

The Blessings and Privileges of the Saints—Obedience to Counsel

A Discourse by Elder Lorenzo Snow, Delivered in the Tabernacle, Great Salt Lake City, Sunday Afternoon, October 11, 1857.

I presume, brethren and sisters, that we all feel measurably thankful and grateful that we have had the privilege of receiving the fulness of the Gospel—that we have been counted worthy to be gathered out from among the nations, to meet in these valleys of the mountains for the purpose of receiving instruction, learning the mind and will of our Heavenly Father, and of preparing ourselves for those things that are coming upon the earth.

But, at the same time, I presume to say that we do not all of us fully comprehend the blessings and privileges that are prepared in the Gospel for us to receive. We do not fully comprehend and we do not have before our view the things which await us in the eternal worlds, nor, indeed, the things which await us in this life and that are calculated to promote our peace and happiness and to answer the desires of our hearts.

The Lord has established certain constitutional desires and feelings in our bosoms; and it is so with all mankind—with the whole human family. There are implanted and interwoven in their constitutions certain desires and capacities for enjoyment—desires for certain things that are in their nature calculated to promote our peace and well-being, that answer their feeling and promote their happiness. But how to obtain the gratification of those capacities and desires, the world do not know nor understand. But the Lord has seen fit to put us in the channel and in the way of understanding those things by being faithful and walking in the light of the Holy Spirit, and receiving truth, and eventually coming in possession of everything that our hearts desire in righteousness, to promote our peace and happiness and the highest things that pertain to glory and exaltation in the eternal worlds.

We frequently, in the multitude of cares around us, get forgetful, and these things are not before us; then we do not comprehend that the Gospel is designed and calculated in its nature to bestow upon us those things that will bring glory, honor, and exaltation—that will bring peace and glory. We are apt to forget these things in the midst of the cares and vexations of life; and we do not fully understand that it is our privilege, and that the Lord has placed it in our reach to pursue that Gospel whereby we may have peace within us continually.

All this trouble and vexation of mind is but a matter of the present; and if we keep the light of the Spirit within us, we can so walk in the Gospel that we can measurably enjoy peace and happiness in this world; and while we are traveling onward, striving for peace and happiness that lie in our path, in the distance, we shall have a peace of mind that none can enjoy but those who are filled with the Holy Spirit.

Now, let a worldly man once conceive that it is in his power, after a succession of years of trial and difficulty, to come in possession of worldly riches and wealth, and of all things that his heart can desire, what is he not willing to do? Why, he is willing to labor and toil; and although dressed in poverty and in rags, and with but little of the comforts of this life, yet, so long as he has a sure testimony that eventually he is coming in possession of all the desires of his heart, he urges forward undaunted and full of courage. He has within him a secret desire and hope that the people around him do not comprehend. When the people think there is nothing like peace and happiness about him, he is full of peace; and he has a secret and strong assurance that he is coming in possession of that which he has wished for and that his heart is seeking for.

In the Gospel we have received, by the light thereof and by the power thereof, we see that by-and-by we are coming into possession of those things that we have so long desired and labored for. Those who are not in possession of this Spirit do not understand that the Lord God of our fathers has revealed himself unto us; and although many of them have had a like opportunity, yet they have not made use of it to acquire that knowledge.

Through a continual course of progression, our heavenly Father has received exaltation and glory, and he points us out the same path; and inasmuch as he is clothed with power, authority, and glory, he says, “Walk ye up and come in possession of the same glory and happiness that I possess.”

In the Gospel those things have been made manifest unto us, and we are perfectly assured that, inasmuch as we are faithful, we shall eventually come in possession of everything that the mind of man can conceive of—everything that heart can desire.

Well, then, in the midst of poverty and deprivations, or in the midst of comforts and conveniences, still these hopes are the secret springs of our joys. We see that our heavenly Father does provide us with everything we need; we see that we are in the sure path to come in possession of those richer blessings that are promised; and nothing in this world can, or ever will, place an impediment in our way to prevent us from receiving those blessings.

Is not our liberty, our comfort in the everlasting Gospel, the assurance that we shall receive all the reward that is made sure to the faithful children of God? Then where is the man that is not willing to set fire to his substance—that is not willing to yield everything for the salvation of himself and the people, if that be the principle upon which salvation is to be obtained?

Let a man have the visions of the Almighty unfolded to his view, and see in yonder heavens the government of the eternal worlds—let him see the liberty and joy that are to be participated in, and let him see that the Gospel gives all to this man, and he is willing in his heart and in his feelings to yield everything to the will of God, that he may come in possession of those things. Will such a man pursue a course that will eventually throw him out of the kingdom? Will he give up those blessings and those prospects for a little comfort, or for a little of this world's goods, or to enjoy the comforts of this life for a season?

Where is there cause to mourn? Where is there cause for the Saints to wear long faces? Where is there cause for weeping or repining? There is none; but it is life or death that is set before us. Principalities and powers are ours, if we continue faithful; sorrow and banishment, if we disregard the Gospel.

What can we wish for more than is comprehended in our religion? If we will stand firm upon the rock, and will follow the Spirit that has been placed in our bosoms, we shall act right in the way of our duties—we shall act right to those who are placed over us—we shall act right, whether in the light or in the dark.

Where is the man that will turn aside and throw away those prospects that are embraced in the Gospel which we have received? In it there is satisfaction, there is joy, there is stability, there is something upon which to rest our feet, there is a sure foundation to build upon, and upon which to yield that which is required of us.

When the enemy is near, and when the stormy clouds arise, and the war clouds approach, even then we can feel free and quiet, and be satisfied that all is right in Israel. It is only for us to be ready to do our duty, to serve our President with all our heart, with all our might, with all our feelings, with all our property and energies, and with all things that the Lord has put into our hands.

Let the power that God has put into our hands be used; for herein lies a continued advancement in dominion, in power, and in knowledge. We should be ready at all times to exercise all the power, means, and influence we possess in the service of our God, and resignedly follow out the directions of our President and those that are appointed over us.

Let us be like little children, ready and willing to do as we are commanded by the powers that we should obey. Let us be obedient to the voice of truth, and ever be found in the path of duty; and there let us continue. Let a man do this, and he continues to advance; he will grow in the knowledge of God, and in influence, and in everything that is good. We may well be said to be a people of one mind, for we are the Saints of the living God. The Saints who are brought from the nations of the earth—those who have been gathered together in one, are the ones who hold the birthright to reign on the earth.

It is a good thing, brethren, to be a Saint. We are as children; we have to pass through the state of infancy, of childhood, and of youth, before we can arrive at manhood; and we have to learn by degrees.

There are some who do not learn and who do not improve as fast as they might, because their eyes and their hearts are not upon God. They do not reflect, neither do they have that knowledge which they might have: they

miss a good deal which they might receive. We have got to obtain knowledge before we obtain permanent happiness; we have got to be wide awake to the things of God.

Though we may now neglect to improve our time, to brighten up our intellectual faculties, we shall be obliged to improve them sometime. We have got so much ground to walk over; and if we fail to travel today, we shall have so much more to travel tomorrow. We should try to learn and understand how we may best perform our daily duties, and learn what enjoyment it is our privilege to receive.

Wives and children fail in a great many instances to enjoy that which they might enjoy, because of tradition—because of not employing their minds in reflection. Take an individual family in Zion, for instance, and you will see that there is not that amount of enjoyment that there might be, provided they would act up to their privileges; for then they would receive the blessings in store for them.

The husband has to learn to give proper counsel and direction; he has to learn how to manage his wives and his children, and it takes him some time to learn how to manage wisely and to bestow comfort upon each member of his family.

Our children, if we are diligent in cultivating in ourselves the pure principles of life and salvation, will grow up in the knowledge of these things, and be able with greater facility than ourselves to promote the orders of heaven and establish happiness and peace around them. But our traditions are so interwoven with our nature that it requires more time and effort on our part for us to learn.

It does not trouble some women to follow out the counsel of their husbands: they will serve them in faithfulness—they will honor and respect the power of the Priesthood that is upon their husbands. In this respect they do well and enjoy themselves in doing so, as every woman will; but in the relationship that exists between them and other wives of that man, you are very apt to see a little discord.

And some men will at once fall into the channel of obedience, while it takes other men quite a length of time to learn that principle and carry it out. While a man is full of the Spirit and power of the Almighty, he perceives the line of duty in a moment.

There are men who will follow the counsel of President Young in every particular; but set such a man to preside over men who have not that fulness of light that he has, and he will find difficulty in governing those men: they have to think about it and study about it.

It requires more energy and more strength of purpose in a man to follow out the counsel of one who is just above him than it is to follow a man that is a long way ahead of him. So it is in regard to the women; they can follow the counsel of their husband and do as he wishes much better than they can regard one another. But we should do our duty, if it not so pleasing to ourselves.

We are all imperfect and full of weaknesses; we have not become perfect in the things of God; and hence we have to suffer for one another. Now, in my dealings with the brethren, I have more difficulty in getting along with the man that is ignorant than with him who can see his duty. I perceive that the ignorant man is weak—that he is blind; and inasmuch as I have to suffer from his wrong, because he has not learned to control his passions, it becomes a greater virtue in me to be patient with him; for there is more required of me.

Well, so it may be with some women. You very seldom find that husbands and wives are perfect; but perhaps it is very well that the husband is not perfect, because, if he was, he would be placed at a great distance from his wives. It requires a great exertion on the parts of wives to keep pace with their husbands.

You all perceive more imperfections in those around you than you do in yourselves. It is much more difficult for wives to learn than it is for husbands, because women have not the degree of light and knowledge that their husbands have; they have not the power over their passions that their husbands have: therefore, they have to suffer one for another until they get power over themselves like unto those that have advanced more fully in the

knowledge of our God.

There is a struggle all the time, and it requires exertion on our part to know how to manage, how to move, and how to come in possession of the greatest amount of happiness. Let wives pursue an even course with regard to their husband; let them bear with his faults; let them be united and live in peace, and they will increase in light and intelligence. Let the one that has got the most light learn to be the most forbearing, for the sake of her husband and for the sake of the principles of truth. If the Lord has made one woman more perfect than another, and given her more intelligence than her sisters, let her show more mercy and patience in overlooking their faults. By this means a wife will gain influence and favor with her husband, with her sisters, and with her heavenly Father. She thus advances herself and puts herself in a position to enjoy all that is for the righteous. The whole is summed up in this—DO RIGHT.

The man that has the most influence will enjoy the most, and the most is required of him. It is so with you women. If any of you have more knowledge and influence than the others, more is required of you; you have the more to endure.

Let families put themselves in possession of all the good they can—be in a position to do right, and be continually in the path to exaltation and glory. We should all think of these things and practice them. If you want to know how to be great, good, and happy, and how to advance faster in the principles of exaltation and perfection, why, then, set yourselves to work to find out how you can do the most good. You, women, do this, and learn how you can best serve your husbands. You, men, learn how you can best serve President Brigham Young.

Well, it may be more glory for you, sisters, to serve your husbands, than to serve each other; but you have got to learn to do both, and you will get all the honor and glory that you are capable of receiving. But some do not conceive of this: they think that it matters not whether they love their husbands or not, so long as they do not let them know it. But if they do not put themselves in the way of acting properly, they bring darkness and trouble upon themselves.

For instance, if one of my fingers is injured, I feel that injury all over my body. So also if a man has several wives, and one of them gets injured, he feels the injury that is put upon that wife. Some women think, if they can do all that is required by their husbands, that is all that is required. That is very good; but it is a wild, fanciful notion to think that this is all that is called for. But if you will set to with all your energy to bless your husband in serving him and those around him, and endeavoring to make them all happy, because they desire exaltation and happiness, then you are in the line of your duty. This requires an exertion; it requires faith, prayer, and the Spirit of the Lord to enable you to carry out this operation.

But you, sisters, have made rapid advances in consideration of where you stood a few years ago. Well, still continue in the good work and attend faithfully to those things that pertain to your duties and to the stewardship appointed you. See that the little, trifling misunderstandings in domestic concerns do not poison your happiness.

And you, brethren, attend to those duties that pertain to your calling and Priesthood, and know that the Lord has called us to receive the fulness of the Gospel.

We are his Saints, his sons, and his daughters, and all things are open to us; the treasures of time and of eternity are ours—everything is ours, if we will serve our God in faithfulness, even to the sacrifice of all we possess. There lies the preparation for happiness hereafter.

Brethren and sisters, may the Lord bless you! I ask it in the name of Jesus. Amen.