

Kindness the True Spirit of Instruction and Government

Remarks by Elder George A. Smith, delivered in the Tabernacle, Great Salt Lake City, June 2nd, 1867.

It is certainly good to receive instructions from fathers in Israel, and the kind of instruction which is most desirable is that pertaining to our everyday life, for a great share of the unhappiness and misery of the world is the result of ignorance. Many people do not know how to enjoy the blessings they receive. When they have comforts around them they make themselves miserable longing for something in the distance and beyond their reach; something imaginary, and often not really necessary. It is the duty of every person to cultivate the spirit of contentment, and, no matter what our condition in life may be, we should be sure to do right, be contented, and trust in God to improve it. When we are placed in uncomfortable circumstances—for instance, when we lack the necessities and comforts of life, we are apt to give way to a spirit of discontentment, when, peradventure, if we understood the providences of the Almighty we should find that they are to give us an experience we could not otherwise attain to, and which is necessary to prepare us for the performance of greater duties which may be required of us.

President Kimball's remarks in relation to going with his boys, and teaching them how to work, were excellent; and one of the greatest blessings that a man has bestowed upon him on earth is that of being with his family. A great many do not appreciate it, but the privilege of being with one's family, and teaching them the principles of truth and how to become useful in life, cannot be too highly prized. The Presidency and numbers of the elders have so many responsibilities of a public nature resting upon them, that they are deprived, to a great extent, of that association with their families which is necessary to enable them to instruct them personally, consequently they have to leave it to others. President Kimball told us that if he hired a man to work for him he had to show him which was the top end of a straw. My family, once during my absence, employed a man to work in the garden. They gave him a lot of cabbages, turnips, onions, and carrots to set out for the raising of seed. He set everyone of them into the ground with the roots up. When the ladies came to see what was done, they gave him a lecture on the subject that he remembered, and he learned to do such work properly. A great many of our people have been gathered from the various nations of Europe, and while there the majority of them were operatives in factories, or engaged in different mechanical pursuits, and never planted an onion, carrot, turnip, or parsnip in their lives, and have no idea of the process, consequently, when they gather here, where almost every man is under the necessity of raising his own food, they have to learn the method of doing so.

President Kimball has been urging us strongly to store our bins with wheat and flour. This may sound like strange counsel to those who, during most of their lives, have been in the habit of receiving their wages every Saturday, and, then, without further care, laying in their week's provisions. But in this country, where we are liable to seasons of scarcity, it is requisite to prepare for such emergencies; hence the counsel to store up food is frequently given, and is absolutely necessary. Yet, as a people, we are apt to neglect it, for the sun rises and sets, the seasons come and go with unfailing regularity, and we expect that every year will bring plenty; yet we have had years of scarcity, and may have again, and we are not safe unless we provide against them, and be prepared for a day of hunger. Hence, in this respect and in many others, the Latter-day Saints have many things to learn.

Many men do not know how to be comfortable in their families; they are cross and crabbed with their wives, and think it is necessary to scold and find fault with almost everything they do. Now, you can do a good deal more with a person without finding fault than with; the man that is pleasant with, and never says a cross word to his family, governs them the best, as a general thing. Women, too, who talk pleasant and comforting words to their husbands, and never find fault, always have the most influence with them. And yet we find men and women who, in their family relations, seem to think that the rod and a disposition to be cross and crabbed, to scold, and find fault, and threaten, is the best policy, whereas the right policy is directly opposite. We should overcome with love and affection, guide with kindness, and teach and instruct by good example and self government, for the man who can govern his own temper, rule his own passions, and regulate his own conduct, will have more influence over others ten thousand times than he will who is feared and dreaded, and consequently hated. The question arises in the world—"How is it that Brigham Young can control so easily so many Latter-day Saints?" And "How was it that Joseph Smith could send his brethren all over the world, and bring so many people together, without ever seeing

them?" It is by the power of that magic which wins hearts; by the power of those eternal principles of salvation which exist in God and in his faithful servants. Every man knows that in Brigham Young he has a friend and a father, and that when he counsels, instructs, corrects, or reproves, it is with the spirit of a father to his children—he corrects them for their own good; hence every person fears to do wrong and desires to do right, and, so far as this principle extends, Israel is governed by love and charity, by that strong bond of eternal truth which will make peace throughout the earth.

How are the nations of the earth governed? Generally through fear or self-interest. What is it that props the French Empire? A million of bayonets. What holds the autocrats of Europe on their thrones? The fear of death, for if any attempt be made to overthrow them death would be the inevitable doom of the conspirators. Is that the principle by which governments can stand? No; the only principles by which they can be permanently sustained is the love of truth, honor, and integrity, and these virtues should be honored and observed by the sovereign more than by anybody else, and that superior love of truth would enable him to control every person in his empire, for virtue reigning triumphant would frown down vice, and would thus lay the foundation for an empire that would be lasting.

When one sovereign gets more bayonets than the others, blood and slaughter result, and downfall follows. How will it be in the Kingdom of God? It will be governed by peace, truth, and order, and truth will eventually govern the world. Men will be taught correct principles, and they will then govern themselves. That is the secret of "Mormonism." President Young teaches the Saints correct principles, and the Saints govern themselves.

I bear my testimony to the truth of the counsel and instruction that we have received this morning, and I trust they will be treasured up in good and honest hearts, and that men and women will consider these things and realize that we have one great interest, which is to build up Zion, sustain the principles of salvation, walk humbly before the Lord, remember our prayers, and deal honestly and justly with each other. If a man owes another let him discharge his obligations honorably; if circumstances beyond his control prevent him doing according to agreement, let him go to his creditor and show to him the real circumstances of the case, and that it is absolutely out of his power, and not become a man's enemy because he is your creditor. It frequently happens, I notice, that in the dealings of brethren one with another, when pay day comes men are not so pleasant and agreeable as when they are trying to obtain the credit. This is wrong. In all cases our word should be our bond, certain and sure, and nothing short of that which is beyond the ordinary course of events should prevent us fulfilling it.

By pursuing this course of events we shall increase confidence in our midst, build each other up, and build up Zion. Let us not build on borrowed capital, but learn to live within our means, and teach our children the beauties of industry, prudence, and frugality, that we may all be prepared and qualified to magnify our callings. Thus the rising generation will be prepared to bear the burden and carry off the kingdom; the work will increase, and truth will spread until it covers the whole earth.

I feel thankful for the privilege of bearing my testimony. I pray that the blessings of heaven may rest upon you, and that the peace of God may be upon all Israel. I heartily unite with br. Kimball in praying for the recovery of his son, and for prosperity and blessings upon all Israel; which may God grant, for Jesus sake. Amen.