

The Gospel a Perfect System—Evidence that the Latter-Day Saints Have Received the Holy Spirit—Plural Marriage

Discourse by President Brigham Young, delivered in the New Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, Aug. 9th, 1868.

I will endeavor to speak to the people so that they can hear me. We very frequently hear complaints about the people being unable to hear. That is very annoying to me; there is no satisfaction in talking to people if they cannot hear. I talk a great deal in public and in private. I have labored for many years in preaching the gospel of the Son of God; and when I first commenced, it seemed as though I was under the necessity of speaking very loud. I could not satisfy my own feelings without talking with a loud voice. I have acquired this habit, and to talk loud and long for many years wears on a person's constitution.

This gospel that we have embraced is worthy the attention of the high and the low, the rich and the poor, the wise and the ignorant, the noble and the ignoble. It commends itself to the feelings, understanding and conscience of every creature beneath the heavens that is endowed with intelligence. There is no system that is perfect except the gospel of the Son of God. Every art and science is incorporated in the gospel of salvation delivered to the children of men. If the inhabitants of the earth possess ingenuity, knowledge, wisdom or understanding they receive it within the purview or pale of this gospel that comes from heaven. I have said, and I still feel it, that outside the gospel of the Son of God—the plan of salvation—there is nothing but death, hell and the grave; everything else is within our religion. But when we talk about comprehending our religion, why, we might as well undertake to comprehend eternity. We have a little of it. The Lord has made manifest to the children of men a portion of it, enough to enable them to continue on, to grow, increase, expand, to add wisdom to wisdom and knowledge to knowledge, for light cleaves to light and truth to truth. The power to increase in knowledge is in our possession if we will improve the golden moments as they pass by.

We talk a great deal to the Latter-day Saints. What for? To bring them to a knowledge of the truth; to place them in a position in which they may be prepared to inherit that glory which they anticipate. And to obtain that perfection which we desire more will be required of us than merely a spiritual exercise of the mind; our outward works pertaining to our natural life, and in fact our whole souls must be devoted to God, and the upbuilding of His Kingdom. We talk to the people to bring them to the knowledge of the truth, and to bring ourselves, for we are with you, so that we may understand what we should do, how we should labor, how direct our lives here, in order that we may be perfected and prepared to enjoy life everlasting in the presence of the Father and the Son. I still feel to urge upon the Latter-day Saints the necessity of a close application of the principles of the gospel in our lives, conduct and words and all that we do; and it requires the whole man, the whole life to be devoted to improvement in order to come to knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus Christ. Herein is the fullness of perfection. It was couched in the character of our Savior; although but a scanty portion of it was made manifest to the people, in consequence of their not being able to receive it. All they were prepared to receive He gave them. All we are prepared to receive the Lord gives us; all that the nations of the earth are prepared to receive He imparts unto them.

The inhabitants of the earth do not acknowledge the Lord as they should. There are very few but who believe in a Supreme Being; but do they honor God? No, they take His name in vain. Do they believe Him to be what He is? No, they so far mystify the character of Deity that it is impossible for the people to understand it. Do they reverence His name? No. If they believe in a God, He is so far off that they never can get near Him; they know nothing about the conduct of this Being; and He is so far off in their imaginations that He knows nothing about the children of men; at least such is the feeling amongst them, and yet many of the so-called Christians say His center is everywhere and His circumference nowhere. They have mystified the affairs of salvation to that degree that the whole world of mankind have lost that reverence that is due to the Supreme Being.

The Latter-day Saints have received the Spirit of the Lord; the proof is here in the gathering and the oneness of the people. Have the Elders of Israel been to any other country but this? Yes. To preach the Gospel? Yes. Have they been to Eng- land and preached the gospel there? Yes. Have the people believed? Yes. Where is your proof? The

proof is that they have left all, if they had anything, and have come up to the gathering place where the Saints are assembled. The Elders have also preached through the different nations of Europe so far as they were allowed to do so. In some countries the law would not permit them; but the Lord will yet revolutionize those nations until the door will be opened and the gospel will be preached to all. Have the people believed? A few of them. But we gather the poorest of the people, the unlearned, and a few of the learned; but generally, we gather those who are poor, who wish to be redeemed; who feel the oppression the high and the proud have made them endure; they have felt a wish to be delivered, and consequently their ears were open to receive the truth. Take those who are in the enjoyment of all the luxuries of this life, and their ears are stopped up; they cannot hear; but go to the poor, to those who are in poverty and want, and they are looking every way for deliverance, and when they hear the Elders preach their ears are open to hear and their hearts are touched with the Spirit of the Lord, and many of them have believed. These are they that we gather together.

Now, when we look around upon the Latter-day Saints, in a temporal point of view, we are proud of them. I have been in countries where the men, women and children had to labor—wearying their lives out of them to get the bread necessary to keep their lives in them. I have gone to bed many a time, and when I have turned down the bed I would find the sheet patched from end to end, so that I would wonder which was the original sheet. I have also known young ladies—I do not know that I ought to say this, but I do not say it to their disgrace, but to their praise—come home from their work on a Saturday evening, and retiring to a room, throw a blanket over their shoulders, and wash every particle of their clothing, that they might be able to go out on Sunday to attend meeting. These are they that we have baptized. Why? Because their ears were open, and the Spirit of the Lord found a way to their hearts, and they saw there was deliverance in the gospel. The rich and noble, as a general thing, have turned a deaf ear to the voice of the Elders of Israel. Now, the gospel that we have embraced comprises every glory, honor, excellency and truth there is in the heavens, on the earth or beneath the earth. Is it worthy of the attention of the poor? Yes, it is. According to the reading of this book—the Old and New Testament as well as the Book of Mormon and the Book of Doctrine and Covenants—which we regard as the foundation of our work, the Lord has chosen the poor of this world—rich in faith—and the time will come when He will give the earth to His poor for an everlasting inheritance. I speak this for the comfort of my brethren and sisters who have been poor. They have come here, and what do we see? The youth, the middle-aged and the old improving in letters, in mechanism and in the arts and sciences. We bring them here to improve them, and if the Lord will bless us sufficiently, and the people will bless themselves, we will have a nation that understands all things pertaining to the earth that it is possible for man to grasp. Will this people be praiseworthy? Yes, and honored and honorable. Will they be looked to as examples? Yes; and it is the duty of the Latter-day Saints to live their religion so that all the world can say there is a pattern for us, not only in our business and worship, but in our knowledge of things that are, things that have been and of things that are yet to come, until the knowledge of Zion shall reach the uttermost parts of the earth, and the kings and great men shall say, “Let us go up to Zion and learn wisdom.” Will they come here to learn how to govern? Yes. One of the simplest things in the world is to control a people. Is there any particular art in making this people obedient? There is just one. If you Elders of Israel can get the art of preaching the Holy Ghost into the hearts of the people, you will have an obedient people. This is the only art required. Teach the people truth, teach them correct principle; show them what is for their greatest good and don't you think they will follow in that path? They will, just as far as it is consistent with their weaknesses and the power of darkness that is over the inhabitants of the earth—with us as with others. We have merged partially into the light, and we should be very thankful and obedient to the requirements of Heaven, that we may receive more and more.

Every art and science known and studied by the children of men is comprised within the Gospel. Where did the knowledge come from which has enabled man to accomplish such great achievements in science and mechanism within the last few years? We know that knowledge is from God, but why do they not acknowledge him? Because they are blind to their own interests, they do not see and understand things as they are. Who taught men to chain the lightning? Did man unaided and of himself discover that? No, he received the knowledge from the Supreme Being. From Him, too, has every art and science proceeded, although the credit is given to this individual, and that individual. But where did they get the knowledge from, have they it in and of themselves? No, they must acknowledge that, if they cannot make one spear of grass grow, nor one hair white or black without artificial aid,

they are dependent upon the Supreme Being just the same as the poor and the ignorant. Where have we received the knowledge to construct the labor-saving machinery for which the present age is remarkable? From Heaven. Where have we received our knowledge of astronomy, or the power to make glasses to penetrate the immensity of space? We received it from the same Being that Moses, and those who were before him, received their knowledge from; the same Being who told Noah that the world should be drowned and its people destroyed. From Him has every astronomer, artist and mechanic that ever lived on the earth obtained his knowledge. By Him, too, has the power to receive from one another, been bestowed, and to search into the deep things pertaining to this earth and every principle connected with it.

We can receive all this in our education here; but to acquire a knowledge of these principles, time and study are required. Let a child go to school, and he commences with a, b, c, and goes on to a-b ab, and then to words of two or three syllables until he is prepared for a higher course of studies. No child can learn algebra or common arithmetic at first, but he has to go on day by day, just as you and I have to do. We have learned many things concerning the Kingdom of God upon the earth, and we can learn still more. But with all we have learned, are we prepared, Latter-day Saints, to put our trust in God implicitly? No, we are not. How do we know? By the acts of the people and by our own experience. This is in consequence of the evil and the power of Satan that is in the world through the fall. He has beguiled the inhabitants of the earth, and has thrown a mist before their eyes so that they cannot see the providences of God. Who is it can see the power by which the leaves of yonder trees grow? Can you see and understand it? No; why? Because there is a veil dropped over the eyes and minds of the children of men, so that they cannot behold the providences of God nor His handiwork in all nature. We are deprived of this knowledge; but we can begin to see and understand through receiving the Gospel. But we have still a great deal to learn.

It is said that "obedience is better than sacrifice." It is far better. When I look at the Latter-day Saints—and when I say you, I reckon myself—I, Brigham, am with you), where are we? What do we understand? How far have we advanced? What do we expect to receive? How are we looking at things pertaining to this world? We have received the first principles of the Gospel; and we have received the spirit of the Gospel; but do we live so as to increase in this day by day? That is the question. Do we live our religion so that we improve on all the knowledge that God has given us? Do we live up to the light that the Lord has revealed? You may answer this question. The Latter-day Saints, as a people, are a very good people, they are excellent; they have come to a oneness that is most remarkable—astonishing to ourselves, and also to others. But are we one yet? No, not exactly; we have a great deal to learn before we come to a unity of the faith and see eye to eye as the people of God have to do in the latter days. We see some things, but we do not see all that is for our best interest; if we did we would live our religion.

Now, my brethren and sisters, from the high and from the lower circles of life, find if you can on the face of the earth a gentleman or lady, that is, one who is a true gentleman or a true lady (we have many that are called gentlemen and ladies); but you find one in the strict sense of the word, that is, as I would interpret the word, and you will find a man or woman that would border very closely on an angel. Every word that they speak will be seasoned with grace: every act of their lives would be as high as mortals can come to angels; nothing pertaining to them low, degrading or disgraceful. You find a gentleman and you will find a man who possesses a heart full of charity, faith and love, full of good works, whose hand is always open to do good to every creature. You find a lady, and she is one who is ready to impart wisdom, knowledge, truth, and every virtuous and holy principle to her sisters and her fellow beings. These are the true lady and gentleman; but they are of a higher order than those we now call ladies and gentlemen. You may say my definition is incorrect. Be it so, it matters not to me. I have my own views with regard to these things. I look upon the Latter-day Saints as being a very good people, but very far from what they should be. "Well, we must have time to grow," says one. Very true, we cannot learn even the "First Reader" in a day. When we commenced going to school we learned a little today, and a little more tomorrow, and a little more the next day, and so added knowledge to knowledge; and by and by you and I have to come to a unity of the faith. This is the Gospel—the plan of salvation—that we believe in. This is the doctrine we preach to the people—to purify ourselves as He is pure; to sanctify the Lord God in our hearts, that we may be counted worthy to receive His blessings and be sustained by Him.

We know very well that the name “Mormon” is rudely applied to the Latter-day Saints, and we know very well what the world thinks of us; but what matters it to us? Nothing. Suppose that we had the power to take the poor and the ignorant, the low and the degraded who are trodden under foot by the great and the powerful among earth’s inhabitants, and bring them together and purify them and fill them with knowledge and understanding and make a nation of them worthy of admiration, what would you say to this? O, ye inhabitants of the earth, can you do it? The Lord can. Well it is such a people that I am looking upon; this is the people I expect to be saved with. I am proud of them. Not proud of their ignorance or meanness; not proud of their wickedness by any means. But I am proud to think that we have received the gospel and are enabled to sanctify ourselves if we are disposed to. I delight in the Latter-day Saints, because of their obedience to these principles, and not because of their rough, uncouth course of life.

Now, it is for us to perfect ourselves by these principles. We have received the gospel and have been baptized for the remission of our sins. Is there anything wrong in this? No, the Christian world profess to believe the Old and New Testaments; the Jews say they believe the Old Testament. We believe both, and that is not all, we believe in the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants given by the Lord to Joseph Smith and by him to the Church. We also believe if we were destitute of the Spirit of the Lord, and our eyes were closed so that we could not see and understand things as they are by the spirit of revelation, we might say farewell to all these books, no matter how numerous. If we had all the revelation given since the days of Adam and were without the spirit of revelation to be and abide in the midst of the people, it would be impossible for us to be saved in the celestial Kingdom of God. The world look upon us as a set of fanatics for believing this; but that does not matter at all to us. We have our course before us; the path for us to tread in is marked out. What is it? It is march on, march on, ye Latter-day Saints, to the higher orders of life in this world. March on, ye Latter-day Saints, until you are prepared to receive life everlasting in the presence of the Father and the Son. What matters it what the world say? That makes no difference to us, not in the least. But I will tell you what concerns us, to order our lives in accordance with the principles of the gospel that we have embraced. Let a Christian live his religion and he is honored and thought much of by his brethren and friends and acquaintances. And even the wicked contemplate a man or woman who lives his or her religion with a feeling of reverence, and they involuntarily honor that being who honors his God. The vilest wretch that lives on the face of the earth looks with reverence on a person who is a true follower of Jesus, and cannot help it. If we respect ourselves we will shape our lives accordingly. If we do so, we shall become pure and holy. Is there anything wrong in this? No; neither is there the least wrong in the world in acknowledging the hand of God in all things. If I had the skill given me today to construct a machine by which we could pass from nation to nation in the atmosphere as they now do on *terra firma* on the railway, would there be any harm in acknowledging God in this? I should receive the knowledge from Him; it is not independent in and of myself. I am dependent upon Him for every breath I draw and for every blessing I receive. If you, ye nations or wise men of the earth, are not dependent upon Him, we would like to see you act independently. Let a man who thinks he has power independent of God—if there be such a man—take a grain of wheat, rye, barley, or a kernel of corn from the element God has ordained and organized for its development, and see if he can make it grow. All acknowledge that it cannot be done. Well, then, there would be no harm in acknowledging God in all things. But, here I pause a moment; I do not mean that we should acknowledge the hand of God in a man or woman doing wrong; but I will acknowledge the hand of God in sustaining the individual while he does it. No matter what wrong a human being may commit he or she is sustained by the Almighty while doing it. But the act is of the creature and not the Creator. We should acknowledge the hand of God in all things. And if we do this we will live our religion a little better than we have.

O, ye my sisters, will not you improve a little? Shall I come to our own capacity here today? Yes; then let us look a little and see what is for our advantage. How many of my brethren and sisters are there who have a mint or a bank to go to with an inexhaustible fountain of wealth? None; we are poor. We gathered poor. It is true that we are decently clad; but why not go to the fields and take the straw and make your hats and bonnets, and save that means to send for the poor Saints? Would ten thousand dollars pay for the hats and bonnets worn by this congregation today? By no means. But suppose that we say five thousand, that amount had better be used in sending for the poor than in spending it in articles the material for which can be gathered and manufactured right here. I see a very few straw hats in this congregation today with straw trimmings, made by the hands of the

wearers perhaps, and can you beat them for beauty with imported articles? No, you cannot. Well, these are lessons we try to teach the people all the time. We teach men who have been in the factory all their lives how to prepare the ground, to plant potatoes, corn, squash, cucumbers, onions, and cabbage, that they may have something to eat when the dreary storms of winter overtake them. And thus we teach the people how to live. This is our business. If you do not learn to live here, how can you live hereafter? If you do not understand the things of this life, how can you understand the things pertaining to the life to come? Just as the apostle says with regard to loving one another—"If you say you love God and hate your brother you deny your own words, for how can you hate him whom you have seen and love Him whom you have not seen?" You cannot do it. We make the application here, how can we understand things a thousand years ahead if we do not understand what is here today? We take children, and teach the little girl to spin, weave, and knit her stockings; and the boys to drive team, plow, to go to the field to hoe and prepare the ground, and to sow the seed so that they may have food to eat. What next? Why, say your prayers always before going to work. Never forget that. A father—the head of the family—should never miss calling his family together and dedicating himself and them to the Lord of Hosts, asking the guidance and direction of His holy spirit to lead them through the day—that very day. Lead us this day, guide us this day, preserve us this day, save us from sinning against Thee or any being in heaven or on earth this day! If we do this every day, the last day we live we will be prepared to enjoy a higher glory.

There is a little matter I want to speak upon to you, my sisters. It is a subject that is very obnoxious to outsiders. They have given us the credit for industry and prudence; but we have one doctrine in our faith that to their view is erroneous, and very bad; it is painful to think of. Shall I tell you what it is sisters? "Oh," says one, "I know what you mean, my husband has two, four, or half a dozen wives." Well, I want to tell the sisters how to free themselves from this odium as many of them consider it. This doctrine so hateful and annoying to the feelings of many, was revealed from heaven to Joseph Smith, and obedience is required to it by the Latter-day Saints—this very principle will work out the moral salvation of the world. Do you believe it? It makes no difference whether you do or not, it is true. It is said that women rule among all nations; and if the women, not only in this congregation, Territory and government, but the world, would rise up in the spirit and might of the holy gospel and make good men of those who are bad, and show them that they will be under the necessity of marrying a wife or else not have a woman at all, they would soon come to the mark. Yes, this odious doctrine will work out the moral reformation and salvation of this generation. People generally do not see it; my sisters do not see it; and I do not know that all the elders of Israel see it. But if this course be pursued, and we make this the rule of practice, it will force all men to take a wife. Then we will be satisfied with one wife. I should have been in the beginning; the one wife system would not have disagreed with me at all. If the prophet had said to me, "Brother Brigham, you can never have but one wife at a time." I should have said, "glory, hallelujah, that is just what I like." But he said, "you will have to take more than one wife, and this order has to spread and increase until the inhabitants of the earth repent of their evils and men will do what is right towards the females. In this also I say glory, hallelujah." Do men do that which is right now? No. You see travelers—young, middle-aged, or old—roaming over the world, and ask them where their families are, and the answer will generally be, "I have none." You go to the city of New York, and among the merchants there I doubt whether there is one man in three who has a wife. Go to the doctor and ask him, "where is your wife and family?" and, "thank God I have none," will be his reply. It is the same with the lawyer. Ask him about his wife, and his reply will be, "O bless me, I haven't any, I say it to my praise, I am not troubled with a family." You go to the parson, and were it not for his profession, the cloak of religion that is around him, not one in a thousand of them would have wife or children.

Do not be startled, my sisters; do not be at all afraid; just get influence enough among the daughters of Eve in the midst of this generation until you have power enough over the males to bring them to their senses so that they will act according to the rule of right, and you will see that we will be free at once, and the elders of Israel will not be under the necessity of taking so many women. But we shall continue to do it until God tells us to stop, or until we pass into sin and iniquity, which will never be.

Do you see anything very bad in this? Just ask yourselves, historians, when was monogamy introduced on to the face of the earth? When those buccaneers, who settled on the peninsula where Rome now stands, could not steal women enough to have two or three apiece, they passed a law that a man should have but one woman. And this

started monogamy and the downfall of the plurality system. In the days of Jesus, Rome, having dominion over Jerusalem, they carried out the doctrine more or less. This was the rise, start and foundation of the doctrine of monogamy; and never till then was there a law passed, that we have any knowledge of, that a man should have but one wife.

Now, sisters, I want you to see to this. I advise you to have faith and good works; be fervent in spirit and virtue, and try to live so as to bring the men to the standard of right, then we shall have no trouble at all. I believe that in Massachusetts they have only 27,000 more women than men; but that is not many. There is a cause, perhaps, for this. A good many young men go into the army, or go here or there. What is done with the daughters of Eve? In many countries they stick them in the factories, into the fields, the coal mines, and into the streets—as I have seen hundreds of them—gathering manure, &c., working all day and getting a penny at night to buy a loaf of bread with. They stick some of them down into the iron works, under the ground to pack the ore, or into the building to lag off the iron. But the young men are sent to the wars. When England and the rest of the nations learn war no more, instead of passing a law in this or any other nation against a man having more than one wife, they will pass a law to make men do as they should in honoring the daughters of Eve and making wives of and providing for them. Will not this be a happy time? Yes, very fine. If you will produce this today, I'll tell you what I would be willing to do. I would be willing to give up half or two-thirds of my wives, or to let the whole of them go, if it was necessary, if those who should take them would lead them to eternal salvation. And then you may have my daughters, if you will only lead them in the way they should go that they may obtain eternal life; if you will teach them the gospel, how to live, how to honor their being, honor their God and live their religion. Do this and you are welcome to them. Would I get more wives? If I had a mind to; but if I had none at all it would be all right. If I have one it is all right, and if I should have a score it would be all right.

I mean to teach, pray and plead with the people to save themselves by hearkening to the commandments of God, and to live their religion so that we may get through a world of sin, darkness, ignorance and unbelief. Man is prone to wander as the sparks are to fly upwards. The spirit is warring with the flesh continually, and the flesh against the spirit. Which will come off victorious? This will decide the destiny of all the inhabitants of the earth. If the spirit reigns triumphant; and overcomes the body and its passions, that character will receive glory; but if the passions and sin, within the flesh, overcome the spirit and subdue it, that character will be lost. That is all there is of it. The Lord has done all on His part. His grace is sufficient; He has laid the plan of salvation for us to follow. Work on the square and all will be right. God bless you. Amen.