

May we be enabled as a people, and may our children, wherever they are, be enabled to distinguish between those things which war necessarily does not change, and those things which it must not be permitted to change, and to cleave to the fundamentals, both of personal and social conduct, as well as to all our other fixed obligations and duties as Latter-day Saints, and as children of God, our Father in heaven.

That we may have the spirit of discernment to distinguish between these things, and the strength, both those of us who are here and those who are on far fronts, the pattern of whose lives has been upset and broken, to carry forward and live lives of consistency, and endure to the end, is my prayer, to which I add my testimony of the truthfulness and divinity of this work, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

### ELDER JOSEPH FIELDING SMITH

*Of the Council of the Twelve Apostles*

At the session of the conference this morning we were informed that the Church is out of debt, that it owes no man or any institution a dollar. For that I am grateful, as I know you are. But the Church is in debt—fortunately not financially, but it is in debt now, has always been in debt, and will be in debt as long as time endures.

With the help of the Lord, this afternoon I would like to point out some of these obligations resting upon the Church collectively, and upon the Church individually.

#### OUR INDEBTEDNESS TO THE LORD

James has said that "every good gift and every perfect gift is from above and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." Everything that we possess, every blessing that comes is through the mercy and the goodness of our Father in heaven, and his Son Jesus Christ.

We read, in the second chapter of Mosiah, the words of King Benjamin which he was commanded by an angel to preach unto his people. I want to read one or two of these verses:

I say unto you, my brethren, that if you should render all the thanks and praise which your whole soul has power to possess, to that God who has created you, and has kept and preserved you, and has caused that ye should rejoice, and has granted that ye should live in peace one with another—

I say unto you that if ye should serve him who has created you from the beginning, and is preserving you from day to day, by lending you breath, that ye may live and move and do according to your own will, and even supporting you from one moment to another—I say, if ye should serve him with all your whole souls, yet ye would be unprofitable servants.

And behold, all that he requires of you is to keep his commandments; and he has promised you that if ye would keep his commandments, ye should prosper in the land; and he never doth vary from that which he hath said; Therefore, if ye do keep his commandments, he doth bless you and prosper you.

And now, in the first place, he hath created you, and granted unto you your lives, for which ye are indebted unto him.

And secondly, he doth require that ye should do as he hath commanded you; for which if ye do, he doth immediately bless you; and therefore he hath paid you. And ye are still indebted unto him, and are, and will be, forever and ever; therefore, of what have ye to boast?

#### GOD'S PLAN IS TO BRING SALVATION TO ALL MANKIND

How glorious is the plan of salvation, inaugurated before the foundation of the world for the salvation of men. Adam was sent to start the race, and through doing so, it became necessary for him to transgress a law, to bring death, or mortality, into the world. That made it necessary for the coming of Jesus Christ to redeem us from Adam's transgression, or the mortal death, and through the mercy of our Father in heaven, and His Son Jesus Christ, through that atonement we likewise are granted redemption from our own sins on condition of our repentance.

The resurrection comes to every soul, no matter how he lives, no matter what he believes; it comes to the wicked as well as to the righteous, and every man shall receive his reward according to his works.

Salvation from our individual sins comes through our repentance and cannot come any other way. And that all comes through the mission of Jesus Christ, who, according to the teachings of Paul, bought us with a price, and therefore, we belong to him and we are indebted to him. Never, worlds without end, will we be able to pay that debt. And that being true, we are under obligation to keep His commandments, to walk in the light of truth, to hearken to his precepts, to obey "every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God."

Ingratitude is, I think, the most prevalent of all sins, and one of the greatest, because every soul who refuses to abide in the truth, who will not walk in the light and understanding of the commandments which Jesus Christ has given, is ungrateful. He came and gave His life to redeem us from transgression. He was nailed to a cross and His blood was shed. What for? That we might live, that we might receive the remission of our sins, that we might, through obedience to the principles of the gospel, come back again into the presence of God the Father, and His Son Jesus Christ.

He did not have to die. He did that voluntarily. He tells us plainly that He laid down his life that He might take it again, because that is the commandment which He had received from His Father. "No man taketh it from me," He said, "but I lay it down of myself; I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father."

#### THE SUFFERINGS OF THE SAVIOR

Can you imagine the suffering, the extent of the anguish of soul that our Savior passed through—He who is the Son of God—in order that we might receive the resurrection, and that we might receive the remission of our sins through obedience to the principles of the Gospel, and

an exaltation in the presence of the Father and the Son? Do we realize what all of that means?

I think it is understood by many that the great suffering of Jesus Christ came through the driving of nails in His hands and in His feet, and in being suspended upon a cross, until death mercifully released Him. That is not the case. As excruciating, as severe as was that punishment, coming from the driving of nails through His hands and through His feet, and being suspended, until relieved by death, yet still greater was the suffering which He endured in carrying the burden of the sins of the world—my sins, and your sins, and the sins of every living creature. This suffering came before He ever got to the cross, and it caused the blood to come forth from the pores of his body, so great was that anguish of His soul, the torment of His spirit that He was called upon to undergo.

Are we not indebted? Yes. Are we ungrateful? Yes, unless we are willing to abide by every word that comes from the mouth of God, unless we are obedient, unless our hearts are broken, in the scriptural sense, unless our spirits are contrite, unless within our soul is the spirit of humility and faith and obedience.

#### OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO PREACH THE GOSPEL

Now there are many debts which we owe to the Lord. There is the debt of preaching this gospel to a wicked and a perverse generation, and those are the words of the Lord, so do not accuse me of calling the world wicked. It is. I can testify to that from what I have seen of it, and I have seen of the wickedness but a small part, I assure you. But the world today is filthy, drunken, saturated and stinking with tobacco. The world is full of immorality. It is a fallen world; it has been a fallen world since Adam was driven from the Garden of Eden, and yet we are in it, and the Lord has given us the mission of assisting Him, of being His agents in this world, to regenerate it, as far as it is possible to bring to pass that regeneration. It will never be fully accomplished, so far as we are concerned; we are not going, by our preaching, to save very many souls.

The Lord has given unto men their agency. They may act for themselves, they can choose to do good, or they can choose to do evil, with the rewards which are coming, and most men choose to do evil. The Lord said that men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil. Yet our mission, I say, is, so far as it is within our power, to regenerate, to bring to repentance, just as many of the children of our Father in heaven as it is possible for us to do. That is one of our debts; that is an obligation the Lord has placed upon the Church, and more particularly upon the quorums of the priesthood of the Church, and yet this obligation belongs to every soul.

It is the duty of every member of this Church to preach the Gospel by precept and by example. Brother George F. Richards quoted from the scriptures this morning, where the Lord said it is our duty to warn the world, and it is the duty of every person so warned to warn his neigh-

bor, and if he will warn the neighbors, then they are left without excuse, and their blood is upon their own heads. It is our mission to warn. That is one of our obligations, and we owe this debt to the world.

#### THE OBLIGATION ASSUMED IN PARTAKING THE SACRAMENT

I have already called attention to the fact how we are indebted to the Lord Jesus Christ. I want to say a little more about it. We go, if we are attending to our duties, to the sacrament service every Sunday; we partake of the bread representing the broken body of our Redeemer; we drink the water in remembrance of His blood which was shed; and we take upon ourselves obligations to do certain definite things. We are placed under covenant, to do what? To take upon us the name of Jesus Christ, to always remember Him, to keep His commandments which He has given us. These three things we covenant to do every time we eat that bread, every time we drink that water which has been dedicated, consecrated, to that very purpose.

We are indebted then, or obligated, to take upon us the name of Jesus Christ. This is the Church of Jesus Christ, and in taking upon us His name, we are under obligation to respect Him, and to remember what He has done for us, and we covenant to keep His commandments.

Do we think of it seriously? Can we eat and drink in remembrance of the body and blood of Christ, and then go immediately out to violate His commandments? Do we realize the nature and the importance of that great covenant we take upon us and renew every week of our lives—or at least have the opportunity to do it every week of our lives? We are under obligation to pray. I have been bold enough to say (and I confess I would not be able to prove it, but I believe it), that we are not a praying people. I shall modify that to this extent, by saying too many of us do not pray. We do not get down on our knees, we do not humble ourselves, we do not go before the Lord with that contrite spirit as He would have us do, and as we have been taught to do.

#### THE GOOD NAME OF THE CHURCH TO BE GUARDED

There is another obligation, another debt that we owe. We owe it as a Church and as individuals, to keep ourselves clean; our minds pure, our souls clean, uncontaminated by the sins of the world. It is the duty of each one of us individually to keep the good name of this Church unsullied. Now we have been accused of a great many things. There is not a crime in the category that has not been laid to the charge of the members of the Church. And the Lord said it would be so, that wicked men would speak evil of the truth. We should rejoice when they do that, not in the fact that we are so accused by those who bear false witness, but in the fact that we are innocent from all those things. In that we should rejoice.

But it is our duty as a Church, as communities, to keep the good name of this Church above reproach, and it is the duty of each individual member of this Church to keep himself clean, for each one of us carries

with him the good name of the Church, and whenever we do anything that is contrary to righteousness, if we are unclean in our lives, if we do not keep the commandments the Lord has given, the whole Church suffers, not merely the guilty individual who sins, and we ought to think of that. If one man sins and his sin is published, the world blames the whole Church. They would not do that with any other organization under the sun.

So it is our obligation, and we owe this debt to each other and to the Church at large to keep ourselves in strict accord with all these laws and commandments, to keep ourselves virtuous and clean, clean in our thoughts, clean in our actions, clean in our words, clean from blasphemy, the taking of the name of the Lord in vain. We are in debt to our Father in heaven in regard to tithing, and we have heard a good deal about that this afternoon.

We are in debt in regard to fasting, and I am afraid there again we have failed. A day has been set apart for fasting in this Church, and I fear we have made it just about as easy for people as we can to disregard this commandment by the way we hold our meetings, and I am not so sure that we are observing that law as strictly as the requirements demand of us.

Let me read a word or two from section 59 of the Doctrine and Covenants.

The Ten Commandments were spoken of this morning. It will not hurt for me to repeat what is written here, beginning with verse 5, in section 59 of the Doctrine and Covenants:

Wherefore, I give unto them—meaning members of the Church—a commandment, saying thus: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy might, mind, and strength; and in the name of Jesus Christ thou shalt serve him.

Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.

#### THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD WITHDRAWN FROM THE WICKED

Here are two great commandments. We are under obligation, we are in debt to love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our might, with all our mind, with all our strength, and do it all in the name of Jesus Christ. We are in debt and under obligation to love our neighbors, and if the world had only loved its neighbors, it would not be torn asunder as it is today. All this that has come upon it is because of its wickedness, and because the people of the earth violated the commandments and lost the Spirit of the Lord, and when I say lost the Spirit of the Lord, I am not speaking of the Holy Ghost. They never had the Holy Ghost. But the Lord has given to every man that comes into this world the guidance of the Spirit of Christ, or light of truth, and many times we speak of it as the Spirit of the Lord, and in many of the revelations it is spoken of as the Spirit of the Lord. This Spirit of Christ is given to every man that comes into the world.

But the Lord has withdrawn this spirit in great measure, because of the wickedness of the world. The Lord has said:

I, the Lord, am angry with the wicked; I am holding my Spirit from the inhabitants of the earth. (D. & C. 63:32.)

This the Lord said a hundred years ago. He is not withholding the Holy Ghost from the world, because they never had it, but this light of truth, this guidance which comes to every man, which would lead men unto the truth if they would only hearken to it, is withdrawn because of their wickedness.

Now I will return to what I started to read:

Thou shalt not steal; neither commit adultery, nor kill, nor do anything like unto it.

Thou shalt thank the Lord thy God in all things.

Thou shalt offer a sacrifice unto the Lord thy God in righteousness, even that of a broken heart and a contrite spirit.

And that thou mayest more fully keep thyself unspotted from the world, thou shalt go to the house of prayer and offer up thy sacraments upon my holy day.

That is another obligation, and a large percentage of the members of the Church are failing to pay that debt, or keep that obligation.

#### OUR OBLIGATION TO THOSE WHO HAVE DIED

Now, one more obligation that I wish to speak of, in conclusion. We owe an obligation not only to the living, but we owe an obligation to the dead. The Lord in His mercy and His justice grants to every man the opportunity to repent and to receive His Gospel. Millions have died without that privilege. They have gone into the spirit world not knowing Jesus Christ, without an opportunity to receive the remission of their sins. We owe a debt to them. We should be searching out the records of our dead and be preparing them that we might go into the temples of the Lord and there perform the ordinances for their salvation.

The Prophet Joseph said this is the greatest responsibility the Lord has placed upon us. Now, when he said that he meant, evidently, the greatest responsibility individually.

There is another responsibility just as great which belongs to us collectively, or as quorums of the priesthood and as members of the Church, and that is as I have already stated, to preach this gospel to a perverse and wicked generation.

Now, my dear brethren, the Lord bless you. Let us, as the scriptures say, "gird up our loins," and go out with all our might to accomplish the things the Lord has called upon us to accomplish, keeping His commandments, setting the example before all men, that they might follow, being humble, being true, and I ask it, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

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The congregation sang the hymn, "Lord, Dismiss Us With Thy Blessing"—Words by Walter Shirley, Music by Jean Jacques Rousseau (L.D.S. Hymns No. 315).