

Advice to Missionaries—Preaching the Gospel—Gathering the Poor, Etc.

Discourse by Elder Amasa M. Lyman, delivered in the Tabernacle, Great Salt Lake City, April 7, 1863.

I am glad to have the opportunity of making some remarks in relation to some matters that interest us as Saints. I do not feel disposed at the present time to seek either to please myself or you by undertaking to discourse in a very methodical manner, but I wish simply to talk of such things as may be suggested to my mind and of such matters as will interest us and as affect our interests as a community. The character of our meetings are such as seem to render short sermons the order of the day; they are texts from which the people may preach their own sermons, and this will, doubtless, be most appropriate.

I have been much interested in the instruction that has been addressed to the Conference since its commencement; and the topics that have been talked upon are of all-importance to us who are engaged in the building up of the kingdom of God. I have listened with pleasure to them myself, and my thoughts and reflections have been pleasing, especially so because of the belief which I entertained that those instructions were directly connected with the working out of that salvation that we are seeking for.

I was much pleased and gratified with the allusions that were made and the instructions imparted this morning to that portion of our community who are called to preach the Gospel and minister for the salvation of mankind, by acting in the capacity of teamsters to drive teams from various parts of Utah to Florence and then back again to this point with their freight of Saints.

I have been led, from what I have observed, to entertain some serious reflections with regard to these our brethren, believing in my own mind that they are too apt, as a general thing, to dismiss from their feelings, if the sentiment was ever entertained by them—they are too apt, I say, to forget that they are actually preachers of the Gospel and ministers of salvation to the people, in their capacity as teamsters. I fear that they have thought themselves less honorable than others, because they had not to go abroad and simply tell the people of principles by which they might be benefited and saved; and because of their entertaining this feeling a small degree of recklessness and carelessness in relation to their conduct have been allowed to gain the mastery over them. While we are acting as a lot of teamsters we do not arrogate to ourselves the dignity of being missionaries; we are apt to think that there is nothing in that kind of business that is calculated to ennoble and enlighten mankind. In the most honorable acceptance of the term, we are only going to drive a team to the States and back again, and, consequently, there is little or no responsibility resting upon us, beyond that which may be placed upon those who are appointed to regulate our actions, to take care of the teams and to act in the capacity of Captains. If we do this duty, as we consider it to be one, in that way that will be considered well done, and so that it will be accepted by our brethren, then all is done that was embraced in the nature and character of our calling. I want to say to our brethren who are called to act in this capacity, that they are in every sense of the word ministers of salvation, and as such they should be men of pure feeling, they should be men honest in bearing forth pure and holy principles and men that should honor God in every feeling of the heart, with every thought and every action, men who should be mindful of God and of their relationship to him.

If this feeling could be cherished within those men, it would save them continually from recklessness; it would save them from the commission of many wrongs, from many evils that are done by those who are so unfortunate as to be destitute of the knowledge of the truth which has been daily imparted to our brethren. By this means we cannot only be delivered from sin, but we shall never suffer the evil consequences, and we shall know better than to say or do anything that will cast a darkening shadow over the otherwise bright fame of other individuals. I would really love to see men that would go to drive teams act as though, to a certain extent, the responsibility of God's Church and kingdom devolved upon them; I would like to see them act as men, as Saints and servants of God, and I would like to see them make themselves men of purity, the examples of the rectitude and propriety of their own conduct, so that their actions would be altogether commendable to God and such examples as would be acceptable to all good men. The man who simply goes to preach the Gospel is no more doing the will of Heaven than the man who

drives an ox team for the salvation of his poor brethren. The man who has horses to drive and carry him along over the country to aid him in forwarding the purposes of Heaven, should feel that the position is an honorable and responsible one. No matter what a man's sphere of action be, if he be devoted to his calling, his labor will be acceptable. The man who has no oxen or horses to drive, but who has to pass over the country preaching the Gospel, is very fortunate if he can get horses to draw him along through the district of country in which he is called to travel. Amidst all the difficulties which he may encounter he should feel that his position is both an honorable and responsible one. If men have this feeling what will they do? Why, they will pursue about the same course that those brethren will who have been called by this Conference to go on a foreign mission. These young men are going out into the vineyard to become praying and preaching men, to become examples of propriety and to let their actions evince that decorum and rectitude of feeling that will prove them to be all they profess—Saints and servants of the living God. This is a just and a proper feeling for them to entertain and their conduct should be in strict accordance with their high and holy profession.

What are these brethren expected to do while upon this mission? What would naturally be expected of men called to act in this capacity? We would expect that they would remember God; but how should they remember him? They should not merely remember him at stated times, when they might, by specific regulations instituted, be bound to offer their supplications to him in prayer, but they should attend to this in its time and season, they should remember him in secret that he might not forget them in public, and in this way they will not only remember God but they will have reason to think of his goodness and they will always have him in their thoughts. Let them adopt this plan, and then when you meet them on their journey or see them collected around their camp fire, their time will not be wasted in useless and foolish conversation, but their time will be occupied in the adjudication of such questions as will lead their minds to the understanding of the truth and to the comprehension of the character of that God whose representatives they are called to be.

This is what we would expect of missionaries; we would naturally expect they should be praying men, that they should be Godfearing and God-loving men continually. And what we should expect from that class of missionaries we should expect and we ought to see with and among every other class of missionaries, the teamster as well as the preacher. The teamster labors to build up the same kingdom that the preacher does, depending for its development upon the influence and power that the truth gains among the children of men. How is this to be accomplished? By laboring and gradually gaining strength and by obtaining a still stronger hold in the affections of the people.

Then I hope that the teamsters, and I suppose they are all present at Conference—but if there should be some of them at home they will doubtless find the instruction good for them before they start upon their journey, and even when they are performing their return journey they can do much by favoring the improvement which there ought to be in this class of the ministry—I hope that they will study to be sober, both spiritually and morally, and when they get to Florence I do not want them to harrow up the good, kind feelings of their brethren the returning missionaries, by becoming slightly inebriated, and accept of my assurance that you can be credited with performing the whole journey if you never get drunk once. It seemed to me when I was there last season that there was a portion of that same reckless spirit among our brethren that was manifested by the Gentile emigration that I saw passing over the road. They seemed to feel that they had never performed the journey before, and they appeared to feel and act as though they thought that although they might never have been drunk all their lives, still they must celebrate such an important event as the performance of a journey from here to Florence by getting drunk! I was sick when I was there, but the nights were made hideous and horrid by that mistaken class of missionaries who were sent out with wagons and teams to bring in the poor. There were some of them who did not see the nature of their business, the purity of its character and its holiness, but they would give way to recklessness and to acts of immorality. I allude to it here because I saw it then as a thing to be corrected, and it is one that I have no doubt will be corrected.

There are a great many things connected with the accomplishment and performance of the duties of this class of missionaries to which is attached by some a great degree of importance, while by others perhaps these things will be regarded with indifference. Now, I have long entertained this feeling of attaching importance to this kind of

missionary labor: perhaps I am wrong; but it does not change the fact that I have entertained and cherished it as a correct and true principle, and as such I have taught it before the Saints, which shows that I feel interested in the proper management of our emigration and solicitous that a good example should be set before the ingathering Saints.

In our going abroad to proclaim the Gospel, we go to preach its principles to the people, and there is nothing else that I know of laid upon us to perform but to preach the Gospel and proclaim that righteousness to the people that has been made known in these last days, that those who believe may continue from their introduction into the Church and kingdom of God to travel onward and upward in the principles of salvation. Well, then, if this is all that devolves upon us as missionaries abroad, then we have nothing else to preach or practice, or in which to engage ourselves, but the performance of that duty. And permit me here to remark, that I am exceedingly glad to see the change that has been and is transpiring in regard to the manner in which our brethren go abroad, and the kind of treatment extended to those who are dependent upon them while they are absent. I believe I can appreciate these blessings. The appointed missionary has no excuse, there is now no reason why his affections should not be entirely devoted to the ministry; but there is no reason why his energies should be wasted in a useless anxiety about things which are entirely beyond his reach. We might as well try to change the condition of the dead as to think of turning all men in favor of our Gospel, this will never be, but we expect to make many converts. In going forth to do our duty in warning mankind we should not have our minds troubled and perplexed on account of our families being destitute of johnny cake at home, and when we have the assurance that our families are provided for, then there is but one labor, but one branch of business in which may be enlisted every feeling of the soul. But if a man has no cause of trouble, he can engage heart and soul in the work of the ministry and think of nothing else but the Work in which he is engaged. "But," says one, "I cannot forget my wife and child that are at home." You are not required to forget them. I could always remember my wife and my child, but did I sorrow over them and fear that they were starving to death? No; I did not. Why? One reason was that they had never starved to death before when I left them; and I knew that we had traveled together and appeared to walk hand in hand with the meager hag, and that she had met us at every corner of life's path, but I also knew that our poverty had never produced starvation. Under these circumstances then, when absent on missions, we kneel down and pray, "God bless the distant ones at home," and then go on about our business.

I hope for the blessing and prosperity of the Work of God, for its continued increase, and that the Elders who go abroad may feel to the extent they should the importance of the position they occupy and the true nature of the Work of God. Brethren, do not think of anything but to increase the Work in which we are engaged, for if it succeeds we should be sustained. There is always an increase of our individual work in the increase of the aggregate of God's kingdom upon the earth. "But," says one, "I do not know when I shall get that other wife or those dollars I am after." Now wait a little; never mind those things at present, but attend to your duties in the Church and kingdom of God. "Why," says one, "have you got rich?" No, I have not in one way, but in another I have. Some would imagine that I had according to the Mountain Boys' manner of speech, but I have not got rich in this way; I have got rich in learning to wait my time for everything, and to be patient until the proper time comes. I do not say that I have got rich, but I have gained. I won't say that I have gained as much as I might have done, but I am going to keep on gaining and adding more and more to my already acquired stock of patience, and I want to see all the brethren going on in this way. "But," says the young brother that has no wife, "would there be any harm in me taking a wife?" I presume that under certain circumstances there would not, and I presume equally that under other circumstances it would be wrong. Then, when you are sent abroad to preach the Gospel, do not take a wife, but attend to your duties in that calling. I have been abroad for almost thirty years, performed numerous missions, and I have never been commanded to go abroad to take a wife. I want to see the brethren who go on missions give their minds and talents to the preaching of the Gospel, that by their honest treatment of the people the Saints may be honestly gathered, be taught and led onward and upward in the pathway of exaltation and happiness.

When men labor in this way, the prayers of the just will bless them; they will become rich—in what? In the faith and confidence of the souls that have become enlisted in the truth through their philanthropy. This will make a store for holy reflection that will last perpetually and eternally. But if we would secure this in its fullest extent while here,

remembering others as we think of ourselves, we must extend and manifest to them the same honest, truthful and proper conduct that we wish to have extended to us. There is none of us who would desire any wrong to be extended to us; we would not crave it; we would not ask for it unless we asked it in ignorance, but never while in the exercise of good judgment. If you would never have evil at your door, never carry evil and lay it at the door of your brother or sister, but be honest, pure and just. You can do this, if you cannot do everything; and Elders in Israel who act in this way are always blessed. You never saw such men engaged in any labor but what they were blessed. You never see them go abroad but what they are blessed; and when the fruits of their labors flow in the homeward tide to Zion, that blesses them; it tells of their integrity, of the truth of their teachings, of their conduct, of their example and of their actions, as well when abroad as at home. Those persons who were thus gathered tell of their teachings, of their counsels, and of the advice which was given to them by those Elders, which was productive of salvation under all circumstances, at all times and in all places. This is the time when we might afford to weep, as the President said in reference to the young brethren that are going abroad; when they come back, having magnified their calling before God and the Saints, then he said he could weep, and who could not? It would be no tears of grief, no effusion of sorrow, but it would be simply the overflowing of the feelings of joy and gratitude. This is worth all that has to be endured while absent from our friends. Does this privilege and blessing of holding the priesthood belong to these young missionaries alone? No, there are hosts of them. Why, the whole land is filled with Elders holding the Priesthood of God; they are to be found numbered with the Elders' Quorum, with the High Priests and with the Seventies, and, in fact, all through the land you can hardly see a man who does not hold the Priesthood of the living God. And the purity of life that should characterize the man who is a minister of Jesus Christ should be above the mediocrity of ordinary men. The man who administers the words of life and salvation continually to the people, should set forth that which he seeks to develop in himself and he should seek to put away that careless indifference of character which characterizes many others; he should have a sacred and holy regard for the truth; he should make life subservient to the truth always, and should never do violence to the principles of purity for any reason that could be urged nor for any cause that could be plead, but he should be among the people an example of righteousness in whatever capacity he might be called to act as a revelator and a minister of God. By doing this, do you not think there would be a reformation? Yes, there would be a reformation and an increase of intelligence and of purity of life. "Well," says one, "do you not think there is an increase already?" Yes, I do; but who does not know what has been the claim and character of some men in times past; for instance, a man that has done one thing great and good has satisfied himself with that, hence he has made no further exertions to do anything in any of those quorums by which to raise and gather around him the ornaments of society.

Now, let us not be satisfied with these good feelings and influences of the heart; but let us be faithful and stand for God, let us say we have received much that has been good and precious, but still, good Lord, we want more. For that let us pray on, let us preach on and practice purity of life, and still seek to be the ministers of righteousness that we may gain that which we have not yet acquired, and get that which we do not yet possess.

Now, this Conference should be the means of carrying to the people suggestions and instructions of this kind by means of the Bishops and their Counselors. Supposing that these men holding the Priesthood, instead of holding it as ministers of God and of the truth, should waste their time in idleness, and should make their office the means of their own aggrandizement, and, instead of improving the opportunities afforded them to facilitate the advancement and improvement of the people, should neglect that which is really necessary to be done and turn the labor upon work that would be unprofitable and that would involve the people in debt and difficulty, of what benefit is such a minister? The result would be that the people would feel burdened throughout the land and there would be discontent among the citizens. But supposing the presiding officer should take the lead and say, Here is a new interest, let us be awakened, and let us one and all unite to benefit the community—Would not this produce a good feeling? Then let the Bishop, the Priest, and the preacher, instead of introducing follies and nonsense among the people, spread out before them the principles of equity, and create within them a lively interest in the Work of God. Let the subjects of their thought and the topics of their conversation be such as will lead them to the acquirement of that intelligence that comes from God. But if the head gets sick and dull through age and the absence of the spirit of life, the heart becomes sick also. "What do you mean?" says one. I mean that the Elders can, by their faith, their energy and their life, instil into the minds of the people a perseverance and a

determination to press forward such as is not likely to be, unless an influence is used for that purpose. By taking this course, they will secure the fellowship of the Holy Spirit and the confidence of their brethren.

Let me advise all men to be wise, and especially those who are not any older than I am; and if I am not considered to be old, I would say that I mean all men who are of my age, and also those who are younger as well as those who are older; I would advise all such to be sober, to be sociable and to do as much good as they possibly can, by setting a good example before their children, by being an example of propriety of action and by striving to keep far from them faults of an evil character. Now, it does seem to me that my example will have its effect among my friends. For instance, if a man indulges in drunkenness, and if I refrain from this habit, when I meet that man he will endeavor to be completely guarded and not be cursed by the evil consequences of his slavish habit. We want to be perfect in everything we do and in all life's vicissitudes to realize that we do speak the truth, and let us be sure to remember one thing, that the intimacy of our relationship with celestial beings is such that we should be strict examples to others in the keeping of our word. We should never lie; if we tell a falsehood to a brother, however friendly and kind he may be, he could not change that lie into a truth; therefore cease from lying. We are all guilty, more or less, in this respect; when I go and make a promise to a brother, or if a brother make a promise to me, I hold that promise to be sacred, although the man was under the necessity of promising something because his business required him to do so, hence it is important that we be careful about making promises. Oh do not consider that we honor God or worship him any more by making so many promises. Let us especially be careful to abstain from all that is impure, unjust, and unholy; for if we are going to be like God our justice must be just, and it must have its exercise in the narrowest and smallest as well as in the broadest avenues that are in life's relations, and we must be scrupulously honest in its administration.

Remember, my brethren, that honesty is the safeguard to our actions, and remember that every good gift comes from our Father and God. It is our duty to honor our Maker and God in all our ways; and I can tell you this one truth, that until we can love each other and regard each other's interests, we shall fail to enjoy the blessings of celestial glory; and if you think of enjoying celestial glory without this element as well as the many others that are required of us, let me request you to stop and pause, for you cannot do it; you cannot enjoy this at my house when I and mine are glorified; but we do not want anything that is dishonest about us. Let us be faithful and just in our dealings and try to elevate ourselves in the scale of intelligence, and prepare ourselves for the benefits and blessings of Heaven's common education. This is the point that we have been striving, studying and struggling to attain. We want to be educated in God's way, that we may submit ourselves to God and be willing to be governed by his laws in all things.

We have got a little of the Lord's property in our possession, and we call it ours. Now, if you undertake to persuade some persons to go with you, the question immediately arises, What are you going to give us to pay us for going with you to Zion? This is about the feeling, but the property which we own and are stewards over is just what the Lord has placed in our hands. He has stored away property for the benefit of his penniless children, and he will bestow it upon them in due time. It is hard to tell what the anticipations of the people are; but if they will acknowledge the hand of God in all things and live by the truth as it is revealed unto them, they will increase in influence and power with God and all good men. When they have enjoyed all that they can enjoy of life and life's blessings, as they are gratuitously bestowed by God their Father, who do you suppose will be the most accommodated with the Temple that is to be built? If the Lord comes down to visit that Temple, he will come down to bless his people and not to benefit himself. Suppose he should come now, who are prepared to receive him? And who would share the greatest good and be the most accommodated by the building of this Temple? Why the blessings would be the people's; the happiness and the benefits thereof would be for the people, and the glory that it would afford to the Almighty would only be that which the blessing would afford him of seeing his children happy in the enjoyment of the benefits of his mercy. This would be his blessing, and he would also enjoy the shelter that was made for him in the Temple of our God. Now, let us go to work with this feeling, remembering that we have a great deal of responsibility and care upon us; let us not cease to be active, for we have always plenty to do; we have always enough responsibility to keep us busy and to keep the great stone of the kingdom of God rolling onward. It is a common saying that a rolling stone gathers no moss, but I do not care for this saying, for I know to the soul that lives in the Gospel and enjoys its life-imparting influences, there is a stream of imperishable wealth

flowing unto such a soul. A man cannot perform a good action without its bringing its corresponding reward, neither can he perform an evil one without its corresponding effects upon his life and character.

My invitation is, especially to the Elders, let us go abroad as men of God to build up the kingdom of our Lord and Master. Let us know nothing while upon our missions but that which tends to the interests of that kingdom to which we belong, and let all we do be done for the interest and upbuilding of the kingdom of God. Let us carry its interests with us in our hearts; let us speak of it in the private circle; do not let it be spoken of in the pulpit alone, but let it be spoken of between man and man, husband and wife, father and son, parents and their children, and in all life's associations; yes, let the light of eternal truth be kindled in every heart, let the fire that will consume the dross of our errors be lighted up in every soul, in every household, until every household becomes a sanctuary of the Most High, and until every family becomes a worshiping assembly such as will be acceptable to God—a people whom he will delight to own, to honor and to bless, and then, whether a man have one wife or two, or a dozen, his home will be a happy one, it will be a little heaven below. It will be a happy one, because it will be a peaceful one and because that home will simply be one sacrifice upon the altar devoted to God, to truth, to principles of purity and to heaven. “But,” says one man, “can a brother obtain celestial glory if he has only one wife?” Yes, he can have great glory with one wife. “And,” says this brother, “would you not advise some men not to have but one wife?” Yes, I certainly would. “And who would you advise?” I would give this advice, because I know that there are a great many more men getting more than one wife than are capable of treating them decently; I am sensible of this. But then I have no advice to give about getting wives at all, but I have some advice that I always have to give to those that have wives, and that is to treat them kindly. “Well, but,” says one, “I would like to have my wives obey me.” Well, then, I will tell you how you should act. You be obedient to those who are placed to counsel and guide you in the principles of life; and if you follow their counsel, your wives will not be likely to rebel against you. This is what I have to say upon this subject, and the reason I say it is because I want to have that portion of intellectual humanity that is subservient to me understand their position and relationship to each other and to God. If I make myself before them a continual, perpetual and unceasing example of obedience, and then ask them to obey me, I shall have no fear about their compliance. I seldom, if ever, ask them to obey me. If they do not know that and do not feel that I have honored them, they have not as much sense as I have given them credit for.

I would like my family to love God and keep his commandments, to abide by the principles of purity, to love to impart them to their children by practice, by teaching and by example and by every means by which children can be influenced by their parents. Then, if this were carried out in every family, there would be something in the tendency of our lives that would have a regenerating influence upon the rising generation, physically and mentally. Then let us try to be Saints as husbands and fathers, Saints as children and friends, and in all life's relationships let us act truthfully and consistently. And if we who minister in the ordinances of the house of God were to do this, and were all to open our mouths in favor of the truth, where the truth is dropping and distilling upon the people like the dews of heaven, this would make everything green, fresh and lively throughout the land of Zion, and then Zion will increase and grow and its never-ceasing embellishments will be seen in the conduct of the people, for Zion will be sanctified by the conduct of the Saints.

Now, my brethren and sisters, in conclusion, let me say, may God bless you and me in doing all the good we can, in practicing righteousness, in doing that which we know to be right and in living that which we do not know but are taught by faith to observe, and thus fill up our lives in usefulness, then when we get to know the truth more perfectly we shall rejoice therein. If we only do this, we will bring our application of the truth home and there allow it to do its work, for the fruits of the truth are here and we shall realize the blessings of them forever. And that this may be your happy condition and mine is my prayer, in the name of Jesus: Amen.