

DUTIES
RESPONSIBILITIES
AND
FAITH OF THE
SAINTS

by
Presiding Bishopric
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DUTIES, RESPONSIBILITIES, AND FAITH OF THE SAINTS

As we shall soon reach the closing time of another year, it will be well to look back over the immediate past and review the work done, comparing the same critically with the written word, so as to determine whether the law of Christ has indeed been fulfilled in our work, or whether we have come short. Forty years ago attention by divine commandment was called to the necessity of "fulfilling" the law relating to temporal matters. Doctrine & Covenants section 114, paragraph 1. And it will require but little reflection on the part of any one in order to know that so long as the law of Christ or any part of it remains unfulfilled, as a people we are lacking, not having performed the duties required of us.

As children and followers of the Holy One, who became such because he was obedient in all things, we can not in any sense afford to fail in keeping the least of the commandments which he has given us. The church was advised as early as 1834 of the necessity of obedience to all the laws of God, and instruction plainly given that:

"Zion can not be built up unless it is by the principles of the law of the celestial kingdom, otherwise I can not receive her unto myself; and my people must needs be chastened until they learn obedience, if it needs be, by the things which they suffer." Doctrine & Covenants 102:2

It is not our object in this review to judge any brother or sister as to their standing, or worthiness or unworthiness, under the law. Each is to do that for himself. But it will be expected of us to point out, in so far as we are able, in much plainness, the requirements under the law, that all may obtain a quickened sense of duty and a clear conception, if possible, of the law relating to the unrighteous mammon, or riches of the world, as illustrated by Jesus in the parable of the unjust steward.

The Master taught plainly the results and consequences of both the performance and the nonperformance of duty in these things, not leaving the task to those who might err. He said:

"He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much. If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?" Luke 16:10-12

The things which we now have are not our own, but God's. Christ has wrought out for us a rich inheritance which is to be given as our "own," if we shall prove ourselves faithful. Each then should awake and examine himself faithfully, as the Lord shall judge in faithfulness by and by.

Seventy years are now accomplished since the instruction was given:

"Behold, now it is called today (until the coming of the Son of man), and verily

it is a day of sacrifice, and a day for the tithing of my people; for he that is tithed shall not be burned (at his coming); for after today cometh the burning: this is speaking after the manner of the Lord; for verily I say, Tomorrow all the proud and they that do wickedly shall be as stubble; and I will burn them up, for I am the Lord of hosts; and I will not spare any that remaineth in Babylon. Wherefore, if ye believe me, ye will labor while it is called today." Section 64:5

This harmonizes so wonderfully with the testimony given, by the inspired Psalmist, and of which he states, "The mighty God, even the Lord, hath spoken," that no doubt need arise as to the divine touch of the revelation.

"Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined. Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence; a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him. He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that he may judge his people. Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice." Psalms 50:2-5

The establishment of Zion, the coming of the Lord, the terrible burning, the testimonies of heaven and of earth, and the gathering of the Saints who have made a covenant by sacrifice, are all here set forth in majesty and power. Surely no faithful Saint can ever hesitate to perform his duty because it will be a sacrifice to do so after studying this language.

In the ministration of the law of Zion touching temporalities, as with the law relating to spiritual things, there is a proper order, and each step is taken as men and women are in condition to make the same. Faith in God is not had without hearing the word of God. There can be no true baptism without faith and repentance. But after the condition of hearing the word, faith is possible; and under the conditions of both faith and repentance, baptism may be administered; all these having been performed, another new and extended step, the laying on of hands, is provided for under the law. Should a person demand the ministration of the laying on of hands as a first step he would never gain the position of practical advancement in divine things.

This law is equally true in the administration of that which relates to temporal matters. Had the church, when under the form of branch and district government only, demanded the administration of the law that is made applicable in Zion and her stakes, failure and confusion must certainly have ensued. The distinctive line outlining the conditions was clearly drawn in the revealed law, so that no mistake need be made in a proper administration. The instruction is given:

"It is not expedient in me that there shall be any stakes appointed until I command my people. When it shall be necessary I will command that they be established." Section 117:11

If there was no necessity for a stake there was no necessity for the administration of a section of the law that was made applicable under the condition of a stake; and the work of

gathering tithes and offerings would be carried on, as in the case of the preaching of the gospel by John, preparing the people for more perfect things, if they should not reject the counsel of God by refusing to obey what they could obey.

We are called upon to occupy ground as we advance, not before. It was necessary for Israel to cross the Jordan before attempting to apply certain laws and usages to Canaan; and we have our Jordan before us and the wilderness about us in a spiritual sense, and we are required to work accordingly. These conditions were foreseen and pointed out in the revelations, hence some features found in the law: "Let those commandments which I have given concerning Zion and her law, be executed and fulfilled, after her redemption" (Section 102:10b). This is not to be interpreted to mean that we shall have to wait until the redemption has been completed before any part of the law is applicable and binding, but as a step is made in the work of the redemption, so the Saints must occupy accordingly and fulfill the law relating to such new condition.

Following the order of development and growth intimated in the law, on the 15th of April, 1901, the following instruction was received and subsequently accepted and acted upon by the church:

"My people are directed to establish two stakes; one at Independence, one at Lamoni, Iowa, organizing them after the pattern which is found in the law;"
Section 125:10

Authoritatively, then, we pass in part at least from the governmental forms of branches and districts to that of stakes, and by this step take upon ourselves all the responsibilities and duties incident to the new relation, and are entitled to all the privileges and blessings promised for the new order, providing we are faithful in carrying out the laws revealed for the government of the same.

Under these advanced conditions none ought to be surprised that greater sacrifices are expected, and that a fuller consecration of our powers, affections, and interests are required to the service of God by the people than before. When a stake had been appointed and the Saints were gathering to Far West in 1838, a special petition was made of the Lord to know what was required of the people; they prayed: "O Lord, show unto thy servants how much thou requireth of the properties of thy children for a tithing." There could have been little or no question as to what the was a proper tithe under the law as applicable to the church in a scattered condition at the time, for numerous instances of precept and example are contained in the Scriptures setting forth the rule and practice. The people at this time, however, seem to have been apprehensive that the special work they had undertaken would require special diligence and sacrifice on their part, and they seem to have done that which was eminently proper under such circumstances, - appealed to the Lord for instruction and received the following:

"Verily, thus saith the Lord, I require all their surplus property to be put into the hands of the bishop of my church of Zion, for the building of mine house, and for the laying the foundation of Zion, and for the priesthood, and for the debts of the presidency of my church; and this shall be the beginning of the

tithing of my people; and after that, those who have thus been tithed, shall pay one tenth of all their interest annually; and this shall be a standing law unto them for ever, for my holy priesthood, saith the Lord." Section 106:1

The law is not local in the sense that it was for the people alone, however; for the second paragraph, like the promise of Peter on Pentecost day, extends the application as follows: "Verily, I say unto you, It shall come to pass **that all those who gather unto the land of Zion shall be tithed of their surplus properties**, and shall observe this law, or they shall not be found worthy to abide among you . . . And this shall be an ensample *unto all the stakes of Zion*. Even so. Amen. This instruction more fully revealed the law applicable under the conditions named. Nearly seven years before, the Lord spoke of the work of sacrifice and gathering as follows

"And now I give unto you further directions concerning this land. It is wisdom in me that my servant Martin Harris should be an example unto the church, in laying his moneys before the bishop of the church. And also, this is a law unto every man that cometh unto this land, to receive an inheritance, and he shall do with his moneys according as the law directs." Section 58:7

The example here presents also another feature of importance to the Saints - that of inheritances. And the important instruction, "concerning the residue of the elders," as set out in the ninth paragraph, should not be overlooked. Considering the general sentiment known to have been held to by the people at the time, the statement becomes a wonderful prophecy, now literally fulfilled, showing that time would be required to accomplish the work and the necessity of carrying the gospel message to all people. It reads:

"And now, verily I say, concerning the residue of the elders of my church, The time has not yet come, for many years, for them to receive their inheritance in this land, except they desire it through the prayer of faith, only as it shall be appointed unto them of the Lord. For, behold, they shall push the people together from the ends of the earth;" Section 58:9e,f

No place is found, it seems, for either elder or layman in the gathering without proper sacrifice and the exercise of supreme faith in God; nor should anything less be expected. Men and women in order to inherit heavenly things should show by their obedience and fidelity to the principles belonging thereto that they are worthy. It may require great sacrifice on their part to attain it. It may demand the manifestation of great courage and faith, or all of these; but it is certain that attainment is only had under these conditions. Jesus said to his disciples:

"Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. This he spake unto his disciples, saying, Sell that ye have and give alms; provide not for yourselves bags which wax old, but rather provide a treasure in the heavens, that faileth not;" Luke 12:35-36

To have required less of the Saints in 1838 than was asked in the first century would have been unlike God. It is stated in Section 42:8:

"If thou lovest me, thou shalt serve me and keep all my commandments. And, behold, thou wilt remember the poor, and consecrate of thy properties for their support, that which thou hast to impart unto them, with a covenant and a deed which cannot be broken; and inasmuch as ye impart of your substance unto the poor, ye will do it unto me, and it shall be laid before the bishop of my church and his counselors, two of the elders, or high priests, such as he shall or has appointed and set apart for that purpose." Section 42:8

This applies to all the church, and in effect is much the same as surplus, as stated in Section 106. In laying the foundation of Zion, lands have to be purchased, and storehouses established, and all kinds of industries set in operation as fast as possible, that there may be places for the Saints to live, something for them to do, and their necessities supplied; but this will take time. In order to have means to operate with, it will be necessary for all that can to turn over their surplus, or now make a first consecration, according to their circumstances and ability, that there may be means to establish storehouses, buy lands, and make the necessary preparation for the complete consecration of the residue as stated in Section 42:

"And again, if there shall be properties in the hands of the church, or any individuals of it, more than is necessary for their support, after this first consecration, which is a residue, to be consecrated unto the bishop, it shall be kept to administer unto those who have not, from time to time, that every man who has need may be amply supplied, and receive according to his wants." Section 42:10

To reach this final condition and to make our work a success, this law must be fulfilled, that all things may be prepared, and nothing done in haste. When the Saints began to gather to the land of Zion in 1831, they were requested by revelation in Ohio to give of their means to buy land in Zion; all the churches being called upon to do the same.

"And let all the moneys which can be spared, it mattereth not unto me whether it be little or much, be sent up unto the land of Zion, unto them whom I have appointed to receive." Section 63:10

This seems to be the Lord's way to establish Zion, and all should gladly labor with him to accomplish this work intrusted to the church. The apostle (Paul) says:

"For we are laborers together with God; ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building." 1 Corinthians 3:9

Then we must work according to his direction and pattern, else we toil in vain. With the law demanding the surplus let us comply, and all everywhere make a first consecration as a beginning at least; and when there is sufficient in the treasury, those in charge will move forward with their part of the work, as fast as deemed wise, or as the Lord shall direct. We do not want the cries of the worthy poor to ascend to God in vain, and we must do the Lord's work in his way. Both propositions must be met.

In the 50th Psalm the Lord says, "The world is mine and the fullness thereof." We, then, are only stewards under God. This is in harmony what he says in Section 101:10:

"Behold, all these properties are mine, or else your faith is vain, and ye are found hypocrites, and the covenants which ye have made unto me are broken; and if the properties are mine then ye are stewards, otherwise ye are no stewards."

The full time having arrived under God's order and blessing, the Bishopric calls upon the Saints everywhere to yield full and complete obedience to every mandate of the law, with a free heart, willingly, and as the Lord has blessed every one, whether with much or little, and all will to be used for the purpose designated in the revelations.

The Presiding Bishop, therefore, will administer this law, take the testimonies and receive surplus properties and special consecrations of the Saints in every place according to the provisions of the law concerning the same. And the bishops in the Stakes of Zion will proceed to administer the law of the Lord touching surplus properties and consecrations in connection with tithes and offerings in their respective stakes according to the rules and regulations furnished by the Bishop of the church, that there may be harmony and equality in the administration of the law among the people, making due report of the same to the Presiding Bishop.

Bishops in districts, and Bishop's agents, will also carry out these provisions so far as the same are applicable, under the instruction and advice of the Bishop and his counselors. Thus the church will work according as the Lord has designated concerning stakes, and of churches outside as provided by section 58:10, 11; 63:8, 13.

Carrying into effect these provisions will not in any manner interfere with the contributions in the way of special offerings made for college purposes. The law directs the application of the funds herein called for, and every cent of it is needed for the purposes named. The law is also definite touching the duty of the Saints to the college, and this duty should be discharged by every member, for none should neglect to heed the voice of the Master touching it, and fulfill the obligation. All unpaid subscriptions to the college should be forwarded as soon as possible, so they may be applied and the debt canceled.

It may be said that the Bishopric is making a good many calls for money for church purposes, all of which is frankly conceded. But we ask in reply, Is it not necessary to do this if the work is kept advancing toward the accomplishment of the things spoken of in the law? It is also a truth that must not be overlooked, if we would judge aright in these matters, that notwithstanding the fact that there are many calls for help of first one special necessary church work, and then another, the Saints who have sacrificed and helped in all these things are better prepared to comply with the last call made than they were the first. It is said that "giving does not impoverish the Lord." True; and it may also be truly said that giving, for the benefit of the Lord's work, does not impoverish his children. This is one of the fruits of righteousness to be shown forth in the lives of God's children. Men and women glorify God by giving of their means as they also do in other work, hence, the law of giving. The apostle says:

"Let everyone of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come."

Again,

"Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity; for God loveth a cheerful giver."

Jesus said:

"Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away; and every branch that beareth fruit he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit."

This is true of the one who "honors God with his substance" as in anything else. And instead of saying to the members who have done a good work in anything, It is enough, you need not do anything further, the promise is that the Lord will help them, that they "may bring forth more fruit." We trust, then, that we shall never be called upon to meet the excuse that a person has already done something, therefore, should not be called upon again. We are called upon to give as we are able, not more than we are able to give, and the motto and prayer of every member, of every elder in the field, of every general and local officer in the church should be, Lord, help me that I may be able to do more, rather than relieve me from helping further.

We are engaged in the most important work known to man. Do we think it will be accomplished without extraordinary faith, courage, and sacrifice? Let us not deceive ourselves, and let every man and woman make choice of what they will do. Remember the exhortation of the Lord to Joshua:

"Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed; for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest." Joshua 1:9

Trusting fully in the promises of the Lord to his Saints, and that his work will be accomplished in his own time, we are,

Your co laborers in the truth,
E. L. Kelley,
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