

Man's Natural Spirit and the Spirit of God—Our Relationship With Him—His Dealings in the Latter Days—What is Expected of the Saints—Their Position and Labors Among the Nations—Christ the Example to All His Followers—Words of Counsel to Priesthood and People

Discourse by President John Taylor, delivered in Payson, Thursday Evening, Nov. 23rd, 1882.

We are living, as Brother Cannon has remarked, in a most important day and age of the world. The times are pregnant with greater events than any we have any knowledge of in the history of God's dealings with His people among the nations of the earth in the different ages. The very fact of our gathering together as we do is a very peculiar thing. It differs from the way of any other people. It is a part of the Gospel, and inspired by the spirit of revelation, even the gift of the Holy Ghost which comes through obedience to the Gospel. There is and always has been a spirit abroad in the world which is really a portion of the Spirit of God, which leads mankind, in many instances, to discriminate between good and evil, and between right and wrong. They have a conscience that accuses or excuses them for their acts; and although the world of mankind is very wicked and very corrupt, yet it will be found that almost all men, though they may not do good themselves, appreciate good actions in others.

The scriptures say that God "hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him, though he be not far from every one of us." The Scripture further says, He has given unto them a portion of his spirit to profit withal. But there is quite a distinction between the position that these people occupy and the one which we occupy. We have something more than that portion of the Spirit of God which is given to every man, and it is called the gift of the Holy Ghost, which is received through obedience to the first principles of the Gospel of Christ, by the laying on of hands of the servants of God. Hence, when the Gospel was preached in former times among the people they were told to repent of their sins; to be baptized in the name of Jesus for the remission of their sins, and then to have hands laid upon them for the reception of the Holy Ghost. They were told, moreover, what this Holy Ghost would do; that it would take of the things of God and shew them unto them; that it would cause their old men to dream dreams and their young men to see visions; and that it would rest upon the servants and handmaids of God, and they should prophesy. These are the operations of that Spirit which dwells with God, the Father, and God, the Son, namely the Holy Ghost. It is this Spirit that brings us into relationship with God, and it differs very materially from the portion of spirit that is given to all men to profit withal. The special gift of the Holy Ghost is obtained as I have said, through obedience to the first principles of the Gospel. Its province is to lead us into all truth, and to bring to our remembrance things past, present and to come. It contemplates the future and unfolds things we had not thought of heretofore, and these things are very distinctly described in the Bible, in the Book of Mormon, and in the Book of Doctrine and Covenants. Herein lies the difference between us and others, and it was so in former times. One of the ancient Apostles in speaking of our relationship to God, says: "Now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." Again it is said: "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God," that is, rightful inheritors of the things of God, "and joint heirs of Jesus Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." It is the Gospel of the kingdom that has brought us into this relationship with God. We enjoy the same spirit that the Saints enjoyed anciently in the days of Jesus, in the days of Moses, in the days of Enoch, in the days of Seth, back to the days of Adam. The Gospel which we have received is the everlasting Gospel, which, through the atonement of Jesus Christ, brings men into close relationship to God, their heavenly Father, and makes them heirs of all the promises that God has made unto His people. Hence we occupy this position—God is really and truly our Father and we are His children. He is "the God of the spirits of all flesh," and he has told us to draw near unto Him. He has taught us how to pray, and in what manner to approach Him and to ask for such things as we need. This is the position we occupy if we can comprehend it, and we are called upon by the Almighty to do a great work. He has taken very great pains in introducing the principles of the Gospel. In the first place He has Himself spoken to us from the heavens, as

also has His Son Jesus Christ. He has restored the everlasting Priesthood. All those men who had it in their possession heretofore—that is those who held the keys of it upon the earth—have appeared and restored the authority of the Holy Priesthood which they held. Thus John the Baptist appeared, and laying his hands upon Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery, ordained them to the Aaronic Priesthood, using the following words: “Upon you my fellowservants, in the name of Messiah I confer the Priesthood of Aaron, which holds the keys of the ministering of angels, and of the gospel of repentance, and of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; and this shall never be taken again from the earth, until the sons of Levi do offer again an offering unto the Lord in righteousness.” Peter, James and John afterwards conferred upon Joseph Smith the Melchizedek Priesthood, which holds the key of the mysteries of the kingdom, even the key of the knowledge of God. By this Priesthood the mind and will of God is made known unto man; by it man can walk according to the light and intelligence which God imparts. Men have been ordained to this Holy Priesthood, and they have gone forth to preach the Gospel to the nations of the earth. In this labor they have been sustained, blessed and upheld by the Lord, for although the world has generally been opposed to them in their ministrations, yet He has given unto them power, wisdom and intelligence, whereby they have been able to sustain and maintain the principles which God has revealed. And then the sheep of God—that is, the thousands that have been gathered together from among the nations—have been led to see and believe in and obey the Gospel as it has been presented to them. Jesus said that His sheep would know his voice, and a stranger they would not follow. Through the medium of the Gospel we have been gathered together in these valleys of the mountains today. Why did the Lord call upon us? That He might have a people who would obey His law; for the world generally will not listen to the voice of God; the nations of the earth, the kings of the earth, the princes of the earth, the presidents of the earth, the legislators of the earth, and the powers of the earth, will not listen to the voice of God, and He has called us together, as He said He would do, “one of a city and two of a family.” He has gathered us together that we may be taught of Him. It is written in the Prophets that the people “shall be all taught of God;” and we want to progress in this intelligence and in the principles which God has revealed until men shall not say one to another, “Know ye the Lord, for all shall know Him, from the least to the greatest.” This is the position that we are expected to occupy. Having obtained this knowledge of God, we are to teach it to others, so that the eternal principles he has revealed may be disseminated among the nations of the earth, until the honest in heart shall be gathered out, until all that love truth and are desirous to know the will of God and do it, will be under the direction and guidance of the Lord. And then, when the will of God is done among the saints of God upon the earth as it is done in heaven, a part of that which Jesus prayed for will be accomplished. Jesus taught his disciples to pray that the will of God might be done upon the earth as it is done in heaven. At the present time it is not done in all the earth, but it may be done among us if we will subject ourselves to the law of God, the word of God, the will of God, and the principles of eternal truth, and follow the teachings of the Spirit of God; for as many as are led by the Spirit of God are the sons of God, and if sons then are they heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ. Now, it is the rule of God which is desired to be introduced upon the earth, and this is the reason why the Father and the Son appeared to Joseph Smith, why John the Baptist conferred the Aaronic Priesthood, why Peter, James and John conferred the Melchizedek Priesthood, why Moses came to bestow the dispensation of the gathering, and why other manifestations have been given unto us as a people, His elect, whom He has chosen from among the nations. This is an honorable position for us to occupy. We are called to fill various duties that God requires at our hands. And our position is not a nominal thing; it is a reality. It is true that God appeared to Joseph Smith, and that His Son Jesus did; it is true that John the Baptist appeared; it is true that Peter, James and John appeared; and conferred upon him the Holy Priesthood; it is true that Moses and Elias appeared unto him and that these all conferred upon him the keys of their various dispensations; it is true that this Priesthood has been conferred upon us; it is true that the Gospel has been preached by the Elders of Israel to the nations, so far as they have yet gone; it is true that those who have obeyed this Gospel have received the Holy Ghost and have been placed in communication with God our Heavenly Father. These things are all true. It is also true that Elijah has appeared that the hearts of the fathers might be turned to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers—that is Adam, Seth, Methuselah, Noah, Abraham, and the men of God in different ages—that a general interest might be manifested towards the works of God and the people of God as they have existed upon the earth, that we may stand as saviors upon Mount Zion, and build up temples to the Lord, and then go and administer in those temples for the living and for the dead, that there may be, as the Prophet Joseph has said, a welding link that will cement and bind other peoples with us and we with them, and that there may be a

bond of union, also, between the people on earth and those in heaven, that we may operate together, they in the heavens and we on the earth, for the accomplishment of the purposes of God pertaining to the peoples that have lived, that now live and that will live.

These are some of the objects of our existence, and this is the reason we are gathered together in these valleys of the mountains. It is a curious thing when you reflect that when you were baptized into this Church nobody could keep you from gathering here. To do so, many wives have had to leave their husbands, many husbands have had to leave their wives, children have had to leave their parents, and parents have had to leave their children. But we are gathered together that we might learn the laws of life and the word of God, and that we might comprehend the duties and responsibilities that devolve upon us—that we might learn how to save ourselves and how to save our wives and children, our fathers and mothers, our uncles and aunts, our grandfathers and great grandfathers, who did not have the privilege which we enjoy. This is the position we occupy, that is, if we are living our religion, keeping the commandments of God and obeying those eternal principles which He has revealed to us. There are no people living upon the face of the earth today, who enjoy the privileges that this people enjoy, nor that have the light, the truth, or the intelligence which we have. The world does not understand us, nor the principles we have received, and consequently we are persecuted, opposed, and abused on all hands. It makes no difference, however. We are here to do the will of God, to build up the kingdom of God, and to establish the Zion of God. And we have been, many of us, to the ends of the earth, I was going to say, but we have not been quite to the ends, in fact I do not know where the ends are; but we have been up and down the earth a great deal, and then there are a great many places we have not yet visited. It is true the world has not treated us very well, and I sometimes think that we entertain too much of the same spirit that the world exhibits towards us. We are inclined to return evil for evil. We ought not to do that. We should return good for evil. "Bless them that curse you, and pray for them that despitefully use you," said the Savior. We have had the Gospel committed to us. For what? That we might be the messengers of life and salvation to others, not of death, damnation and destruction, but the messengers of life and salvation. How was it with Jesus when he was upon the earth? "God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved." He came to be a Savior to the world. He has not set us apart to condemn the world but to preach the Gospel of life and salvation to the world. It is not for us to feel in our hearts a principle of destruction, but a principle of salvation, and to seek to benefit, to bless, and to exalt the human family, as many as will come under the influence of the Son of God, and that those that won't, why we will leave them in the hands of God; it is for Him in His own way and in His own time, to do with them as He may see fit. It is for us to carry out His designs; it is for the Twelve, the Seventies and others to preach the Gospel to the world and gather out the honest in heart; it is for us to give the inhabitants of the earth fair warning, that they may comprehend the true state of things and have the principles of life presented to them. "But," says one, "they act very mean towards us." Well, so they do. But, then they don't know any better. Don't know any better? No, they don't. They don't comprehend things as we comprehend them. We profess to be acquainted with the Spirit of God, as I before said, and with the light of revelation, they don't. And furthermore, "The things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God." Well, but don't God say He will come out in judgment against the wicked? Yes; but that is His business and not ours, unless He calls on us to help Him, and we must continue to bless them that curse us, and pray for them that despitefully use us. It is our business to preach the Gospel, and gather together God's elect from the four quarters of the earth. It is for us to act right—that is the First Presidency, myself and Counselors. We are poor, frail, weak creatures, just as you are, and you are just as much as we are; there is nothing to boast about in any of us. Any blessings we have received are the free gifts of God to us. And He expects us to magnify our Priesthood and calling and to honor Him. What else shall we do? We will preach the Gospel; we will try and gather the people when we have preached; we will build Temples as we are doing, and we will administer in them when they are finished, in accordance with the pattern God has shown us, and we could not do so unless He had shown us. Those men that prate so much about our affairs and ignorance, we might build Temples for them, but would they know how to administer in them? No; they would not; and there is not a man living in the world outside of this Church who could perform the first ceremony in a Temple of the Lord of Hosts, and we would not ourselves have been in possession of that knowledge had God not revealed it to us. But having this knowledge we can enter into these Temples and administer for the living and for the dead. But we must humble ourselves before the Lord, we must put ourselves right, we must teach our families the principles of life, we must do right by our neighbors and

by everybody, we must magnify the Lord and observe His law, purge ourselves from everything that is wrong, and say, "O God, try me and prove me. Give unto me Thy Holy Spirit that shall light up the candle of intelligence in my soul, that I may be enabled to see myself as Thou seest me, and if there is anything wrong in me show it unto me and give me power to put it away, that I may have the truth and be full of the Holy Ghost, the light of revelation, and the power of God." We want to put ourselves and our families in order. And then let us learn to acknowledge the hand of God in all things and obey His law and keep His commandments in everything; not in one thing only, but in everything, that the Spirit and blessing of God and the power of God may be with us, that we may be the sons of God without rebuke in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation; that we may be full of joy, peace and thanksgiving to God our Heavenly Father, that we may be true to our devotions at the family altar, and every morning and every evening bow before the Lord with our family and all that pertains to us. And then let the quorums seek the spirit and power of the Priesthood that belongs to them, whether High Councilors, Presidents of Stakes, High Priests, Bishops, or whatever they may be, that all may magnify their calling and be full of the Holy Ghost and the power of God, laying aside our follies, our covetousness and our evils, and wherein we have done any wrong make restitution for that wrong. Now, this is the word of the Lord to you if you can receive it. Let us try and obey the word and will of God, and keep His commandments, and then call upon the Lord and He will hear our prayers. His eyes are over His people, and His ears are open to their cries. God will stand by His Israel and he will deliver His people if they will only serve Him. No man, no power, no nation can harm you if you are followers of that which is good, for God will sustain His people. Zion is onward, onward and onward. The kingdom of God will be established. No power upon the earth can stay the hand of the Almighty. Let us, then, be humble and faithful, and fear God and keep His commandments, that the Holy Ghost may dwell in us, that the peace of God may abide in our habitations. Let us dedicate ourselves and our families and all that pertains to us to the Lord, and we will feel that we are blessed of Him. The work we are engaged in is not a phantom. We are going to build up the Zion of God; and the kingdom of God will continue to grow and increase, until "the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign forever." If we will be faithful, God will bless us and prosper us, and all things spoken in the Prophets will be fulfilled.

God bless you and lead you in the paths of life in the name of Jesus, Amen.