with hickory gads by mobs, and he went south into Arkansas, taking his sons with him. We went a good deal out of our way for the purpose of visiting Father Hubbard. I had a vision that was very remarkable to me, which was manifested to me the trouble that my brethren, or that the Lord would deliver us. We arrived at the house on Sunday morning, and was taking breakfast. We had had trouble not at the place where we stayed over night. I saw a book of Mormon on his shelf. He did not seem to pay any attention to us or to take any interest in us. I took up the book of Mormon, and said to him, "You have a very good book here." "Yes," said he, "but it is a book that came from the devil." That opened my eyes. He had been in Illinois, he had been in Zion; he had been persecuted there and driven out; but I found that he had apostatized, and he was our enemy. He was in Arkansas, dating up his plantation out of axes and cleared some land for him. I was strongly impressed three times to go out and warn Father Hubbard. At last I felt that I had advanced that revelation was a prophet of God. I knew it for myself. I first met Joseph Smith in the streets of Kirtland. He had on an old hat, and a pistol in his hand. Said he, "Brother Woodruff, I have been out shooting at a mark, and I wished to see if I could hit anything," and says he, "Have you any objection to my pistol?" I said, "No." Says I, "there is no law against a man shooting at a mark, that I know of." He invited me to his house. He had a wolf skin, which he wanted me to help him to tan; he wanted it to sit on while driving his wagon team. Now, many might have said, "Is this a prophet? Is this a man with a pistol and tanning a wolf skin?" Well we tanned it, and used it while making a journey of a thousand miles. This was my first acquaintance with the Prophet Joseph. And from that day until the present, with all the experience that we have had, and with all the difficulties and afflictions we have been called to pass through, I never saw a moment when I had any doubt with regard to the work. I have had no trial about this. While the people were ejectating on the right hand and on the left, and while Apostles were urging me to turn against the Prophet Joseph, it was no temptation to me to doubt this work or to doubt that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God.

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It may be called caution for a man to talk about his sins; but I have a right to give my testimony, and I have a right to give young and I will give a little of mine to my friends, because I want our young men as well as the old men to understand that the Lord is not trifling with us at all. Brother Cannon has told you that it is the right of all the Elders of Israel to have revelation. That is true. There is not a man, woman or child who has received the gospel, but has the right to receive revelation for themselves, for self, as well as the Presidency of the Church.

After traveling quite a time in Tennessee, Kentucky, Mississippi and other places, I was ordained an Elder, by Warren Parish, who was then president of the Seventies quorum. We fasted together there for about a year. After that, I was ordained to the second quorum of Seventies, under the hands of David Patten. Many blessings pronounced upon my head by these Elders of Israel—similar to those that were given to me by Father Joseph Smith, the Patriarch, and by those who administered to me in the Kirtland Temple when I received my endowment.

Now with regard to revelation. What is revelation? It is the inspiration of the Holy Ghost to man. Joseph Smith said to Brother John Taylor in the days of Brother Taylor, you watch the inspiration of the Spirit of God, and the whisperings of that spirit to you; you carry them out to your life, and it will become a principle of revelation to you, and you will know and understand this spirit and power." This is the key, the foundation stone of all revelation. Joseph Smith was full of revelation. He could translate anything given to him of God. He could receive revelation without the Urim and Thummim. Many of his principal revelations contained in the Doctrine and Covenants were received without the use of the Urim and Thummim. They were given to him by the inspiration of Almighty God. In my own experience I have endeavored to get acquainted with this spirit and to learn its operations. I have many times had that spirit manifested to me, and if I had not followed its whisperings to me, I should have been in my grave long ago, with many of my companions. A few incidents will suffice.

When I came to these valleys and returned to Winter Quarters, I was sent to Boston by President Young. He settled me to take family income and gather all the Saints of God in New England, in Canada, and in the surrounding regions, and stay there until I gathered them. I was there about two years. While on the road there, I drove my carriage one evening into the yard of Brother Williams. Brother Amos Hyde was with a wagon by the side of mine. I had my wife and children in the carriage. After I turned out my team, I had my carriage. I went to take out my team and put them in the carriage. I had not been there but a few minutes when the Spirit said to me, "Get up and move that carriage." I told my wife I had to get up and move the carriage. She said, "What for?" I said, "I don't know." That all she asked me. I got up and moved my carriage four or five rods and put the front wheel against the corner of the house. I then walked around the and went to bed. The same night, about two hours after, I was awakened by a crash. They were two hundred yards from where my carriage was. I went and moved my house and put it back in its little hickory grove, and again went to bed. In thirty minutes a whirlwind came up and broke down a tree of nine feet in the yard, on the ground, it swept over three or four fences and fell square in that deep yard, near Brother Amos Hyde's wagon, and right where mine had stood. What would have been the consequence if I had not hearked to the Spirit of God, myself and my wife and children doubtless would have been killed. That was the still, small voice to me—no earthquake, no thunder, no lightning but the still, small voice of the Spirit of God. It saved my life. It was the spirit of revelation to me.

When I moved the last company of Saints from Liverpool (there were about one hundred of them) we arrived at Pittsburg one day at sundown. We did not know where we were. I went to the first steamboat that was going to leave. I saw the captain and engaged passage for us for that steamer. I had my goods on board, and the Spirit said to me, and that too very strongly, "Don't go aboard that steamer, for your company." Of course, I went to the office of the captain and told him I had made up my mind to wait. Well, it started and had only got five miles down the river when that boat took fire and three hundred persons were burned to death or drowned. If I had not stopped that Spirit and had gone on that steamer with the rest of the company, you can see what the result would have been.

Well, I have had a good deal of experience in these things in my day. I have learned them so thoroughly that I dare not disobey that Spirit. Once when I was in Nauvoo, I felt to start a good many missionaries. I went home quite weary, and I said to myself, I will go and take my rest. Before I got to my house, the Spirit said to me to take my team and go to my farm. My wife says, "Where are you going?" I was going down to the farm." "What for?" "I don't know," says I. I went down to the farm. I found that the river had broken over and had surrounded my house. My water was two feet deep around my house. My hogs were drowning, and my stables were full. By going there I saved my house and surroundings and stopped up the break.

These may be considered small things; still they show the working of the spirit. I can tell you many things that I did not obey the Spirit of the Lord, and it came pretty near costing me my life. I was at Nauvoo, in the one December, visiting. On Monday morning the Spirit said to me, "take your team and go home." I made up my mind I would do it. Just about the time I turned my team to go home, I met my friends but I knew that I should stop as my visit had been rather short, and I had proceeded to do so. I stayed until Saturday morning, but I had obeyed That warning of the spirit rested upon me to that degree that I felt uncomfortable. And I said to my friends that I was going home. I ate an early breakfast that morning, put my horses in my wagon, and started for home. I had started for home by way of Wassich, which was some thirty miles from Nauvoo. I got to Wassich, the Bishop wanted me to stay and hold meeting there on Sunday. "No," says I, "I have already stayed too long and I must go home." I put about 10 Saturday evening, but I felt uneasy. That warning of the spirit rested upon me to that degree that I felt uncomfortable. And I said to my friends that I was going home. I ate an early breakfast that morning, put my horses in my wagon, and