

Others' Sins No Justification of Ours

Remarks by President Heber C. Kimball, delivered in the Bowery, Great Salt Lake City, Oct. 6, 1865.

Brethren and sisters, may the very peace of our God be upon you, upon all Israel, and upon all those who love our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in all the world.

The more we grow in the Spirit of the Lord Jesus, the more are we inclined to extend the blessings of our God to all men, women and children who love Him. We are called to a very exceeding high calling, namely, to be messengers of life and salvation, holding the Priesthood of the Son of God for the redemption of the world. What manner of men ought we to be? Of all men upon the earth our morality should be the best, and our light should not be hid under a bushel but should be on the top of a bushel to be seen of all, that our good works may be known, and that by our good example we may influence others to do good and to trust in and serve God. Every man can exercise an influence for good or for evil in his sphere, and in the circle wherein he moves.

How often people justify themselves in doing wrong because Mr. or Mrs. So-and-So did so; or in conducting themselves like foolish persons in imitation of somebody's foolish example! People generally are disinclined to acknowledge their faults and forsake them, but this we ought to do, purely because we love the right, doing it independently, and in defiance of the evil customs and examples with which we are surrounded. Every man ought to receive the truth wherever he finds it. Some would rather receive the truth only from the First Presidency and the Twelve; but we should acknowledge it, let it come from what source it may. Every person should learn to govern himself and live in this world so as to secure life everlasting; and to do this, we must identify ourselves with our Father and our God, being grafted into Him by the ordinances of the Gospel, and through faithfulness being conformed to His image, partaking of His heavenly nature, as the graft which is put into the roots of a tree partakes of the sap and nature of the tree, bringing forth the fruits of righteousness, drawing nourishment, life, and strength forever from the great source of all life and good. There is no other way for us to identify ourselves with God. Being baptized into Christ we put him on and become one with Him, as he was baptized into His Father and became one with His Father; and thus we are all one in Christ Jesus. We are made one with the Father and the Son by observing His word, His law and His ordinances.

If I were to commit an impropriety, another person would not be justified in doing the same thing. If I violate the law of God I shall be condemned and will not escape upon the plea that somebody else did the same. Every man must answer for his own sin. It is true we have our weaknesses. How? I am afflicted with rheumatic pains, or the infirmities of old age, or I am naturally consumptive, etc. These are weaknesses of the flesh; but may it be termed a weakness when men willfully violate a plain, well-known law of God? The Lord requires nothing of His creatures which they cannot perform. We are subject to the weaknesses of human nature, but they are not crimes, neither should they stand in the way of our doing all the good in our power while we live in the flesh, and as little harm as possible. It is a sin to break any of the commandments of God. When a person bears false witness, it is a sin; or when a person steals, it is a sin; and these sins must be accounted for, either in time or in eternity, by the person who commits them.

We have come to this Conference from all parts of the Territory to be reminded of our duties, and to obtain strength in the worship of the Lord, and we are a good-looking people, and greatly blessed of the Lord. Our happiness consists not in the possession of earthly wealth so much as in the possession of that Spirit which it is our right to obtain and cherish.

The short sentence, "Do right," embraces a great deal, and extends over the period of man's life, embracing all his daily duties. It is right for us to build that Tabernacle; it is a work which all the people of the Saints in these mountains are engaged in; and the more faithful we are in paying our tithing, these public works will progress the more vigorously. We all know what the word of the Lord is on the subject of paying tithing, and the use to be made of the means thus collected, namely—to build temples and tabernacles, and to establish the kingdom of God generally. The Israelites built a tabernacle in the wilderness wherein they deposited their holy things, which were afterwards removed into the temple at Jerusalem. When our temple is completed, it will be used for the

administering of the holy ordinances of God; it will be for the use of the Priesthood to give endowments to the people. It is just as requisite that that temple should be built as it is that we build houses for our wives and children to dwell in, because the service of our God is not so acceptable to Him in a temporary place of worship when His people can make a permanent one after the pattern which is pleasing to Him. Let us pay our tithing faithfully, and when we do that there will be no trouble in making any public improvement we desire to make; we can bring out the rivers and large streams of these valleys into canals for the purposes of transportation and irrigation, and become enriched by the facilities which these mountain streams offer unto us.

This is the headquarters of Zion, and the law shall go forth from Zion and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. The Lord gave the law through Joseph when he was here, and now he gives it through President Brigham Young. The law shall go forth from Zion unto all nations, and the word of the Lord is, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else." All who will not comply with this call will be damned. The Elders who have faithfully fulfilled their missions, warning all men who came within the sound of their voices, have identified themselves with the Savior, and with the Father, and with the Holy Ghost; and the Holy Ghost will abide with all such if they continue faithful; and herein consists the authority and power of every faithful servant of God in this and in all ages of the world.

When a man revolts against the work of God and against the counsels of his servants, and will not be subject to the Holy Ghost which dwells in him, he commits treason against God, and against his authority on the earth, and neither the Father, nor the Son, nor the Holy Ghost will take up their abode with such a man, and he may bid farewell to the guidance of good angels.

We should so live that we can have the spirit of truth sufficiently to judge between truth and error, between him that serveth God and him that serveth Him not. It is every man's right so to live, for a people that are informed and intelligent are much easier led and directed in the truth than a people that are untaught and ignorant. It is for the purpose of instructing the Saints that we need the Temple and Tabernacle erected; and thanks be to God that he acknowledges our labors in the small house we are now using for the purpose of giving endowments; and those who keep their covenants made in that house will reap the blessings promised to them; while those who look upon their endowments as a light thing, and trifle with the things of God, will meet with desolation which they cannot avoid; but in doing so they are deceiving themselves and will bring upon themselves sorrow and wretchedness, and finally destruction.

To be a Saint is an individual work, and it is out of the power of God, angels, or men to make a Saint of a man who is determined to be a sinner. If a man will revolt against God and his authority on the earth, he has a right to do so, as much so as Lucifer had a right to turn away from his Father and God. Men are damned or saved by acting upon their agency, in receiving or rejecting the revealed truths of heaven. The majority of the members of this Church are the very elect of our God. There are some that are not so good, who care not for God, for His servant Brigham, for Heber, nor for the Twelve Apostles. But the day will come when the Lord will choose a people out of this people, upon whom he will bestow his choicest blessings. Think of the great numbers who were baptized into this Church when the Work first commenced in England, and how few there are who have stood to this day—"many are called, but few are chosen."

Notwithstanding this sifting out of the unfaithful, the Lord has got a chosen people in these valleys of Utah, and He desires them to become self-sustaining, and fully able to control the trade and traffic of these mountains for their own profit and advancement. In view of this we wish our brethren to import their own merchandise, establish stores in their towns and cities, and trade with one another, and thus keep the wealth which we create among ourselves, making every effort in our power to bring about the redemption of Israel, and the great Work of our Father and God. This may be the means of destroying some through the deceitfulness of riches; but Jesus Christ will save all whom the Father hath put in his power to save, and great efforts will be made by the wicked one to destroy, if it were possible, the very elect; but as Jesus Christ hath said, "My sheep hear my voice, and will follow me, and a stranger they will not follow."

All who profess to be Latter-day Saints will not be saved in the celestial world, for they cannot abide the celestial

law, but all will attain to the glory which they can abide. Every righteous thing that we do in this mortality is a rudimental lesson in the celestial law of our God. Let us go to with our might, mind, and strength to abide the celestial law, as it shall be revealed to us from time to time, until we can abide its fulness, that we may ultimately be introduced into the presence of our heavenly Father to dwell with him for evermore. Whatever the Prophet and President of the Church tells us to do that we should do, for he is directed by the unerring Spirit of the Almighty to counsel this people. We are connected with him in the Lord, and we talk and pray together upon all subjects concerning the progress of this people; and it is for him to decide, and give the law to Israel; and all who do not abide it must suffer the consequence of their disobedience; and all those who obey it will obtain the blessings which are promised to faithfulness and obedience.

I desire to do right and to bring about that which is good. I have no other desire in my heart than to make all the acts of my life praise God. When I go into a ballroom I can there contemplate upon the things of God and praise Him in the dance. Virtue cleaveth to virtue, and light to light, and if we receive them they will have a place in us. I shall, the Lord being my helper, try to be a Saint and live my religion. I have come to this Conference with a determination to hear the word of God and be a Saint. We are blessed of the Lord now more than all the people upon the face of the earth, and we ought to be faithful to His commandments every moment of our lives, for we owe all we have and are to His beneficent bounty, and all should be devoted to His interest, or in other words, to our own interests by devoting all to the building up of His kingdom.

No man has a right to commit sin, nor to intrude upon the rights of his neighbor. It is our privilege to do right, to serve God and keep his commandments, and follow faithfully the counsels of President Brigham Young in all things. The world is mad at what they call the one-man power, but they need not find fault with the "Mormons" for this, when the same thing is so faithfully upheld almost everywhere. For instance, the General Government sends a Governor to the Territory of Utah; the Territorial legislature can make laws and this one man can veto every one of them, making them of none effect. Brigham Young will always exercise an influence over this people for good, and I am going to help him, and the Twelve Apostles will help him, and so will all the faithful Saints of God in all the world. We shall prosper, and God will bless all this people for the righteous' sake that dwell among them, for there is just as good a people here as ever did live in any part of the earth, according to their blessings and privileges. God has his elect here, and he is gathering them from the four quarters of the earth; and like a net that is cast into the sea, he gathers good and bad, that out of the multitude which he brings over the sea in ships he may gather His chosen people.

Thirty years ago the whole Church was under condemnation because they had neglected the new and everlasting covenant, even the Book of Mormon and other revelations God had given to them, and they were driven by their enemies, for they were under condemnation at that early day of our history. How is it with us now? There are scores of this people who never look at those books. The Book of Mormon is the ensign which God has lifted up to the nations in the last days, and we are not justified when we in our feelings neglect or forsake it. I take much comfort in reading those books which the Lord has given us through Joseph Smith. The Book of Mormon was written by the Spirit and power of God; the man that will read it faithfully will be filled with light and with truth. We should hold everything in reverence that God has revealed in the latter-day and in former days; but that which is revealed for us more nearly concerns us.

This Church and kingdom will prevail; it is the kingdom of God, and he will bear it off, and there is no power on earth nor in hell can stay it in its progress from this time henceforth and forever. Amen.