

SERMON BY ELDER JOSEPH LUFF,

At St. Louis, Missouri, December 13, 1893.

Subject, **THE PERFECT LAW.**

I do not expect to do any work to-night that may be called sermonizing. I expect to scatter in my statements from Dan to Beersheba, and to cover as much ground with brief references and a few statements on each point referred to as possible.

At the close of last night's meeting, after the announcement was made that I should be the speaker for to-night, I read some five or six questions that had been asked of me in other places, and some of which had been asked here, and which are common as expressing the feeling of inquiry in the minds of the people generally.

The object we have in view, as already stated, is to convince men and women everywhere who become our hearers that we have the truth; that truth alone can save; that error, no matter how dearly cherished, cannot help us in any way in the work of saving men and women.

We have frequently heard it said that it matters not what a man believes so long as he is deeply in earnest in believing it, so long as he is sincere; and we have wondered when hearing such a statement as this, why it was—if that is true—that Jesus ever came into the world; what object he could have. If a belief in error, a sincere belief in error, will do men just as much good, secure as much of eternal benefit for him as the pursuit, and possession, and observance of truth, the mission of Christ was simply undertaken from a mistaken idea entertained in heaven.

If we turn to the heathen world we find as true expressions of sincerity and devotion as can be found anywhere in the religious world. Men and women will sacrifice their lives for their faith. We have been told (and your speaker has only the word of those who claim to know in regard to it) that mothers have been known to throw their children (who doubtless were as dear to them as the children of our Christian people are to them) before the

wheels of the advancing Juggernaut car. Others have been tied to beasts, and these beasts have been started over the plains, and have continued in their course until death has come to the relief of the persons fastened to them. We have learned of the woman who took her place meekly and resignedly, and even cheerfully and joyously, upon the funeral pyre, and allowed her body to be consumed. All of these things, if true, are in evidence that there is much of sincerity, of earnestness, in the minds of those who know not the Christ; but yet who have forms of religion unto which they subscribe, and in attestation of their devotion present themselves in the way that I have referred to.

If I come to the circle of what is called Christianity in the world, and am forbidden to go outside of that circle when discussing this question, I seek earnestly to find something that will warrant the conclusion referred to; namely, that it matters not what a man believes, whether it be truth or heresy, so long as he is honest about it, he is all right.

I have asked, in starting my examination, why it was that on a certain occasion the Savior, finding a number of people (we have the reference to it in Matthew 13) who were worshipping him, notified them that their worship was worthless. "In vain do ye worship me." Why? Because they were "teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." They were teaching something for doctrine that God had not authorized, and Jesus wanted them to distinctly understand that what God had not authorized he never would be responsible for; that he would save men if they observed the covenant he had sought to make with them, but outside of that covenant they had no pledge whatever. "In vain do ye worship me."

Now some people tell us that doctrine amounts to nothing; that we ought not to

talk doctrine; and if a man undertakes to talk doctrine in the religious world to-day he is shut out of the Evangelical Alliance.

Paul in writing to Timothy said: "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee." Now if salvation follows by attending to the doctrine and continuing in the doctrine of Christ, then the question is, whether it is not important that we shall preach doctrine, and see that the doctrine we preach is not the doctrine of men, but of Christ; for in vain we may worship if we teach for doctrine the commandments of men.

Jesus said, when he found numbers of people disposed to worship him and his Father, "Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" Are you so foolish as to think that because you keep my name on your lips, and go through forms of worship, and make me an object of seeming reverence, that therefore I am going to take that expression of sincerity and devotion in lieu of the truth that God ordained that I should preach and that you should obey? That was about the thought he had in mind. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." Now what is the will of this Father which is in heaven? It is that you observe the doctrine, that you shall be in fellowship with him, that he shall be found resident within our hearts and lives; for thus he prayed as we find in the seventeenth chapter of John. First, he prayed for his ministry, that they might be one with him as he was one with God: "As thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee." Then he prayed further, not only for these, "but for them also which shall believe on me through their word, that they all may be one." Now note: having ordained a means by which this oneness could be brought about, he was extremely anxious that his father should throw around his people his preserving and conserving grace, so that they might abide in the truth; be found one with him, as he was one with the Father.

Right in this connection I will quote a passage that I have called your attention to before, found recorded in John's Second Epistle: "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God." He may have religion, all the religion he can carry; he may pray from morning to night; he may be just as earnest as possible in following Christ according to the formula he has fixed in his mind; but if he transgresses, and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ, he has not God. Now that is either true or it is false. Which is it? That is a very strong statement, but I want to be understood. If it is true then our only safety is in staying by the doctrine Jesus Christ gave; if it is not true, we may as well dispense with Christ and his religion at once—and all religion for that matter. It is a terrible mistake to think that we can separate ourselves from the old-fashioned faith, attach ourselves to something else, and by pledging ourselves thereto obtain the promised blessings. That is a terrible mistake, and men are making it in the world to-day. Further he says: "He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son."

I also call your attention to a statement found in the first chapter of James' epistle, beginning with the 22d verse: "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves; for if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was." The idea presented is that this gospel of Jesus Christ, in which the Christ is revealed, is held up for every man to look into, that he may by looking therein make a discovery in regard to himself that will indicate to him what his duty is. But if he turns away after making that discovery, and instead of doing what the book or the law or gospel of Christ suggests, and shall do something else, though he be as deeply sincere in it as is possible, he fails of the good the glass was designed to promote. What was the use of the sacrifice that Christ made in order to pro-

vide the gospel, if something else would do?

But James follows with this statement: "But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed." Turning to the opposite of this, as found in the book of Proverbs 28: 9, we read: "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination." It does not matter how sincere he may be in what he believes, if he turns his ear away from hearing the law, even his prayer (so the book says, I am not responsible for it) is an abomination.

A certain individual, as he was traveling with one of my friends, was anxious to talk on the subject of religion; and my friend entered into discussion with him and started to preach the old-fashioned gospel; namely, faith in God, repentance, and baptism for the remission of sins, the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost, the doctrine of revelation, of priesthood authority, the same as they received in the days of Moses and Aaron; and quoted him the words, "No man taketh this honor unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron." The man became quite indignant, and turning to this friend of mine said, "Sir, I have no use for anything in the form of doctrine." He said further to my friend, taking him by the hand, "Let me kneel and pray for you, pray with you." But my friend said, "No." Why? Because the book says, "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination." "Your prayer will be of no use to me. I would rather take my chances without it than with it; I do not wish your prayer for me to be an abomination." Was he right? Was he safe? You answer for yourself. Now the other statement, on the other hand, is, that if a man looketh "into this perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed."

What do we mean by this perfect law? One of the apostles writing to the Hebrews,

in regard to this gospel law, speaks of it as containing certain principles; you will find it in the sixth chapter of the letter to the Hebrews, beginning at the first verse: "Therefore leaving [one rendering has it not leaving; I don't care which you use] the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on to perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works. [Now what he means by that is simply not sinning again and again that we may have need to repent continually.] And of faith towards God, of the doctrine of baptisms [plural, notice], and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment." Notice, now, that here are six principles mentioned as being incorporated in the gospel of Christ, of the doctrine of Christ. Paul preached this wherever he went. He did not have one doctrine for the Hebrews, another for the Galatians, another for the Corinthians, another for the Laodiceans, and another to the residents of some other locality; but he declared, like John, that there was but "one Lord, and one faith, and one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." And he gave word of counsel in writing to the Galatians: "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ." They had seemingly gotten hold of that foolish idea that some people have to-day, that you can tinker with what God has done just as you please; you can strike out or add to it; and though it will be a perversion of it so far as the literal intent is concerned, you can make it to suit yourself; that God will save you by your own means if you don't like his; make it to suit yourself and he will save you anyhow. But he gave them to understand plainly that they had made a terrible mistake; for he says: "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you [not that men may preach who call themselves ministers but that we, the apostles of Christ have

preached], let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than ye *have* received, let him be accursed." Now that is very strong language, I will admit; very strong language; but I did not make it. I found it here just the same as you find it.

Jude, writing on the same subject, doubtless moved by the same inspiration as Paul, and under very similar conditions confronting him among the people to whom he was writing, said: "When I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the Saints." Nothing less than that faith will do is the thought, the very same idea that was in the Apostle Paul's mind. He knew, just as Paul did, that influences would be at work later on that would seek to encroach upon the sacred territory that had been redeemed by the blood of the spotless Lamb of God, and he wanted them to understand that that forecasting in his own mind by the Spirit warranted him in uttering a protest against the saints allowing such an encroachment to be made. He wanted them to feel that they were custodians of a sacred treasure,—though it was in earthen vessels,—and when the time should come when the enemy would seek to in any sense pervert, change, or destroy the features of the gospel, that they should feel themselves under moral obligation, divinely imposed, to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. They were all of one mind in this matter.

Now turn to the twenty-fifth verse of this first chapter of James, which says, as I have quoted, "Whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed." There is one thought I wish to call your attention to: the perfect law of liberty. Do you know that when a thing is once perfect that God cannot make it any better, much less can man? Now, did you ever stop to think of

that, that perfection cannot be improved upon? I labored the other evening to show that God started right, that he never had occasion to apologize for anything he ever did for men; the sun, the moon, or the stars; the conditions relating to the earth or anything else; and that we were permitted to understand the invisible things of God from the creation of the world, by looking at them through the things that were made that were plain to us, even his eternal power and Godhead. Then if you want to understand in relation to the spiritual, you can study the physical; and in the physical there is a revelation made to the mind of men who would study the purpose of God, which is, that he is one in everything. It was not one God for physical men and another God for spiritual men, but it was one revelation of divine purpose in everything. I repeat the statement that it may fix itself upon your mind, and if you don't like me for stating it, think of it for the truth's sake and forget me: that once God declares a thing to be perfect he puts it out of the power of men, or angels, or devils, or Christ, or God himself, to make it better at any subsequent time.

If you have a yardstick,—a perfect yardstick,—exactly thirty-six inches long, measuring it by the standards that determine such instruments, you find it is exact. Don't you know that you can't glue onto the end of it even the thickness of a piece of cardboard without making it imperfect, if it was perfect when you started? And don't you know, on the other hand, that you can't take a file and rasp from the end of it the thickness of a *shaving* and leave it perfect, if it was perfect before? And this is true in regard to the perfect law.

Now there was an object in that perfect law; it was to perfect every man and to bring about the perfecting of the saints, until we should arise to the stature of a perfect man in Christ Jesus. And Paul says, in writing to the Colossians (twenty-eighth verse of the first chapter), "Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ

Jesus." That was the reason he preached a perfect law, because a perfect man could not be developed without the operation of a perfect law upon him. If that is true, and if that law had incorporated in it faith, repentance, baptism for the remission of sins, the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost, etc., is there any man who will arise and tell me that if I leave the laying on of hands out of it that it is still perfect?

If it did not reflect the mind of God without the laying on of hands in it at the start, will it reflect the mind of God without it now? Will any man tell me, if I take the Bible in my hands, that I have any less right to preach the laying on of hands than I have to preach faith, when the book testifies just the same of one as of the other? Will any man rise and say why he believes that faith in Christ is necessary? "Yes," you say, "because the Bible teaches it is. Just so we say of the laying on of hands. Paul says concerning the gospel, 'For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.' And he says that the laying on of hands is one of the principles, one of the *main* principles of it. If, therefore, he spoke the truth when he uttered those words, then if we find men preaching doctrine or gospel theories to-day in which the principle of the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost, for the blessing of children, for the healing of the sick, for the ordaining of the ministry, is not found, we find an imperfect gospel, a gospel that does not reflect the God who ordained the gospel with that doctrine in it eighteen hundred years ago. We want to be very plain to-night, even if you should think we cannot preach a sermon at all. So with the doctrine of baptism; that doctrine is a point in our theology that is advocated very strongly; and the reason we preach on it so frequently is because so many other people neglect it. We deal with that which other people forget or refuse to teach.

We turn to the book and find a statement from the lips of Jesus, when he was talking to Nicodemus, who came to him by night and paid him the compliment that he knew he was a teacher sent from God, because no man could do the miracles he did except God was with him. And when Nicodemus had asked him what he should do Jesus turned to him and said, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Nicodemus said, "How can a man be born when he is old?" Why, that is just what they are asking in the

pews to-day. They may use other words to express it, but that is the very thought. Nicodemus had never heard of such a thing as a spiritual birth; he understood the laws of life and the transmission of life in our physical nature, and he was as fully posted in the laws governing literal Israel of that day as any man could be; he was a ruler there. And Jesus said, "Art thou a master in Israel and knowest not these things?" And further on he says to him, when the question is asked, Can a man fully grown and developed be born according to the processes ordained for physical life and existence at the beginning, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." That was what Nicodemus was thinking of; but what Christ was thinking about was spiritual. "Marvel not," said he, "that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again." But that did not answer the question Nicodemus asked; the question was, "How?" There was no suspicion cast in Nicodemus' speech to show that he thought it was impossible, but the question was, "How?" And Jesus made answer, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water [W-a-t-e-r, that spells water, doesn't it?] and of the Spirit [S-p-i-r-i-t—except he is born of both of these], he cannot enter into the kingdom of God"—Jesus said that.

Now please hold this thought in mind. I turn to-day and listen, (when I ask the question, What must I do to be born again?) to the sound of preaching yonder, and to that from the religious circles around me. I ask of the representatives that stand at the doors of each of other institutions, What must I do to be saved? I am told, when this question of baptism is suggested by me, that it does not matter a particle whether we ever touch water or not, that we *can* be saved and enter the kingdom of heaven. Now there is a statement somewhere in this book which reads, "Let God be true, but every man a liar."

Jesus, on a certain occasion—you will find it, I think, in the eighth chapter of John's record, or the tenth, I will not be certain—said to those Jews which believed on him, "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." They began to dialogue with him that they were already free, that they were the children of Abraham; and Jesus says, "Ye are of your father, the Devil," who was a liar from the beginning. You have made a mistake. Now, he was speaking to the people who were *believers* in him, for the record says he said it "to those Jews who believed on him."

The Devil was a liar from the beginning. When was the beginning? Genesis says, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Did the Devil begin lying away back there? Is that true? The record says that on one occasion the Lord appeared before Adam and told him that of all the fruit of the trees in the garden he might partake, with one exception, and of that tree he must not partake, under certain risks or penalties, and it was said to him, "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." "Thou shalt surely die"—there are just four words there. Now the Lord moved away from the presence of Adam, and some other voice was soon heard discussing a question with Eve, and Eve gave the source of the voice she heard to understand that the Lord had forbidden their partaking of the fruit of that tree, and had said that in the day they should eat of it they should surely die. And this voice was heard saying, "Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil;" and that is the reason God does not want you to partake of it. But I tell you that in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt *not* surely die. This, in effect, is what the Devil said. But, wait a minute, [counting on his fingers.] How many fingers did I have up before? Something is wrong. It was, "Thou-shalt-surely-die;" now it is, "Thou shalt *not* surely die." There is a word too many. Just one, innocent, little word, but there are places where you can put that innocent word where it will make black appear white, God like a devil, and righteousness more detestable than sin, if you put it in the right place in the sentence. That was where the lie began, "in the beginning."

Now, if I turn to you and say, My dear friend, how do you know that was a lie that the serpent told in the garden? Suppose I should ask all of you. You would at once answer, Because it flatly contradicted what God had said. That is a pretty fair definition; I accept it; nobody will object to that. Well now, stand right in those shoes, don't jump out. When Jesus says, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he *cannot* enter into the kingdom of God," will you, right in the face of that, rise up and say that he *can* enter the kingdom, whether he is born thus or not? Do you say Jesus was mistaken? Latter Day Saints don't believe he was. And now think of that, for I wish to be understood. If you can only say, when we stand before the bar of justice, "I understood that man, but he was too plain," I will

take the consequences at God's hands if you will.

I take the ground that if Jesus told the truth when he said, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he *cannot* enter the kingdom of God," that any man who says he *can*, tells an untruth, if your definition of a lie holds good in that case which was produced from Genesis—a flat contradiction of what God says, for there is nothing more direct in the shape of a contradiction than to say that he *can* when Christ says he *cannot*.

If that snake should happen to come into this house and get onto this platform and say just what was said back yonder, every man in the house would be hunting for the poker to smash his head; and they would tell the ladies just to keep still that they would see to him. But let that serpent go outside the door there, and let him put on a beaver hat, and a broadcloth coat, and doeskin pants, and an immaculate cravat, and come in here and say the very same thing, and half the audience would go down on their knees and say *Amen*. When Jesus says he *cannot* and some men say he *can*, is there any difference in what was said in the garden of Eden and what he says? There is not a particle of difference in the spirit of it; it is only in the looks of the thing that said it. It has a different dress on, that's all. Now we are followers of whomsoever we serve.

"O, but Elder Luff," "Brother Luff," one says: "O, Mr. Luff, you miserable fellow, to call yourself a preacher!" Another says: "Will you rise up and say that clergymen to-day are wilfully working in the service of the Devil and trying to deceive people by telling them falsehoods? I did not say that, did I? Now notice whether I did or not. I did not even say that the serpent *knew* he was doing the Devil's work, but I said he was doing it; and I know that the consequences to the race of man were just the same as if he did know it, and that a man does do the Devil's work when he contradicts God's word, and the consequences will be precisely the same to the world. It makes no difference how the man is dressed, or what position he holds in this world, if he contradicts God's word and tells you that you are as safe as you would be under the observance of Christ's words, he is doing the Devil's work, whether he knows it or not; and the consequences will be the same to you whether he knew it or did not know it. Now that is a very plain way of stating it; but as I said before, I will take the chances when you and I stand before the bar of God. You enter the complaint that I was too plain in my language, and I will take all the condemnation that

God will give me for being too plain, if you will bear the consequences of going against the facts that were in those plain words.

One more passage I call your attention to, in the second chapter of Acts you will find it. Peter, on the day of Pentecost, was called upon by the number of people, who had seen the manifestation of God's power in a miraculous form, to answer the question, "What shall we do?" What shall we do to be saved? The first point I want settled here is, Did Peter know how to answer that question? Remember that the Holy Ghost, in fulfillment of Christ's promise, was resting upon him. Did he know how to answer that question? Why yes, you conclude at once. Now if I do not represent your mind in these answers it will not disturb me in the least to have you correct me. The next question is, *Did* he answer it correctly? Do not be in a hurry to answer that. Did he answer that question correctly on the day of Pentecost? I guess he did; that is, if he did not, you may question safely whether any man at any other time can answer it correctly, for he was certainly under the influence of the Holy Spirit and there was nothing that would have prompted him to answer it any other way.

Now note, when you answer in that way, there is another question starts up in my mind, and it is this: If Peter and the rest of the eleven were qualified to answer that question then, and they did answer that question right, if the same question is being asked now, and any person answers it in any other way, must they not be answering it wrong? If Peter answered it right, must not any other answer be wrong? Peter's answer was, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." Latter Day Saints agree with Peter and Christ. Who do you agree with?

If these were parts or features of the perfect law of liberty then, I want to know how men can expect to have the perfect law now, unless they have in it baptism for the remission of sins, the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost, and such other doctrines as were incorporated in it in former time?

Now I leave that thought for another: In the sixteenth chapter of Mark there is a commission given, "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;" etc. The infidel steps right in here (Mr. Ingersoll as

a champion for them) and says: I know that is false, because I find people who do believe; I find faithful, earnest, devout people here, there, and elsewhere, and I know these signs are not following. Now I never saw God, and do not know anything about him, and do not know what to say about his personal appearance or anything of that kind; but I reason this way; that what I do see I can decide upon; and I see people building magnificent houses for his worship and spending large sums of money, and their belief is apparent to me, and these signs are not following. And when I see these people come up to the conditions that are named and the signs do not follow, I say that if Jesus said that he has told an untruth; that if there is a God his inspiration was at fault; and I prefer to believe there is no such being and that these people are being deceived.

Now suppose one of these infidels should be called upon to arbitrate a case like this: A certain man has a house to build, and after he has his plans and specifications prepared he submits them to men to make their bids for the construction of the house according to them. These men send in their bids, and finally he decides upon a certain one; accepts it, and lets out the contract to this man to build; and he departs and leaves the work to be carried on in his absence. Upon his return the man comes to him and says: "Sir, I bring you the key; the house is finished, and the stipulation was in the bond or agreement that I was to receive in money so many thousand dollars upon turning the key over to you when the house was completed." "Yes, sir, there is no question about that; but before I pay over that amount or accept the key you will have to go with me and allow me to inspect the building. We will go down and begin at the foundation.

"Well, sir," he says, "now that we are here in the basement and looking at things, it strikes me that in these specifications it was provided, as well as shadowed in the plans, that you were to go down a certain depth until you reached the rock, and lay the first foundation stone on the rock; but I do not think, from the appearance of things, that you went down that far; did you?" "Well, no, but I went down as far as we thought necessary, and I called in half a dozen architects and master builders and talked the matter over with them, and they agreed with me that this was all sufficient." "All right, sir. Now," he says, "it strikes me that in these specifications it was provided, as well as outlined in the plans, that twelve pieces of timber were to be set in certain positions there, above this foundation, and they were to

be of a certain kind of material; and I count here, one, two, three, four, etc., and I find there are only some nine; where are the others?" "Well that is all we put in." "Only nine?" "Yes." "Well, what is the reason for that?" "Because I counseled with those master builders and architects here, and they said it was only a piece of folly to put in twelve when nine would do just as well."

"But it strikes me there was also a provision made that there should be seventy pieces of pine studding set around, and I have been looking about and I don't find that number, and it strikes me this is not pine at all; what have you to say about that." "Well, there are not seventy; what was the use to put seventy in when fifty-seven would do just as well. I know all about it; I have been counseling with those master builders and they agreed with me, and we put in hemlock instead of pine, as it is above ground, and that will do just as well and will last just as long."

"Well," he says, "I believe the plans and specifications call for a plunge bath in this house, I think it is outlined in the plans and described very accurately in the specifications, and I desired it should be put in. I would like to see that bath room." "Well," he says, "I'll take you, but that plunge bath business is obsolete; we never have anything of that kind in our modern houses; the shower bath is much more preferable to-day, and the medical fraternity have decided that the sponge bath is much better than the plunge bath for health; and I consulted all these medical men, you not being right here, and we concluded to put in a modern shower bath, it being more convenient in every respect. And then I have painted the house, the doors are grained, and everything is in excellent shape.

"Now, sir," he says, as he steps up the stairs to move out, "I would like you to carry out your part of the contract and pay me the number of thousand dollars called for." The man says, "I am under no obligation to pay you one cent, and if you think I am you make your appeal where you think the discovery of the fact can be revealed to me—to the law of the land; make your appeal there. I wanted a house of a certain kind; if I had wanted some modern idea of a house I would have submitted to those men's ideas, or allowed them to suggest to me. I was the man who had the money to pay; I was the man to be pleased. I paid a man to draw up the plans just as I wanted them, you agreed to build according to those plans and specifications. My dear sir, you have built a house, but you have not built the

house that was called for; I am under no obligation to pay you a dollar. If I should pay you a cent, sir, I pay it because of my own good nature, not because you have any claim upon me under the law; but I certainly will not pay you the price stipulated in the contract."

Now they agree upon this infidel that I have been referring to, (the one who objected because the Christians did not have the signs following,) to arbitrate the case. He goes into the presence of both, and listens to the charges on the one hand and the admissions on the other, and finally asks, "My dear sir, did you not accept those plans, and specifications, and contract to build the house provided for in those outlines?" "Yes, sir, and I furnished an excellent house, suitable for a king." "Even so, that may be true, you built a house; but you have not built the house. You are not entitled to anything; you had better take whatever he offers you, or take your house down and away, because you can't compel him to pay you a cent."

Now, why don't he use the same common sense when he comes to decide in regard to this gospel? "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; and he that believeth not shall be damned. And these signs shall follow them that believe." Believe what? *The* gospel. Well, now, you know that instead of believing *the* gospel they are believing any kind of a perversion or formula, and the infidel takes it for granted that because he sees men worshiping after some sort, and that they are sincere, that God has not kept his part of the contract, and therefore he does not believe in God. He fails to look into the details of doctrine and organization to decide whether they are respecting that which the plans and specifications demand. He ignores the fact that God appointed Jesus Christ to outline and inspired men to continually uphold and reiterate the specifications in the hearing of men that there might be no mistake. Yet he hastily decides that God must accept any building and pay the price stipulated for the house. There is the difficulty. He is not as consistent in deciding in religious matters as he was in the other.

If a man will accept *the* gospel, Jesus says he will be with him "always, even unto the end of the world." You stand by the doctrine and organization and you will always find him in the doctrine, for "he that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son." That is the sense of it.

—Reported by R. Archibald.

(Concluded in next Supplement.)

SERMON BY ELDER JOSEPH LUFF,

At St. Louis, Missouri, December 13, 1893.

Subject, THE PERFECT LAW.

(Concluded from last number.)

NOW HERE are several questions that I will answer hurriedly. "Can't I be converted without baptism?" I will answer this question, yes. You can be converted without baptism just as well as you can be with it. Why preach baptism then? Because conversion is one thing and a new birth another. There is many a man whose heart is converted that knows nothing whatever of a new birth. Conversion simply means a change of heart, of purpose, of design, and determination.

For instance, a man comes here from England or Sweden. He has been living under a monarchical form of government and thinks there is nothing like it; but after living in America for a short time he changes his mind and thinks differently from what he used to do; he is converted by ascertaining things that compel him to change his judgment. He is then an American at heart. But is he an American citizen, just because his heart is changed? Can he go and vote? Is he eligible to any office in the United States? You say no, because the government of the United States has fixed a means, or ordained a plan by which citizens, who have been foreigners, shall be made; and until men subscribe to that formula of law, they may enjoy many of this country's privileges, much of its freedom, and may be ever so loud in their praises, preach about this government's excellence until their hair turns white, their powers are gone, and they are ready to drop into the grave voicing abroad their love for this government; and yet they are not citizens and never had the right to vote, because they did not respect the law by which alone they might become citizens.

"Whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, . . . he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work,"—not being influenced by what modern human ideas are, and being not only converted in his mind and heart with reference to the better conditions obtaining under the gospel than anywhere else, but is also a doer of the work,—this man has the promise.

I have tried to show you that baptism for the remission of sins, the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost, etc., were originally incorporated in the gospel. But in this same connection, a man may be changed in heart and believe that this gospel is the only true doctrine that has been preached upon the earth in these last days, but the mere fact that he believes that does not change his state, but his heart.

Jesus "came unto his own, and his own received him not; but as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God." He did not make them sons of God, but he placed the power in their hands to enter the kingdom: as many as believed on him, to them gave he power to *become* the sons of God. And Peter said on the day of Pentecost, after offering the people the gospel as a means, "*save yourselves* from this untoward generation."

Now for the next question: How can water wash away sins? In the first place I don't know that anybody ever said that it could wash away sin; but we preach it for the remission of sins, and say that sins are not generally remitted without it. That is what we declare. "But," you ask, "if water doesn't wash them out,

and yet the sins are not washed away without the water, what does wash them out?" Listen a moment. The ninth chapter of John tells of a man who had been blind from his birth, and when Jesus met him he spat on the ground, made clay, and placing some on his eyes, said, "Go to the pool of Siloam and wash," and the young man did as he was told and came back again healed; and they didn't like him for that and pitched him out of the synagogue afterwards, because they couldn't argue the fact out of his head. But to the question: Was it the clay that cured the blindness? was it the spit on that clay that healed him? was it the water in the pool of Siloam? If so, why didn't any of them that were blind go down there and have their eyesight restored? If it was not the water, or the clay, or the spittle that cured his blindness, would he have been cured without it? or without going to the water? Now, would he have received his sight if he had not gone? What do you say? was it the water that did it? and if not, what did it? If it was not the water of the pool of Siloam that did it, and it could not have been done without the water, what was it that did it? When you tell me, I won't need to answer the question, How can water wash away sins?

Turning now to the fifth and sixth chapters of the Book of Joshua we find an account of where the children of Israel were commanded to take the city of Jericho, and it would seem to human thought that the best way would have been for them to procure some battering rams and knock down the walls and enter right in. But the Lord said, "Rise up and take the company, having the priests go in advance, carrying the ark of the covenant and seven trumpets of rams' horns, and march around the city of Jericho once; and next morning do the same, and so on for six days, but on the seventh day rise early in the morning and compass the

city seven times, then let the priests blow on those rams' horns and when the people have heard it let them set up a shout, and the walls shall fall and you shall have Jericho in your possession." They rose up on the morning appointed, according to arrangement, marched around the city once, and returned home; and, after returning to rest those walls were just as wide and stout as ever, and perhaps sixty or seventy feet through for aught I know. Next morning they arose and compassed the city again, the third, fourth, fifth, and sixth days they did likewise, and on the seventh day they rose early and marched around that city. Once they went around, two times, three, four, five, six,—gracious! those walls are just as firm as ever they were; don't look as though once more going around was going to knock them down. But they walk around the seventh time, and still the walls were not down; there was something else to do. The priests were to blow on those rams' horns, and the people when hearing those trumpets sounding were to set up a shout. The rams' horns' blast rent the air, the people caught it up and gave a shout, and the walls toppled over.

Will somebody rise up and tell me it was the noise of that shout that shook those walls? Was it the measured tread of the people that caused the earth to tremble beneath those walls? Will somebody tell me tin horns would have done just as well, after the Lord had said rams' horns? Suppose some one had said, "Rams' horns are too mean to employ in the Lord's service; we will make silver or gold ones," would it have done just as well? When you tell me it was not the sound of the rams' horns or the tread of the multitude; that it was not the shout of the people that caused the walls to fall, and yet with the same breath you are compelled to admit that if they had not shouted, if they had not blown on the rams' horns and done all those other things to knock the walls down, the walls

would not have gone down; please tell me what did knock them down? When you have told me what that was you have answered how it is that sin is washed out by our going into the water.

In the fifth chapter of second Kings there is an account given of a leper named Naaman. The Syrians had brought away captive out of Israel a little maid, and she said to Naaman's wife, her mistress, "If my Lord was with the prophet in Israel he would cure him of his leprosy." And one went in and told the leper what had been said, and after considerable ceremony he made ready to start on his journey to meet the Prophet Elisha, and he took letters from his king and camels laden with presents to offer to this prophet in Israel. After his arrival had been announced to Elisha by the servant who bore him the letter from the king, Naaman came with his servants and his quadrupeds, and as he approached the door of Elisha's house he thought the prophet would have come down with all the dignity that should attach to his prophetic estate, and bow before him and acknowledge him as the captain of Syria's great host, and in the name of God, with a great deal of ceremony and display of dignity, command the leprosy to depart. But Elisha said to the servant, "Go back and tell him to go down to the river Jordan and dip seven times, and his flesh will come on his body all right." The servant went down and told Naaman, and he got mad about it. He said, "I thought he would have come down, and, calling upon the name of the Lord his God, strike his hand over the place and recover the leprosy. The water in the rivers Abana and Pharpar are better than this ever was, and why could I not dip there? After making this long journey to be told to go through such a ceremony as dipping myself in this river. Why, if there is any virtue in the river all the lepers in the country could be healed by dipping in it." The servant

looked up at him and said, "My Lord, if the prophet had told you to do some great thing you would have done it. Now how much easier is this; why not go down and test it, prove it?" That mild rebuke struck Naaman as being sensible, and he started. Reaching the river he dipped himself one, two, three, four, five, six times, and those pale, deadly spots were on his flesh yet. Six times he had been down and there wasn't a particle of healing yet. What was the trouble? Because the prophet had said seven times. After the seventh dip his flesh came on him as of a little child. Will some of you rise up in meeting and tell me that it was the water of the river Jordan that possessed the power to cleanse lepers? Do you tell me that? No? Would he have been healed without dipping as he was told? No. Well, if it wasn't the water that did it, and it would not have been done without the water, what did it? When you explain that you will have answered the question, How can water wash away sin?

Christ ordained that we should be baptized for the remission of sins, and that except we are we cannot enter the kingdom of heaven; and I think he has some authority to say who shall enter and who shall not. I have not a word to say; he has the work in charge, and the only reason I know *why* we should be baptized is because Christ has said so; and by complying with the terms and observing what is commanded we are entitled to the promise and can hold him to it. The water does not possess the virtue; but without the water we must continue to carry our sins. Virtue always follows obedience to Christ's commands.

The next question is, why was Jesus baptized? was it for the remission of sins? I might answer that question, Yes; but it does not necessarily follow when I answer that way that the sins were his own. But the way I approach this matter and give you the only explanation I

have of it is this: As Paul said, "He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." How can one man be made sin for another, except it is by putting himself in his place and observing the conditions and the law that gives remission? In explanation of this we have the Apostle Paul's letter to the Hebrews, second chapter: "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." And he says, "For verily he took not on him the nature of angels [evidently because his mission work was not to redeem angels; he had not come to do an angel's work. He took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham]. Wherefore, in all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people."

If there is any significance in this statement it seems to me that it is found in this fact, that Jesus Christ having come to perform a work, or institute a means by which the redemption of men was to be secured, come not only to teach a theory, but to demonstrate a fact, and in order that he might accomplish this work he placed himself in precisely the same attitude man was in. As God, his Father through him had ordained a law for the remission of the sins of men, he, taking upon him the same kind of body man was tabernacling in and being made partaker of flesh and blood just the same as man, was required to submit that flesh to the law appointed by the Father for the remission of sins; and, therefore, I understand what he meant when he came to John and demanded baptism, and John said, "I have need to be baptized of thee and comest thou to me?" He said, "Suffer it to be so

now: for thus it becometh *us* [not *you*, or *me*, but *us*] to fulfill all righteousness. He made himself "like unto his brethren," for "in all things it behooved him to be made like unto" them. If he ordained a law for those who were tabernacling in the flesh to observe, he must abide the conditions of that law while he was in the flesh, as the flesh that he had been born of bore the taint of sin, it was his to submit that body to the law that had been ordained by which remission was to be obtained. He came not to do the will of the flesh, but to subject that will to the will of God, and thus stand as a perfect example before men.

The next question here is, Why will not sprinkling do? I will not dwell upon that to-night; I will only answer, Because the book does not provide for it at all. If you can find anything in the New Testament pointing to it or authorizing it in any way, there will be some ground for an argument of the question; but as it is, it puts me in mind of a discussion between a minister of the Christian and one of the Methodist Church on the question of infant baptism. In the course of the discussion the minister of the Christian Church sought to show that there was nothing in the New Testament Scriptures to represent the thought that infants had ever been baptized. When the Methodist minister obtained the floor, speaking later, he brought up the case of the house of the Philippian jailer, where it says he and his house were baptized straightway. "And now," he said, "who can imagine that household without any infants in it?" After talking in this line for quite awhile, he was interrupted by the Christian minister, who said, "Just wait a minute, brother, I want to correct a wrong impression you have in your mind. There were no babies or infants in that house, I know, because that jailer had only one daughter, and that daughter was married to a shoemaker, and the shoemaker lived right across the road from the girl's

father." "What is that?" said the Methodist, "will you repeat that?" "Certainly! That jailer had only one daughter, and that daughter was married to a shoemaker, and the shoemaker lived right across the road from the girl's father." "Why," said he, "my dear sir, will you please rise up and tell me where you find that statement?" "Yes sir," said the Christian, "in the very next verse after the one where you find the statement that there were babies in that house. While you were *thinking* that perhaps there were babies there, I was *thinking* perhaps the jailer had only one daughter. It was only a supposition in both our minds; but in the absence of proof this will not do, of course, because the book does not say it."

We are to be buried with Christ by baptism, and to be planted in the likeness of his death, that we may rise in the likeness of his resurrection. Jesus went down into the water and came up out of the water, and Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and John was baptizing in Enon, near to Salim, because there was *much* water there, when a quart would have baptized a thousand of them, if sprinkling would have done.

Now another question, the last that I am asked to answer to-night is, "Why don't you work a miracle among us when you preach signs and miracles among us so much?" Well, I'll be just as honest with you, my friends, as I can. It is simply because I cannot. I haven't power to do it, and if you can show me a man that ever had you will make a fact known to me that I was never aware of. "Well, then, who does work miracles?" God. And he said to men, "You shall observe a certain law; or you respect the means; it is my business to attend to the results."

In the eighth chapter of Acts we have the record of a man who, when he saw the signs the man of God wrought, came to him, and putting his hands down in his

pockets suggesting he had plenty of money there, says, "Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost." But the answer was, "Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the *gift of God* may be purchased with money."

James says, "Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and *the Lord* shall raise him up." What is meant is this: The disciples were but instruments in God's hands; that is, through them miracles were wrought by the power of God. And I tell you honestly, with my hands raised up that the angels of heaven may record what I say, that with the sole exception of the raising of the dead, I have seen manifested the signs such as the Bible records; the maimed, diseased, crippled, and distressed restored; some instantly, and of others as the Scriptures say, so say I, from that very hour the fever left them; and, when occasion demanded it in God's judgment, bone has come to his bone when it has been broken and separated. "But why don't you do this that we can see it?" you ask. The language that came from the lips of Dives in hell, when he lifted up his eyes and saw Lazarus in Abraham's bosom, was, "Send Lazarus that he may go and tell my brethren on the earth about this matter, for if one comes from the dead they will surely believe;" but the answer was, "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead."

I have known men who have had this miraculous power wrought upon them and they are still outside the church. A man who comes into the church because he sees a sign will want a sign every day to keep him in. "A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign, but

there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas," etc. God wants men to stand up as soldiers, defenders of the truth, because it is truth, and not because of the pay they are getting, or anything else; but he does confirm the word with signs following.

The apostles, even when they had the instruction of the Savior direct, found upon one occasion an individual possessed of a devil. They did their best to cast the devil out, but failed, and Jesus came along and they turned to him. That maniac looked piteously into his eyes, sought relief, and he raised his hands and rebuked the spirit and commanded it to go, and after it had exerted itself for awhile, it went out and left the body out of whom it was cast helpless; and the disciples, who had been commanded to cast out devils, said, "Lord why could not we do that?" His answer was, "Because of your unbelief, because ye had no faith;" nevertheless, he instructed them further, "This kind [of devil] goeth not out but by prayer and fasting."

On one occasion (if you will turn to the seventh chapter of John you will find the statement) the brethren of Jesus came to him when he walked in Galilee, for he would not walk in Jewry because the Jews sought to kill him, and said, "Depart thence and go into Judea, that those people may also see the works which thou doest;" "for there is no man that doeth anything in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly. If thou do these things, show thyself to the world. For neither did his brethren believe on him." And Jesus turned to them and made answer, and it seems to me that his answer was sufficient for all time: "The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil."

In the fourth chapter of Luke it says, that Jesus told them that they would say unto him, "Physician, heal thyself: whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum,

do also here in thy country;" but he says, "No prophet is accepted in his own country. But I tell you of a truth that many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, . . . but unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta. . . . And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them was cleansed saving Naaman the Syrian." He was not moving around working signs and miracles simply to gratify those seeking them.

If you turn to the Apostle Paul's writings, you will find in the fifth chapter of his first letter to Timothy, towards the latter part of the chapter, where he tells Timothy to quit drinking water and take a little wine for his stomach's sake and his often infirmities. Why didn't Paul put his hands on him and heal him? He didn't have the power; God reserves that to himself, and the truth remained that the power was with God, and Paul was not able to heal him although Timothy was called his son in the gospel. In the last chapter of his second epistle to Timothy he says: "Erastus abode at Corinth: but Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick." Poor Trophimus! Why didn't Paul heal him? Because he had not the power.

And if you turn to another testimony of this same Apostle Paul, recorded in his twelfth chapter of the second letter to the Corinthians, you will find this statement: "I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such a one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) how that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter. Of such a one will I glory: yet of myself I will not glory, but in mine infirmities. For though I would desire to glory, I shall not be a fool; for I will

say the truth; but now I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth me to be, or that he hear-eth of me. And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: and my strength is made perfect in weakness." Why did Saul have to carry that thorn in the flesh all along, notwithstanding he had prayed and begged that God would remove it from him?

Jesus said the signs would follow; but when men command us to do these things because Jesus said so, we call upon them to obey the law and show their faith, for if they have not faith enough in him to obey his word, how can they have enough to receive a miracle? If they love the truth they will accept it.

When the enemy came to Christ, after he had fasted and was hungry, and said, "Make of these stones bread," Jesus answered, "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." And when upon the pinnacle of the temple he said to the Savior, "Now I will quote you something that is written, as you have been quoting, 'It is written':" "It is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone." "Now, jump down here and let us see the angels take care of you; it is so written, and you content yourself because of what is written. Prove that what is written is not a lie."

We stand up as the followers of Jesus and preach that these signs shall follow, but some one comes to us and talks just like that other fellow did—he wants us to work a miracle to prove to him that Jesus did not lie when he promised that signs should follow believers. God is working with his truth, confirming it with signs following, and we leave it for men to accept or reject it, as they please. We want them to accept the truth because they love the truth better than error. Jesus has certified to certain things he preached by giving his life in confirmation of them and being resurrected; and he gives his certificate to-day by the same Spirit as before, and his Spirit will change our bodies at last and bring them up in the resurrection day; making them again the habitation of the spirit to abide forever.

I would rather take Christ's word, no matter how strange the statement is, than that of ten thousand of the wisest theologians of this age contrary to it, though they were polished men and the whole universe should say amen to it. Just as Thomas Jefferson, I think it was, said: "I would rather stand and be right, and not a single man at my back, than to be wrong with all the United States at my back saying amen." If that Bible is right I propose to be right, so that at last, when I stand before God, its author, I shall be able to take it and place it between him and me and quote him chapter and verse for authority for what I have believed and done; so that if he wishes to condemn me he must first condemn that Bible and its writers.

May God bless these scattering remarks and sanctify them to your good. May he help us to abide in the truth. Amen.

Reported by R. Archibald.