

Liberty of the Saints—Why They Are Gathered—Object of the “Word of Wisdom.”

Remarks by President Brigham Young, delivered in the Old Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, January 12th, 1868.

I feel happy for the privilege of again speaking to the Latter-day Saints in this city; and I am also happy for the privilege of being a member of this Church. In this I am exceedingly blessed, and I can say of a truth, that my soul drinketh of that “river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High.” I am full of peace by day and by night—in the morning, at noon, and in the evening, and from the evening until the morning. I am extremely happy for the privilege of living with those who are seeking to do the will of God. We are gathered together in the tops of these mountains for the express purpose of building up Zion, the Zion of the last days, the glory of which was seen by the prophets of the Almighty from the days of old. “And they shall call thee,” says Isaiah, “The city of the Lord, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel.” “The Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory.” We are removed far away from those who bore rule over us and oppressed us, and who deprived the Saints of their constitutional rights. The Lord has led His people to a land where they can enjoy as much liberty as they are disposed to live for. There is no oppression here; there is no people on earth who have as few encumbrances upon their spiritual and temporal rights as the Latter-day Saints in these mountains. We have all liberty, yet we are not at liberty to do wrong in this community, and have it sanctioned, although many do wrong, which wrongs are in many cases overlooked and forgiven.

The law of liberty is the law of right in every particular—that is, if we understand it to mean the privilege of doing anything and everything to promote the peace, happiness, and well-being of mankind, whether in a national, State, Territorial, county, city, neighborhood, or family capacity, with a view to prepare them for the coming of the Son of Man, and to have a place in the presence of their Father and God. Shall we say that we enjoy this law of liberty to the fullest extent? We do, in fact, and no power can deprive us of it. We have a good and wholesome government, when it is administered in righteousness and equity, and its laws scrupulously obeyed; and it guarantees to all their political, religious, and social rights. We have the privilege of worshipping God according to the dictates of our own consciences, and according to the revelations of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is true our consciences are formed more or less by circumstances and by the effects of early teachings, until we enter upon the stage of action for ourselves. Parental influences upon the growing organization of the unborn infant have much to do in giving character to conscience. But we always have the privilege of answering a good conscience. We have the privilege of praying as many times a day as we please; we have the privilege of praying from morning until evening and from evening until morning without anyone to molest us. We have the privilege to meet in a congregational capacity in our great public meetinghouses, or in our ward meetinghouses, to attend to our sacraments and fasts, and there to tarry, when we are thus assembled, as long as we please without any restrictions whatever.

There are circumstances in which it would be right to restrict a person even in prayer and worship. For instance, if a man should hire another to work for him so many hours a day, for which he agrees to pay him so much, the employed is thereby bound by the conditions of the agreement to work the number of hours stipulated, that he may justly collect his pay, for he is not paid for praying, nor for holding religious meetings and religious conversations with his fellow workmen. If this may be called a restriction upon the free exercise of religion, it is a just one, for the restriction itself becomes a religious duty in order that mistaken notions of religious freedom may be corrected. In such a case we would not say that a person is in the least degree abridged in the free exercise of his religious privileges, but rather, by keeping him to a faithful observance of his agreement, he is made to exemplify one of the foremost principles of true religion—namely, honesty. If a man has sufficient to supply his wants, and the wants of those who depend upon him, and can, without infringing upon the rights of others, afford to pray all the day long and then all the night long, he is free to do so.

A great many instances might here be introduced to illustrate wherein men should not be permitted to do as they please in all things; for there are rules regulating all good societies and the business intercourse of men with each other, which are just and righteous in themselves, the violation of which cannot be countenanced either by civil or religious usages. It is not the privilege of any man to waste the time of his employer under any pretence whatever,

and the cause of religion, good government, and humanity is not in the least degree advanced by the practice, but the contrary is really the case. Men should be abridged in doing wrong; they should not be free to sin against God or against man without suffering such penalties as their sins deserve.

I have looked upon the community of the Latter-day Saints in vision and beheld them organized as one great family of heaven, each person performing his several duties in his line of industry, working for the good of the whole more than for individual aggrandizement; and in this I have beheld the most beautiful order that the mind of man can contemplate, and the grandest results for the upbuilding of the kingdom of God and the spread of righteousness upon the earth. Will this people ever come to this order of things? Are they now prepared to live according to that patriarchal order that will be organized among the true and faithful before God receives His own? We all concede the point that when this mortality falls off; and with it its cares, anxieties, love of self, love of wealth, and love of power, and all the conflicting interests which pertain to this flesh, that then, when our spirits have returned to God who gave them, we will be subject to every requirement that He may make of us, that we shall then live together as one great family; our interest will be a general, a common interest. Why can we not so live in this world? This people have been gathered together for a further purpose than to prepare them to be one in the faith of the doctrine of Christ, to be one in the proclamation of the Gospel in all the world; to be one in our obedience to the ordinances of the house of God. All this we could have done in the different countries from whence we have been gathered out. We could have lived and died there, as many have, in faithfulness to the spiritual requirements of our religion, if the Lord had not had in view a great spiritual and temporal purpose in gathering His people from the four winds. The order of God among men is not complete without a gathering. Hence Jesus says—"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not." And because they would not be gathered and avail themselves of the great blessings consequent upon it, their house was left unto them desolate, etc.

We are gathered together expressly to build up the kingdom of God. We are not gathered together to build up the kingdom of this world. The voice of God has not called us together from the uttermost parts of the earth to build up and enrich those who are diametrically opposed to His kingdom and its interests. No, but we are gathered together expressly to become of one heart and of one mind in all our operations and endeavors to establish Christ's spiritual and temporal kingdom upon the earth, to prepare for the coming of the Son of Man in power and great glory.

When the everlasting gospel is preached by the power of the Holy Ghost, the minds of those who are honest and worthy of the truth are opened, and they see the beauty of Zion and the excellence of the knowledge of God which is poured out upon the faithful. Such men and women have seen in the revelations of the Spirit that God would gather His people even before the gathering was taught to them by the servants of God; and they understood the great object of the gathering, they saw that the people of the Lord could not be sanctified while they remained scattered abroad among the nations of the Gentiles. When the people first receive the Spirit you may ask what you will of them, and they will yield it in a moment; their submission to God and the counsels of His servants is almost complete. They are ready to give their substance, their houses and lands, they are ready to leave all and follow Christ; they are ready to leave their good, comfortable, happy homes, their fathers and their mothers, and their friends; and some have left their companions and their children for the gospel's sake, and all this because of the vision of eternity which has been opened to their minds so that they beheld the beauty of Zion, and they sacrifice all to gather to the home of the Saints.

We have been assembled together from among all nations to be corrected in our lives and manners, and for purification before the Lord. We have come up to these mountains through trials and tribulations and perplexities, and what do we see when we come here? The fatigues of the journey have proved and tried the souls of many, so that they have faltered in their faith; the light of the Spirit within them has become darkened and the understanding benighted. They look for perfection in their brethren and sisters, forgetting that in the vision of the Spirit they saw Zion in her perfection and beauty, and that this state must be obtained by passing through a strict school of experience. When they arrive here they find the people like themselves, subject to many weaknesses of the flesh, and some giving way to them every day. The great majority of the people are apt to lose the Spirit they

at first possessed through the cares of the world and the many afflictions they pass through in gathering together from the distant nations of the Gentiles, and through looking for perfections in others which they do not find and which they themselves do not possess. Notwithstanding this there exists no other community so dissimilar in their education and training, and yet so agreed in theological and civil polity as we are.

What does the Lord want of us up here in the tops of these mountains? He wishes us to build up Zion. What are the people doing? They are merchandising, trafficking and trading. I wish to view them as they are and where they are. Here is a merchant—"How much have you made this year, 1867?" "I have made sixty thousand dollars." "Where did you get it? Did the merchants in the east or the west give it to you?" "No." "Who did give it to you?" I answer that this poor people, the Latter-day Saints, who have gathered together in their penury, have put this means into the hands of the merchant. He has got it from a people, a great number of whom have been helped here by the means of others; and when they get a dime, a dollar, ten dollars, they carry it at once to the merchant for ribbons, artificials, etc., making him immensely rich. We all have our pursuits, our different ways of supplying ourselves with the common necessities of life and also its luxuries. This is right, and the possession of earthly wealth is right, if we follow our varied pursuits, and amass the wealth of this life for the purpose of advancing righteousness and building up the kingdom of God on earth. But how easy it is to wander from the path of righteousness. We toil days and months to attain a certain degree of perfection, a certain victory over a failing or weakness, and in an unguarded moment, slide back again to our former state. How quickly we become darkened in our minds when we neglect our duties to God and each other, and forget the great objects of our lives.

The purpose of the Lord is to get the Saints together, and then preach to them the doctrines of the kingdom of God by the voices of His servants, and it is the duty and the privilege of all His people to conform to them in their lives, in all their daily pursuits, until they became one in all things, in every day's operations in life, for the obtaining of our bread and meat and clothing of every description, being one in the exercise of our ability in gathering together the various comforts of life around us, sustaining ourselves and the household of faith, and still being kind to the stranger. The Lord has not called us here to make our enemies rich by giving to them our substance for considerable less than it has cost us to produce it from the elements. They would use that means for our destruction. This course is against the mind of the Holy Spirit, against the mind of the angels who watch over us, against the commandments of the Almighty, against the mind of every faithful and true Latter-day Saint, and against the cause of God and truth. As Elder Orson Hyde has said, I would that all the inhabitants of the earth would repent of their evil ways and become righteous, and then work the works of righteousness all their days.

As Latter-day Saints it is our business, morning, noon, and night, all the day long, all the week long, all the month long, all the year long, and all our life long, to sustain those who sustain the kingdom of God. Does not the religion which we have embraced incorporate everything which is in heaven and earth and under the earth? Yes, if there is a truth among the ungodly and wicked it belongs to us, and if there is a truth in hell it is ours. Everything that will produce good to the people is within our religion. With our religion we have embraced all good, but we have not engaged to sustain the powers of Satan and the kingdoms of this world. We have left them and engaged to sustain the good—the wine and the oil—until we become one, and act as with one voice in maintaining every temporal and spiritual interest of the political kingdom of our God on earth, whose officers shall be peace and whose exactors shall be righteousness. Our judges will be of our own selection, who will deal out justice and righteousness to the people. We are looking forward to this state of things. We expect to see the day when there will be none in our midst but those who are for God and truth and who are valiant for His kingdom on earth. As the Prophet has said—"Thy people also shall be all righteous; they shall inherit the land forever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified." We are longing for this state of things, then why not begin to work for it today? Why not commence the work today by ceasing to do evil, by ceasing to give strength to the hand which would pierce us through with many sorrows? Why not begin today by sustaining those who will sustain the kingdom of God? This is my text for the Latter-day Saints, and I wish it to be constantly held before them until they exemplify it in their lives, by becoming of one heart and of one mind in all things in righteousness and holiness before the Lord.

To observe the Word of Wisdom is nothing more than we ought to have done over thirty years ago. Touching this

matter, I tell the people the will of God concerning them, and then they are left to do as they please in obeying it or not. It is a piece of good counsel which the Lord desires His people to observe, that they may live on the earth until the measure of their creation is full. This is the object the Lord had in view in giving that Word of Wisdom. To those who observe it He will give great wisdom and understanding, increasing their health, giving strength and endurance to the faculties of their bodies and minds until they shall be full of years upon the earth. This will be their blessing if they will observe His word with a good and willing heart and in faithfulness before the Lord.

I am talking to the bishops continually almost, giving them instruction and advice, but it is hard for them to get the people to be guided by them. Now, for example, we will take the least ward in the city, and suppose the people all consent to be guided and controlled by the word of the Lord in all things, to be faithful in their labor and in the discharge of every duty, being economical, prudent, and industrious in all their labors, taking care of everything, abstaining from the use of spirituous liquor, tea, coffee, and tobacco, etc., also to let doctors alone, and faithfully abide the word of the Lord relating to the sick, manufacturing what they need to wear, and raising what they need for food; saving their dollars as they happen to get them by the sale of some of their products, sustaining themselves in all things, wanting only what they can produce in the country from the elements and the labor of their hands—suppose, I say, they were to take this course, three years would not pass away before the people of that ward would be able to produce everything they need in life. Thus, by a union of purpose and a concentration of action, that little ward would soon be able to buy out their neighboring wards, who would persist in pursuing the opposite course; and perhaps fifteen years would not pass away before this prudent ward would be able to buy out and own this whole city, if they continued to do as they were desired to do, and the rest of the wards pursued their own way. I pray my brethren the Bishops, the Elders, the Seventies, the Apostles, yea, every man and woman and child who has named the name of Christ to be of one heart and of one mind, for if we do not become of one heart and mind we shall surely perish by the way.

Before I close my remarks I will again remind my brethren and sisters that we have a duty to perform in sending for our brethren and sisters who are in foreign lands. We wish to gather them together. As to whether they will stick to the faith after they are gathered I know not, neither do I care. It is better to feed nine unworthy persons than to omit feeding one who is worthy among the ten. So it is with clothing the needy and sending for the poor. They must have the same opportunities for salvation that we have, for the neglect of which they will be held accountable in the day of judgment as we will also be. Let us send for the poor. We are doing considerable, though we are not doing as much as we should do. If I could only have power sufficient with God I think I should accomplish the desire of my heart in this matter and that of my brethren and sisters. We do desire to have our friends relieved from their bondage, and brought to these valleys of the mountains to share with us the blessings we enjoy. It would be a blessing to the poor if we could only exercise the faith that Elijah had in the case of the widow's meal and cruse of oil, that the little we do get for the emigration of the poor may accomplish, under the blessing of God, much more than is natural for us to expect from it. If we can only obtain faith to multiply the means we do get, we may make a little reach out so far as to accomplish the desires of our hearts.

May God bless you. Amen.