

ELDER RUDGER CLAWSON.

A Lesson to be Drawn from the Career of King Saul—The Obligation of Obedience to God—The Law of Tithing.

Brethren and sisters: In taking up the Bible this morning, I was very much impressed with certain words that I read therein which touched upon the principle of obedience. President Snow this morning has dwelt somewhat upon this principle. I have many times thought and still think it is one of the cardinal principles of the Gospel. We read in the 9th chapter of I Samuel that God designed to make a king over Israel. He chose a young man by the name of Saul, the son of Kish, a Benjaminite. It is said that he was a choice young man, and there was not among the Children of Israel a goodlier person than he. From his shoulders and upward he was higher than any of the people. It seems that the father of Saul had lost his mules, and he sent his son Saul in search of them. As he went forth he met the Prophet Samuel, who had been made acquainted with the fact that God had selected this young man to be king over Israel. Samuel called him in and anointed him to be king. But let me tell you, brethren and sisters, that it was not sufficient that this young man should be a choice young man, of fine appearance and taller by head and shoulders than any others in the House of Israel, but in order that he might be the king and a servant of God, a change must come over him. Man can serve man by the spirit of man, but in order to be a servant of God we must have the spirit of God. So it proved to be in this instance, for Samuel instructed Saul that in returning to his parents he would come up with a company of prophets, and that he should join the prophets, and that the spirit of the Lord would come upon him. Samuel further said to him:

"And thou shalt prophecy with them, and shall be turned into another man."

"7. And let it be, when these signs are come unto thee, that thou do as occasion serve thee, for God is with thee."

"8. And thou shalt go down before me to Gilgal; and behold, I will come down unto thee, to offer burnt offerings, and to sacrifice sacrifices of peace offerings; seven days shalt thou tarry, till I come to thee, and shew thee what thou shalt do."

Now mark what follows:

"And it was so that when he turned his back to go from Samuel, God gave him another heart; and all those signs came to pass that day."

We can see, brethren and sisters, how this man was favored of God, not only in being called to be king and in presiding over something like three hundred thousand people (for they were numbered in those days, and that was said to be the number) but also that he should receive of the Lord another heart and be changed into a new man. Notwithstanding this, however, there was a flaw in the character of Saul that proved in the end his ruin.

You will remember that Saul was instructed to go down to Gilgal and to remain there seven days, when the prophet would meet him there, and together they should offer burnt offerings and a sacrifice to the Lord, and upon that occasion also the prophet was to tell him what the Lord required. Saul went down to the place appointed, and he waited there for the prophet, but the prophet did not come exactly as the king expected. He may possibly have delayed his coming. At any rate, the king became nervous, for there was some disturbance among the people and the Philistines were about to come against them in battle. So, instead of waiting for the prophet, Saul undertook, of his own authority, to offer up burnt offering and sacrifice, contrary to the commandment of the Lord. When Samuel came down he said to Saul:

"What hast thou done? And Saul said, because I saw that the people were scattered from me, and that thou comest not within the days appointed, and that the Philistines gathered themselves together at Michmash;

"12. Therefore said I, the Philistines will come down now upon me to Gilgal, and I have not made supplication unto the Lord; I forced myself, therefore, and offered a burnt offering."

"13. And Samuel said to Saul, thou hast done foolishly; thou hast not kept the commandment of the Lord thy God, which he commanded thee; for now would the Lord have established thy kingdom upon Israel forever."

"14. But now thy kingdom shall not continue; the Lord hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the Lord hath commanded him to be captain over his people, because thou hast not kept that which the Lord commanded thee."

Now to Saul it may have appeared a

very simple matter that he should not wait the coming of the prophet. Why could not he, a king, make offering and supplication to the Lord? Why should he wait for the coming of Samuel? Because it was the will and commandment of the Lord, and he did not obey it. In this we have an evidence of the goodness of God in one way and of his strictness in another way. The king was assured by the prophet that if he had obeyed the commandment of God, his kingdom would have been established over Israel forever; but that having departed therefrom, his kingdom should not continue. We have another illustration in the life of Saul of the great importance of being obedient to the commandment of the Lord. When the Children of Israel came to the promised land from Egypt, under the guidance of the Almighty, on one occasion, when they were weary and footsore, the people of the Amalikites came out against them, and harassed them upon the right hand and upon the left and slew their women and their children and their tender ones.

Because of this piece of treachery and unfriendliness to a people who had never injured them, the Lord determined that they should be destroyed, and he told the prophet to write it down in a book of remembrance, that when the people were established in the promised land and became strong they should go against the Amalikites and carry out the commandment of the Lord with respect to that people. Saul was selected by the prophet to perform this duty. He was told to gather together the hosts of Israel and to give battle to the Amalikites. He was commanded to destroy them from the face of the earth, because they had fought against Israel in the day of their weakness and trouble. Saul gathered the hosts of Israel and went against them, and destroyed them. But it is said in the scriptures that Saul and the people spared Agag the king and the best of the sheep and of the oxen and of the fatlings and all that was good, but everything that was vile they destroyed utterly. Samuel came to Saul, and Saul said unto him:

"Yea, I have obeyed the voice of the Lord, and have gone the way which the Lord sent me, and have brought Agag

the king, and have utterly destroyed the Amalikites.

"21. But the People took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the chief of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice unto the Lord thy God in Gilgal.

"22. And Samuel said, hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offering and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.

"23. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry."

The Lord did not say to Saul that there was anything wrong in burnt offering and sacrifice, but he said that obedience was better than sacrifice.

And later on Samuel said unto Saul, "I will not return with thee; for thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord hath rejected thee from being king over Israel."

In another place it is said that the Lord repented that he made Saul king over Israel, because he had forsaken him and failed to keep his commandments.

It seems to me, brethren and sisters, that we can draw a lesson of wisdom from this story of the king of Israel. We can see that when the Lord gives a commandment to the children of men He requires the strictest obedience to that command. When the Lord speaks he means something. It is not as the conversation of one man with another, when we do not weigh our words and think not of the result thereof, but when the Lord delivers a commandment to his people it is binding upon them. We have the commandments of the Lord in the Bible, in the Book of Doctrine and Covenants, in the Book of Mormon and in other Church works, wherein is set forth the mind and will of the Lord unto His people. Furthermore, we have the living oracles; we have the prophet of God to stand forth in the midst of Israel and deliver unto us the mind and will of God.

The Lord has said in these last days that he will not be mocked, and that we cannot disregard or treat lightly his words. We know that many troubles and evils have come upon the people from time to time because of the disregard of the word of the Lord. We have been told, publicly, by the President of the Church that if the Latter-

day Saints had heeded strictly the word of the Lord delivered to them through the Prophet Joseph Smith, they would now have been established in those eastern lands from which they were driven, and would be today the wealthiest community upon the earth. The Lord would have watched over and delivered them out of the hands of their enemies. It does not follow either that if they had been obedient to the command of God they would not have been brought to this land. I believe they would have been directed to this favored spot, and also established here and blessed abundantly. No doubt some of the evils under which we are struggling at the present time are due in a measure to our disobedience, for we have been instructed that Zion might have been redeemed long ago if the Saints had been faithful.

We have strayed in a measure from the commandments of the Lord. Some of our people have put private interpretations upon the laws of God. Take the law of tithing for instance. It is very simple and easy to be understood. Very few words are employed by the Lord to set this law before his people. He says that He requires of his Saints one-tenth of their interest annually. It seems to me that every man, woman and child could easily determine what their interest is annually. It is not a command of man; it is a command of our Heavenly Father. I have no right to put a private interpretation upon it, or to vary from it, or to say that a man is entitled to figure out this that and the other until he has nothing to pay tithing on, and in some cases until the Lord himself is brought in debt to the individual. I take the law as it comes to us in the Book of Doctrine and Covenants. I have had no trouble in determining just what my tithing is. I have had no trouble in paying my tithing when I have paid it as I went along. The only trouble I ever experienced was when I left it until the end of the year, and when I figured it up it was a source of anxiety to me as to whether I had paid my tithing or not. But if we pay it as we go along, it is a simple matter, and the probabilities are that we will be honest in it with the Lord. It is so with all of the commandments of God.

There is a blessing predicated upon the observance of every commandment. We cannot ignore it or depart from it or change it to suit our own notions and then expect to obtain the blessings. The Lord does His part, we must do ours. So I have rejoiced in contemplating this great and glorious principle of obedience. It has strengthened my faith. It has caused me to make new resolves. I have come to understand a little more than I understood last week or last month, the strictness of the Lord and how careful He is that his servants and people should obey Him, and what is meant when it is said that the Lord would choose a man after his own heart. It meant, I think, that He would choose a man who would obey his commandments. We know that the Savior was a man after the Lord's own heart. We are told that if we would have salvation we must follow the example of the Savior, and the great distinguishing quality of the Savior was his obedience. He came not to do His own will, but the will of the Father in all things. We too should feel that we are not here to do our own will, but the will of the Father. With respect to tithing? Yes. With respect to the Word of Wisdom? Yes. With respect to faith, repentance, baptism and the laying on of hands? Yes. With respect to all the great commandments which the Lord has delivered unto us? Yes. And not one more than another.

We do not single out the principle of tithing and say it is the greatest commandment God has given. We simply say, it is a commandment of God and we should obey it. We do not say that a man will be saved and exalted simply because he obeys the law of tithing. We must live by every word that proceedeth forth out of the mouth of the Lord, and one commandment is as sacred as another. They are all needful for the welfare of the Church and for the accomplishment of the purposes of God. We cannot pick and choose and say we will keep this commandment because it is pleasant to us and we will slight another because it is not agreeable.

I pray that we may be greatly blessed in our conference; that the spirit of the Lord may rest down mightily upon the President of the Church and upon the

brethren who shall be called to address the people, that we may be edified and strengthened, encouraged and renewed in our faith. I ask it in the name of Jesus. Amen.

ELDER ABRAHAM O. WOODRUFF.

Advantages of Colonization and Manual Labor.

Brethren and sisters, in standing before you this morning I assure you I feel very dependent upon the spirit of the Lord to give me utterance. Without that spirit I feel that it would be unprofitable for me and my brethren to occupy the short time allotted to us in conference, where there is so much to be spoken of and so much business to be transacted pertaining to this great people. Therefore I pray that the Lord may bring to my memory some things that I have had upon my mind, and which I desire to speak a few words upon. I will read a portion of the 58th section of the Book of Doctrine and Covenants:

"26. For behold, it is not meet that I should command in all things, for he that is compelled in all things, the same is a slothful and not a wise servant; wherefore he receiveth no reward.

"27. Verily I say, men should be anxiously engaged in a good cause, and do many things of their own free will, and bring to pass much righteousness;

"28. For the power is in them, wherein they are agents unto themselves. And inasmuch as men do good they shall in nowise lose their reward.

"29. But he that doeth not anything until he is commanded, and receiveth a commandment with doubtful heart, and keepeth it with slothfulness, the same is damned."

These are the words of the Lord unto this people through the Prophet Joseph Smith, and they are applicable to us at this time. As a people, I believe that when the prophet of God stands before us and says "thus saith the Lord," we all feel in our hearts that he is speaking the mind and will of God. However united we may be in this respect and in other duties that devolve upon us, we are not as united as we ought to be.

I hold that the Latter-day Saint who goes out from the crowded cities, takes up a portion of mother earth, and seeks to establish a home upon that piece of ground, is just as much engaged in the building up of Zion and in the work

of the Lord as they who go out into the world to preach the Gospel of the Lord Jesus. For our spiritual salvation would not amount to very much if it were not coupled with our temporal salvation. We have the battle of life to contend with, as well as the battle for salvation in the world to come. I feel that there is not altogether the united effort among the people of the Lord that there ought to be in our colonization matters. I deprecate the tendency that appears to be increasing among the young Latter-day Saints to rather earn a livelihood in an easy manner, by the use of the pen at the bookkeeper's desk, or the use of the scissors behind the dry goods counter, than to go out and assist in the great colonization that devolves upon this people. I do not feel that it is the duty of the Latter-day Saints to seek their own ease. The man who chooses a life of ease rather than one which will bring himself and his muscle in conflict with the sterility of the soil, does not develop within his heart the love of God as much as does the pioneer who goes forth with a desire to build up Zion materially. It is true, we are not all fitted for the same avocations in life, but I have noted in traveling among the people who are the colonizers of today that in many instances their sons and daughters have a desire to make an easy living. They do not desire to stay on the farm and to labor as their fathers and mothers have done. They lose sight of the fact that brains can be used in the colonization of new countries and in the cultivation of the soil as well as in callings to be found in the city. It is true, that in any avocation in life there is always room at the top; but it is not easy for young men and women to come in from the country and make a good living in the cities. Very often we find them, after they have labored five or ten years, without a home and without anything laid up for their future welfare. They may have had a pretty easy time of it; they may have been able to take advantage of the theatres, the pleasure resorts, etc., but they have not made any material advancement. It is my firm belief that if this spirit prevails among the young Latter-day Saints, it will only be a matter of a generation or two until our