

(SERMON SERIES.)

# SUPPLEMENT TO THE SAINTS' HERALD.

LAMONI, IOWA, NOVEMBER 26, 1892.

[Reported for the Herald by E. Stafford.]

## SERMON BY ELDER JOSEPH R. LAMBERT,

DELIVERED

AT LAMONI, IOWA, AUGUST 28, 1892.

Subject, FEAR OF GOD.

THE preacher read for the morning lesson the sixth chapter of Ephesians, from the first to the eighteenth verses inclusive. He then read for his text the fifteenth verse of the third chapter of 1 Peter: "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear."

I understand from the apostle's words here, that when we undertake to do anything for the benefit of God's work, we should see to it that we are in a proper condition to perform that duty; hence when we give a reason to the people for our hope, we are to make the effort in meekness and in fear. And it seems to follow that unless these conditions obtain with the individual who makes the effort, there will be a failure in that work being done in a manner that will be acceptable to God. This condition of humility God requires on the part of his servants and his children, always, and in every part of the work intrusted to them. I do not understand by the word *fear*, as here used, that it means terror; and while I am aware that it does not come from the same original word, which is defined to mean *reverence*, and *respect*, yet I understand that

it is with the original tongue very much as it is with the English, in which words have different meanings, and the meaning must be largely understood by the connections in which they are used.

It does not seem reasonable, nor at all harmonious with the leading declarations of God's word, that I should be brought into a state of fear or terror when I serve God, or perform any duty in his service; for you will remember when the Master was asked, "Which is the great commandment in the law?" he answered: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind;" and when we do this, I cannot see any room for the fear which "hath torment." John informs us that "there is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear." Hence we arrive at the only reasonable conclusion, that the word *fear*, as here used, represents the highest degree of reverence for God, with such an understanding of his goodness as will lead us to see and feel the exceeding sinfulness of transgressing his laws and breaking his commandments. This is the kind of fear that should move us in the service of God. Hence when we come to those who inquire the reason for the

hope that is within us, we are to give it to them in meekness and in fear; and all this is comprehended in what the wise man said (Ecclesiastes 12: 13): "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil."

Those children who have grown up to the years of maturity and understanding, those who have a good degree of intelligence, and love for goodness, and who are blessed with good parents, do they fear them with cringing terror? Certainly not, for they are loving and kind; but they see and understand that a transgression and disobedience of that which is given for their best good is exceeding sinful, and having that degree of reverence and regard for their parents, they fear to disobey that which is given for their good.

It does not require, I think, a great deal of reflection to convince us that here in this life there is a necessity for some standard by which to try our belief and our actions. If we are living here without any standard, it is not at all likely that we will rise much higher than ourselves. All concede, both those who are opposed to the Christian religion and those who believe in it, that man is made more or less imperfect; that we cannot find one who is absolutely perfect; hence if we follow any standard that has originated in the wisdom of man, we are following that which is more or less imperfect, and will never rise higher than the standard. It is true we may rise higher than ourselves, if we are so fortunate as to select for our guide a standard which has originated with higher and better individuals than we

are, and following the rules which they have given, and the example which they manifest in their works, we may rise as high as they have risen; but we cannot go beyond that, hence we can never become perfect. When we acknowledge the necessity of a standard, the inquiry at once arises, What has been presented to the world as the best standard? You will remember, many of you, that in speaking of an objection urged against Mr. R. G. Ingersoll's philosophy, he says: "If I do take away from you, I am creating sentiment in the hearts of the public; you move on the imagination. I would teach the people the principle of love." And he presents this as though it was something new; but it is not, for the very basis of the Christian religion is love. I ask those who are acquainted with the gospel record, if Mr. Ingersoll or any who believe as he does have ever met with a better expression of love than we have in the gospel? This principle of love lies at the very foundation of the gospel scheme: love to God, love to man; and it was the love of the Supreme Being that moved him to send Jesus Christ, that whosoever should believe on him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

We call your attention to Christ's exact words, as found in the New Testament, given in answer to one of the Pharisees who sought to entrap him in his speech; the twenty-second chapter of Matthew from the thirty-sixth to the fortieth verses, inclusive. Now, here the whole ground of duty is covered; and if we are anxious to learn what our duty is, we will find that these perfect words express all, in small compass; that is, we are to love God, and to love our neighbor. And if you ask what is meant by our neighbor, we have but to turn to the

words of the Master in the New Testament. He says it is the one that is in need, and whom we have the power to help in the time of distress and need. "Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." Where can we find a better and more emphatic expression of love than made here in these declarations by Him who stands at the head of the Christian system, and who must be recognized by Mr. Ingersoll and all others as the leading representative of Christianity? Hence what Mr. Ingersoll tells us, as we have noticed, with reference to the principle of love as superior to the Christian or gospel work, is of no force whatever.

In connection with this we call your attention to the statements made by John in writing to the saints—those who had obeyed the gospel—in his first epistle, third chapter, and fourteenth verse: "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death." John says, by implication, that there is a possibility of our obeying the ordinances, in form, and yet of not passing into that state of love in Christ Jesus; and he gives as a grand test, by which we may know that we have a proper standing before God, our love for the brethren. Now this love here spoken of in the gospel, cannot be received to the extent that it is enjoined, as I understand it, unless we are in possession of the Spirit of God; and by

obedience to the gospel we come in possession of that Spirit. Thus if we obey the gospel "*from the heart*," we are sure to receive this Spirit; and love to God and each other, is its leading fruit.

"We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love *the brethren*," not our brethren. The Free Masons may love their brethren, the Odd Fellows theirs, etc.; but the brethren meant here are those that were spoken of on one occasion by the Savior. Jesus was told that his mother and his brethren desired to speak to him, and he said: "Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." Those who do the will of God become the brethren of Christ, and "we know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love *the brethren*." So if Mr. Ingersoll should say concerning this love of God, that He is so far away that no good results can come from love to him, we reply, that we are not only taught to love God, but are taught to love each other; and John makes it so plain in his writings that if we love not our brother whom we have seen, we cannot love God whom we have not seen. Here is another test. And John also states that "whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him." That is the kind of love taught in the gospel; and it reminds me again that the gospel standard is much higher than any with which we are acquainted, and the promises of the gospel are as great and grand in their character as the duties are important. This is

sustained all the way through the Bible, and we are led to conclude from the light of its pages that the blessings of the gospel are held out to the human family by the infinite God, and he says, You can have them freely if you will; but there are certain conditions by which they may be received, and upon no other conditions can they be secured; now choose for yourselves. And we are choosing. Some choose to go so far, and there they place their stakes and say, "I don't propose to go any farther," as though God would condescend to come to their conditions. Others think they can go a little farther, and still others not so far; and thus they think they can choose for themselves what they will believe and do. Well, we have better and more important work to do than to stop and quarrel with others because they do not go as far as we do. We know that God will do right; he will be the same just and merciful Father in eternity that he is here.

"Without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." This faith lies at the very foundation of Christian duty—faith in *God*; and when we come to examine the character of this faith that is required of us, we see revealed the correct standard by which we are to be governed. I am willing to admit that the Bible, as a record, is more or less imperfect, because, as a book, it is the work of man; but it contains the word of God; it reveals the gospel plan; it enjoins that which, if properly obeyed by us, will place us within reach of that which is absolutely perfect in its character—the Spirit of truth, which never leads into error, but leads and guides into truth. It will, says Jesus, "guide you into all truth." Hence,

when we follow this standard, it will lead us to God; it is the connecting link between God and man; it is that which is to prepare us for and bring us into perfect harmony with himself, and to qualify us for all that is in store for the pure and the good—those who love him and keep his commandments.

The word of the Lord gives us the double assurance that the Spirit will perfect us in Christ Jesus; but in order to obtain and retain this Spirit, we must obey the gospel and live in accordance with its precepts; for in no other way can we receive absolute perfection with God. The character of God, the Infinite Being, is made up of certain attributes, the leading ones of which are, justice, mercy, love, power, impartiality, and unchangeableness; and as he is an infinite being, we find each one of these attributes complete in itself. This is the kind of character in whom we are to believe. He is the object of our faith; he is able to accomplish his own work; he is able to fulfill all his promises; all power is in his hands in heaven and in earth. He is moved by the principle of love in all his dealings with the human family, in the administration of punishments as well as rewards. He is moved by this principle of love, for "God is love." He is impartial; he loves those who do his will in any age or in any part of the world, hence we can come to him with the promise that is made, without fear. Not because we are privileged in living in any certain land, or in any certain age of the world, for he is unchangeable as well as impartial, and his plan of saving mankind is the same in all ages. It was to serve for the benefit of all mankind; it was to place within their reach the glory and wonderful reward, which

God has promised to those who love and serve him faithfully to the end. We see from all the statements of the New Testament that there can be no change in the gospel plan because there is no change with God; and in Malachi 3: 6 it is declared, "For I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." We can readily see that the gospel to-day, in all its powers, its ordinances, its commandments, its promises, its gifts, and blessings, and privileges, is the same as it was in the days of Jesus and the apostles; and it has become the duty of this people to *live* this gospel, and to preach it everywhere to those within and those without, in order that all who will may be made perfect in Christ Jesus, and not fail to receive the promised reward. I make this declaration with the understanding that faith, repentance, baptism, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment, do not express all that there is in the gospel. There is much more made binding on those who obey the first principles of the gospel before they attain to the condition required to obtain the promised reward.

But notice for a moment the effects produced by faith in such a God as this. Having faith in his love, we will love him and each other: "God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." Having perfect faith in God's absolute justice, we will deal justly with each other; having faith in his purity as stated in the word, we will try to be pure—"Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." Having faith in all these different attributes of his character, as stated so plainly in his word, we will try to go in harmony with them, and hence we will become more and more like God, so that when

he appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. "Now," says the Apostle Paul, "we see through a glass, darkly;" in a day in which the gifts, powers, and blessings of the gospel of the kingdom were in full operation, notwithstanding this, he says we see through a glass, darkly; "but then"—that is, "when that which is perfect is come"—we shall see him "face to face; now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known." This declaration is in complete harmony with a strong statement found in one of the latter-day revelations of Jesus Christ to his people, which says, "The day shall come when you shall comprehend even God." But if we fail to keep his commandments and neglect some of those things which we might regard as small, and fail to come up by degrees, fighting our way, overcoming evil with good, and living by all that the gospel standard requires, we will never attain to this divine knowledge, which is eternal life in its fullness.

This leads us to consider another principle in the gospel; viz., repentance. The gospel we teach is a gospel of repentance; and he who professes the Christian religion and fails to repent either does not understand his duty, or he is not willing to perform it; that is, he is not sincere in his profession. All the way through the New Testament we have this principle taught in a very emphatic way. John was the forerunner of Christ, and he preached in order to prepare the people to receive Jesus. And what did he preach? The gospel of repentance, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." And when they came flocking to his baptism, and demanded to obey this ordinance, he turned to them and taught them that they must bring

forth fruits meet for repentance. We see the way they came to God, and when they came inquiring what they should do, they were taught practical repentance, that they should cease to do wrong and learn to do that which is right, as you will find in Luke. So he taught practically the principle of repentance.

Now, with regard to our peculiar ways, some of them the result of tradition, some of inheritance, some from one thing, and some from a great many things; I believe that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation, and that there is no excuse for any person saying, "Well, I cannot help this; it has become a part of my nature; and I have to do that way." I believe there is power in the gospel to overcome everything that is of an evil nature, and when it does not accomplish this in an individual, it is because he does not give the gospel room as he should; does not allow it to do its perfect work; does not have that faith and confidence in it that he should have; but when the transforming power of the Spirit of truth continues with an individual until he is prepared for the companionship of God and angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect, it delivers him from the bondage of death and enables him to overcome all that is sinful, all that is opposed to God and his truth; hence, when we come to God, we must repent.

We might notice other principles of the gospel but we do not design to keep you but a little while. We are to believe in the resurrection of the dead, and the doctrine of eternal judgment; and we are to submit ourselves in obedience to the ordinance of baptism, as one of the immutable ordinances of the gospel, and a part of that law of adoption by which we change our relationship to God, and

lose all affinity with the world, and become citizens of the kingdom of God— heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ.

But after anyone yields obedience to these first principles, he is not to neglect them, and leave them in the sense of having nothing more to do with them, but is to go on unto perfection. Peter, when writing to the ancient saints, said: "Giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity. For if these things be in you and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." Now here are many important characteristics enjoined by the Apostle Peter, which we are to add to our faith; hence if we are living in perfect harmony with these important adjuncts, what kind of men and women will we be? what kind of examples will we set for those who are inquiring after the truth?

If those who are opposing the Christian religion, and are fighting against an empty theory, which is a most worthless thing, should see the practical workings of these principles in us, it will be the best way that we could still the objections that are urged against our religion, and it is the only way by which we can secure the favor of God; and as the same writer says: "So an abundant entrance shall be ministered unto you into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

But this complete perfection which we so much desire will be enjoyed in a future state, and hence we have the principle of the resurrection of the dead, and the doctrine

of eternal judgment. Our spirits are to be transformed through belief of the truth and obedience to its requirements here, and in the day of God's power the body is to be redeemed from death; there will be a reunion of body and spirit in the resurrection, and the redeemed body will be like unto the most glorious body of our Lord Jesus Christ, and being prepared to live in the presence of God, to comprehend his life, his purity, and his blessings, we will be prepared to enter into and enjoy the rest promised to the people of God. Thus we see that the gospel reaches within the veil; it is adapted to all our surroundings in this life, and in obedience to its requirements we receive the approbation of God here, and in the future world the reward shall be ours to enjoy. This is the character of the gospel.

I was quite severely criticised—not to my face however—by a brother for preaching in this house that the rules of the gospel should enter into the life of every individual, the business man as well as every other individual; that we ought in all business transactions to act in accordance with the gospel of Jesus Christ; that it should be our standard of right. The brother said that a man would starve to death if he did that. Do you believe that, dear Saints? Is that the strength of

your faith? That is the trouble with a great many of us, we have too little confidence in the rules laid down in the gospel. If I am going to starve to death because of obedience to that which I have professed, then I will starve, and take my chances in the other world. But I do not believe that a man will starve in doing the will of God. You may get rich as fast as you would like, that is if your likes are in harmony with the will of God, and you may prosper as fast as you ought to prosper. We may not get rich in so short a time, but we can prosper while we are helping everybody else to prosper likewise. All men ought to take the principles of the gospel into their daily lives, and when they do this they are right before God; and if we would do this, I do not believe we would have as many wild declarations as we do from Robert G. Ingersoll and others. There would be but little room for them; there would be such an exhibition of practical Christianity as would prevent such statements as he and others sometimes make.

May God help us, so that our faith may be increased, and our love for God and each other; so that we may be enabled to accomplish the great work entrusted to us *according to his divine will.*

## THE REASONABLENESS OF PRAYER.

TO RECOGNIZE God's existence is to necessitate prayer to him by all intelligent creatures, or a consciously living in sin and under condemnation of conscience, because they do not pray to him. It would be horrible to admit the existence of a Supreme Being, with power and wisdom to create, and believe that the creatures he thought of consequence and importance enough to bring into existence are not of enough consequence for him to pay any attention to in the troubles and trials consequent upon that existence. Surely such a statement is an impeachment of both the wisdom and goodness of God. It were far more sensible for those who deny the fitness and necessity of prayer to take the ground of the atheist and say plainly, "We do not pray, for there is no God to pray to;" for to deny prayer, is practically atheism.

So in the very constitution of man's being there is the highest reasonableness in prayer. And, if the position of man in his relation to the earth he inhabits is recognized and understood, there is no unreasonableness in a God-fearing man looking to God for help and deliverance under any and all circumstances, in all the vicissitudes of life. The earth was made for man. One has said, "There is nothing great in the world but man; and there is nothing great in man but his soul." With this in view, how absurd to talk about "fixed laws" and "unchangeable order," in a way to keep man in his trouble from God. □ It is all the twaddle of the conceit of man setting himself up to judge and limit his Maker. "To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One." The Creator is greater than his creation; the lawgiver is supreme over all law. He created the earth, that it might be inhabited by man, and he governs the earth in subordination to the interests, the eternal and spiritual welfare of the race of immortal beings that are here being prepared for glory and immortality.

Laws, indeed, are fixed in their operation and results as subserving the highest good in the training and the disciplining of the race, giving them hope in their la-

bor and sure expectation of fruit from their toil. But as set in operation for *man's good*, so, in an exigency that may make necessary their suspension, to secure his deliverance from peril and bring man back to the recognition of the personal God, as above law, is it unreasonable to believe that God has power thus to suspend or overrule his own arrangements? A wise father will govern his children by rules as securing their best good. But he will retain in his power the suspending of those rules when special occasions arise, when the object for which they exist can be better secured by their suspension. Shall not the living God have the same right?

So much as to the reflections suggested by the dogmas of natural religion. They sustain in reason our faith in prayer. The basis, however, of our faith rests upon the unchanging and unchangeable revelation of God, and not upon man's philosophy. Jesus taught his disciples to pray, saying, "Our Father which art in heaven." As Christians, this is our authority for prayer. In the words, "OUR FATHER," our blessed Lord has given us the substance of all that can be said, as to *the privilege of prayer, what to pray for, and how to pray*. There can be no loftier exercise of soul ever given to created intelligence than to come into conscious contact with the living God, and be able to say, "*My Father*."

And surely, as my Father, with a loving father's heart, it must be his desire that I should tell him *all* my needs, *all* my sorrows, *all* my desires. And, so his word commands, "Be careful for nothing, but in *everything*, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." — Phil. 4: 6. Under this verse there is positively no exception of any request that may not be made known unto God. So there is true faith and right Christian philosophy in the remark, "If a pin was needful to my happiness and I could not find one, I would pray to God for it."—Introductory to "The Wonders of Prayer," by D. W. Whittle.