

Necessity of Performing the Duties Required of Us and Not Those Required of Others—All Should Become More Spiritually Minded

Remarks by Elder Lorenzo Snow, delivered in the Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, October 9th, 1867.

Knowing our religion to be true, we ought to be the most devoted people on the face of the earth to the cause we have embraced. Knowing as we do, or should know, that the gospel we have received promises all our hearts can wish or desire, if we are faithful, we ought to be very faithful, devoted, energetic, and ambitious in carrying out the designs and wishes of the Lord, as He reveals them from time to time through His servants. We ought not to be lukewarm or negligent in attending to our duties, but with all our might, strength and souls we should try to understand the spirit of our calling and nature of the work in which we are engaged. When Jesus was upon the earth he commanded his disciples to go forth and preach the gospel without purse or scrip, taking no thought beforehand as to what they should eat or drink, or wherewithal they should be clothed, but simply go forth and to testify of those things which had been revealed to them. In doing this they secured to themselves the blessings of the Almighty, and success attended all their exertions. They were bound to succeed; no power could cross their path and prevent them reaping the most sanguine success, because they went forth in the strength of the Almighty to perform His will, and it was His business to sustain and support them and to furnish them all the means of success. Through obedience to the commands of the Lord they secured to themselves the blessings of life with the privilege of coming forth in the morning of the first resurrection, and they had the assurance that in their labors no power on earth could successfully oppose them. These were the kind of prospects I should have liked had I been in their position, or in any other position, for to the thoughtful mind the idea of ultimate success in any pursuit is very pleasing. Now, had the Apostles, instead of doing as they were commanded, imagined that by doing something else they could have answered the same purpose, they would not have succeeded so well in their operations, neither would they have possessed that assurance of success which, under all the trials and persecutions to which they were exposed, was, doubtless, to them a source of constant pleasure and satisfaction.

Quite a number of young men have been called to go to the southern portion of our Territory for the purpose of developing the resources thereof and building up Zion. Now, should they imagine that they could be as successful by taking upon themselves a mission similar to that given by Jesus to his disciples, they would find themselves very much mistaken. Had the Apostles or Seventies in the days of Jesus imagined that they could have fulfilled the missions given them by building an ark as Noah did, or building granaries and storing grain as Joseph did, they would have been grandly mistaken.

Joseph, in the land of Egypt, was called upon to perform a certain class of duties, which were made incumbent upon him. He was not called to preach the gospel without purse or scrip, but to build granaries, and to use all his influence with the king, nobles, and people of Egypt to store their grain against a day of famine. I have often thought, in reflecting upon this subject, how little proof they had of the importance of doing what Joseph required of them, when compared with the abundance of proof we possess in relation to the importance of the duties required of us. There was Pharaoh—a Gentile, making no profession of religion—he had a dream which none could interpret save Joseph, a stranger in the land, whom no one knew, who had been bought for money, and who was taken from prison into the presence of the king. No doubt the nobles and the people who heard of the interpretation of the dream believed that Joseph made that for his own benefit, glory, and exaltation, and that the king might think well of him; and when they saw him riding round in pomp and splendor, trying to establish granaries all through the country, they, no doubt, thought he was an impostor, and placed no credence in his predictions. In fact, I think I could hardly have believed it myself had I lived in those days. Many of the people placed such little faith in his words that, failing to lay up their food, when the famine overtook them, to save themselves from starvation they had to sell themselves for slaves to the King. Now, supposing that Joseph had gone to work and built an ark, he would not have been accepted of the Lord, neither could he have saved the people of Egypt nor his father's house. When Noah was commanded to build an ark, supposing he had established granaries, he and his house could not have been saved. So in regard to ourselves, when duties are required at our hands, whether it is to go to the southern part of our Territory, to Europe, to contribute to the Perpetual Emigration Fund, or to build temples, or whatever we may be required to do within the pale of the kingdom of the Almighty,

we have to walk in the spirit of these requirements, and perform them, if we would gain power and influence with our God.

I am pleased, indeed, to see the prosperity of Zion. I feel a spirit of solemnity upon me while standing here gazing upon this multitude of Saints. Seeing the difficulties through which we have passed, our present prosperity is astonishing to ourselves and equally so to the world. I feel to thank God for the prosperity of Zion as it presents itself at this time. And when we contemplate our individual position, and see the blessings God has conferred upon us in gathering us from the nations of the earth to the valleys of the mountains, where we are under the guidance of the Priesthood, we should be a contented, joyous, and happy people.

I feel to say a word or two in reference to education. There are very few people who have arrived at the age of fifty and upwards who feel like studying mathematics; they do not feel like attending school and applying their minds to the acquisition of the sciences, but there is a kind of education worthy the best attention of all, and in which all ought to engage—that is the education of the Spirit. As we advance in life we one and all ought to be less passionate, more spiritually minded. The men ought to be more fatherly at home, possessing finer feelings in reference to their wives and children, neighbors and friends, more kindly and godlike. When I go into a family I do admire to see the head of that family administering to it as a man of God, kind and gentle, filled with the Holy Ghost and with the wisdom and understanding of Heaven. Men and women can increase their spiritual knowledge; they can grow better as years multiply upon them. It was so, in a measure, with the old prophets. When they stood on the verge of the grave, ready to give up the ghost and to pass from this life to another, they were full of the power of the Almighty, and could lay their hands on the heads of their children and tell them what would befall them down to the latest ages. The High Priests and Elders of Israel should cultivate this spirit, and live continually that they can have the revelations of the Almighty to guide them, that they may grow wiser and better as age advances.

Nothing can be more foolish than the idea of a man laying off his religion like a cloak or garment. There is no such thing as a man laying off his religion unless he lays off himself. Our religion should be incorporated within ourselves, a part of our being that cannot be laid off. If there can be such a thing as a man laying off his religion, the moment he does so he gets on to ground he knows nothing about, he gives himself over to the powers of darkness; he is not on his own ground; he has no business there. The idea of Elders in Israel swearing, lying, and giving way to intoxication is far beneath them; they ought to be above such things. Let us put from us every evil, and live by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. Let us lay hold of every duty assigned to us with ambition and energy, that we may have the spirit of our God, the light of truth, and the revelations of Jesus Christ within us continually. God bless the Latter-day Saints. God bless the President, the Priesthood, and all Israel, and may we be successful in winning our way onward in the path of eternal truth and glory; and that, as we advance in life, we may not only have the privilege of gazing upon this beautiful scenery within these walls, but of meeting together in a temple built by the power of the Almighty and the united efforts of His Saints; of building the Center Stake of Zion; and above all, when we have finished our course on the earth, that we may have the privilege of coming forth in the morning of the first resurrection with our bodies glorified and singing the new song. Amen.