

# SUPPLEMENT TO THE SAINTS' HERALD.

LAMONI, IOWA, MARCH 18, 1893.

[Reported for the Herald by E. Stafford.]

## SERMON BY ELDER R. M. ELVIN,

DELIVERED AT LAMONI, IOWA, AUGUST 7, 1892.

Subject, JESUS CHRIST UNCHANGEABLE.

THE speaker read the text, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever." Latter Day Saints are trying to have the world believe that the gospel they are preaching is the same unchangeable plan of redemption that has been taught since Adam, and that there is but one gospel, but one plan of salvation; one God, one Christ, and one Holy Spirit; one baptism, one hope of our calling. The very first thing that attracted my attention in hearing the gospel preached by these people was the unanimity that I found among all those that taught it. No matter from what part of the world the ministers had come, they all agreed in their teaching; and we are desirous in what we have to present that it should be understood by those who hear it, that we believe God is an unchangeable being; that he is eternal; that Jesus Christ is his veritable Son; that there is no other name given under heaven whereby man can be saved but that of Christ.

We believe the human family is alike in its wants and necessities, and that what it required to save a man in any past age of the world, it will require now; whatever of blessing, whatever of theory, whatever of light or revelation that any people or peoples of the past were able to obtain by faith, it is now possible for men to receive through faith; and we believe with the Apostle Peter when he said: "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation he that feareth him [God], and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him." Now we believe this, we teach it; and we teach it so strongly that we tell the people that wherever righteousness is found, wherever faith is found, God will bless, God will give light, and strength, and

comfort to those who are working righteousness and exercising faith in him. And this we believe, that there are hundreds and thousands in the world whose ears have not been saluted with the blessings of the gospel as we understand it, who have received but a degree of light and comfort that the gospel brings. We believe and teach that it is true, that Jesus Christ is the light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world. There are no limits placed upon this, but every man must be saluted by the light, else he cannot be condemned by the light. We still teach that statement made just prior to the flood, that God's Spirit "shall not always strive with man;" we believe it to be true now as then. It will lead him to the truth, will knock at the door of his intelligence for acceptance, and if he will receive it there will be given unto him, as the Scriptures declare, line upon line and precept upon precept, here a little and there a little.

It will be our effort this morning to try and show that we are consistent with our profession, and that what we have received as revelations agree in themselves, and with what are found in the Scriptures. While Jesus was here he taught many things in parables. In Matthew 13: 33 is one that we desire to read as a basis to our remarks: "Another parable spake he unto them: The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened." In the comments of men upon the parables of Christ we find but very little said about this one. Mr. Trench in his book on parables has the least to say upon this one than upon any other of the parables put forth by Christ. We believe it is just as important as any

spoken by the Savior, and it signifies something to us. But let us try, if we possibly can, to learn something from it. The kingdom is the church; it is so represented; and in that church or kingdom you will find that which is represented by three measures of meal. We ask, Where can we find these three measures of meal?

I present for your consideration the Bible, the Book of Mormon, and the Book of Doctrine and Covenants; those three books, and say to you that those three books contain the word of God. The word of God is the means of our sanctification. Jesus prayed to his Father, "Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth." If these three books containing the word of God are harmonious, and teach the same thing, we have there the representation of the three measures of meal; for God gave this word as contained in these three books; he gave it by the ministration of his Holy Spirit, which is represented by the leaven, which leavens the entire lump. And I have purposed to show to you that the teaching of these three books is harmonious, and their work must be the same.

Now be it understood that while the Latter Day Saints are tenaciously, faithfully, and continuously urging upon mankind the observance of the word of God, they do so with the understanding and with the Spirit. In the fourteenth chapter and fifteenth verse of St. John, Jesus makes the statement, "If you love me, keep my commandments." The keeping of the commandments of Jesus Christ is the evidence of our love toward God; and the neglect of any commandment that has emanated from heaven is an evidence that we lack confidence in and love toward our heavenly Father. Again, turn to the statement of the Apostle Paul to the Corinthian saints. He there makes the statement, "The letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life." Now, while we are urging the necessity of the observance of the word, we also urge the necessity of obtaining the Spirit; for this word came by the gift of God to man through the ministration of angels and the Holy Spirit. The letter itself, or the word, will kill; and the religious

world only having the word, it is no wonder we have the antagonism and confusion found in Christendom at the present time: it has been without the Spirit, and the consequence to it has been that it is divided in doctrine, in church government. It is unable to meet in unison, unable to fraternize together with the same understanding. It cannot comply with the injunction found in the fourth chapter of Ephesians, to endeavor "to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," and the reason is, while it has received the letter or word, it has not had the Spirit; it has been left to its own wisdom; has been left to place its own interpretation upon the word, and it has reached the same conclusion that Martin Luther reached when he found certain things in the Scriptures that did not agree with his understanding; he concluded that it must be wrong because it did not agree with him. But if he had had the Spirit that, as we believe, every man who undertakes to preach the gospel ought to have and by which the Scriptures was written, he would have had a correct understanding of that which was written. I remember going to hear Prof. O. S. Fowler, at an expense of fifty cents, and it was the best investment for amusement I ever made. You see men with badges on the left lappet of their vests, on which are letters. To the initiated these mean one thing, to the uninitiated another. In a book published by Mr. Fowler were many words italicized, as we find in the common Bible, and when he read one of those words and told us the meaning, the book became of double interest to me, and thus I learned something that was very essential for me to know. Is it not possible that the world has been reading the Bible and has not had the gift by which it could understand the true intent and meaning of that word. If the Spirit makes alive, it is necessary that we should obtain the Spirit; and if these three books contain the word of God given to the world and are identical in their teaching of the plan of salvation, the sooner the world understands that the better. I was talking with a gentleman yesterday, and he said to me, "Your explanation of the Scriptures

seems the most reasonable of any I have heard, and is that which will reach the understanding of the people, give them to understand that God is the Father of the race, that he is interested in one as much as another, in the salvation of the race; and for this cause has sent the gospel to the earth." That is what we wish the people to learn; that the gospel was not sent for a few. The Latter Day Saints are not satisfied with their number; that is, they are not satisfied to sit down in contentment and enjoy, alone, the religion they have received, because they are conscious that there are untold millions whose souls are in darkness; that there has been a spiritual dearth throughout the world and, consequently, a spiritual revival is necessary.

It may be true that you have entertained a different understanding of this parable than what your speaker has; namely, that it represents the three books as the three measures of meal, and the Holy Spirit as the leaven that leavens the entire lump. We ask that you shall examine for yourselves; do not turn away when light is presented to you. One of our brethren went to a gentleman who was a great lover of history, and it was represented to him that the Book of Mormon was one of the greatest historical books pertaining to the first settlement of America; and when our brother presented the Book of Mormon to him for his consideration, he put his hands behind his back, refusing to take it. If there are any here so blind to their interests, we beg of them that they listen to what Paul says: "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." If there is any good in this Book of Mormon we ask them to examine it, and to hold fast that which is good which they have received. On page one hundred and eight we find this instruction concerning the gospel of Jesus Christ: "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, can we follow Jesus, save we shall be willing to keep the commandments of the Father? And the Father said, Repent ye, repent ye, and be baptized in the name of my beloved Son. And also, the voice of the Son came unto me, saying, He that is baptized in my

name, to him will the Father give the Holy Ghost, like unto me: wherefore, follow me, and do the things which ye have seen me do. Wherefore, my beloved brethren, I know that if ye shall follow the Son with full purpose of heart, acting no hypocrisy and no deception before God, but with real intent, repenting of your sins, witnessing unto the Father that you are willing to take upon you the name of Christ, by baptism; yea, by following your Lord and your Savior down into the water, according to his word; behold, then shall ye receive the Holy Ghost; yea, then cometh the baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost; and then can ye speak with the tongue of angels, and shout praises unto the Holy One of Israel."

On the one hundred and ninth page, the closing paragraph, it states: "And now behold, my beloved brethren, this is the way; and there is none other way nor name given under heaven, whereby man can be saved in the kingdom of God. And now behold, this is the doctrine of Christ, and the only and true doctrine of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, which is one God, without end."

There is the teaching that we find in the Book of Mormon, or at least the teaching of one of those men whose history we find recorded in the Book of Mormon. Do you not discover that this is in harmony with what we find in the Scriptures? If it is, why should it not be true? If God is no respecter of persons, but in every land and every clime he that fears him and works righteousness is accepted with him, and persons are baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost in order to be accepted with him, why should it be thought a strange thing that those baptized by the elders of this church, should prove accepted of God, when we find our brethren of the different churches teaching that any member of their church (they do not restrict it to the minister, but a person baptized by any *member* of their church) is accepted of God? It is so understood and taught by a large portion of the religious world, that baptism is an essential feature, and that under certain circumstances, if necessity arises,

the administration of any individual will prove acceptable, whether performed by male or female. Now that principle is taught and widely taught, but the elders of this church teach that men to have the right to administer in this sacred ordinance must be called, ordained, qualified, and endowed with the Holy Spirit that their work may prove beneficial to the individual and accepted of God. This book from which I have just read teaches that this is the doctrine of Christ, and the only true doctrine acknowledged of God.

Now turn to the statement of Jesus recorded in Mark to see whether or not we are in harmony with what is stated there; beginning at the fifteenth verse of the sixteenth chapter. "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.

This is the great preaching commission, given by Jesus Christ to his disciples just prior to his ascension, also after his resurrection. What individual has the right, who has the authority to separate what is contained in that commission, in the face of the declaration revealed to us in the Scriptures. "What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder"? Here he hath joined together with the preaching of the gospel the requirement and promises. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved. . . . And these signs shall follow them that believe;" and then enumerates the signs. But we are told that these signs were just for the apostles. O, how strange, that this language should be so misleading; that they are ready to accept a part of the statement the Savior made, that whosoever is baptized shall be saved, but separate and reject the remainder! These apostles had been baptized before these words were spoken to them;

they were authorized to go and preach the gospel and baptize everyone that came unto them confessing their sins; and the promise to those who thus came repentant before God confessing their sins was, that upon receiving baptism they should receive the gift of the Holy Spirit; "For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call;" this is the instruction contained in the Scriptures. The Bible is professed to be accepted by all the different churches in Christendom, and yet when we read from the Bible this statement of Jesus, we are told that it had reference only to the apostles. But how could it have reference to them only when it is stated that he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and these signs shall follow them that believe? These men clothed upon with the authority of heaven to go and represent the kingdom of God among men must have understood that after individuals had rendered obedience to this ordinance of baptism according to the instruction of Jesus in the commission, they were authorized to tell them that they were entitled to the various signs promised to follow the believer; they were entitled to the gift of the Holy Spirit, which manifests itself in the various gifts and manifestations revealed in the Scriptures; and the believer is the one that is to receive these gifts.

I found one man who had taken a very peculiar position with reference to this text under consideration, and that was, "If that scripture be true as preached by the Latter Day Saints, then every believer must receive all the spiritual gifts and all the signs here spoken of. Every believer must have the gift of knowledge, of understanding, of faith; the gift of unknown tongues, of interpretation of tongues; the gift of prophecy, the discerning of spirits; the gift of performing miracles; they must be able to take up serpents, drink deadly poison, etc." How strange that is, when Paul while instructing the saints concerning the ministrations of these gifts says that God giveth to every man severally as he will; to one a certain gift, and to another another gift. We found at

one place where we were preaching, a man who, to prove that the faith of the Latter Day Saints was not true, came forward and took from his pocket a small bottle; there was about an ounce of poison in it. He said: "If there is a Latter Day Saint who believes that if they take any deadly thing it will not hurt them, let them come forward and take a dose of this strychnine; and if it does not hurt them, I will believe in their teaching." If that had been the test of the doctrine of Jesus Christ, if that had been made the test by which individuals were to ascertain whether or not a man was a true believer, it would have been incorporated in the Scriptures, and we would have been told to preach the Bible and teach that these signs shall follow them that believe, also to take with us a bottle of strychnine in order to take it on all occasions to make true believers. If God had authorized us to take poison with us for that purpose, then we might have believed that the method this man proposed was a correct one; but if a man tells me to take strychnine, he stands in the same position as if he took a revolver and told me if I would not believe his doctrine he would shoot me. A man has the same right to carry a revolver and force men to accept his doctrine as to take strychnine and tell men to take it in order to prove their doctrine true; and such is subject to arrest for threatening the lives of those whom he thus approaches. Members of this church have had poison administered to them and have survived. It is written of one of the elders of this church that poison was given him when he did not know it, and the effect was of such a character that a portion of his hair came off, he was so thoroughly overcome; and after God had preserved him, one of the brethren who was with him was prostrated, though he was compelled to leave the brother and continue his journey; but both survived. I believe there are those here who have been subjected to the same treatment, but God has preserved their lives.

The Book of Mormon makes the same profession as the Bible; it teaches the same truths; it teaches about this Holy Spirit, and that this

Spirit is the source from which spiritual manifestations are given, from which the gifts of the gospel are to be received. On page four hundred and seventy-two of the Book of Mormon we have another statement concerning the gospel of Jesus Christ: "Now this is the commandment; Repent, all ye ends of the earth, and come unto me and be baptized in my name, that ye may be sanctified by the reception of the Holy Ghost, that ye may stand spotless before me at the last day. Verily, verily I say unto you, this is my gospel; and ye know the things that ye must do in my church; for the works which ye have seen me do, that shall ye also do; for that which ye have seen me do, even that shall ye do; therefore if ye do these things blessed are ye, for ye shall be lifted up at the last day."

These words were spoken to the twelve apostles whom Jesus Christ personally selected from among the Nephites; and they in their preaching found those who were tenacious over the doctrine they were preaching, and he came in their midst and made inquiry concerning these things that caused division among the people. And Jesus Christ appeared unto them the second time, and gave them instructions that were so plain and explicit that they could not err therein; and we are here told that whatever Jesus Christ taught them to do, the church to-day is to do; whatever Christ done while here in the flesh ministering at Jerusalem, the church wherever it is found and whenever it is found will follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ. Whatever doctrine Christ taught, whatever ordinances he practiced, they will practice; whatever spiritual blessings were obtained under his administration they may obtain by reason of having the light of the Holy Spirit, the source of the power that the God of heaven bestows upon those who serve him, that they may attain to eternal life and stand as heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ.

I have presented the word of God from two of these books, and will now present a little from the third one, that you may see that we are absolutely in harmony with all of these

books. The instruction that Jesus Christ gave to us on page one hundred and twenty-four Book of Doctrine and Covenants I will read: "Thou didst baptize by water unto repentance, but they received not the Holy Ghost; but now I give unto thee a commandment, that thou shalt baptize by water, and they shall receive the Holy Ghost by the laying on of the hands, even as the apostles of old. And it shall come to pass, that there shall be a great work in the land among the Gentiles, for their folly and their abominations shall be made manifest, in the eyes of all people; for I am God, and mine arm is not shortened, and I will show miracles, signs, and wonders, unto all those who believe on my name. And whoso shall ask it in my name, in faith, they shall cast out devils; they shall heal the sick; they shall cause the blind to receive their sight, and the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak, and the lame to walk; and the time speedily cometh that great things are to be shown forth unto the children of men; but without faith shall not anything be shown forth except desolations upon Babylon, the same which has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication. And there are none that doeth good except those who are ready to receive the fullness of my gospel, which I have sent forth unto this generation."

Please take notice that the one to whom these words were spoken was Mr. Sidney Rigdon, who was a Baptist, subsequently a Disciple minister, (of the church known now as the Christians,) for whom he had for some time been preaching in the northern part of Ohio. His home was in Mentor, and he had converted hundreds, perhaps thousands to the faith of the Christian Church. Elders P. P. Pratt and O. Cowdery presented to him a copy of the Book of Mormon, and he examined that book and afterwards received the doctrine they were preaching, and was baptized and became one of the leading ministers of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. After he had entered into the work this revelation was given; and in speaking of the work that he had done before, it said that he had

been like John the Baptist, preaching faith, repentance, and baptism by water; but now he was to receive the right, after he had become a member of the Latter Day Saints, that he should preach faith, repentance, baptism by water, and the reception of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands; and that these signs should follow the preaching of the word. It is over sixty years since Mr. Rigdon and his associates commenced to preach that doctrine, and it has spread out and has found disciples among nearly every nation of the earth; and wherever it has been preached there have been men and women who have been prepared to say by the gift of God's Spirit that the doctrine they have embraced is true. It matters not whether this gospel be preached in Maine or in California, in Minnesota or Florida; whether in England or Wales, in Canada or Australia; wherever it is preached, and in whatever language it is preached, the same doctrine that is taught from this stand is taught by the representatives of this church; and the results are the same with those individuals who accept the preaching, go down in the waters of baptism, and there receive, by reason of the reception of God's Holy Spirit the remission of their sins; they are prepared to say, and to say understandingly and conscientiously, "I know that my Redeemer liveth; I know that the truth that has been manifested to me by the gift of God's Spirit is the truth of heaven, and by continuing therein I have the promise of a crown that fadeth not away." And now, having been born of that "one Spirit" into the "one body," we then have entered into a oneness in Christ and have proved the language of our text to be true, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever."

In a public discussion with an individual of another church I made to him a proposition, that if he would take this question, "What must I do to be saved?" and write to any individual representing this faith, whether in the distant East of this country, or in California, or in Minnesota, or down in the Southern States—write to any of our ministers in Australia or in

England, when the answers came back they would all be alike. The reason why I made that proposition is this: The ministers of that church are not bound by each other's statements. You take the writings of Mr. Alexander Campbell, and then take those of other ministers of that church, and compare them, and find a contradiction between them, and tell them of it, they very soon say, "I am not bound by what that man has stated." When an elder of this church states before me what a man must do to be saved, I am bound by his statement if he teaches by this record, the Bible. When Brother Alexander H. Smith is asked in Utah the question, "What must I do to be saved?" his answer as to what is for them to do to receive salvation, I am bound by, as long as he represents the church, and not himself, or any other man. No man has the right to represent his own notions when standing before the people to represent the church. Robert G. Ingersoll delivered a lecture in Chicago a short time ago from the text, "What must I do to be saved?" In the audience was a newspaper reporter who wrote out that text and sent it to all the ministers there to be answered by them, and when he received their answers no two agreed. When you take the question, "What must I do to be saved?" you can send not only to a few, but to any number of the representatives of this church, and their answers will agree. What must be done is this: We must comply with the word, and we must obtain the Spirit of God; for Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever; and though all men should prove to be liars, we cannot afford, as has been said from this stand, that Christ should be proved to be untrue. His work and his words must be true, and we must subscribe to them.

In closing my conversation to you I have one passage of Scripture that I wish to present; it is in the Inspired Translation; it is not found in the old Bible; it is in the sixth chapter of Genesis beginning at the sixty-second

verse: "Even so ye must be born again, into the kingdom of heaven, of water, and of the Spirit, and be cleansed by blood, even the blood of mine Only Begotten; that ye might be sanctified from all sin; and enjoy the words of eternal life in this world, and eternal life in the world to come; even immortal glory. For by the water ye keep the commandment; by the Spirit ye are justified; and by the blood ye are sanctified. Therefore it is given to abide in you, the record of heaven, the Comforter, the peaceable things of immortal glory, the truth of all things, that which quickeneth all things, which maketh alive all things, that which knoweth all things, and hath all power according to wisdom, mercy, truth, justice, and judgment. And now, behold, I say unto you, This is the plan of salvation unto all men, through the blood of mine Only Begotten, who shall come in the meridian of time."

There can be no clearer, no purer, no higher testimony of the gospel of Jesus Christ than that which I have just read to you from the Inspired Translation, and from all these four books that I have read from in your hearing this morning. There is the word of God given by the Spirit of truth. The living God is the author of these revelations, and we promise to man life and salvation on the terms herein contained. We do it solemnly, we do it understandingly; we do it expecting to meet the promise that we make at the bar of God. We read here the promise to men in the name of Jesus Christ, that if they will repent of their sins with a true heart, with the intention of doing that which is right; if they will accept of these truths, go down into the waters of baptism, there obtaining a remission of their sins, and have the hands of elders of this church laid upon them, they shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. I know that it is true by my personal experience; and I wish to say to you in conclusion that I am ready to testify that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever.

## RELATIVE PERFECTION.

THERE is a relative, as well as a more general, perfection in man, which must not be lost sight of in examining the question of his proper vocation in life. There is required of him, not only a culture of his whole being as a man, but also a diligent and faithful adaptation of certain of his powers to the particular circumstances in which he is placed. Life's purpose is only adequately accomplished in discharging both these claims; and, indeed, the more limited service is a necessary condition of the general development. You find yourself, then, occupying a given position in the world. It has its appointed duties, its special opportunities of usefulness, trials also, difficulties and temptations of its own. Take your lot as it is assigned you, without murmuring. Make the best of it; and, if in the eyes of men it seems unhonored and unenviable, ennoble it by your own spirit, and work your way through it, by character and honest industry, to something better and happier. If, on the other hand, you find it accord with your inclination, and open before you a fair prospect of worldly advancement, be assured there is nothing irreligious in honorably aiming at success and eminence in it, and still less in openly avowing that such is your object. Every pursuit which conduces to the welfare of the world has its appropriate honor attending it; and a genuine virtue is developed by enthusiasm for what is highest in our own line of action. You may treat life as a problem, which has to be wrought out to a successful result, with certain moral conditions attached to it. Do not, because it looks difficult, timorously shrink from attempting the solution; but work through every part of it, whether you get the whole result or not, without violating one of its moral conditions. Draw the utmost from it that will yield for temporal prosperity, for

social weight and position, for honor, usefulness, mental culture, and refined enjoyment, consistently with the strictest integrity, with health and the exercise of the affections, with a remembrance of the end of life and a cheerful submission to the divine will. Whatever your vocation in life, —whether you labor with the head or with the hand; whether you write books, or manufacture cloth; whether your ships cross every sea, or your whole stock in trade is contained within the four walls of your humble shop; whether you sit on the bench of justice, or earn your honest wages from week to week, —honor your work as assigned you by God, who regards not its subject-matter, but the spirit in which it is performed; and, as in his sight, with a loyal and devoted heart, strive to be outdone by no one in the completeness and efficiency of its execution.

This is the healthy view of our human world. Contentment, comfort, abundance, depend on its wide diffusion. It would put everyone in his proper place, and fit him with his proper task. It would let none be idle, and leave none in want. It would abolish useless privilege, and bring all under the constraint of wholesome duty. This view reconciles earth and heaven. While we are in the world, it makes us, in the best of senses, friends with the world, but not less fitted for heaven when we pass away. It is also the honest and sincere view. Thousands who disown it act upon it; and none more so, and with a keener eye even to selfish advancement, than some who put forth an exclusive claim to the religious character. Such is the course of action which contributes to relative perfection, by linking our individual lives through specific duties with the general well-being of the world.

JOHN JAMES TAYLER.