Hardship the Heritage of the Saints—The Necessity of Trial Forgiveness of Enemies—Inspired Dreams, "Get the Spirit of God"—The Great Work Expected of the Saints—Labors Among the Lamanites

Discourse by President Wilford Woodruff, delivered in the Meetinghouse, Kaysville, Davis County, Sunday Morning, December 10th, 1882.

We have met again this morning to hear and receive instruction and worship the Lord and honor Him upon this holy Sabbath day.

The heavens are full of knowledge, full of instruction, full of revelation and of principle and decree, and I may say of judgment, all to be made use of in their day and time, and we have a right to all the knowledge, all the revelation, all the principles of truth, that we can claim by faith and diligence in serving the Lord and in the performance of our duty.

I look upon the Latter-day Saints as occupying a position, I may say equal, at least, to that occupied by the people of any other dispensation that God has ever given to man. We are a blessed people; we are favored of heaven and have received at the hands of our heavenly Father a great many blessings both of the heavens and of the earth, and we, as a people, should be grateful to the Lord our God for the many kindnesses He has bestowed upon us. We live, in fact, in the dispensation of the fullness of times, the last dispensation in which the Lord will reveal his mind and will to the inhabitants of the earth, the last time in which the Lord will prune his vineyard, the last time in which he will set up his kingdom upon the earth, establish His Church, and build up His Zion, to prepare for the coming of the Son of Man. And while we sometimes feel and have felt in days that are past and gone, to complain because we meet with oppression, persecution and affliction, yet I wish to say to my brethren and sisters that these things are the heritage of the Saints of God. Any people whom God calls will meet with opposition from those who will not receive the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This has been the legacy of the Saints of God in every age from Father Adam down to our own day. Those that live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution. I believe myself, from the reading of the revelations of God, that it is necessary for a people who are destined to inherit the celestial kingdom to be a tried people. I have never read of the people of God in any dispensation passing through life, as the sectarian world would say, on flowery beds of ease, without opposition of any kind. I have always looked upon the life of our Savior—who descended beneath all things that He might rise above all things—as an example for His followers. And yet it has always, in one sense of the word, seemed strange to me that the Son of God, the First Begotten in the eternal worlds of the Father, and the Only Begotten in the flesh, should have to descend to the earth and pass through what He did—born in a stable, cradled in a manger, persecuted, afflicted, scorned, a hiss and by-word to almost all the world, and especially to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and Judea. There was apparently nothing that the Savior could do that was acceptable in the eyes of the world; anything and almost everything he did was imputed to an unholy influence. When He cast out devils the people said he did it through the power of Beelzebub, the prince of devils; when he opened the eyes of the blind, the Pharisees and priests of the day told the man to "give God the glory; we know this man is a sinner." And so all his life through, to the day of his death upon the cross. There is something about all this that appears sorrowful; but it seemed necessary for the Savior to descend below all things that he might ascend above all things. So it has been with other men. When I look at the history of Joseph Smith, I sometimes think that he came as near following the footsteps of the Savior—(although no more so than his disciples)—as anyone possibly could. Joseph Smith was called to lay down his life; he sealed his testimony with his blood, and passed through some serious trials and afflictions. In section 122 of the Book of Doctrine and Covenants—the word of the Lord given to the Prophet while in Liberty jail—the Lord showed him his condition and position. He refers there to the trials and troubles he was called to pass through, and then compares them with what He Himself (the Savior) had to endure. He says: "And if thou shouldst be cast into the pit, or into the hands of murderers, and the sentence of death passed upon thee; if thou be cast into the deep; if the billowing surge conspire against thee; if fierce winds become thine enemy; if the heavens

gather blackness, and all the elements combine to hedge up the way; and above all, if the very jaws of hell shall gape open the mouth wide after thee, know thou, my son, that all these things shall give thee experience, and shall be for thy good. The Son of Man hath descended below them all. Art thou greater than he? Therefore, hold on thy way, and the priesthood shall remain with thee; for their bounds are set, they cannot pass. Thy days are known, and thy years shall not be numbered less; therefore, fear not what man can do, for God shall be with you forever and ever." The Lord showed him in this revelation that these afflictions were necessary. We have been called to pass through trials many times, and I do not think we should complain, because if we had no trials we should hardly feel at home in the other world in the company of the Prophets and Apostles who were sawn asunder, crucified, etc., for the word of God and testimony of Jesus Christ.

How should we feel towards our enemies? President Taylor of late has called upon us to exercise towards them the same spirit that was manifested by our Savior upon the cross: "Father forgive them they know not what they do." We should endeavor to exercise that spirit. Our persecutors, those who would seek to destroy us, do not know what they do. They do not comprehend us at all. Why, bless your souls, if the veil was lifted from off the eyes of the President of the United States, from off the eyes of the members of the Congress of the United States, and from off the eyes of our enemies, if this veil were lifted they would bow before the Lord and plead for these "Mormons;" they would do this if their eyes were open to see the future consequences of taking a stand against this Church and kingdom. But there is a veil over their eyes, because of their works of evil; and the day will come when all peoples will mourn who take a stand against the kingdom of God, the Zion of God, the Church of God, and the Lord's anointed; unless they repent they will, when they pass into the other world, go into outer darkness, where there is weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth. It is impossible, however, for the Saints of God to inherit a celestial kingdom without their being tried as to whether they will abide in the covenants of the Lord or not.

Well, I feel we are a blessed people. We have prospered. The Lord is fighting our battles. The Lord holds the destiny of this nation and all other nations in His hands. Our enemies can go no further than He permits them.

We live in a day and time when the Lord has decreed to set up his kingdom for the last time upon the earth. That is the reason we have the privilege of building these Temples and these meetinghouses in the mountains of Israel. The Lord has set his hand to establish his kingdom according to his former promises, and it is going to prevail upon the earth. He has told us to fear not our enemies; that though earth and hell combine against us, they shall not prevail, if we are built upon the rock of Christ.

We have come to this earth upon a mission; and we have been gathered to the valleys of these mountains that we may be taught and instructed in the things of God; that we may magnify our calling before the Lord; that we may become saviors upon Mount Zion; that we may have power to go forth and warn the nations of the earth. I look upon the mission of the Latter-day Saints as being as important as that of any people that ever lived in any age of the world. I have often expressed my views with regard to this. As Elders of Israel, very few of us fully comprehend our position, our calling, or relationship to God, our responsibility, or work the Lord requires at our hands. The Lord has given unto us the Priesthood. This is conferred upon us that we may administer in the ordinances of life and salvation. But to enable us to perform our duties acceptably, there is one thing we need, one and all of us, and that is the Holy Spirit. While in Winter Quarters, President Young had a dream in which the Prophet Joseph Smith appeared to him and said: "Brother Young, you exhort this people to obtain the Holy Spirit; with it they can do anything that is necessary; without it they cannot build up the kingdom of God." In one of my dreams while in Arizona, I had the same admonition from President Young. I thought he was attending one of our conferences. I said to him: "Can you speak to us?" "No," he replied, "I have done bearing my testimony in the flesh; I have merely come to see the people, to see you, to see what you are doing. But I want you to teach the Latter-day Saints to labor to obtain the Holy Spirit. It is one of the most important gifts that the Saints of the living God can possess. You all need this," he said, "in order to build up Zion. If you have not this Spirit—the Spirit of the Holy Ghost, the testimony of Jesus, the testimony of the Father and Son—you cannot get along. But if you are in possession of this Spirit, your minds will be open to comprehend the things of God." This is true. There is not a man in this Church and kingdom today, who, if he is in possession of this spirit, will set his heart upon the things of this world. Any man that loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. We have received something better than the love of

gold, silver, houses and lands; we have received the promise of eternal life. We have had conferred upon us the eternal Priesthood by which our heavenly Father has created all worlds and redeemed all worlds and has performed all his works from eternity to eternity.

Then, we should labor to obtain this Spirit while we are upon the earth that we may overcome every evil. We have a mighty warfare on hand. We have to contend against the world, the flesh and the devil. There are temptations that surround every man and woman, that is, if they attempt to keep the commandments of God, and no man or woman can inherit eternal life without passing through this warfare in the flesh. Other generations have had their turn. As a people it is our turn today. The old patriarchs and prophets have gone, their missions are ended, so far as their testimony in the flesh is concerned; but they were valiant in the testimony of Jesus Christ; they kept the law, and they will inherit a celestial glory.

I often reflect upon the promises made concerning the Priesthood. The Lord, in a revelation upon this subject, says, Doctrine and Covenants, 33rd to 41st verses: "Whosoever is faithful unto obtaining these two priesthoods of which I have spoken, and the magnifying their calling, are sanctified by the Spirit unto the renewing of their bodies. * * * All that my Father hath shall be given unto him. Therefore, all those who receive the priesthood, receive this oath and covenant of my Father, which he cannot break, neither can it be moved." Now, I sometimes ask myself the question, Do we comprehend these things? Do we comprehend that if we abide the laws of the Priesthood we shall become heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ? I realize that our eyes have not seen, our ears have not heard, neither hath it entered into our hearts to conceive the glory that is in store for the faithful. We are placed in a position to be proven and tried; we must be, we have been, we shall be, until we get through with our labors in the flesh. The Lord told Joseph Smith that he would prove us in all things, whether we will abide in his covenant, even unto death, that we may be found worthy: "for if we will not abide in his covenant, we are not worthy of him." Jesus Christ abode in the covenant; he kept all the commandments while he was upon the earth. He even was baptized by the hands of John, although it was not for the remission of sin, but to fulfill all righteousness. There was no part of the Gospel that Christ did not fulfill, and he called upon Joseph Smith to fulfill the same. This he did. He laid down his life. He went to the spirit world, and he is there watching over this people. He has power there, and so have our brethren who have gone to the other side of the veil. They are laboring for us. They are watching to see how we perform the work left to our charge.

I hope we live our religion. I hope we strive to keep the commandments of God. We occupy a very important position in the world. There are very few of the inhabitants of the earth who are laboring to build up Zion. There are very few, apparently, who are able to abide the law of God. There are very few who are willing to sacrifice anything for eternal life and salvation, and thousands will have to inherit a kingdom other than the celestial.

Nevertheless, my brethren and sisters, we are laboring and progressing in this work. Zion is advancing; the kingdom of God is rolling on. The progress of this kingdom has never stopped from the day of its organization; it never will until it has accomplished all for which it has been organized and established on the earth to accomplish. We have a great work to do. We are commanded to preach the Gospel to the nations of the earth. The Elders of Israel have been doing this for the last fifty years. We are still doing it, in the United States and other parts of the world. We shall continue to labor among the Gentiles just as long as the Lord says we must do so. But at the same time we have now been commanded to turn to a branch of the house of Israel. Here are the Lamanites, thousands and thousands of them surround us. They look to us for the Gospel of Christ. It is our duty to go to them and organize them, and preach to them the words of life and salvation.

Then, again, we have temples to build in our day and time, that we may go into them and do a work both for the living and for the dead. Our mission is more extended and extensive than we realize. There have been no Prophets, no Apostles, upon the earth for the last 1,800 years, that we are much acquainted with, except Nephi, who dwelt upon this continent several hundred years after the death of Christ. There has been no one upon the earth with authority to preach the Gospel to the nations of the earth. Many generations have passed away. Many thousands of millions have passed into the spirit world. We are now at the end of the sixth thousand years. We are bordering upon the millennium. We are living in the great and last dispensation, in the which the God of Israel expects us, his servants, his sons and daughters, to perform the work which has been left to our charge. It is our duty to build

these temples. It is our duty to enter into them and redeem our dead. Joseph Smith is preaching to the spirits in prison; so are all the Elders who have died in the faith. There are millions of them there, and they must have the Gospel offered to them. Joseph Smith and others cannot baptize the spirits in water, it is not the law; but their posterity, their sons and daughters who are living in the last dispensation, are expected to go into these temples and there redeem their dead. This is a good work, and it is a great blessing for men and women to have this privilege. We have one of these temples finished, and we are doing a great work in that temple. A hundred and sixty-two thousand persons have been baptized for the dead, and nearly seventy thousand endowments have been given in that temple. We have only just begun this work. We want the Logan temple finished, as also the temple at Manti, that the people may go forth and redeem their dead. Our forefathers are looking to us to attend to this work. They are watching over us with great anxiety, and are desirous that we should finish these temples and attend to certain ordinances for them, so that in the morning of the resurrection they can come forth and enjoy the same blessings that we enjoy. We are living in the flesh and have the privilege of receiv– ing the Gospel of Christ for ourselves. Our forefathers had not this privilege; and as their posterity when we meet them in the spirit world we shall have the joy and satisfaction of knowing that we did our duty by them while here upon the earth. We occupy a position in this capacity towards them the same as we do to this generation. We occupy the position of Saviors upon Mount Zion.

There are a great many things I might mention that are of interest to the Latter-day Saints. We should humble ourselves before the Lord. We have been called to set our houses in order, that we should seek to obtain the Spirit of the Lord that it may enable us to magnify our callings in the Priesthood. We are under great responsibility. It won't pay to apostatize; "there is no money in it." Any man who receives this Priesthood and tastes of the word of God, and of the powers of the world to come—any man that turns away from these things, apostatizes, and turns away from the Church of God, shall not, in accordance with the revelations of the Lord to Joseph Smith, "have forgiveness of sins in this world nor in the world to come."

The Lord is laboring for his kingdom. In his hands he holds the destiny of this people and of this generation, and if we will do our duty he will sustain and uphold us and Zion will not be moved out of her place. I am anxious to see the Latter-day Saints rise up and magnify their calling. We (the Twelve Apostles, Seventies and others) are called to go forth to preach the Gospel to the Lamanites and organize them. I am glad of it. I have felt for a long time that we should turn our attention to them. They are the literal descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and the Lord is working in their midst. The vision of their minds is beginning to be opened, and they are to be taught the things of the kingdom of God. I have thought sometimes that they have more faith than the Latter-day Saints. I traveled among them for one year in Arizona and New Mexico. I visited those that dwell in the walled cities. They have some seven villages on the top of a mountain from 500 to 1,500 feet high. One thing struck me very forcibly while there. Although a good many of these people are superstitious, some of them sunworshippers and so forth, yet they seem to be impressed with the idea that there is going to be a famine. They have enough grain and dried squash laid up to last them for years, and they think the day is not far off when they will need that which they have stored up. Don't we believe that a famine will come? I know some of our sisters are laying up wheat, I hope the Relief Societies will continue to do so, and the brethren should help them. I believe that the Latter– day Saints ought to store up grain against a day of want. The Bible tells us that prior to the coming of the Son of Man there shall be wars and rumors of wars, famines, pestilence, and earthquakes. All these things will come to pass.

It is a good time with us. The Lord has blessed us. He has blessed the earth for our use; and we ought to dedicate our families, our fields, our crops, our herds, to God. We should pay our tithing according to the law of God. We should attend to all the duties required at our hands. We should not neglect our prayers. Men should seek to enjoy the spirit of God, and the fellowship of His Holy Spirit. We should seek to do all the good we can, so that we may feel satisfied when we get through.

I pray God to bless you with His Holy Spirit; I pray that he will give us power to fulfill our calling in the Priesthood, power to build up Zion, power to finish these temples in which we may redeem our dead. This is my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.