

The Unchangeableness of the Gospel—The Triumph of Truth

Discourse by Elder John Taylor, delivered in the New Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, Sunday, October 8, 1871.

We are met here in a conference capacity, and have assembled ostensibly, and in reality, to confer together about the general interests of the church and kingdom of God upon the earth. The authorities from the distant settlements are here to represent themselves and their people, and a great many are here from the surrounding settlements to listen to the teachings that may be given, to the business that may be transacted, to the doctrines that may be promulgated, and in general to make themselves acquainted with the spirit of the times, with the obligations that devolve upon them; and the various responsibilities that rest upon all parties.

We meet, then, as I have said, to consult on the general interests of the church and kingdom of God upon the earth, and not upon our own peculiar ideas and notions, to carry out any particular favorite theme or to establish any special dogma of our own devising; nor do we meet here to combine against men; but to seek, by all reasonable and proper means, through the interposition and guidance of the Almighty, and under the influence of His Holy Spirit, to adopt such means and to carry out such measures as will most conduce to our individual happiness; the happiness of the community with which we are associated; to the establishment of correct principles; to the building up of our faith, and strengthening us in the principles of eternal truth; to our advancement and progress in the ways of life and salvation, and to devise such measures and carry out such plans as will best accord with the position and relationship we occupy to God, to the world we live in, and to each other.

So far as the principles of truth are concerned they are like the Author of truth—"the same yesterday, today, and forever." No change has taken place in the program of the Almighty in regard to His relationship with men, the duties and responsibilities that devolve upon men in general, or upon us, as the elders of Israel and representatives of God upon the earth. Years ago, when we listened to the glad tidings which had been again revealed to man, by the opening of the heavens and by the revelations of God, we rejoiced in the great principles of truth that were then divulged. The gospel that we then obeyed brought peace to our bosoms; for it enlightened the eyes of our understandings and gave us a knowledge of our standing with and relation to the Almighty; made us acquainted with the position we occupy in relation to the living and the dead; opened up a way whereby we might pour blessings on the latter, and, as ancient patriarchs and servants of God did, by which we could confer blessings on unborn generations. That gospel unfolded unto us some of those glorious principles associated with the present position and future destiny of man. The work in which we are engaged is like the Great Jehovah—eternal and unchangeable. It emanated from God, and was imparted to man by revelation. By obedience to that gospel we received the Holy Ghost, which partook of the things of God and showed them unto us. That spirit imparted light, truth, and intelligence, which have continued to be manifested to the church of the living God and to all who are faithful in that church up to the present time.

Men have their ideas and theories and notions, their views of morality, politics, science, and philosophy; we have our ideas in relation to God, to angels, to eternity and to our responsibility to God and to the world; and acting upon that faith we go forth in the name of Israel's God to accomplish that destiny which God has placed in our hands. God has decreed certain things with regard to the earth and the people who live on it. He has revealed unto His servants, the prophets, certain things that should transpire in connection with the world and its inhabitants, and we are left no longer to the wild chaos of fleeting thought that exists everywhere in the world; for God has placed us under His inspiration, given unto us a knowledge of His law, revealed unto us His purposes, drawn back the curtain that intervenes between man and his heavenly Father, and divulged unto us His will, designs, and purposes concerning us. We know for ourselves of the truth of those principles that God has revealed, and if in former days Paul could say, "Ye are our witnesses, as also is the Holy Ghost who bears witness unto us," it can be said more emphatically of this day. This assembly now before me have received the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Holy Ghost accompanying that gospel; and every man and woman present who has lived the religion of Jesus Christ has the witness of the truth of the work they have obeyed, and they are ready with one acclaim to pronounce: "We are His witnesses, as is also the Holy Ghost which bears witness unto us." You, my brethren and sisters, know of the truths of that gospel which you have received, and you are not indebted for that knowledge to any organization

that exists under the face of the heavens, other than the one you are now associated with. No philosophy, no religious combination, no school, no doctors of divinity, no priesthood of any order revealed unto you the principles which you are in possession of. The gospel that you received, you received "not of man nor by man, but through the influence of the Spirit of God and the power of the holy priesthood that administered it." This you know now, and this you then knew. It is no wild phantom, no idle theory, no notion propagated by man; but it is the word of eternal life, the revelations of God, the gospel of Jesus Christ, the principles of eternal truth, which you have received, from the God of truth, through the medium of that priesthood which He has organized on the earth; and this you know, realize, and understand for yourselves. You understood it years ago, and you understand it today. It is the same gospel, the same priesthood, the same principles of truth; it imparts the same hope, fills the bosom with the same joy, disperses that uncertainty and doubt that dwell in the bosoms of unbelievers, and opens to the view of the believer visions of "glory, honor, immortality and eternal lives." And there is nothing in this world that can change these feelings—no vain philosophy, no political influence, no combinations of any kind that can root out of the mind these principles of eternal truth which are inspired and implanted there by the spirit of the living God. They are written on the tablets of the heart in characters of living fire, and they will burn and extend while time exists or eternity endures. So far then we feel comforted and blessed. If others are satisfied with their views, all right. If a man wants to be a Methodist, Presbyterian, Roman Catholic, Shaker, or Quaker, all right, he can be what he pleases; but let me have my religion. Let me have principles that will draw aside the curtain of futurity and introduce me to those scenes that exist behind the veil. Let me, as an immortal being, know my destiny pertaining to time and eternity, and the destiny of my brethren and friends, and of the earth that I live upon; let me have a religion that will lead me to God, and others may take what they please, it is immaterial to me. I have no quarrel with them. They can have their own ideas and carry out their own views, so far as I am concerned, untrammelled, if they will let me have mine. Let me be surrounded with the panoply of truth, let me have the favor of Jehovah, let me associate with angels and the heavens, and eternity be opened to my view, and be placed in such a relationship with God that He can communicate His will to me, and I ask no more of this world. I have no complaint to make about anybody, I don't even complain of the devil. I know that he was sent here for a certain purpose—to carry out the purposes of God, and God did not even banish him from His presence when the sons of God met together, for the devil was also among them, and we need not be surprised at anything of that kind now. When the Lord asked him where he came from, said he, "I came from wandering to and fro in the earth." What did he do in the earth? Not much good, and, I presume, all the evil he could. And I presume it was absolutely necessary that there should be devils, or there would not have been any.

Years and years ago, I preached abroad among the nations of the earth, and I see around me here many of my brethren, the elders, whose heads are now as grey as mine, who did the same. We preached to many of you who are here, and told you that the world would wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. Did we not preach this doctrine? I think we did, ten, twenty, thirty, and forty years ago. We told you then that in consequence of the wickedness that would exist upon the earth, thrones would be cast down, empires be demoralized, and that wars and bloodshed would exist upon the face of the earth, and that God would arise and vex the nations and bring them to judgment, because of their iniquities. Is it anything astonishing that these words should be fulfilled? Why, they are the words of truth! They were spoken by the spirit of revelation, and were in accordance with the revelations given to ancient men of God, who spoke as they were moved upon by the Holy Ghost, and who, while rapt in prophetic vision, saw and foretold what should transpire on the earth. God revealed the same things to us that He did to them.

And what other doctrines did you hear the elders proclaim, my friends? You heard them proclaim, "Come out of her, my people." Why? "That you partake not of her sins and receive not of her plagues." Didn't you hear that? I think you did. Did you hear that her sins had reached up to heaven, and that God would remember her iniquities? Yes, you did. Do you believe it today? Yes: you believe just the same principles now that you believed then. Your ideas and views, feelings and theories in these respects have not advanced, as people tell us sometimes, with the intelligence of the age. God save me from such intelligence, the Lord deliver me from their infidelity, corruption, and iniquity, social, moral, political, and of every kind you can mention; and the Lord God deliver this people from it. I don't want it. I want to know God and the principles of truth. I want, as an immortal being to understand something of my relationship with the other world. I want to know how to save the living and to redeem the dead,

and to stand as a savior on Mount Zion, and to bring to pass the purposes of Jehovah in relation to this people and the earth whereon we live. That is what I want to know; that is the kind of intelligence I am after. Then, if there is anything else that we have not got, that is good, virtuous, holy, pure, or intellectual, give it to us, and we will embrace it; but we don't want your corruptions, debaucheries, and crimes, which everywhere prevail, and which are a stench in the nostrils of God, angels, and all good men; and I would make a prayer here which I used to hear very often when I was an Episcopalian: "From all such things, good Lord deliver us." We want truth, purity, integrity, and honesty; we want men who live so that they dare face any man, or, even God himself; and to reach this standard is what we are after, and it is our constant aim and desire. I was very much pleased with a song I heard sung yesterday. I don't know that I can remember it, but it was something like this:

"Hurrah, hurrah, for the mountain brave, No trembling serf is he; Nor earth, nor hell can him enslave— The Gods have set him free."

There is nothing faltering in the knees of a man of God, you can't make him quail. God is his friend, and angels and all good men are his friends. He is living for time and eternity, and all is right with him, living or dying.

Well, but don't you think some folks are very bad? I always thought so; my mind is not changed about that a particle. Well, but don't you think the folks don't treat us very well sometimes? I never knew the time they did; I never expect to be well treated by them. I never knew nor read of any men of God that were well treated by the people of the world, and if we were I should not think we were men of God at all. Why men who feared God anciently were generally the most unpopular of men, they were considered a kind of fools, or half crazy, or something the matter with them. The enlightened pagans of former days did not like either the religion or the God of the Hebrews. They thought them a shame and a disgrace, and that Baal and their gods were much better. Men of God, in old times, we are told, had to wander about in sheepskins and goatskins, and to dwell in deserts and in dens and caves of the earth. "They must have been very wicked people in those days," say you; and they were, and so they are today. There is not much difference, only I think we are a little better situated, for we have our good houses and farms and an extensive territory. We live under our own vine and fig tree, and none can make us afraid. They think they can, but they make a mistake; there is no trembling of the knees here. Fear does not dwell here, and if it did a little more of the principles of that gospel you have received would dispel it. I remember a kind of shaky-kneed fellow in old times, and they were in rather a critical position. There was some Gentiles holding court there. Oh no, it was not that, I forgot; it was another affair, an army was surrounding them. Excuse me for making the mistake! There was an old prophet there, rather a rough sort of a fellow, and very unpopular. His servant was a rather shaky-kneed sort of chap, was in a tremble, and wanted to know what was going to be done. "Why," says the prophet, "They are more who are for us than those who can be against us." The servant didn't understand this exactly, and the prophet prayed that he might get a little more religion. Said he, "O God, open the young man's eyes," and the Lord did so, and as soon as his eyes were opened he saw thousands of the heavenly hosts surrounding him, and said he, "The chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof." That inspired him with confidence, and did away with that trembling in the knees. Now if any of you should have had a little trembling of that kind, go to your God, seek for the spirit of revelation that flows from Him; get hold of the light and intelligence which the Holy Ghost imparts, and you will cry, "Hosanna, hosanna, hosanna to the God of Israel, for He rules and will rule until He has put all enemies under His feet," you will cry out, "Zion shall arise and shine, and the glory of God shall rest upon her!" You will cry aloud, "The principles of eternal truth will triumph, not all the powers of earth and hell can stay their progress, for Zion is onward, onward, onward, until the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our God and His Christ, and He will rule forever and ever!"

If there is anything the matter with any of you, I don't think there is much; but if there is, get a little more religion; live your religion, seek for the spirit of revelation, which has led you on to the present time. If you cling to that it will lead you to the portals of eternal life. Talk about the Saints of God quailing, pshaw! The work of God is onward, the kingdom of God is forward, and all that I have to say is, get out of the way, for the chariots of Israel are advancing, the purposes of God are being unfolded, the work of God will roll forth, and woe to that man who lifts his puny arm against it.

But I am not strong in body, rather feeble in health, and I do not feel that my bodily strength is sufficient to talk

much longer to this large assembly. I have heard men say they know this is the truth; so do I. I know that God has spoken. If nobody else knows on the earth besides, I know that the truths of God have been revealed; I know that the gospel has been restored; I know that this people will continue to cleave to the truth, that the kingdom of God will progress, and that by and by we will shout victory! victory! victory! now and forever, worlds without end. May God bless Israel and all who bless Israel, and let the curse of God rest upon her enemies, in the name of Jesus. Amen.