

DISCOURSE

BY AMASA LYMAN, TABERNACLE, DEC. 9, 1855.

[REPORTED BY GEO. D. WATT.]

It seems, my brethren and sisters, that an occurrence of circumstances has brought us together again; and the occurrence of circumstances has taken away from you for a time, those who have been more with you than I have myself. But there is one thing that has not changed, viz: our interests, the nature of the object to be gained by us as saints.

The simple fact of the Presidency having left us for a brief period of time, has not affected legitimately, any change in those things that should interest us, and engage our attention. If we are saints at all, we have the same interest to sustain, the same knowledge to gain, and the same fountain from which to draw that knowledge as those have, who have gone from us for a season. It is our right, our privilege, and a duty, that we owe to ourselves; to those with whom we stand connected by the ties of the Everlasting Covenant, as well as by all the relationship that bind us to each other, as intelligent human beings, to continue our labor, and so labor that our efforts may be continually in the acquisition of that knowledge that is requisite to our salvation; for this comprises all that should interest us by whatever name you may call it, or how many divisions or subdivisions you may make of it, and yet when all is considered in connection, the one part with the other constitutes but simply the salvation which we seek, that alone will render us happy; that alone is capable of accomplishing for us that, that is necessary to our peace and comfort here, and hereafter. We may perhaps think that there are many very nice distinctions which might be made between different things, as we may consider them, that may constitute in us, with us, or for us the means of happiness and comfort, and that one thing considered is one thing, and something else is salvation.

I do not know of any thing that exists as a means of happiness and comfort within our reach, or that can be made available but that belongs to our salvation.

These things are so various and so numerous, that we might fill up a short lifetime in recounting them, and still the sum of them would then lack much of being told; but the great business of our life should be to have them and enjoy them, and then perchance we should be able to some small extent to appreciate them, and our happiness and comfort, and glory will be determined in its extent, and defined precisely by the extent to which we appreciate the great truths that exist around us, in the midst of which we have our being.

So that when we have gained the salvation we seek for in all the vast infinitude to which it may extend with the experience of untold ages—when the experience of almost numberless ages shall have added their contribution to its stores of wealth and enjoyment; when these shall be circumstances that surround us, we will find that it is all constituted of one thing, which is simply learning to comprehend the truth that exists around us, in the midst of which we live, move, and have our being.

To affect this is the object of the Gospel, the plan of salvation, that is good for us, to reason upon and speak of often one to another; to reflect upon, that we may understand the object for which the gospel is revealed to us, that we may be enabled to appropriate the things that are rendered available to us, those appliances that are thrown within our reach, in such a way as to conduce to the accomplishment of this object. Then, in order to the proper appropriation of those things, it is needful that we should understand what is to be affected by it; it is needful we should be correct on this point, lest we might be seeking after something that does not exist, and consequently we should never find the reality; lest we should be exploring some country to find jewels of our happiness—where it is not.

All of us have experience enough to give us comprehension of the truth sufficient to be satisfied that our search for a thing where it does not exist must ultimately prove a fruitless one, one that will not bring to us a reward for our labor and toil, that will not give us comfort for the anxiety we have cherished while in search for something we should fail to find.

Well then what is it, my brethren and sisters, let us reason a little this morning, what is it the gospel has to do for us? What have we calculated in our own minds it is? Has something that does not now exist to be created? Has our natural constitution being to become changed by our becoming the recipients of salvation?—Are we to be saved as we are, constituted as we are, or are we to be saved as some other kind of beings? What are we to be when we are saved? Do we suppose that we will be seen and known, that we will be recognized as the same individuals that we are now?

If we are not I would like much to know what I would be, and who I might be, because there are some things, that could I avoid it, I would not be. But in fact I do not know that there are any reasons that have ever commended themselves to my judgment as being good ones for me to entertain a wish to change my identity at all.

The enjoyment of salvation with me this far has been ever cherished and understood in connection with my own identity, that when I am saved I shall be simply brother Lyman saved, and nobody else; I should be simply brother Lyman in possession of all the knowledge requisite to salvation and the consequent participant of all the blessings accruing from having that

knowledge in possession. If I am not that I shall be disappointed, I shall not be happy, or satisfied, unless I lose all my present expectations and faith.

Then it is simply we who are here to day that are to be saved; and what is it all embraced in? Simply in a change of our condition, and not of the condition of some other individual. In the place of ignorance we will possess that principle of knowledge and comprehension that makes us free. What from? From ignorance, that is all.

Well says one, 'are there not many other things besides ignorance?' If there are calculating men and women in this room who can think and reflect, I wish that class particularly, if they never have done it, to make it their study for a little time, to determine one thing for their own benefit, and for the benefit of others as far as their influence may extend, to find out how much of the ill that afflicts mankind is not truly attributable to ignorance, to the existence of darkness that pervades the human mind, and in consequence of which they fail to comprehend the truth; by reason of it they know not God, nor understand the principles upon which he acts.

When you find out an evil that is not traceable legitimately and truly to this great cause—this great apparent fountain of evil and wrong that exists in the world, just mark it down, name it, and let me see it; if there is any other source for evil I want to know it. Jesus, we understand, came into the world to save sinners; he came to save, as we say, lost and fallen man; he came to restore the sinful sons of earth to the enjoyment of the mercy, and the favor, and blessing of heaven.

What did Jesus propose to do, any more than simply to save men? The gospel that he sent into the world proposes to do no more than to save men; and it does just as much for the poorest man, as for the richest, it saves them and that is all it does do.

'But,' says one, 'does it not damn men also?' Do you think it does? Did you ever find any thing about the gospel that would damn any of you? 'But does not the Scriptures hold out such an idea?'

I do not know whether they do or not; you ought to know your own experience better than the scriptures, because it is nearer to you, it is your own property. I would rather have my own experience than to have the Bible thrown in my face, it is richer far to me.

What has the gospel done for you, and for me? It has never done us any thing but good. 'But,' says one, 'there is a man that has embraced the truth and then has gone from it, left it and is now damned.' What has damned him? Is it the gospel? Nothing has damned him but his own mean conduct; his own misdeeds that have influenced him thus against his own interest. Does the gospel require him to commit sin? Does it require him to utter falsehoods, and cherish a principle of hypocrisy, and practise deceit with his neighbor? No. The gospel requires of him practical virtue, righteousness and truth in all his conduct.

Then let us not charge the gospel with damning any body, until we find out it has actually done it. The gospel was sent into the world by the Savior of mankind to place the means of salvation within the reach of mortals, to give to those who should believe the power to become the sons of God.

That was the object of this proclamation thro' out the earth, and was the reason why it was taught in that simplicity that marked the teachings of the ministers of truth. The Scriptures promise salvation to those who believe; and those who do not we are informed shall be damned.

What damns them that do not believe? The same thing that damned them before they heard the gospel. They were in darkness, and what was their condition afterwards? They were in darkness.

Then the object of this gospel being sent up to the world was simply to give men a knowledge of the truth, and open their eyes, it was to cause the light to shine in the midst of the darkness that surrounded them; that in that light they might discover things as they exist around, that they were before ignorant of, and entertain conceptions of things that before did not reach, or occupy their minds at all; all this was to affect man's salvation, from what? From the fall, or any other of the evils that surround him, I do not care whether you regard them as the consequences of the fall or not, I care not what you name the ills that afflict man, and keep them from the enjoyment of a fulness of happiness and glory; from them mankind have need to be saved; they constitute the claims with which men are bound; the clouds of darkness which obscure the light of truth, that prevents the sunlight of truth from rendering the whole sphere of man's being radiant, glorious, and resplendent in what? in that which the great architect of nature has placed there, and made all creation rich with.

We live in the midst of it and are insensible to the beauties around us, to the excellencies within our reach, we tread the blessings that cluster around our path like the flowers of spring, under our feet, not appreciating their worth, instead of feasting upon the glory, power, skill, and judgment that is manifested in the combinations that have been associated together to present this beauty to the eye.

Well, so it is with truth and its excellency in all the various departments of nature's works and its glory. We live in the midst of it, and are starving; we are a poor, starving, miserable, wretched, beggarly set of creatures in the midst of plenty.

Now it is from these chains that bind us in this condition that the gospel proposes to set us free—that the plan of salvation is to snap asunder, and give unto us an abundant deliverance and a correspondingly abundant entrance into the kingdom of God, and to make our future as glorious, as luminous, and as broad, as the path in which we have walked has been dangerous, dark and gloomy. This is what the gospel proposes to do for us.

How is it to be affected? Upon this simple principle, by learning us the truth, and this is the reason why that to know the only living and true God and Jesus Christ, whom he has sent is eternal life.

There is a reason for that, as well as for every other truth that extends, as such, throughout the wide range of creation. It is eternal life because it is freedom from the chains of darkness, from the dominion of error, an emancipation from that bondage that makes man in his existence wretched and miserable.

Then if this is actually salvation, where should we seek to know its blessings? How shall we come to the enjoyment of them? Simply in the acquisition of knowledge. Says one, 'is this all?' Yes, this comprises all. 'But must we not do right, and is it not important that we should?' Yes; but how can you do right before you know what right is?

What do you Latter Day Saints do? I can see that miserable confusion among them that characterizes the men of the world; everything must give way to the pursuits of this world's wealth, and honor; in their eyes this seems to be the only thing that can make them happy. And there are as many ways, in which men seek out happiness as there are men to seek it; and there is as great a variety of interests to be served in the world of mankind collectively as there are men who embrace those interests, and labor to save them, and these will be constantly in contact with each other, and what one man labors to build up, another labors to pull down; that which is the wealth of one is the poverty of another, what is the filling of one man's pocket is the draining of another's pocket to the last dime; the last dollar leaves him, and gets into his neighbor's purse.

This is the way the world gets rich, and imagine themselves happy, and this is the way many of the Latter Day Saints would find salvation in undertaking to do right without first knowing what is right.

The Savior spoke sensibly, and reasonably when he said, 'this is eternal life' to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent.

Without knowing him what can you know rightly? What do you understand and comprehend of truth rightly? Like geologists, and chemists in the world, they dig a well, and find a great many crusts, that is when you apply the term crust to something that is a riddle to them, they find many kinds of material that enters into the combination of the earth.

The alchemist analyzes portions of the earth that is thrown out to discover the different proportions and kinds of matter of which it is composed. What do they learn? Some truth. But what is it like? They cannot tell. If it possesses the property of an acid or an alkali, they know it. But do they know any thing about who combined its various parts, do they know anything about the active mind shadowed forth in the combinations they find? They do not.—So we may search for truth in the earth, on the earth, and above the earth, and we may find a great deal, but we do not comprehend any thing of it from the fact that we do not know God; we have not commenced at the beginning of our lesson.

Many men have become satisfied there is a God, but they do not know him, where he lives, who he looks like, or whether he is like anybody or any thing that is seen, heard, handled, or comprehended by us. Now the gospel simply proposes to teach the world of mankind the truth in relation to the great fountain of truth that is at the beginning of all things that we can see has a beginning; to lead them to a discovery of facts in relation to that truth which pervades universal creation, that exists as far as existence is known, or not known where it actually is.

There is a truth that is coequal in extent with it. If there is light there, it is its light, if glory it belongs to truth.

'Well,' says one, 'is it great as God?' Does it comprehend God, or is God comprehended of it? You know the great principle of eternal life is to know the only true and living God, etc. In our childish speculations we talk about a great many Lords and Gods; and you can get the doctrine made holy by applying the scriptural language to it.

But supposing the scriptures had said nothing about it, what man that has looked abroad upon the face of universal nature as it is presented to us; who has lived in this being and breathing world for only a few years, who has not learned and understood for himself, perfectly, that there is a principle of truth which pervades every thing which is in itself immutable that is the same every where, in every land, country, and clime, whether we speak of a single atom, the crawling insect, or the clustering universe of worlds, all are moving, and existing and controlled by the same great law, the same great principle that causes them to have their existence in truth and harmony with each other.

Let us return from traveling abroad, from this wandering, and see if we can find the same applied here at home with us. Is there a principle that does control us, and that we can control, a principle which is in all things, in which we live, move, and have our being, that is great-

er than the greatest thing we can conceive of, and embraces all things? Yes, the simple principle revealed in this small thing, two multiplied by two makes four, is one that we cannot change, or conceive of a principle by which it could be changed.

We cannot entertain a conception of what it would be if it was not what it is. It is all the time the same in every land, country or place.—It is the same whether we apply the principle to determine the number of apples in the market basket, or whether we apply it in more extended calculations, in determining the magnitudes, times, and distances of the planets.

Here is a principle to which we must yield, to which we must bow. Why? Simply because it is greater than we, it defies our efforts to change it; it controls our actions, influences our being; it determines things, and we with other things are determined by it. What can we say to it? Can we treat it with indignity? No; for it will rule us, it governs us.—What is it? It is the light that is within us.—The revelation says it is the light of our eyes that enlighteneth our understandings. And what is this? It is the God, we see in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars, for he is the light thereof, and the power by which they were made. It is simply what the apostle talked about anciently as recorded in the scriptures; he exclaims, 'Great is the mystery of Godliness, God manifest in the flesh.'

Some may have supposed that the revelation of God is confined to some few things only—some few specimens of what we look upon in the wide range of nature's works, as they are called; I do not know as nature has any works. While we look upon these, we find that all we do see, read of, and can reach by the means that we can render available for the acquisition of knowledge, and for the awakening of conceptions within the mind in relation to the vast infinitude of the work of the Almighty, we find that it is simply the shadowing forth of what? Of this great principle of truth, this God that we adore, that we seek to know, whom to know aright is life everlasting. Why? Because it bursts the chains of ignorance asunder that have held us in bondage; it dissipates the clouds of darkness that obstructs the sunlight of truth from shining around us, and then in the light of truth we begin to see, and comprehend what exists around us, and there relationship we sustain to nature, to God, to one another, and the object for which we live, and for which we are constituted, and the end to which we are tending.

Until we begin to learn this, we are benighted and darkened; we are as effectually lost, as is any man in a swamp without light, or without a guide, he is no worse off than we without the light of truth; for we know not which way to go, or in what direction to look for succor; we know not from whence deliverance is coming, or if it is coming at all.

Then what do we need to save us? Simply a knowledge of the truth. Says one, 'I do not know but that God will save me.' I know but little about him, but I know more about him than I do about any other God. Why? Because I have seen more of him. Any of you that have gazed on the heavens, have seen the light of day, been cheered by the light of the sun, and comforted by its genial rays; you have felt the exhilarating influences of it.

Here is a God that I see, a God that I have heard, whose voice is uttered by all time, and millions of earths, and suns, in the magnitude of the universe, and thousands of universes associated together shadow forth his greatness and glory. Then there is a God who is gentle and kind, easy to be intreated, full of compassion and tender mercy, whose store house of good is richly filled to make, who happy? Those that seek for happiness. Where does he live? Every where. Which of the Gods is it? It is that God that lives every where; that lives through all life, and extends through all extent; that spreads undivided, and operates unspent; that is the God I am talking about now.

What other God is there? You may talk about the Lord Jesus Christ, and about his father; what did Jesus say of himself, that man who came into the world, and as the Scriptures say became the author of eternal salvation to as many as would believe? What did he say that he came into the world to do? No other work but what he saw his father do.

He came to do his father's will. What is said of him? 'Thy throne O! God is for ever; and ever, a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of thy kingdom.' It was because he loved righteousness, and hated iniquity, that he was preferred before his fellows, and was anointed with the oil of gladness above them. What had been done with his father? Did Jesus say of himself that he was in the sun, and in the moon, and that he was the principle that enlightened our understanding? No, he did not say so, but he said, that any man who had looked upon these, had seen God moving in majesty and power.

What does he say of himself? Says he, holiness is my name. Suppose we change it a little, and says he was a holy man, does it change the facts in the case any? No he was simply a holy man. How came he to be holy? Just as you and I shall come to be holy if we ever are. What constituted him a holy man? Simply his being guided by holy influences, his being engaged continually in the perpetration of holy and righteous deeds; this made him a man of holiness.

Again he said man of counsel is my name; because that he had been subject to counsel always. He came into this world to minister unto man, and laid down his life for him, because