

(SERMON SERIES.)

# SUPPLEMENT TO THE SAINTS' HERALD.

LAMONI, IOWA, FEBRUARY 4, 1893.

[Reported for the Herald by E. Stafford.]

## SERMON BY ELDER JOSEPH SNIVELY,

DELIVERED AT LAMONI, IOWA, JULY 10, 1892.

Subject, GOD'S WORD OUR GUIDE.

THE preacher read a portion of the twelfth chapter of Romans, commencing at the ninth verse: "Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another; not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer, distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality. Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not. Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits. Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."

This is a portion of Scripture that I wish to use as the basis of what few

remarks I may be permitted to make to you people this morning. If I have liberty I will try to interest you, and if I have not liberty it will not be my fault. I want to say that if I did not verily believe with all my heart that this was God's divine word and that the great God of heaven so inspired men to give this record to the children of men, I would not occupy this stand this morning. And my reasons, some of them at least, are these: In my limited experience among men, those professing to be the followers of Jesus Christ, those claiming to be ministers of the word, seem to be at variance with the doctrine contained therein, both in teaching and in their demeanor. The spirit that seems to characterize the religious world to-day seems to be so foreign to God's word, to God's pattern, that I must confess, had it not been for the goodness of God in making manifest his divine will and word, in a measure, to me, I would be lost. Yes, I would be in darkness, so far as seeking to worship God in any sense of the word is concerned. I could not do it. I am thankful, then, that the rays of divine light have entered in upon my soul, and revealed to me to a certain extent that God's word is true; that he has a people seeking in their weakness to worship him in Spirit and in truth.

It seems to my mind, this morning, that there are two necessary things that we as a people and as a church should observe, and should be better acquainted with. The first is diligence in becoming acquainted with the word of God (and when I say the word of God I mean all that God has given to the sons of men), for this reason: I learn that the Lord doeth nothing among men save for their good, for their benefit, and that wherever we find in all the field of research the word of God and occupy in that word, we know that God has preserved it for our good, and it will benefit us individually and collectively. It cuts no special figure where we find that word, what name the volume of the book might be that contains the word of God. The next is, that we should try, if possible, to live in harmony with the lesson I have read this morning; and we know that if any man or woman will follow the instruction herein given, it will better their condition. It would make a heaven on earth for all mankind; it would better the condition of all mankind everywhere, because it teaches them to do unto others as they would wish others to do unto them: and to your speaker's mind this is the highest type of God's revelation to man. Jesus when here upon earth uttered that language. There is nothing more sublime than that, "To do unto others as we would have others do to us;" and the lesson we have contains some grand truths. It teaches us to ever keep a spirit of humility; it teaches us to not place ourselves in the front to be seen, and known, and noticed of men; but it teaches to prefer our brethren and sisters and all the race of God who are seeking to imitate the character of the blessed Redeemer, in honor, before ourselves. And a person in possession of the Spirit that gave

utterance to these lines will be patient with an individual, no matter how he may oppose the truth that is presented to him; he will cultivate also, and seek to be possessed of that spirit of humility that characterized the person of Christ when he was here among men, as the great Master-teacher of the race.

I am satisfied of this fact, that there can be no man or woman too well acquainted with God's word; and if you are not satisfied of it this Sabbath morning there may be some of you who will live to see the day that you will be satisfied. A lack of this has been the cause of great distress and trouble among the people of God. We have the history of the past to prove this. If there had been better heed paid to the word of God in the very beginning of this latter-day work, by the people of God, there would not have been that amount of darkness, and deception that has been practiced among them, which has caused the most cruel treatment that ever befell the children of men. It was because they came to the conclusion that because an angel had come and God had spoken, and had called men to lead his people, and all that was necessary was to hold a membership in the church,—it was because of this that they were in a condition to be led hither and thither by the cunning craftiness of men, until their souls were led to wretchedness and misery, whereas, if they had been better acquainted with the word of God they would have been better posted in this latter-day work; they would have been better qualified to occupy the position of judges in the matter, to have seen whether the teachings of those men who were leading the sons and daughters of the kingdom of God hither and thither were in harmony with the word of God or no, and they would

thus have been kept from the deception practiced upon them. The prophet declares that the life of man is only a span from the cradle to the grave, and that death is certain, while life is uncertain; hence the necessity of becoming better acquainted with the rule that God hath laid down for the salvation of the sons and daughters of men.

This carelessness and indifference of the religious world to-day is one of the reasons why the people are taught by the precepts of men instead of by the commandments of God. The first time I went to tell the people this latter-day work was of God, I went into a house, and in talking with the man of the house concerning this work, he said: "Young man, that is your business to become acquainted with the word of God. I have no opportunity to do so. I pay the minister to come once or twice on the Sabbath to tell me what I should do. My time is occupied with the things of this life." You can readily see that that man was in a condition to be deceived.

We as a people who have entered into the church and kingdom of God through the ordinances of the gospel, and who through the mercy of God have received the Holy Spirit in our souls whereby we are able to cry, Abba, Father, become careless and indifferent concerning our duties in studying the Scriptures. Paul taught Timothy to study the Scriptures, and made the statement that he had studied them from his youth, and that they were able to make him wise unto salvation. I presume there are none under the sound of my voice but who desire to be wise unto salvation. God knows I desire it. It is through this spirit of carelessness in not becoming acquainted with the standard works of the church that we are liable to be deceived by spirit manifestation;

but we are able to test it by the good word of God, as the Prophet Isaiah declared: "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." That does not apply to the religious world alone; but it reaches your case and mine, in the church. Manifestations in the church should also be tried by the good word of God, and if they are not in harmony with that word, there is no light in the man or woman that utters the gift. Were it not for the revealed word and the privilege of becoming acquainted with that word we would all, more or less, be deceived by spirit operation and manifestation.

There is a quotation found in the Book of Doctrine and Covenants. I have not the book here, but you will find it on page 163. There was a time, in the first organization of the church, when the ministry sent out to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ to the world was authorized to tell those who heard that word and complied with the ordinances thereof that God would send forth his Spirit, whereby they would be able to know, individually, whether that work was of God or not. And these men in a few years after entering upon their ministry became deceived by spirit manifestations. They did not understand them, and the Lord asked these ministers if when he sent them to preach the gospel by the Spirit of truth they preached by that Spirit or in some other way, and said if they preached it in some other way, it was not of God. We will find, truly, that there is only one way to preach Jesus Christ to the world, and that is to preach him in Spirit and in truth; no other way will perfect you and me in the great hereafter. If the works that we build on that grand foundation of Christ are not of material that will

endure the day in which it is to be tried by fire, surely our works are lost, and all our labors in this life will be fruitless. We ought to be careful that on that grand and glorious foundation we build gold, silver, and precious stones; not wood, hay, or stubble.

Again my experience with the religious world is this: Had not God in his infinite wisdom and goodness given this pattern as we find on page 168 of the Book of Covenants, no man could be able to judge his fellow man of the spirit of which he is in possession; because if outward-appearing principles, of piety, etc., were the only tests for distinguishing the spirits of which men were in possession, we would still be without a sure foundation. Bless you, the religious world of the nineteenth century outwardly possesses a great amount of piety, and would, if that was the test, be in possession of the Spirit of God. But here is the pattern God has given: "Wherefore he that prayeth, whose spirit is contrite, the same is accepted of me, if he obey mine ordinances." That is the test. And thus it may seem, to all outward appearance, that a man's spirit is contrite; yet if that man will not obey the ordinances of God, you may know that he is not of God.

Again he says: "He that speaketh, whose spirit is contrite, whose language is meek, and edifieth, the same is of God, if he obey mine ordinances." So we may know that he who obeys the ordinances of the house of God is in possession of the Spirit of God. Surely this is a grand, good test. This outward piety of the Christian is not a test, outside of obedience to God's commands. So you can readily see that there is a great demand made upon the children of men. Yes, the children of the kingdom of God should become acquainted with these grand utterances that were given by inspiration to this church. The individual who so accepts these ordinances, no matter how weak he may feel, though he may occupy the stand and tremble under the responsibility that rests upon him, under the influence of the Spirit of God shall be made strong. God will give him power by which he will be able to present these glorious

principles of his heavenly kingdom to the world, and these grand utterances found in that record, the Book of Covenants. This pattern is given to all the ministry; to the First Presidency, to the elders, and members of the church of God under the whole heavens. How sweeping that is; everything that comes outside of this pattern we are under no obligation to accept, but may know such is not of God.

The few weeks that I have been away from here seeking opportunities to present these truths in Decatur and other counties surrounding, and in some places where there has never yet been any preaching done, I have had good attendance, especially in one place. The first evening I occupied the stand I had quite a congregation of Christian brethren, some Baptists, some Methodists. I asked them what they desired me to present to them. "I am here in your midst as a defender of what I understand to be the principles of life and salvation. What do you desire that I present to you? my own ideas, as an individual, of the gospel of the heavens and the joy and happiness that should be hereafter? or shall I present to you the word of God, which ought to be the man of our counsel?" They all gave their ready consent to hear from the word of God. I must confess that on the first evening, when I presented the principles of faith and repentance, I had the interest of everybody; but when I dropped those two first principles, I could see now and then a head drop a little; but while I could see a few heads drop, I could see others lift up their heads when we dwelt upon the fact that the Lamb of God was buried by baptism in the river Jordan, and taught that doctrine in his day to the people, and his chosen messengers after him taught the same. The next day, when we were out on the street, (Bro. Shakespeare was with me,) we could hardly go on the street anywhere without hearing some talk about that discourse of mine. It was splendid doctrine. But the next evening when speaking on the following ordinance, "the laying on of hands" for the bestowal of the Holy Spirit and the blessing of little children, show-

ing that good old Simeon—the servant of God who prayed that he might not be permitted to see death until he had seen the Lord's Christ—went into the temple and took up that babe of Bethlehem, and lifting his eyes to heaven, said: "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation;" and that Jesus Christ received the blessing of God under the hand of this worthy prophet, and that Jesus taught the same in his ministry, and his disciples after him, those Christian brethren there assembled could not endure that; it was too much for them, and those who could endure baptism, could not endure the ordinance of the laying on of hands. I had the congregation hanging their heads; that was no place for me. I discovered a very few whose souls in their judgment was with the work, but popular opinion was against them, and they dared not come out and show their colors. Before God and man I pity that people. I am satisfied I have overcome one thing if I never overcome another—because God in his goodness has given me a greater pity for humanity than I used to have.

I see in this free land of America that religion has become such that it has covered the land; and it is no more like it used to be when we inquired one of another, "What church do you belong to?" and the answer was, "O to the big church," meaning the world. There is no such thing now. That day is past and gone; the people are very religious, and belong to the churches of the land. The very thought that only about fifty miles from here a man after getting the opportunity of presenting the word of God, and while he was in the attempt to do so the whole building and roof was bombarded, sounding to him almost like Sherman's cannon during the Rebellion, is truly astonishing. In that little town with five churches with spires pointing heavenward, the very thought that a man, a preacher, should come in their midst and get permission to speak in the town hall, and could not declare that Jesus is the Christ, without the building being bombarded with brickbats—it made me feel that bigotry and intolerance were not yet dead; that

there were a few men of that class remaining among the children of men. There came into that meeting two ministers, who walked up the aisle near to the stand I occupied, who appeared to measure me, size me up, turned their backs upon me, and had not been out five minutes when the bombarding commenced—men who were hired to preach to that people. I do not say these ministers had anything to do with it; I do not say they encouraged the bombardiers; but it did look a little like it when they came in and sized me up, and without stopping to hear what I had to say, immediately went out, and then the shower of brickbats upon the house commenced. I sought in another place the privilege to preach in the park that was used for public speaking on various occasions, and for celebrations. While asking the committee for the privilege, a gentleman who was writing at a short distance from me said: "No sir, you cannot have our church to preach in." I said to him: "Wait till I ask you for your church; I am asking these gentlemen for the park." I had the idea that he thought I was possibly inquiring if there was a church that I could get to preach in. It appeared to me that this gentleman was representing himself as one of the leading officers of the church (Campbellite). He said: "I would not object to you, if you preached the gospel—if you preached God's word." I said to him: "My dear man, I used to belong to the same church you belong to, and I know all that you do, and have learned a good deal more; I have accepted all that you ever accepted of the word of God and a great deal more than you have received." "Why didn't you stay there then?" "Because the good Master said, 'Teach them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you,' and I found your people were not doing that." "You don't accept all the principles of the gospel." "Tell me all that you believe," I replied. "I believe in faith, in repentance, and in baptism for the remission of sins." "My dear sir, I believe in that, and I don't stop there, but go on to the next principle, which you ignore, and that is the 'laying on of hands,' for the reception of the

Holy Spirit, that follows baptism.”  
 “There is no such thing in the Bible.”  
 “Have you ever read your Bible?”  
 “Yes sir, hundreds of times; and there is no such declaration in the Bible.”  
 “My good man, are you an honest Christian?—Let us turn and read, and see if we do not find it here.”

Do you know that that man was so dishonest, spiritually, that he would not stop to hear it read, declaring as he went away from me that there was no such scripture as that in the book?

I do not know whether you people can see it or not, but it seems to me that dishonesty is growing more and more in the hearts of the people, and deception is following in the wake of deception, socially, religiously, and politically, and the time is close at your door when there will be no safety outside of living that godly life that God requires of his people everywhere. It is the only safety that we can see. Let me read to you—I want to help you people, and I would like if the Saints everywhere would become acquainted with this book (Book of Mormon) as well as the Bible. It is not often when I occupy the stand that I take any time to read; but let me read to you a little from the Book of Mormon in order that we may see the condition the world is in. You will find it on page 496, commencing at paragraph 3. “And it shall come in a day when the blood of the saints shall cry unto the Lord, because of secret combinations and the works of darkness; yea, it shall come in a day when the power of God shall be denied, and churches become defiled, and shall be lifted up in the pride of their hearts; yea, even in a day when leaders of churches, and teachers, in the pride of their hearts, even to the envying of them who belong to their churches; yea, it shall come in a day when there shall be heard of fires, and tempests, and vapors of smoke in foreign lands; and there shall also be heard of wars and rumors of wars, and earthquakes in divers places; yea, it shall come in a day when there shall be great pollutions upon the face of the earth; there shall be murders and robbing, and lying and deceivings, and whoredoms, and all manner of abominations, when there shall be many who will say,

Do this, or do that, and it mattereth not, for the Lord will uphold such at the last day. But wo unto such, for they are in the gall of bitterness, and in the bonds of iniquity.”

Now you can readily see that in the day and age in which we live this work was to be established among the children of men, such was to be the condition of the nation of America, this boasted land of freedom, that these secret works of darkness were to transpire, from time to time, when this work came forth. Not only is this so, but another quotation in the Book of Mormon declares that when God would favor the Gentiles he would set up his church and kingdom among them,—I refer to it without taking time to read it,—that when the babe of Bethlehem came to Israel they rejected him, and because of this the kingdom was given to the Gentiles, and they accepted the Savior; that in the last days God would establish his truth among the Gentiles, and on this continent too; and he says that if the Gentiles would accept the gospel (that is, these Gentiles who came from the mother country to this land, and who were highly favored of God in coming) in the latter days they should be a blessed people, walking in the covenants of God; but he says that if they become lifted up in the pride of their hearts, and the imagination of their hearts are evil continually, and they refuse to obey his gospel and to become identified with the house of Israel, then should the remnant of the house of Jacob that has been persecuted and smitten, and become a hiss and a byword, and driven from their lands by the hands of the Gentiles until they are scattered in the far western mountains—then if this shall be the condition of the Gentiles when God shall restore his work of salvation among them, then shall the remnant of the house of Jacob be in the midst of them, as a lion among the beasts of the forest, that devours and tramples under feet, and that class of people that had rebelled against God’s truth shall be cut off from the people. I do not believe that God has authorized me, when I am called to preach before the people, to cry peace and safety; yet I believe that we should

use the gift of wisdom, and not boast of faith, nor of mighty works; but I do believe that God requires at my hands what he requires at your hands, brethren, to raise up a warning voice to the effect that we are living in a critical time—a time in which God is going to try men and women to the very center, to see whether we are what we profess to be, the children of the kingdom.

There has been a time since I came into the church when I have been careless and indifferent, and have wasted the time; but though I am weak and ignorant, whenever I have undertaken to preach, God's Spirit has blessed me. I never knew him to fail me when I stood up in defense of this work. I have seen brethren do well temporally; their children clad well; their wives were well clad, while I was in the very depths of poverty. I have sought by my daily labor to place my family in a condition that they should have a goodly share of this world's goods. I have got too old to seek for honor or fame in this world. I do want to prepare myself to overcome my evil habits, to learn to imitate the example of Jesus, that I may receive the promise that is given those who faithfully labor in this latter-day work; and I hope to obtain it. I have no time to look around at this brother or that brother, to watch how they are living; if I do so, I will fall short myself. I have come to this conclusion: I have got to run the great race for eternal life, and have to run it patiently, and my eye must be fixed upon Jesus Christ, the author and finisher of my faith. I am going to keep my eye upon God, centered upon him alone. I find that if this people with whom I have cast my lot is not the people of God, there is no such people to be found upon this earth. I never had so vivid, so forcible an impression in my life than I have of late of the statement made by Joseph the Martyr, when he declared in his history, when those heavenly personages appeared unto him in his first attempt to pray, that he inquired of those messengers which of all the churches was right, that he could know which of them to join. The answer was that all of the churches were an abomina-

tion in his sight. That is not to say that every man and woman who are outside of the Latter Day Saints Church are an abomination in God's sight; he made no such statement; it was that the creeds of these churches were an abomination in the sight of God. Individuals are found in these churches who are trying according to the best light they have to serve the Lord faithfully. If it were not so, we would have hard work in preaching the gospel in the world. I have not seen it so forcibly before, as in the last month while away from Lamoni; I came back with the conviction that so far as religion is concerned the world instead of growing better is growing worse and worse, as the Apostle Paul declared iniquity should grow worse and worse until the earth would be fully ripened and prepared for the vengeance of God that shall be poured out upon the wicked world. The religious world instead of taking the word of God as the man of their counsel, so far as prophets are concerned, take the position that Jesus Christ was the last prophet that ever graced the footstool of God, that he closed up the prophetic era and was the last prophet that should ever enter the world. Long after that the word of God declares in the twenty-first chapter of Acts, that after Jesus Christ ascended to the Father there was living a prophet, and yet they declare that Jesus Christ was the last prophet. Here was a man by the name of Agabus who took the girdle of Paul and bound his own hands and feet, and said: "Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles."

The Scriptures say that if a thing prophesied does not follow, you may know that God has not spoken; but if the thing does follow, then you may know that the man hath not spoken presumptuously. The church at Jerusalem sent Judas and Silas on a mission to the Gentiles, (this Judas was supposed to be the brother of Christ, not the one that betrayed him; *he* had transgressed and departed this life long before that,) and they were prophets of God, and were sent to the

Gentiles to teach the decision of the conference held at Jerusalem, and to read to them the epistle of James the servant of God. (Acts 15.) So here are two more prophets. And Jesus, in the eleventh chapter of Luke declared: "Therefore also said the wisdom of God, I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they shall slay and persecute." In another place he says: "Behold I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them ye shall scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city." John the Revelator while upon the isle of Patmos declared that the day would come, when Israel is gathered back to the land of their fathers, that there should be two living witnesses called prophets of God, and they should prophesy three years and a half, in the latter days, just prior to the coming of Christ. Here are two more prophets spoken of that were to prophesy after Christ. The religious world takes the position that revelation closed with the apostles of Christ, and that the apostles as well as revelation, were only designed of God to remain in the church for the full establishment of the work of God and his Christ in the Christian era, and that it never entered into the design of God that a succession of apostles and prophets and present revelation should characterize the church and kingdom of Christ after that. Then what have they left from that time to the present? They have only left the transactions of those apostles as they come secondhanded. If revelation has ceased, how do men and women know that they are accepted of God as his children? If there is nothing left of what composed the church of Jesus Christ, how can men become his fol-

lowers, and be identified with his church? Such is inconsistent and unreasonable to teach to the sons and daughters of men. So it does not matter which horn of the dilemma they take, it is as the Book of Mormon declares, they build up churches by the wisdom of man and not by the power and wisdom of God. Their teaching is by the wisdom of man, and not by the revelation of God to the race.

No wonder the religious world is in the condition it is to-day, without the Spirit of God to guide, except that portion promised to lighten every man that cometh into the world. I do not want to be rich and highly esteemed among the men of the world; but I do want to enjoy the Spirit of God that will enable me to hold out these glorious truths to the children of men, that they too may enjoy the liberty of this latter-day work. I am, by the grace of God, in this great work. If it had not been for that, God knows what would have become of me, had not his mighty arm sustained me in my short life here upon the earth. And I hope and pray that he will sustain me still, and enable me to preach to my fellow men to prepare them for that glorious day when the light of God will shine upon this poor benighted earth.

May God help you to keep the commandments that have been revealed to us in the Book of Doctrine and Covenants. Take the Holy Scriptures for the man of your counsel, then take the Holy Spirit for your guide, and it will guide you into all truth. Having first learned the truth in God's word, then having learned to obey that word, the Spirit of God is to guide into all truth. May the Spirit of God guide you.