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Discourse

By Bishop Edwin D. Woolley, Bowey, Sunday Morning, May 17, 1857.

(Reported by J. V. Long.)

Brethren and sisters, it has been some time since I have stood forth to address this congregation, but I have been called upon this morning to say something. I do not feel quite so well when I see the stand so scantily filled as it is today. I like to see the stand full, and I can say that I never feel so well as when I see the congregation large.

Whether this is the experience of any other person I cannot say, but it always gives me satisfaction and makes my heart feel buoyant when I see myself surrounded with many Saints, then there is a spirit around me that is good, and that makes me feel well.

No matter who is called to speak, we want him to speak as the oracle of God. We want him to speak as one inspired, and that which will be edifying to the people. I am well satisfied that, there is a great deal of difference in the timidity of men who rise to speak, and then there is a want of faith on the part of the people in the absence of the Presidency, and the speakers being sensible of this makes an impression, but if men were to stand up as the mouth-piece of God, and the people be sensible of it, they would have much the same confidence at one time as another.

I know that some feel very diffident in speaking when the Authorities are present, but if they understood themselves they would have much more confidence when the Presidency are here than when they are gone because of the greater power that is here when they are present.

I have heard a great many say that they did not care about going to meeting when the Presidency were not here, for there would be some of the Elders there, preaching, they did not care about hearing them, consequently they did not put up their prayers as they did when br. Brigham or br Heber, or some one of the Twelve were addressing them, and hence it is that those who arise before you cannot speak with that satisfaction that they can when they have the faith and prayers of the Saints. This I contend is one great reason why we do not have more elating sermons from this stand than we do.

I cannot say that this will have the same effect upon me that it does upon others, for I am not considered very bashful. It does not matter a great deal to me whether the people are pleased or not; if those over me call me to speak, I say what is in my heart. If I am speaking where I preside I stand up and speak not caring a great deal whether the people like it or not. Of course I would like to edify them and to instruct them if I could.

It has pleased President Spencer to call upon me this morning to address you, and I would be pleased to edify you and instruct you in the principles of eternal life, for my hope and desire are to do good at all times, not only to this congregation but to all mankind.

I was reflecting while sitting upon the stand about the spirits that operate upon us, I feel that it is good for us to be left without those men who stand at the head, and who lead this kingdom, for then we are then called upon to exhort one another, and it shows us our inability and our weakness when we have not those props to support us, for then we have to stand alone, whereas if we continually have them with us to instruct us, to uphold and sustain us we do not know what we are; neither can we realize the blessings of the Lord that are conferred upon us. If we do not get hungry, we cannot appreciate food, and unless we have an appetite for that we have been deprived of we cannot appreciate our blessings. We must be void a little season of spiritual food in order to duly appreciate that which is conferred upon us, but when we have been deprived of a blessing for a short season we can then prize that blessing far better when it is restored to us again.

We can comprehend principles a great deal better when they have been taken away and then

bestowed again, than we could if we had them all the time. It is just so with the luxuries of life. Supposing you had those luxurious dishes set before you now, which you used to have in the States and other countries, and you had the power to enjoy that which you might then have enjoyed, could you not better appreciate them, now that you have been deprived of many of those comforts for a season? I think you could enjoy them a great deal better. They would taste much better than they did when they were so bountifully bestowed upon you, and when you had them all the time.

It is just so with an Elder who has been preaching the gospel. He has been full of the Holy Spirit, his mind filled with intelligence, and his thoughts and imaginations have been fruitful a long time, and he has been able to pour out intelligence upon the people; when he has been accustomed to do so for a length of time he becomes careless and does not know the source from whence these blessings spring.

Such a man begins to think that it is his own strength and power, and that he will always be able to feed the people and to confer upon them the same blessings, but after a while the Spirit of the Lord will be withdrawn, and his mind will be closed up, and his mouth will not utter the words which he desires to utter; the sentiments will not be vivid in his mind; then it is that he begins to understand where that knowledge and that intelligence have come from that he has been able to impart to the people, he discovers that is not within himself.

Then such a man will begin to feel his dependence on a superior power, he will call upon the Lord for that strength which he has previously enjoyed, for he will not be able to satisfy himself, and if he be unable to satisfy himself how shall he be able to satisfy a congregation.

It is very much so here, at least it feels a great deal so to me, for when we have those men around us who stand at the head of this kingdom they are our props, they support us, and by them we are made strong.

And if they had not a higher source to look to for their intelligence and comfort they would feel as languid as we do, they have to look to that which is above precisely the same as we do to those who are above us, and they draw their nourishment and support from that power.

When we look at these things as they exist we cannot but realize how they feel when they stand before the people to instruct them in the way of life, at any rate we can realize this if we have the pastoral charge, or watch care of any portion of the people. Then if we come and sit under their instructions we are made to feel some little of the importance of the positions they occupy, and we can realize that when that power and influence does not attend them that they are wont to enjoy, and especially when it is in consequence of their want of faith in the people, they must feel the burden of their labors and responsibilities.

Then we who preside over Wards and Quorums can appreciate this morning the feelings of our brethren who are ahead of us, of those who have no one to look to for instruction, for counsel and edification upon the earth.

I contend then that those who sit upon the stand now to look to the same source for aid and instruction, and those do who sit here in ordinary times. Do we ever think of the importance of this subject? Do we ever think of our duties in relation to those men? I believe that many of us do, but still I am of the opinion that there are a great many who do not, and this is a source of annoyance to many of us.

I know that we are a praying people, and we pray a heap, but there are a great many of our prayers that do not effect much. Now I can speak from experience.

I never found any kind of measure that would answer so well as that which would measure myself. I never knew how to measure anybody else but by my own feelings, and I consider that I have much the same feelings in me as most of the children of men, at any rate I know of no other method of judging only by the way that things operate upon me.

I have learned that we are sometimes troubled, and we scarcely know why and what about, and although we may strive and pray, yet we find it almost impossible to remove that feeling; we feel very

different at other times, there is a different atmosphere around us, our feelings are different, we enjoy a great deal more, and still we do not pray any more, we are not any more faithful than when suffering from those unpleasant sensations, and still we enjoy a great deal more.

Why is it, and what is the reason? Why cannot we feel the same when we are busily at work day by day? There are periods when we will be happy and comfortable in our minds for weeks and months, and then after this there will be clouds, and there will seem to be no possible means of eradicating those unpleasant feelings from our minds. Though we may pray and contend against the powers that trouble us with all our faith they still hang around us for days and in times that are past, I have known such to be the case for weeks.

I do not know that I can fully explain to you the reason of this, but I can give you my ideas and opinion upon it, and my opinion is this, that evil spirits sometimes come and make a violent attack upon us to endeavor to overcome us; They will gather around us, get into our houses, and be a source of great trouble to us, and we may try to cast them out, yet it will take a season to do this; it will be some time before we can get those evil spirits away from our persons and our habitations, and I believe that the experience of others will correspond with mine when I say that it requires all the power within our grasp, at such times to cast them out.

I view this as a trial of our faith. I have had some experience in this matter, and conclude that the time the enemy comes upon us is the time when we must exert a double influence, that he may not gain more power over us than is necessary to try and test our integrity.

There is something upon my mind that is rather singular, but still it has a bearing upon this subject; it is a matter that occurred no longer ago than last night, and I will mention it to illustrate this part of my subject.

I perceived there was an evil spirit about my habitation, but still it did not take possession of any member of my family, still I was sensible that an evil spirit was there, but I could not pray him out of the house before I went to bed, nor could I succeed after I had retired, and the consequence was he tormented me all night; I did not sleep good nor rest well, and there was not that peace of mind that there is at other times. I know that there was an influence there that was endeavoring to thwart me in my designs, and make inroads into my family.

Have any of you ever felt so? What is the reason that we sleep so much better sometimes than we do at others? It is because there is a spirit around that is contrary to our faith and doctrine, and that is opposed to that exaltation that we are aspiring to.

The devil is a good deal better acquainted with 'Mormonism' than a great many of this people are, and he knows what we are endeavoring to do and to obtain, hence he endeavors to throw everything in our way to oppose us he possibly can, and he is ever ready to thwart us in everything that will tend to exalt us in the kingdom of God.

We read of one man who had a legion of devils and when the Savior cast them out they went into a herd of swine. Devils are ever on the alert, they are right on hand, and only let the least vacuum be made and they are ready to enter in, and there is a great deal more trouble to get them out than it was to admit them.

Two weeks ago a circumstance occurred which I will here allude to. When the time for the sacrament came around a request was made by the Presiding Bishop, for no one to partake of the sacrament unless they could do it worthily, unless they had been washed clean from sin, unless they had obeyed the ordinances of the house of God and the authorities of His kingdom.

The request was not made without an idea existing that there were some who were not fully prepared to receive it. There was still something more in this request, it conveyed the idea that those who were not thus prepared were not in full fellowship and standing, and except people have the confidence of those who preside over them in their several organizations, they are not worthy of the sacrament.

I do not consider any individual worthy to partake of the sacrament that is not in full fellowship with every organization in this Church, if they have not their confidence, their approbation they ought to prepare to get it before they partake of the sacrament.

I find there are some, notwithstanding they are advised not to partake of it, that still persist and eat and drink. They know their own circumstances and feelings, and they ought to know better and do better, but they seem as if they must partake of the sacrament and they will persist in this unwise course notwithstanding they are cautioned to the contrary.

Why be so tenacious about partaking of an ordinance the most sacred, perhaps in the kingdom of God, when there is a doubt, a feeling a surmise that we cannot do it worthily, and thereby drink salvation to ourselves? Why should we urge and desire to continue partaking of that ordinance when in all probability we are eating and drinking damnation to ourselves?

I marvel and wonder at the shortsightedness of the Saints; we should all know our duty in relation to such matters. It does not argue that because we are not prepared to-day that we shall not be prepared in a few days, or the next time it is presented. How many of us have seen the time when we were not prepared to partake of the sacrament? And how many of us have seen the day that we were not prepared for baptism or for the laying on of hands for the reception of the Holy Ghost?

Have not many of us seen the day when we were not in a condition to be administered to by the servants of the Lord? I think we have. I have seen quite a number of times when I was not in a suitable condition and more especially in the early part of my connection with this Church, but if I am not prepared to-day, I consider that I should endeavor to prepare myself by living a better life and doing things more worthily before God and before my brethren.

This being the case then, do not be too urgent, do not contend about your worthiness; do not be so very anxious about doing that which those who preside over you do not approve of, but try to live a proper life, be careful, do not live too fast, but try to live the life of a Saint.

There is another thing I wish to mention. Many of us have commenced in this reformation, and it has not died away yet, and I hope it never will. There are a great many, who commenced very early, and I have known some of them who have got through with the race they have run so fast. They are like they were in one of the southern Settlements, they thanked God they had got through with the reformation.

Now I believe that it is not well to get too anxious, even about the reformation, nor about anything else. I am not aware that there are any here that are so very strong, but still there may be some.

I commenced to reform myself and to preach it to others, and I am preaching it yet, and I must confess that I have not made much progress, that I am not much farther advanced than I was last fall. I am very happy in preaching about it as well as in thinking about it, and after I get through preaching I can remember the joy and pleasure that I experienced while speaking of the necessity of reform, but still I have not got very far with it.

I know there are some who feel as though they ought to be perfect by this time; we have been five or six months endeavoring to reform and some consider that by this time we ought to have perfect control over ourselves, and be passive in the hands of those who preside over us; they consider that we never ought to get angry, nor feel annoyed at anything; but supposing we cannot do this, that our fallen nature is such that we cannot do it, shall we feel that we are going ruin because every imperfection has not been rooted out? I do not feel so, neither do I feel at all discouraged.

I know that a great many feel cast down because of the imperfections which they feel in themselves. I expect to be reforming for these next twenty years, and at the expiration of that time I do not expect to be perfect.

The work of reform has scarcely commenced to do what it is designed to do, which is to make us a people prepared for the coming of the Son of Man. But we are better, we are considerably improved, and that is consoling and happifying.

I presume that as we advance towards perfection the finer qualities or more minute evils will begin to make their appearance and then we shall appear to our more enlightened vision just about as full of errors as we seemed to be before.

We will be assailed on every side, and those very sins that we fell into before, for we are not doubly guarded, will be presented to us gain, and we shall be tempted and overcome.

There has been a good deal of confessing since the commencement of the reformation; but I believe there has not been that genuine contrition and forsaking of evil which there should have been.

Why do I say so? Because I have evidence that such is the case. I tell you when an individual confesses a sin, and does it with full purpose of heart there will something grow from it and that restitution will be made which the law of God requires, but there are a great many people who have professed to take hold of this reformation that have not done this. They will confess their sins, but is there the first one who will make restitution? Yes, there is the first one, and I will also add there are a good many, but I do not believe that one half of those who confessed their evils and their sins, acknowledged they have wronged their brother and their sister have come forward like sincere individuals and made full restitution.

The restoration touches their pockets or their cattle, or perhaps their wheat bins and hence they do not do it. They confess it is true, but they do not fulfill the requirements of the law, then will that confession do them any good? I do not suppose it will, but the devil will gain the advantage, and they will find that there will be two devils where there were but one before; so much for that kind of reformation.

We shall find, however, that when this reformation works thoroughly it will purge out many more from us. I heard it remarked that the battle ax has been used too strongly, and that many have had their feelings wounded in consequence.

Those who have gone away have gone, I believe, because they could not bear the scrutinizing hand and eye of God. The preaching never hit nor hurt any that were good. You might talk about stealing, swearing, whoring and lying; did that injure individuals that were not guilty? No it did not touch them. Men might talk about these things every week, and if I were not guilty their remarks would not hit me, neither would they make me apostatize, leave the country or deny the faith, nor will any sound brother or sister. It is only those that are guilty that the chastisement will affect.

I am aware that it is good for us to feel for and sympathize with the afflicted and sorrowful, but we have to deal out all kinds of food, for we have minds, appetites and tastes of every description to deal with, but there are no two alike, neither are we who preach exactly alike. There are those who can eat mild food all the time, but the man who is hearty, such as work in the kanyons, must have stronger, more substantial food, or he cannot live, for he has got such a strong stomach that unless he has something pretty substantial he does not know that he has had anything at all.

Well, I am one of those who give the strong meat, and sometimes I give it in pretty large doses; but there are others who administer mild food and in small portions. Well, I suppose that is all right; every kind of workmen is required.

I want to see us learn something by the past, and endeavor to judge what the future will be by what the past has been, therefore I say let us look after ourselves, and endeavor to learn to be more wise in our reflections, and wherein we have seen our errors to put a double guard upon ourselves, that we may approximate unto perfection.

When I was young in this cause I was more liable than I am now to be troubled about many things. I have heard Elders say they thought they could convert everybody, and that all the people would believe them, but there is not an Elder who has preached any but who knows that is not so. If we

tell the people the truth plainly, simply, kindly and affectionately, and lay it open to their understanding and they won't hear it, let them go. They will then say, he is not troubled about us, we must look after ourselves or else no one will care anything about us, and thus your testimony will trouble them.

'Well,' ways one, 'if I had heard such preaching twenty years ago I could not have endured it. I would ask, could any of us have stood it? Could any of us, twenty years ago, have believed many things that we now believe? No, we could not, but is that any reason that we should not believe them now?

If Joseph had revealed in 1830 all that is now revealed, the people could not have received it, but things have been gradually developed to the mind, and as the church grows and becomes prepared for more truth so also does the world and they seem prepared, almost as much so as the Saints.

There is not half as much here to try us as there was at Winter Quarters, for it was said there that there would be none allowed to come to the valleys but those who would live faithful to their religion and their God.

Brethren and Sisters, your intention is to live the lives of Saints, and to stand firm and fast to your integrity, and I design doing all that I can to carry out that which I am told to do by those who have the right to command me.

I will offer a few remarks upon the Carrying Company.

I consider this to be a great thing, and one of the greatest plans that has come out for the gathering of the Saints from foreign countries. By this means they will come here and strengthen Zion, fill up our scattered settlements and we shall then feel that we have strength in ourselves.

How are we going to do this? Just as we do everything else, that is by union, by a concentration of all our forces. If we are wanted to go, let us be on hand, if horses, harness or flour are wanted let us hand them out, that we may establish those stations as God has designed them.

I will say to the people who are afraid they are going to suffer from want that if they will turn in their surplus mean and cease fearing they will never want, and in fact it will be with them as it was with a great many here last season, they suffered more from anticipated want than from want itself.

We are afraid we are going to want that mule, that ox, Some suffer in their feelings and they are almost poverty stricken if you ask them for an animal, when they have lots of them running on the prairie. Those animals that people are using we do not expect them to give up, but it is those that are not wanted for one year to come, and if you will turn them out I will promise you that all the time you are expecting to be poor you will be rich. You shall have four yoke of oxen for every one you shall put, and you shall have four mules and four horses for everyone you put into that company.

This is what I call having confidence in God, confidence in your brethren, confidence in those that manage the financial affairs of the Church, and let us be liberal to them and let us go to work with all our might to aid this Company.

I see in the paper this week that Judge Smith has found out where the bourue is where so many travelers go to and never return.

If you will turn out the animals, that bourue will have to be taken to some other place; theretofore it has been between this and the Missouri river, but if the Carrying company gets into active operation it will have to be removed to some other part.

As for building houses, making roads and establishing companies for the Lord, we do not in reality do any such thing, for he can travel without them; he is independent of us; what we do is for ourselves.

We gather out the honest in heart, and in that we will glorify God, and that is as much as we can do for him; then let us serve God, live for one another, and for the up building of his kingdom and then I will risk all the rest, for I know we shall secure a place in the kingdom of God by pursuing this course.

May the Lord help us to serve ourselves that thereby we may serve him, is my prayer—Amen.

