

ELDER JOSEPH FIELDING SMITH

I trust that I may be led by the Spirit of the Lord to say something this afternoon that will be profitable.

A CRITICAL TIME

One of our speakers yesterday said that we were living in a very critical time. For many years we have been living in peace and comparative prosperity, we have had no contentions with our neighbors; on the surface at least their feelings have been kindly, and apparently everything has been in the nature of peace and prosperity. But these are the times when Latter-day Saints should take heed concerning the revelations of the Lord and desire to keep his commandments with full purpose of heart, more perhaps than at any other time.

The Lord said in a revelation given in the early days of the Church:

“And I now give unto you a commandment to beware concerning yourselves, to give diligent heed to the words of eternal life.

“For ye shall live by every word that proceedeth forth from the mouth of God.”

INGRATITUDE IN TIMES OF PROSPERITY

In the days of our prosperity, when we are at peace, when we have the luxuries as well as the necessities of life, there may be a tendency on our part to forget the Lord. This seems to be a failing of humanity. We are taught this lesson all down through the ages so far as the people of the Lord are concerned, as we read of them in the Holy Scriptures. In Palestine as well as upon this continent, when the people were prospered they forgot the Lord. They turned from him and felt self-sufficient rather than to feel the spirit of humility and to put faith in the Lord, and to thank him for his blessings.

The crime of ingratitude is one of the most prevalent and I might say at the same time one of the greatest with which mankind is afflicted. The more the Lord blesses us the less we love him. That is the way men show their gratitude unto the Lord for his mercies and his blessings towards them.

THE WORDS OF THE BOOK OF MORMON

I recommend to you, I shall not take time to refer further to it, the words of King Benjamin to his people as he gathered them around him, and taught them to keep the commandments of the Lord. You will find these things recorded in the first chapters of the book of Mosiah in the Book of Mormon.

I want to read, because I think these words are better than any that I might give you, from the 12th chapter of the Book of Helaman. These words, it would appear, were written by Mormon after recording some of the conflicts between the Nephites and the Lamanites and

the destruction which came upon the people because they had forsaken the Lord:

"And thus we can behold how false, and also the unsteadiness of the hearts of the children of men; yea, we can see that the Lord in his great infinite goodness doth bless and prosper those who put their trust in him.

"Yea, and we may see at the very time when he doth prosper his people, yea, in the increase of their fields, their flocks and their herds, and in gold, and in silver, and in all manner of precious things of every kind and art; sparing their lives and delivering them out of the hands of their enemies; softening the hearts of their enemies that they should not declare war against them; yea, and in fine, doing all things for the welfare and happiness of his people; yea, then is the time that they do harden their hearts, and do forget the Lord their God, and do trample under their feet the Holy One—yea, and this because of their ease, and their exceedingly great prosperity.

"And thus we see that except the Lord doth chasten his people with many afflictions, yea, except he doth visit them with death and with terror, and with famine and with all manner of pestilence, they will not remember him.

"O, how foolish, and how vain, and how evil, and devilish, and how quick to do iniquity, and how slow to do good, are the children of men; yea, how quick to hearken unto the words of the evil one, and to set their hearts upon the vain things of the world!

"Yea, how quick to be lifted up in pride; yea, how quick to boast, and do all manner of that which is iniquity; and how slow are they to remember the Lord their God, and to give ear unto his counsels, yea, how slow to walk in wisdom's paths!

"Behold, they do not desire that the Lord their God, who hath created them, should rule and reign over them; notwithstanding his great goodness and his mercy towards them, they do set at naught his counsels, and they will not that he should be their guide.

"O, how great is the nothingness of the children of men; yea, even they are less than the dust of the earth.

"For behold, the dust of the earth moveth hither and thither, to the dividing asunder, at the command of our great and everlasting God."

ALL THINGS OBEDIENT EXCEPT MAN

Now this prophet did not mean to say that the Lord has greater concern for and loves the dust of the earth more than he does his children. He did not mean to say that we, the children of the Lord, in his sight are considered less than the dust of the earth. The point he is making is that the dust of the earth is obedient. It moveth hither and thither at the command of the Lord. All things are in harmony with his laws. Everything in the universe obeys the law given unto it, so far as I know, except man. Everywhere you look you find law and order, the elements obeying the law given to them, true to their calling. But man rebels, and in this thing man is less than the dust of the earth because he rejects the counsels of the Lord, and the greater the blessings he receives, (this because of his agency), the more willingly does he turn from the source of those blessings, feeling self-sufficient, and puts his faith and his trust in the arm of flesh rather than in God.

KEEP THE COMMANDMENTS

I want to endorse the remarks that were made here yesterday, wherein we were instructed and reminded to keep the commandments of

the Lord, to observe the Sabbath day, to keep the Word of Wisdom, to pray, to attend to the various duties that are given unto us as members of the Church and men holding the priesthood; to live, in other words, in accordance with every word that proceeds forth from the mouth of God.

NECESSITY OF CONSTANT INSTRUCTIONS AND GUIDANCE

Why should we be under the necessity constantly of being reminded of the Word of Wisdom, of the law of tithing, the duty that is upon us to pray and thank our Father in heaven for his many blessings? Yet we find that it is necessary constantly to call the attention of the saints to these things, to instruct them, to guide them, so that we may be kept always in the path of duty and righteousness. Otherwise they fall into error. What a wonderful thing it is the Lord has given us by revelation, this privilege of meeting together in conference as we are now, and from time to time in the stake conferences and in the various other meetings, to be instructed! In these meetings we are taught the principles of the Gospel, and admonished when it is necessary. If we were not it would only be a short time until we would find the different branches of the Church and various stakes falling apart and doing things in different ways, and to some extent at least falling from grace, failing to keep the commandments of the Lord and to walk in his righteousness. The Lord has provided ample means by which we may be instructed and taught, that we may be one in all things.

BLESSINGS CONTINGENT UPON OBEDIENCE

Now, my brethren and sisters, in this time of peace—I do not know how long it will last—in this day of prosperity, let us be humble and remember the Lord and keep his commandments and feel that the dangers before us are far greater than they are in the days of trial and tribulation. Do not think for a moment that the days of trial are over. They are not. If we keep the commandments of the Lord we shall prosper, we shall be blessed; the plagues, the calamities that have been promised will be poured out upon the peoples of the earth and we shall escape them, yea, they shall pass us by. But remember the Lord says if we fail to keep his word, if we walk in the ways of the world, they will not pass us by, but we shall be visited with floods and with fire, with sword and with plague and destruction. We may escape these things through faithfulness. Israel of old might have escaped through faithfulness, but they refused to keep the commandments of the Lord and they were not saved. Therefore I plead with you: pay your tithing, keep the Word of Wisdom, pray unto the Lord, honor him in all things by keeping his commandments, that his blessings may be poured out and that we may receive them in abundance, and in humility we may walk before him and be entitled not only to the blessings that come to us in this mortal life, but to the blessings of eternal life, the greatest gift of God. So I pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.