

Obscure Addresses

Delivered at
The Tabernacle
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VOLUME ONE
JEDEDIAH M. GRANT - 12 MARCH 1854
~BLOOD ATONEMENT~



DISCOURSE

By Jedediah M. Grant, Tabernacle, G[reat]. S[alt]. L[ake]. City, March 12th 1854.

By the request of br[other] O[rson]. Hyde, I will occupy a portion of the time this morning in speaking upon the principles of our holy religion.

I have no special subject in my mind to converse upon for the instruction of the assembly. I do not know but it is as necessary and as equally essential for the elders, who speak from this stand to trust in the Lord for his Spirit, as it is for those who go forth to preach to those who have never received the gospel. There is a commandment thro' Joseph Smith the Prophet, in the Book of Doctrine and Covenants, that requires the elders to "conduct the meetings as they are led by the Holy Ghost, according to the commandments and revelations of God." Also, that they should "seek diligently and teach one another words of wisdom; yea, seek ye out of the best books words of wisdom; seek learning even by study, and also by faith;" and this to be done by the aid of the Holy Spirit, which will bring forth from the treasury of the mind, such things as in wisdom should be taught to the people.

If it is necessary for an elder to have the Spirit to teach unbelievers, is it not as important that he should have the Spirit to teach those who are advanced in the principles of the doctrine of Christ? It certainly requires as much skill to finish a superstructure as to commence it with new materials, or to shape the necessary materials for the foundation, and for the construction of the whole building. It may require as hard service to commence a building as to finish it, but certainly it would require as much skill at the finishing as at the commencement.

Hence, I see no impropriety in a person addressing you without any particular meditation—without any special forethought in relation to the subject matter he shall lay before the people,—trusting as all faithful elders do, in the Almighty God to teach as dictated by his Spirit. It is presumed with me, that any person, occupying this stand and upheld by the prayers of an audience of Saints, assembled here from Sabbath to Sabbath, will actually speak such things as the Lord wishes you to receive and obey, or wishes the speaker to teach you.

I have traveled and preached thro' the United States considerably; thro' the Northern, Eastern, Southern, and Middle States. I have traveled about eleven years, from the time I commenced until I ceased traveling, away from home to preach, and I have never been able to remember, accurately, any sermon I ever preached. I might be able to remember parts of sermons I have preached, certain things that I have said at certain places, and to certain congregations; but the particular form, shape, beginning, and end, and various parts of any discourse I have ever delivered, I cannot remember; I have them not in my mind, neither have I ever written any of them or subjected myself to any particular method, or taken any pains to think methodically beforehand what to say. This is something I never have tried during the period I have endeavored to speak in public.

One thing I always wished for, that when I was sent to do a thing, do it before I returned. I believe when an elder is sent on a mission, he should exert every nerve to fulfill it; not that he should encourage some very special expectations of accomplishing something very great; but an elder properly instructed by the Spirit of God, and having proper experience in his kingdom, will discover that the Lord works not as man; that when he commences his work in a nation, it is by simple means; perhaps in some obscure family, or by giving power to one of his elders to heal a sick person, or to lead some few persons of honest minds to believe the gospel and be baptized; and from such simple beginnings, you will see the work of God commence and spread rapidly. I have noticed in my experience that the elders who have anticipated much, and have in their souls desired to accomplish a great deal, and trusted more or less in their reading, education, attainments, &c., when they have gone forth to preach this gospel of the kingdom, have accomplished but little. Those who have accomplished much, have been humble, contrite in spirit, putting their trust in the Lord. He has always accomplished His work by littles, and on a very simple scale; and it has spread forth from small beginnings and become great.

This is the light in which I view the gospel of the Son of God; in which I view this work in which we are engaged. It commenced small.—The Lord did not choose one of the mighty men of the earth,

(speaking after the manner of men) to bring to pass his work of the last days; he did not choose the potentate, lord, duke, emperor, king, president, or governor; nor did He choose one of the noted divines of the world. When I say noted, I mean celebrated among the people at large who live on the earth; but he made choice of an obscure youth, and enlightened him, and inspired him by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and sent holy angels to him from time to time. All the lessons Br[other]. Joseph Smith received, were easily understood. The first lesson which was given to him was adapted to his capacity; and his mode of teaching the people was in accordance with the doctrines received from the angels; and their mode of teaching him. The instructions received were plain, and appeared in the eyes of the world, to be too simple to have come from God.

I ask you, was it long sermons, loud exhortations, strong reasoning on abstruse and complicated subjects, that brought you into this kingdom? Was it lengthy quotations from the Bible, and every principle being proved scientifically that moved your feelings, convinced your judgment, and brought your spirits to yield obedience to the gospel? No; but you will say there was something accompanying the preaching of the individual who spoke to you; that something attended the simple, unadorned reasons advanced in favor of the Book of Mormon, and the Book of Doctrine and Covenants; that there was a still, small voice of the Spirit to convince your minds, expand your intellect, raise your thoughts to heaven, and give you an understanding of the Bible.

It was the still, solemn voice of the Spirit that gently led you into a belief of the truth. When it had touched your understanding, and you had become humble, and willing to forsake sin, and be baptized, you went forth humbly as a child, and was baptized for the remission of sins, and received the laying on of hands, in accordance with the laws of God, that you might receive a full fruition of the Holy Ghost. When that rested upon you, it was a meek and quiet spirit; it was the light by which every son and daughter of Adam is enlightened; by which all things are governed, and the law by which all things are controlled.

Some people enquire [*sic*] why it is that some of our brethren and friends wish to go to California.—This is easily answered. They have lost the Spirit of the Lord; that tells the whole story.—When you see a man or woman discontented, and unhappy, and wishing to leave the people of the Lord, you have only to reflect for a moment, and you will at once conclude, that man or woman has lost the Spirit of the Lord thro' sin.

The people who have retained the spirit they received at baptism, know the Lord. Can you move them? No.

The inhabitants of the earth who examine our government, and see the easy laws by which we are governed; the progression that marks our course; the exact government that is in our midst, wonder that other States and Nations do not adopt some of the leading principles of Mormonism, in order to keep their subjects in a state of subordination. Every empire, kingdom, and government would be glad to do this if they could.—Do you suppose any other body of people can be governed and controlled in the way we are?—Certainly not. How is it that this people can be governed so easily, by a president and two counselors, and the Quorum of the Twelve, and other authorities of the Church? It is easily answered. They have been taught right principles, and have the Spirit of the Lord; and thereby they are able to govern themselves. They know what is right, and they are led by the Holy Ghost; and they seek to do right continually.

Now in relation to a passage in the Book of Doctrine and Covenants. It is written in the Appendix of the Book of Doctrine and Covenants Paragraph 10, that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints 'believe that all religious societies have a right to deal with their members for disorderly conduct according to the rules and regulations of such societies, provided that such dealings be for fellowship and good standing; but we do not believe that any religious society has authority to try men on the right of property or life; to take from them this world's goods, or put them in jeopardy either in life or limb; neither to inflict any physical punishment upon them. They can only excommunicate them from their society and withdraw from their fellowship.'

This was written by Oliver Cowdery. He believed it was right, and I know it was adopted when Joseph Smith was absent on a journey; but whether he sanctioned it or not, I never did know. But in the ancient church, Paul refers to covenant breakers. What disposition ought the people of God to make of covenant breakers?—they who are led by the meek and quiet Spirit of God; who trust in Jehovah, and watch and pray, and partake of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper; who do right and have kept their baptismal vow;—I say what ought such a people to do with covenant breakers? "Why," says one, "forgive them to be sure." Very good, but what else ought they to do? What does the Apostle say? He says they are worthy of death. I wonder whether he was really in earnest, or happened to get into a wild freak and advanced principles and sentiments that were incorrect? I am inclined to believe his decision was a correct one.

Then what ought this meek people, who keep the commandments of God do unto them? 'Why' says one, 'they ought to pray to the Lord to kill them.' I want to know if you would wish the Lord to come down and do all your dirty work?—Many of the Latter Day Saints will pray, and petition, and supplicate the Lord to do a thousand things they themselves would be ashamed to do. I would like men never to ask Jesus Christ the Lamb of God, his Father, their associates, or the angels of the high heavens, to do anything they would not be willing to do themselves.

When a man prays for a thing, he ought to be willing to perform it himself. But if the Latter Day Saints should put to death the covenant breakers, it would try the faith of the very meek, just, and pious ones among them, and it would cause a great deal of whining in Israel.

In the days of Moses for certain crimes, they were to bring the guilty persons before the congregation, and each man and woman were required to bring a stone to throw at the person worthy of death.

Then there was another odd commandment.—The Lord God commanded them not to pity the person whom they killed; but to execute the law of God upon persons worthy of death. This should be done by the entire congregation, showing no pity. I have thought there would have to be quite a revolution among the Mormons, before such a commandment could be obeyed completely by them. The Mormons have a great deal of sympathy. For instance, if they can get a man before the tribunal administering the law of the land, and succeed in getting a rope round his neck, and having him hung up like a dead dog, it is all right; but if the Church and Kingdom of God should step forth and execute the law of God, O! what a burst of Mormon sympathy it would cause. I wish we were in a situation favorable to our doing that which is justifiable before God, without any contaminating influences of gentile amalgamation, laws, and traditions, that the people of God might lay the axe to the root of the tree, and every tree that bringing not forth good fruit might be hewn down.

"What! do you believe that people would do right, and keep the law of God, by actually putting to death the transgressors?" Putting to death transgressors would exhibit the law of God, no difference by whom it was done; that is my opinion.

You talk of the doings of different governments, the United States if you please. What do they do with traitors?—what mode do they adopt to punish traitors? Do traitors to that government forfeit their lives? Examine also the doings of other earthly governments upon this point, and you find the same practice universal; I am not aware that there are any exceptions. But people will look into books of theology, and argue that the people of God have a right to try people for fellowship, but they have no right to try them on property or life. That makes the devil laugh, saying, ["I have got them on a hook now; they can cut them off, and I will put eight or ten spirits, worse than they are, into their tabernacles, and send them back to mob them. What a fine thing it was that I got Oliver Cowdery to write that piece on law, and introduce it into the Book of Doctrine and Covenants!["]

But if the government of God on earth, and Eternal Priesthood, with the sanction of High Heaven, in the midst of all his people, has passed sentence on certain sins when they appear in a person, has not the people of God a right to carry out that part of his law as well as any other portion of it? It is their right to baptize a sinner to save him, and it is also their right to kill a sinner to save him, when he commits those crimes that can only be atoned for by shedding his blood. If the Lord God forgives sins by baptism, and there is another law that certain sins cannot be atoned for by baptism, but by the

shedding of the blood of the sinner, query, whether the people of God be overreaching the mark, if they should execute the law to save such? They used to do it anciently. We would not kill a man, of course, unless we killed him to save him. We would not baptize a man unless we baptized him to save him. We would not lay hands upon a man that he might receive the Holy Spirit, only for the salvation of the man. And every act of men having the priesthood upon the earth, should be for the salvation of the people.

I am aware that there are a great many strange things connected with religion. In one light, they are odd, in another they are strange. For instance, Jesus at certain times was unusually meek, lowly, humble, condescending, administering to the sick, bearing the infirmities of the people, and weeping over their distresses. At another time he was whipping them out of the temple, calling them a generation of vipers, hypocrites, &c.

Br.[other] Joseph Smith was operated upon in the same manner. At times he was mild, meek, and lowly in spirit; and at other times, when the Spirit of the Almighty rested mightily upon him, requiring him to chastise the people, or rebuke any servant of God, his words then cut to the centre.—Is not this the case with all men of God possessed of the Eternal Priesthood? Ask the best men in the world—the Quorum of the Twelve if you please—how they felt when Joseph was inspired to whip them? I know how I have felt. Ask others how they have felt when Br.[other] Brigham has considered it necessary to chastise them. Look at the power, strength, and might that is in him when the Holy Ghost is upon him, and the spirit of chastisement and reproof. Men of God under this influence have made their friends quake from the centre to the circumference of their bodies.

The gospel is adapted to the capacity of man in a state of heathenish darkness; and when he repents, and when he is baptized, and when he is confirmed, and receives the Holy Ghost; and it is adapted to his capacity when he arrives at the state of manhood, during all his progression. The ordinances of the gospel, the keys of the Holy Priesthood, the signs, covenants, and charges thereof, and all the ordinances of God, will keep a man on the stretch continually.

When people become discontented, and murmur against a man of God, it is a sure sign of apostacy [*sic*]. They say, “Oh, give me ancient Mormonism, give me that which I first heard, when repentance, faith, and baptism for the remission of sins, and the laying on of hands was preached, and the healing of the sick by the same process, and the gift of tongues; when this comprised the whole of the religion of Christ; it was very good.” This appears to be one of the finest wishes of the world; but such people are on the eve of apostacy [*sic*]. The laws of God keep men on the advance movement.

I know br.[other] Orson Pratt says we shall at some time come to a dead stand, but that time is a long way off, I do assure you. I never want it to come, or to believe that it ever will come. When a man wants the first principles of Mormonism, the first things which he heard, and wants no new principles, no new revelation, no further advancement, but desires a dead stand, saying[, “]I have got enough and I want no more,[”] he is pretty sure to apostatize.

A man that is godlike, never can attain too much; he never can think of too much. His mind is not able to stretch wide enough to embrace all the great things of God; but the revelations of eternity are continually opened up to him, and the hidden wisdom of God shines forth upon his intellect, enabling him to explore the heights, the depths, the lengths, and the breadths of the intelligence of the Framer of the Universe, and the Creator of all its fullness, who can give power after power, endowment after endowment, ordinance after ordinance, and priesthood after priesthood, without end. Give me the man who will advance in the line of his duty: who is filled with the Holy Ghost; who will strive to fulfil[1] the end of his creation, and who will not say it is enough, I want no more thirsting after the knowledge of God, for the fountain that flowed from his presence is exhausted.

I do not know but br.[other] Orson Pratt is right in his conjecture; he is a philosopher, and a great reasoner; but it is owing to my weakness perhaps, that I cannot see that we shall ever come to a dead stand. I have an idea that progression is eternal, it may be my weakness, and the narrowness of my understanding, that leads me to this conclusion.

The verbal instructions we receive from time to time are good, and refreshing to the mind. We get line upon line; I live on line upon line all the time; it is just as good to me as the sayings of the Bible, Book of Mormon, or Book of Doctrine and Covenants. I would like to see better revelation from those books than President Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, and the Twelve, have preached from this stand. It tastes to me just as sweet as the revelations contained in those books; their teachings are as delicious to me as anything contained in any of the writ[t]en revelations of God.

We have line upon line, line upon line, here a little and there a little. We are advancing and growing in grace, and in the knowledge of the truth. When a man undertakes to contract and narrow in his views, he ceases to grow in grace and in the knowledge of the truth. That which is narrow is not Mormonism. That which is limited is not Mormonism! Mormonism is not like the bed that a man cannot stretch himself upon, or the cover that a man cannot wrap himself in.

What have I to do with the first principles taught to me? You talk of the endowments that will make you acquainted with God. You talk of his ordinances; but as you advance, you will take upon yourselves more responsibilities, and covenants. When children first go to school, the responsibility on them is light; but as they advance, and become acquainted with principle after principle, doctrine after doctrine, precept after precept, it increases, and they are made more perfect, and prepared by their education and training to occupy an important station in their sphere.—So it is with the people of God. If you shall thus advance, and then turn and trample the holy commandments of God under your feet, and break your sacred and solemn covenants, and become traitors to the people of God, would you not be worthy of death? I think you would.

Do you think it would be any sin to kill me if I were to break my covenants? Let every man preach for himself; I am preaching my own faith to-day. Do you believe you would kill me if I broke the covenants of God, and you had the Spirit of God? Yes; and the more Spirit of God I had, the more I should strive to save your soul by spilling your blood, when you had committed sin that could not be remitted by baptism.

There are principles to suit every state to which we shall advance, thro' all the stages as we rise in the spheres of intelligence, and there are principles to govern us while in those spheres; consequently I want the Saints to understand one or two real practical points as to what they have a right to do.

'But' says one, 'will not Uncle Sam play the devil with you?' We are next to him; Uncle Sam is a part of us, and we are a part of Uncle Sam, and it is Uncle Sam and us together. We have a right to worship God according to the dictates of our own conscience, and have a right to carry out our religion; and there is nothing in the Constitution and laws of the United States to the contrary.

May the God of Israel bless you in the name of Jesus: AMEN.

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