

The Gathering—Knowledge of Salvation Enjoyed By the Latter-Day Saints—Build Up the Kingdom of God

Remarks by Elder Charles C. Rich, delivered at the Forty-Fifth Annual Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, in the New Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, Tuesday Morning, April 6, 1875.

I have been gratified this morning in listening to the instructions that we have received in relation to the principles of life and salvation. It is no doubt the desire of every individual to obtain eternal life in the kingdom of God. But to do this it is necessary that we hear and obey the commandments which he has given on this subject, as well as on the manner of building up this kingdom upon the earth. In every dispensation of God to man he has had purposes for his people to fulfill, and a labor for them to perform, and those purposes and that labor have not always been the same in every respect; but as far as the principles of eternal life are concerned, they have been and will be the same from all eternity to all eternity. When Noah was upon the earth he was required to build an ark; Enoch to build a city; the Prophets, in their several dispensations, had a labor to perform, varying somewhat according to the nature of the circumstances by which they and the people to whom they were sent were surrounded. The Apostles, chosen by the Savior, had to proclaim the everlasting Gospel to all the world, and the same may be said of the servants of God in our day. But in every dispensation those who have been willing to receive the everlasting Gospel have been required to sanctify themselves by living according to its precepts, that they might prepare themselves for the coming of the Lord.

As we have been told, the dispensation in which we are living is one of great importance—it is the dispensation of the fulness of times, in which all things which are in Christ will be gathered together, both those which are in heaven and those which are on the earth. The labor which is required of the Saints cannot be performed short of their being gathered together, for it is absolutely necessary that they should, in all things, observe the commands of God in building up his kingdom here on the earth, which they could not do while in a scattered condition. The building up of the kingdom of God upon the earth, is a labor which will require all our time and attention, and our best efforts, and we have no time to idle away or to spend in foolishness, but our eyes should be continually single to the glory of God, and our efforts should be as the efforts of one man for the accomplishment of his purposes.

We meet together in Conference for the express purpose of taking these matters into consideration, and of being instructed in our duties and in the requirements made upon us by our heavenly Father in spreading forth his Gospel among the nations, that the honest in heart therein may hear and embrace them and be gathered out with the Saints, and thus have a better opportunity of accomplishing their mission upon the earth. I esteem such opportunities as the present as glorious, and as a means of great blessing to us all. How is it possible for us to build up God's kingdom on the earth unless he directs our labors, and bestows upon us the influence and guidance of his Holy Spirit? It is not possible; and as the labor which he requires of us is of the greatest interest and importance to us, and indeed to all of the inhabitants of the earth, it behooves us to seek diligently unto him that we may become the honored instruments in his hands of building up his kingdom. This is no mere fancy or chimera on the part of the Latter-day Saints. We know that among the sects of the Christian world there is nothing certain about the life to come, or about their acceptance with God. The most they attain to in this respect is a mere hope—they hope they are accepted, and they trust their sins are forgiven; but with the faithful Latter-day Saints the case is very different—they know and can bear testimony by the gift and power of God that they are right in his sight; they know they have received the everlasting Gospel; they know that they are laboring in accordance with his mind and will, and they know that they are building up his kingdom here on the earth. This knowledge is a source of joy unspeakable to the Saints, and possessing it they can leave native lands, homes and possessions, parents, friends and everything they value and hold dear, if necessary, in order to perform and accomplish the labor which the Lord requires at their hands.

The principles which have been laid before us this morning in regard to our becoming a self-sustaining people, are plain and easy to be comprehended. They are self-evident to every reflecting mind, and are worthy of our earnest attention, for while we are dependent upon others for this, that and the other which is indispensable to our well-being and comfort, we can plainly see that our course is not only not the most advantageous to ourselves, but also

that it is not the most pleasing to our heavenly Father, for in the revelations given by him in the early rise of this Church, his Saints were requested to pursue such a course in their home affairs as would make them self-sustaining. We have seen times in our experience here in this Territory, when it has been extremely difficult for us to obtain from abroad many things which we needed, and there is little doubt that we shall see such times again in the future; hence the very great necessity to adopt a policy in regard to temporal matters that will free us from the inconveniences that would arise in such a contingency, and that can only be done by producing as far as possible, according to our circumstances and the possibilities of our climate and Territory, everything that we need to sustain ourselves in comfort and convenience.

In the Gospel we find a remedy for every evil. A faithful observance of its principles will eventually free and deliver us from the consequence of every evil practice; and the principles of the Gospel we believe in are easy to adopt, and they are as applicable to a community as to an individual. We are told that in union there is strength; then, if as a community we will go to and, as the heart of one man, carry out the counsels of the servants of God, it will be easy for us to avoid any difficulties which we otherwise might have to encounter. A glance at matters abroad in the world will show the difficulties which the people everywhere have to contend with, and if we could trace them to their source, we should no doubt find that they arise through the absence of the principle of union; and one of the principal reasons of the great difference between us and them is, that we observe this principle much more generally and perfectly than they do, and hence we free ourselves from many of the difficulties and troubles under which they labor. This union will become stronger among us, in temporal as well as spiritual affairs, in proportion as we observe and keep the commandments and counsels of our heavenly Father. He has said that his Saints should become the richest of all people. But how will this be brought about? If we follow our former notions, and the notions of the world in general, what more can we do than they have done? We might say, simply, that we could bring about the very same result here as they have there; but that would not spread comfort and happiness, so far as temporal things are concerned, among the whole of his people, and hence if his promise unto us on this subject is ever fulfilled, it will only be by our following his counsel in all things.

How thankful we should be that we live in an age of the world when God is again willing to speak to his people, and to tell them what he requires of them! I say, what a blessing this is to the Saints, and to the whole world if they would receive it! But it is written that as it was in the days of Noah, so should it be in the days of the coming of the Son of Man. This was verily so—the people were not willing to hearken to him, they would not believe his testimony, neither would they receive his counsel. It is measurably so in our own times. The world at large manifest the same unwillingness to receive the counsel of heaven as they have done in any preceding age. But a few have been ready and willing to receive the testimony of the servants of God, and they have been gathered out from the nations for the express purpose of preparing themselves for the coming of the Lord, and to engage in the labor of building up his kingdom upon the earth, and also to do a work for the salvation of those who have gone before. Then it is for us as Latter-day Saints, to hearken to the voice of God, and to give diligent heed to all things which he has proclaimed to, and which he requires of, us in these days. If we take this course, his blessings, which have been bestowed upon us liberally in the past, will be dispensed more abundantly. In these things we have a right to rejoice, and as Saints of the Most High God we do rejoice in the knowledge of the fact that his hand has been over us from the day that the Church was organized with six members unto the present time. His hand has been visibly manifest in our behalf, and his blessings have been showered upon us, and we have been led by his power and dictated by his servants all the day long. If this had not been so, we should not have occupied the enviable position which we occupy today, our enemies would have overcome us long ago. But the outstretched arm of the God we serve has been over us, and his mercies and blessings have been freely bestowed upon us, and we have been sustained, and we shall be from this time forward. We have need to exercise faith; we have need to put our trust in him, and we have need to labor as he directs us. I presume that the feeling of all who have received a knowledge of the truth of the Gospel, is to do everything that the Lord requires of them, and that they will devote all their energies of body and mind to the building up of his kingdom here upon the earth.

That we may pursue this course and adopt this policy, and perform the labors that may be continually required of us, and ultimately be saved and exalted in the celestial kingdom of God, is my prayer in the name of Jesus. Amen.