

after they have been there two or three months studying the gospel—without a feeling of boasting at all, I would not be afraid to have them meet any of the ministers of religion. Our cause is not suffering; the Lord does bless them; they are in the school of the Lord, not in 'the school of man, and they are being taught by the Lord' in the school of the prophets, as it were, and the Lord is with them and does bless them; the work is progressing as satisfactorily as we could expect.

I am glad to note a wonderful improvement in the sentiment prevailing among mankind compared with twenty years ago when I was upon my former mission. It seems the little leaven is gradually leavening the lump.

The brethren have spoken of amusements in our Church. We believe, of course, in all rightful, legitimate, and helpful amusements. They are necessary for our well-being and good. It was only a few years ago when certain religious denominations looked upon the thought of dancing and such other things with horror. I say the little leaven is beginning to leaven the lump: the staid old Methodists in a national or international assembly of their representatives have decided to introduce dancing among their young people as a means of drawing them into and holding them in the church. I do not mention this to encourage dancing in our midst, in fact I think some of it needs curtailing, but it is all right when conducted under the proper influence and spirit.

My heart is full of good cheer and good wishes for the Latter-day Saints, and I know that the Spirit of the Lord is in our overflow meeting today. We can all find consolation in the fact that when the vessel is filled with milk, the cream comes to the top, and so it is the cream that overflows; and we are in the overflow meeting. The Spirit of the Lord is here, and the brethren who have preceded me have spoken under the inspiration of the Lord, and if we each do our duty, we will be just as well fed with the bread of life as if we were in the Tabernacle with the rest of our brethren and sisters.

Let us seek for the Spirit of the Lord, that the spirit of malice and criticism may not get hold of us, that it may not crowd out the good things from our lives that we are entitled to.

May the Lord bless you, that his peace and blessings may continue to be with and upon these good men who lead us, that we may uphold and sustain them by our faith and prayers and good works. In doing this, we are honoring our Father in heaven and helping each other. May the Lord help us to this end, I earnestly ask, in Jesus' name. Amen.

ELDER JOSEPH FIELDING SMITH

I know we have all been very much interested in the remarks of the brethren who have spoken.

AN IMPORTANT COMMANDMENT ON PRAYER.

I desire to begin the remarks that I shall make, where Bishop Smith left off, in his reading of Sec. 68 of the Doctrine and Covenants:

And a commandment I give unto them (that is, unto the parents in Zion), that he that observeth not his prayers before the Lord in the season thereof, let him be had in remembrance before the judge of my people.

I do not suppose that we have read that verse in this section any too much, and I wonder sometimes if we realize how important this command really is. No man can retain the Spirit of the Lord, unless he prays. No man can have the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, unless in his heart is found this spirit of prayer. We are commanded in the scriptures to seek the Lord, to praise his holy name, to labor diligently, that his spirit may abide with us. The disciples came to the Master, and said unto him, "Lord, teach us to pray." And he did so, and there are some good people in the world, who, because the Lord gave that prayer, feel that on all occasions and at all times when they pray, they should use that prayer and nothing else. But that prayer was given only to teach, and not with the idea that no other words should be used, no other thoughts should be expressed, but to impress upon the disciples that they should make their prayers concise and to the point, and ask for those things which they most desired in righteousness, at all times thanking the Lord for his mercies and goodness unto them.

Now I want to dwell upon this passage for a moment or two. It states here that "he that observes not his prayers before the Lord in the season thereof" is to be had in remembrance. What is the season of prayer?

ALL SEASONS ARE FOR PRAYER.

Some of us may have the idea that the season of prayer is when we arise in the morning, and when we are about to retire at night when our work is done, and that there is no other season for prayer. But I say unto you, and I have good backing for it, that the season for prayer is always. Let me read it to you. You know I like to prove what I say; I like to bring witnesses to bear on that which I express, and I do not ask the people to accept that which I say unless it is in harmony, absolutely, with what the Lord has said either directly or through his prophets. We read in the Book of Mormon the word of Alma to the poor Zoramites who had departed from the truth, and having been cast out of their synagogues, because they were poor, and feeling that they could only pray one at a time as they ascended in the rameumptom, as it is called, they knew not what to do. Alma taught them as follows:

Yea, cry unto him for mercy, for he is mighty to save; yea, humble yourselves and continue in prayer unto him; cry unto him when ye are in

your fields, yea, over all your flocks; cry unto him in your houses, yea, over all your household, both morning, mid-day, and evening; yea, cry unto him against the power of your enemies; yea, cry unto him against the devil, who is an enemy to all righteousness. Cry unto him over the crops of your fields, that ye may prosper in them; cry over the flocks of your fields, that they may increase. But this is not all; ye must pour out your souls in your closets and your secret places and in your wilderness; yea, and when you do not cry unto the Lord, let your hearts be full, drawn out in prayer unto him continually for your welfare, and also for the welfare of those who are around you. And now, behold, my beloved brethren, I say unto you, do not suppose this is all, for after ye have done all these things, if ye turn away the needy and the naked, and visit not the sick and afflicted, and impart of your substance, if ye have, to those who stand in need; I say unto you, if ye do not anything of these things, behold, your prayer is vain and availeth you nothing, and ye are as hypocrites who deny the faith.

I think that is very excellent doctrine, and I read it to impress upon your minds the season of prayer. The season of prayer is in the morning before the family separates. A good time for prayer is when you assemble at the table before you partake of the morning meal, and let the members of the family take turn in the praying. That is the season of prayer. The season of prayer for the merchant is in the morning when he goes to his place of business and before he begins his day's work, over his merchandise. The time of prayer for the shepherd, is when he is out with his flocks watching over them. The time for the farmer to pray is when he goes with his plow into the field, when he goes to sow his grain, and when he goes to gather his harvest. And if a man will pray as he is commanded to do in this passage of scripture which I have read, then he more than likely will be found in all things righteously keeping the commandments of the Lord. He will not be found scheming to take advantage of his neighbor in some trade or bargain, but in all things dealing justly, because he has prayed in the morning and has in his heart the spirit of prayer throughout the day, that the Lord will bless him in the increase of his goods, of his fields, of his flocks, or whatever it may be he is engaged in. So that is the season of prayer.

WHO DOES NOT PRAY IS TO BE HELD IN REMEMBRANCE BEFORE THE JUDGE

But there is something more in this. It says, that the person in Zion or any of her stakes, for that is the way it reads further up in this revelation, who does not pray before the Lord in the season thereof, is to be held in remembrance before the judge of the people.

THE TEACHERS TO SEE THAT THE PEOPLE PRAY.

Now who is the judge of the people? It is your bishop. It is the duty of the teachers who come into your home to teach you and see that you pray. If you are not a praying man or a praying woman, then they have the right according to the law to take that message to the bishop of the ward, and tell him that you are not praying in your

homes, and he can hold you in remembrance, and if you refuse to pray when you are taught; if you will not hearken to the counsels of the teachers or of the common judge, then he has the right according to the law to take action against you for your fellowship in the Church, if he deems it wise. That is within his rights. The Lord has said it, and he said it because he wanted to impress upon our minds the importance of prayer.

It would be a wonderful thing, of course, if all our brethren holding the lesser Priesthood would magnify their callings, and if the bishops in the wards would see that they do, and give them some labor to perform. That ought to be done.

What is the duty of the teacher? As we read here in section 20 of the Doctrine and Covenants, which was given the day the Church was organized, it is the duty of the teacher to visit the homes of the people, to teach them, to see that there is no iniquity in the Church; that there is no fault-finding one with another, no backbiting, no false speaking one against another, and, more than that, to see that the members of the Church perform their duty. That great responsibility rests upon the teacher. He is to see that the members pray, that they fast upon the fast day, that they are paying their tithing in the season thereof, that they are attending their fast meeting in the ward, week by week, and all these things are required of the teacher as he visits in the homes of the people. And if the teacher does not see to these things; then the sin lieth at his door.

DUTIES OF THE PRIESTS.

What are the duties of the priest? The duty of the priest is to preach, teach, expound, exhort, baptize, and administer the sacrament. He is to visit the house of each member and exhort all to pray, vocally and in secret, and attend to all family duties. That is the duty of the priest.

Now the good bishops in the wards should see that their priests go into the homes of the people, and do this very thing, teaching the members in the spirit of prayer. When they find an individual member of the Church who fails in any one of these particulars, it is the right of these teachers or priests to make the report to the bishop, the common judge. However, they are to labor diligently, and with long suffering, in faith and humility, with these members who do not see the necessity of keeping the commandments of the Lord, and after they have done all in their power, and can do nothing further to bring the non-praying members to repentance, the common judge may cite them before him, and he has the right to take action against them for their fellowship. Of course, our duty is to save souls. We must not be hasty in casting any out. So, I say, after the teachers or the priests have done all that can be done, then the drastic measures may be meted out.

ALL AMUSEMENTS SHOULD BE OPENED BY PRAYER.

Another scripture, I will read from II Nephi 32, wherein it says:

And now, my beloved brethren, I perceive that ye ponder still in your hearts, and it grieveth me that I must speak concerning this thing. For if ye would hearken unto the spirit which teacheth a man to pray, ye would know that ye must pray; for the evil spirit teacheth not a man to pray, but teacheth him that he must not pray. But behold, I say unto you, that ye must pray always, and not faint; that ye must not perform any thing unto the Lord, save in the first place ye shall pray unto the Father in the name of Christ, that he will consecrate the performance unto thee, that thy performance may be for the welfare of thy soul.

Have we any right as Latter-day Saints who profess to keep the commandments of the Lord, to open our dances without prayer, or other amusements, and to close them in improper hours and without prayer? Have we that right, professing to be Latter-day Saints, keeping the commandments of the Lord? I say unto you, No. It makes no difference whether it is pleasure, whether it is our daily labor, whether it is the service of the Lord in teaching the gospel and trying to save mankind. Whatever it may be, that thing should be consecrated by prayer, and every performance, for the welfare of our souls.

CONSEQUENCES OF FAILURE TO PRAY.

Now what were the consequences of not praying, as they are recorded in this book regarding the Nephite people? Let me tell you. In the very same chapter, and in the verse preceding where I read, Nephi says this:

Behold, this is the doctrine of Christ, and there will be no more doctrine given until after he shall manifest himself unto you in the flesh. When he shall manifest himself unto you in the flesh, the things which he shall say unto you ye shall observe to do. And now I, Nephi, cannot say more.

Why not? Because the people had refused to pray. Because they had hardened their hearts, even in his day. Therefore the Lord closed his mouth, and said, there shall be no more doctrine till Christ comes, so far as you are concerned, and I cannot say more, because the Lord won't permit it.

"The spirit stoppeth mine utterance, and I am left to mourn because of the unbelief and the ignorance and the stiffneckedness of men, for they will not search knowledge nor understand great knowledge when it is given unto them in plainness, even as plain as word can be." Now that applies in our day. We have members of the Church to whom this ought to be read. They are not here; they do not come to conference. But men who have hardened their hearts, men who will not pray, men who will not search knowledge, who are not acquainted

with the revelations of God as they have been made known unto us in these books and given unto us in this dispensation, notwithstanding the fact that the knowledge which has been given unto us is plain and easily to be understood. They shut their hearts against it, and refuse to search and to find that which the Lord has declared, which is for their eternal salvation and the salvation of all the world. Naturally such people are in darkness. We cannot afford to do that.

THE DOCTRINE AND COVENANTS IS FOR ALL THE WORLD.

The Lord has given so many revelations, in our own day. We have this Doctrine and Covenants full of them, all pertaining unto the Latter-day Saints and to the world. For this is not our book alone. This Doctrine and Covenants is my book and your book; but more than that, it belongs to all the world, to the Catholics, to the Presbyterians, to the Methodists, to the infidel, to the non-believer. It is his book if he will accept it, if he will receive it. The Lord has given it unto the world for their salvation. If you do not believe it, you read the first section in this book, the preface, and you will find that the Lord has sent this book and the things which it contains unto the people afar off, on the islands of the sea, in foreign lands, and his voice is unto all people, that all may hear. And so I say it belongs to all the world, not only to the Latter-day Saints, and they will be judged by it, and you will be judged by it. We will all be judged by it, by the things which this book contains and by the things which the other books contain which are holy scripture, which the Lord has given unto us; and if we fail to comprehend these things, if we will not search, if we will not study, if we will not take hold on the things which the Lord has revealed unto us, then his condemnation shall rest upon us, and we shall be removed from his presence and from his kingdom. And I say that in all soberness, because it is true.

Now there is no time to say more. I have said all, perhaps, I should; but still there is a great deal more that could be said.

Now, brethren and sisters, let us go home feeling a determination in our hearts to serve the Lord. Remember that we are living in a critical period of the world's history. Great events are before us. The Lord in his mercy, and with justice and judgment, is going to cut short his work in righteousness. The decrees have gone forth, and it behooves us as members of the Church to be united and to serve him and keep all his commandments. This I pray we will do, in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

The choir sang the anthem: "Send out the Light."
Benediction was pronounced by Elder Joseph A. West.