

Our Labors Are Interesting and Peculiar—Character of the Latter-day Saints—The Blessing and Privilege of Priesthood—The Primary Associations—Our Warfare is One of Faith—We Must Importune for Our Rights—Necessity for Good Lawyers—The Gift of Wisdom—Persecution Will Tend to Unite Us—We Should Be Pure

Discourse by Apostle F. D. Richards, delivered in the Tabernacle, Ogden, Sunday Afternoon, January 18th, 1885.

It is always a pleasure to meet with the Saints, and I always find substantial pleasure in bearing that portion of the labor of the ministry which devolves upon me. Of course there are times when human nature is physically incapacitated from labors. Nevertheless I rejoice exceedingly in the contemplation of the work that we are engaged in. Certainly the review of our immense subject, our great calling, our vast labor, and the wonderful results that follow them—when they are reviewed as they were this morning, and called up before our minds, must awaken deeply interesting and I should hope broadly expanded views and reflections in the minds of the Saints.

We are, as a people, and also our labors as well as the results of them, a great outstanding witness to the world of the divine character of the work we are performing—the high order of our calling to perform that work, as well as pointing significantly to the grand and glorious results which must inevitably follow the labor and toil that are now upon the Latter-day Saints. Any person whose bosom is warmed and whose intellect is lit up by the Holy Spirit must rejoice greatly in the contemplation of the great last dispensation which is now fairly before the world, fairly upon the Saints, like the harness that is upon those that are appointed to labor, to pull, to lift, and to toil.

Where is there any people upon the face of the earth, except the Latter-day Saints, who have from their religious convictions—or from any system of ethics or morals that they possess, gone forth upon the face of the earth, and, from honest, conscientious convictions, and, from their most heartfelt appeals, taken hold of the honest in heart, or of the vicious in heart; anywhere upon the face of the earth, and gathered together a people comprising twenty to thirty different languages and nations, and brought them together to any place, located them, and established a system of government that has been for their improvement, for their benefit, for the increase of their influence, their peace, or their happiness in any sense, either spiritual or temporal?

You can look abroad upon the earth in vain to find any other example that has any kind of relationship, or bears any kind of analogy or appearance like unto the work that is being performed by the Latter-day Saints in the days in which we live.

Who is it that is doing this work? What is the character of this people? Are they those that have been through the schools and been educated to appear in the most plausible and convincing manner in all classes of society? Are they those that have been brought up in affluence and comfort; that can present everything that is pleasing and engaging to the eyes, the ears and the minds of those they address? Not at all. Not many learned or noble. It is often the inexperienced boys that are picked up from the plow, from the workshop, to the humblest of laboring men, toiling, struggling, and many a time when they have not been able, from persecution and oppressive circumstances in which they have been placed, to make a comfortable livelihood, yet they have left the bosoms of their families and gone forth in faith carrying the principles of eternal truth and administering them, with an honest heart and clean hands and by the authority of the Holy Priesthood from heaven to the children of men. And what have they done? What has this simple, humble plan accomplished? Without money in their pockets, without letters of recommendation even to the people, without means oft times to make them comfortable, abnegating themselves, deficient in the comforts and necessities of life, they have gone forth with their hearts full of love and blessing to the human family to find other bosoms kindred to their own, though strangers in appearance, ready to receive the glad testimony of these servants of God. It is not the learned and the noble, nor the wealthy of the earth that have brought their hundreds, their thousands and their tens of thousands to this country.

It has been the potency of those principles that have been taught by the simple and many times silent testimony of the Holy Ghost, by the still small voice, that has carried conviction to the honest, the humble, laboring poor, and

has brought them home here to Zion—they that want to know more of God, they that come from the crowded cities and other portions of the earth—find here a piece of a new world; they take hold and make to themselves homes, all in the name of Israel's God, and by the calling of the voice of the Good Shepherd. Oh, how beneficent and how munificent has the Lord our God been unto us! Behold! as I look abroad this afternoon in this house, I contemplate the great mass of this congregation that are partakers of the Holy Priesthood. It is not a few that are partakers of the holy calling, the authority to administer in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the echo of that saying that is written in the Scriptures where the Lord has said that He would take of Israel and make of them a nation of kings and priests unto Himself. Behold ye, my brethren and sisters, here they are.

Here is Israel gathering together, being taught of the Lord, to learn of His ways and walk in His paths, that they may receive the blessing and be clothed upon with power, as the Prophet said: "Awake, awake; put, on thy strength, O Zion, put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem." What are these beautiful garments? These beautiful garments are the clothing upon with the authority and power of the Holy Priesthood. It is that which makes people beautiful; it is that which makes people useful; it is that which causes the Saints to sing: "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of Him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth." It is that excellence of the knowledge of God that makes men and women beautiful, and makes their acts delightful when they are performed in righteousness in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. I rejoice when I look around and contemplate this precious privilege—that there is scarcely an individual that has come to years of judgment and understanding but is a partaker of some measure of the Priesthood, if no more than the office of a Deacon that can administer blessing by attending to the door, wait upon the tables, and also by attending to other temporal duties from time to time as they may occur.

Here let me say, that every officer in the Church, from the Deacon up to the Apostle, should realize that it is his duty to endeavor to administer blessings by the virtue of the calling of God which is upon him; he ought to feel thus, and every sister that is the wife of such an husband should feel, if she has received with him her blessings in the house of the Lord, that it is her privilege and duty to administer blessings, comfort and happiness to her husband, to her children, to her family and household. Every one in all the Church should be filled with a spirit of blessing. The authority of the Priesthood should cause a gushing forth from the fountain of the heart, a bubbling forth of streams of blessing, of consolation, of comfort and of rejoicing, each should try to help and benefit the other in every possible way.

Contemplate the immense army, I may say of Seventies and Elders we have among us; and what a work are they doing in the nations, and what a work are they doing and ought they to do at home in preaching the Gospel to each other, in encouraging and strengthening those whose hands sometimes hang down, and whose knees tremble; speaking comforting words to the Saints, saying, "Dear brother, thy God reigneth, trust in him." Notwithstanding all that we see on the right hand and on the left, and all that we hear, the Lord God has not forgotten His people, nor has He forgotten to educate and instruct them, in all that He knows is for their greatest good, so that by and by He may come and find a nation of kings and priests who shall reign with Him on the earth a thousand years. We ought never to forget that we are in a school of experience. Every brother and every sister should feel that they exert an influence that will tend for good or for evil.

We ought to feel concerned for our little ones. How precious they are! Sometimes I hear the brethren testify how much good is being done by the Relief Society and the Associations. I want to hear them talk about the Primaries, and tell us how the little children are getting along. It seems hard to get it into the heads of some of the parents as well as some of the Bishops to realize the importance of teaching and instructing these youngsters, some seem to consider it the sole duty of the Primary Associations, while others think it the duty of the parents only to see after them. Now, I think we miss it in trying to thus shirk the responsibility. I think we should all try to understand more perfectly the worth of souls. Oh, if the sisters and brethren that have the charge of these little Primary Associations could only realize that every little child is a gem that they are called upon to polish, to cut, to refine, to shapen, to burnish, to fit and prepare to stand in the diadem of its father's crown. This is the way in which we ought to look at these small but precious jewels. We should assist the little ones to grow up to be mighty men of Zion, that shall

come up to teach Senators wisdom, rebuke strong nations, though they may be far off and become a wholesome terror to the ungodly.

As Apostles, as Bishops, as High Priests, as Elders, as well as fathers and mothers, we need to get more of the spirit of this great work in all its different branches, and keep it with us; always have a blessing to dispense; everywhere a word of comfort and consolation to bestow. We should seek for the Spirit of God and get that measure of it that will bear us up, that they will make us feel the cares of life are trivial; that will sustain us under every circumstance. We can bear wonderful trials; we can live through and outgrow them and look back on them and wonder how we passed through them, realizing that we never could have done so but for the help of God that sustained us in it. Then give Him the glory.

Every officer, then, in the Church should be full of blessing to his fellow man. Only think how many patriarchs there are. They should feel to bless all around. No doubt they do, sealing upon those to whom they administer the blessing of eternal life in perpetuity.

The school that we are being educated in is a strange one. You cannot pick up the Bible and find anything that is like it. In ancient days, when there was a warfare, it was a warfare of carnal weapons, many times. Not so, in our days; and as if the Lord were determined to put carnal weapons far away from us, He even permitted the Gubernatorial order preventing us carrying firearms with which to celebrate the 4th of July, and then, on the top of that, He has given us the abundant testimony of peace all around, even with the hostile natives. Is not this an overwhelming testimony that the Lord wants us to work with the other class of weapons—the sword of His Holy Spirit, the power of eternal truth—the ammunition that wants to be kept alive, active and burning in our hearts.

When we come to contemplate this matter, our warfare is entirely in another direction, it has to be carried on and accomplished by the power of faith. We have to contend for our liberties and the rights of the people before the courts, wherein we strive to maintain the Constitutional rights to which we are entitled, both civilly and politically. We have not gone to the authorities that are over us in the nation and supplicated them saying: “Will you please give us some extraordinary liberties or privileges—we contend for the rights of every American citizen, which are our rights.” We have not cut ourselves off from the rights of citizenship. Our fathers fought to help obtain and bled to help establish the blessings and privileges, the liberties and powers of this glorious government to all its loyal citizens; and when this Church was established, it went on for more than thirty-two years—no law of the Church conflicted with the laws of the land, until it became necessary in the opinion of some politicians that the Saints should be made offenders in the eyes of the nation and of the world. Then it was that Congress passed a law—the law of 1862—prohibiting plurality of wives, polygamy, or bigamy, as they choose to call it. Now, then, we have not risen up against the laws of the land; it is the laws of the land and the men of the land that have risen up against the people of God, and have brought their offensive warfare in this matter, and we are thereby placed on the defensive. The nation have been pleased to say that we shall not worship God according to the dictates of our consciences, as required by some of the laws and ordinances of His Church; and have made laws to prevent us from so doing, if possible. Hence it is that, while we go before the courts we do not go as suppliants for something extraordinary, or for something that other people have not got. We ask to be preserved our rights, the rights that belong to every American citizen. It is for this that we go through the courts, appealing from the District Court to the Supreme Court of the Territory, and then to the Supreme Court of the United States.

Now, is not this a great and an important lesson of experience and instruction, and yet there is occasion, for all this is required in the Book of Doctrine and Covenants. The Lord has said through the Prophet Joseph to us, that we must importune at the feet of the judges—do you remember it?—and at the feet of Governors—do you recollect that—and at the feet of the President, and then, says He, if your importuning does not prevail, and you do not obtain all things which you have a right to, He will come out of His hiding place and take the matter into His own hands. So you see we have some importuning to do before, or at the feet of Judges, Governors, and Presidents, in order to maintain the liberties guaranteed by the Constitution of our country.

Right here I want to say a word or two especially in regard to the way we have to do our importuning. I refer to a discourse by President Young, in which he said he wished he had five hundred young lawyers full of the spirit of the

Gospel who would rise up and help to maintain and defend our rights before the courts of our country. The discourse was published in the *Deseret News* and republished in the *Journal of Discourses*. It is public matter for anybody to read that wishes to. But a few days ago, however, a Bishop remarked that it looked very singular for one of the Apostles to raise up a lawyer, and thought there must be a screw loose somewhere. It happens, however, once in a while that some Bishop wants my son or someone else's son to help defend them before the courts. (Laughter.) I wonder if there is any screw loose there. Excuse me, brethren, for this reference; but I wish we could have a goodly number of substantial young men growing up in our midst who would become skilled and mighty in the law, and who could go into any of the courts and set forth the true principles of justice and equity in all cases. We need more of such men. We do not want men to become lawyers, turn infidels, and live for nothing but the little money they can make. We want to raise up a corps of young men armed with the Spirit of the Gospel, clothed with the Holy Priesthood, who can tell the judges in high places what the law is, and what equity is, and can plead for the cause of Zion, and help maintain the rights of God's people. Hence you see we have got to carry on these matters. Our rights are infringed, and we have got to defend ourselves as best we can. We are told that we must plead with the dignitaries of the earth; plead with them until their position on our question is known; they have got to declare themselves.

There are different branches of the government, which are considered coordinate. For instance—there is the legislative branch, namely, Congress. Then there is the President, who represents the executive branch. Then there is the army and navy, which is the arm of power to carry out and maintain physical defenses. And then there is the Supreme Court, the legal tribunal that stands at the very head, if you please, and pronounces upon the constitutionality of the acts which Congress passes. Hence we see our case has not only to be brought before and had cognizance of in the Congress of the United States to ascertain if they will make laws to oppress us, but these laws can be taken to higher courts, to see whether they will maintain the rights of God's people in the land. And does it seem a terrible thing that one or two should get cast into prison? As President Cannon contemplated this morning, half a dozen would cover all such cases within the last twenty-two years, and the persons connected with the most notable cases have come in and furnished the evidence for their own crimination, under the promise that punishment would not be inflicted. But like the Governor of Illinois, who pledged his honor and the honor of the state to protect our Prophet and Patriarch, all such promises were broken. Nevertheless, in this manner we have got to test the purity or impurity, the integrity or otherwise, of the different branches of the government under which we live.

God is going to make His people a great people. He has designed them to be the means not only of revealing among themselves, what they are, and what they are here for, but of making them a standing testimony of the truth before the whole world. The great knowledge of which we have become possessed cannot be hid under a bushel, cannot be hid up in a dark place. Here we are in the heights of the continent, calling Israel home, ready to impart the light that is within us, to all of Adam's children who will receive it. Let us seek to be wise. The Lord has told us of certain classes of defense which are better even than the employment of weapons of war. And what is it? It is the gift of wisdom. "Wisdom is better than strength or weapons of war," said the ancient man, who tested the matter and found it out. Now, let us understand that the "fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" and a good understanding have all they who keep His commandments.

My brethren and sisters: let us not be discouraged in the least. Remember that no great revolution was ever achieved without some fighting. Some battles have had to be fought, some victories had to be achieved. It is while the war is going on that some get wounded, and other contingencies arise, and some things necessarily happen that are unpleasant. But after the war is over, and the new government is instituted, the grand improvement is then felt, as it has been felt in this nation ever since the thirteen colonies fought and maintained their independence from the mother country. It is true we have been oppressed a little. But our enemies do not make very much at it. We live and thrive notwithstanding, do we not? How singularly the Lord works with men. The people of the Southern States through the war and since, have been limited or deprived of some of their rights. And some few men—Senator Brown for one—are not afraid to rise up from their seat and defend the right whether in behalf of Mormon or non-Mormon, and expose the doings of self-righteous men in New England, exposing the fruits of their monogamous marriage relations as compared with our marriage institution. The Lord has raised up

men sometimes to maintain the rights of His people. He will allow us to be pinched from time to time as it may be necessary to unite us together, to make a wife love her husband a little better, to make a husband love his wives and children a little better, and to strengthen the bond of union in every heart. For my part I rejoice in this work, and seek continually to gather knowledge. I rejoice that I have lived to see the work of God established on the earth. Let me tell you, my brethren and sisters, the greatest affliction some of us have: it is some great fearful apprehension that something is going to happen. We naturally borrow trouble. We should not do that. Just consider that the work is the Lord's. Be certain you do your duty every day. And when you lay down at night do so with a clear conscience, and enjoy slumber and be refreshed, and rise up in the morning, in the likeness of the resurrection, prepared to renew the contest of life. Thus we should go on step by step, adding faith to faith, keeping the commandments of God, and purifying ourselves all we can. The Lord will bless us in proportion to the degree that we endeavor to purify ourselves, and keep His commandments. That is the great secret of our full acceptance with God. We must purify ourselves as He is pure.

I do not consider it proper for me to occupy more of your time this afternoon. I feel to say I rejoice in this work. And I say unto every brother and sister that keeps the commandments of God, be joyful and rejoice in Him. He has called us to the work in which we are engaged, and He is educating us, as I said before, in order that by and by He may have a nation of kings and priests, judges and rulers to help Him bear government and rule over this earth in righteousness, when the curse shall be taken from it, and when truth shall prevail from one end of the earth to the other. May it be our happy lot to be there and rejoice with father Abraham and all his family, is my humble prayer, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.