PART 2 DESERET EVENING NEWS. 9 TO 12

TRUTH AND LIBERTY.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 1895. SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH.

# SALVATION FOR THE DEAD.

Discourse Delivered in the Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, Sunday, January 6th, 1895, by

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[REPORTED BY ARTHUR WINTER.]

I desire to be filled with the Spirit of the Lord in performing this duty which has been assigned me this afternoon. I feel that without this Holy Spirit my words will be vain to myself as well as to the assembled congregation.

Just before coming to meeting this afternoon, a gentleman made inquiry of me as to the object of this fine structure which stands upon the east side of this block, called the Temple. He supposed it was a place for public meetings; and though he admired the external appearance of the building, I inferred from his comments that he thought it was a waste of means to erect such a building for the private purposes to which it is put. I endeavored to explain to him some of the reasons why we built the Temple, and why so much means were expended in making it beautiful. We felt that there was no offering which poor mortals could give to the Lord that was too beautiful or too good, and a house could not be too highly embellished which it was expected holy messengers would visit, and perhaps the Lord Himself would condescend to occupy at some time. For this reason, among others, we have felt to obtain our choicest workmen, our most skilled artisans, our most talented architects, to work within and without that edifice, to make it a place of beauty. Those who read the Scriptures will remember how much means and effort were expended by the wise king Solomon in the construction of that Temple whose beauty, as it is described to us in the fathers language of men, is still a subject of such great wonderment. We who believe in the Book of Mormon are also informed of the labors of the ancient people of God who dwelt upon this continent south of us and who subsequently occupied portions of this land, in the erection of temples to the name of God. To us these buildings are most sacred places. They are the shrines at which we bring our offerings of love for God and our fellow men, particularly for our kindred who have died without a knowledge of the truth and whose salvation is, necessarily at least, dependent upon the works of their children in the flesh. We have built temples for the purpose of redeeming our dead; performing for them those sacred ordinances which are necessary, as the Scriptures inform us, to salvation. For we believe that the Gospel which the Lord has revealed in these days, and which is the Everlasting Gospel, contains laws which it is necessary for every creature to obey in order to receive celestial glory.

We believe that God has established in His Church a certain order which must be observed by His children if they would inherit the glories revealed to us in the Scriptures, and for which nearly every human being is hoping. We believe, too, that there is but one Gospel which is capable of bringing to the children of men the longed glory. We believe in one faith, one Lord, one baptism; though we believe that there are Lords many and Gods many, as the ancient Apostle said, and that God, operates in various directions for the benefit of the children of men. It operates upon them in such a manner as to give unto one the gift of wisdom, unto another the gift of tongues, and to others various gifts according to their capacities and the will of God in bestowing them. We believe that there is but one baptism that is recognized by God; and yet we say there is also a baptism by fire as well as of water, which baptism is as essential to the salvation of the human family as the baptism of water. Yet all these beliefs of ours are comprehended in that one statement of Paul, "One Lord, one faith, one baptism."

The Gospel which we have received is one which teaches us that all mankind are the children of God; that they are destined to be saved, excepting a very limited number who possess such perfect knowledge of the truth and such a degree of intelligence that they can sin against the light after they have received it, sin away the day of grace, and place themselves without the pale of the redeeming blood of Christ. But in saying that all men shall be saved, it is not saying that all men shall receive an equal glory and exaltation in the presence of God. No; we believe that in the dwelling place of our Father there are many mansions—many degrees of glory, suited to the capacities of men and women, and which will be awarded to them according to works which they have done in the flesh and the intents of their hearts. To attain the highest glory it is necessary that men and women should possess a living faith, not a faith which James describes, without works and consequently dead. I feel that it is a pernicious doctrine in some respects which is taught by the Christian world today, that belief on the Lord Jesus Christ, regardless of works or of obedience to the commands of God, is sufficient. I say it is pernicious because it too frequently encourages men and women in works of darkness; for the motion prevails in many places that the man who confesses Christ with his lips, even though he be an liar deathbed, calls the wicked into the presence of God and associate with holy beings; that he, though suspended between heaven and earth, can go into the presence of God and there unity beings who have died virtuous to the truth, when his spirit leaves its associations in mortality, from whence it was driven because of his sin! Therefore, I say there is much of evil in this theory of men. It is not a doctrine of God. Men may turn and twist certain passages of scripture to sustain this idea, but it will not avail them. True, Christ told His disciples to go into all the world preaching the gospel, and those who believed should be saved; and there are many passages which say that belief on the Lord Jesus Christ shall redeem mankind. Of course, this belief is essential to the salvation of the human family. Faith is necessary for their exaltation; for it is indeed the first principle of the everlasting Gospel. But the man who possesses faith without works Christ has likened unto the man who built his house upon the sand, and when the winds and the storms came, that man's house fell, because it was not founded upon a foundation. But the man who heard what He said and did the works which were commanded by Jesus was likened unto the man who built his house upon the rock, and notwithstanding the storms that blew about it, it stood, because its foundation was secure.

I believe that there are many sincere believers in this doctrine that belief is all that is necessary to salvation, and such as these may be of those people who are sincere I hope in their profession; but I believe there are many ministers of religion who realize that this doctrine is incorrect and that it is insufficient for the salvation of mankind. Such will endeavor, and I trust, turn unto the Lord that they may serve Him and not only save themselves, but become saviors unto others whom they are placed to guide.

When a man is affirmed with a disease, he desires to procure a physician who understands the case and tell him, however painful the truth may be, what is necessary for his deliverance from the disease with which he is troubled. Some physicians are who a degree to their patients, with doubtful people into the belief that they will speedily recovered to health by the ordinary process of nature, when if they were only to tell the truth they would see that some drastic measures were necessary to the saving of their lives. I remember reading of a certain physician in the field who was called in to attend a very rich man who had injured his hip. He examined it carefully. The rich man, in order to give him an inducement to save the limb, had told him that if he could save the limb he would give him a large monetary reward. The doctor's knowledge of the human system gave to him the feeling that in order to save the man's life the limb would have to be amputated; but hoping for reward he deceived the patient under the belief that perhaps he might recover, and he did not tell him the real condition of the case. The result was that gangrene set in and in a short time the man's life was lost; whereas, if the physician had told the truth and had received the stipulated number, the man's life might have been saved.

So, too, if the physicians of our souls would take the knife and separate from us the false doctrines, theories and dogmas which we have inherited and imbibed, the soul might be saved and preserved to become a choice instrument in the hands of God. But instead of this, the love of reward, the hope of gaining wealth, the desire to preach for money and divine for hire, prompts many men to pass over troublesome points which deceives the human family and keeps them in ignorance of the true doctrines of Christ, which men and women must accept in order to attain salvation in the kingdom of God. The Scriptures are full of witnesses singing the peaceful lullaby of "Peace, peace, the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shall be saved," and men guilty of every sin under heaven can, according to the creeds of men—not, mark you, according to the doctrines of God—come for themselves salvation and exaltation in the presence of God. We do not want to deceive ourselves with this notion. Even Latter-day Saints, who profess to have accepted the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, need not suppose for one moment that they will be saved merely because hands have been laid upon them or the reception of the Holy Ghost, and they have had a testimony of the truth, that their salvation is secure; for if they depend upon a dead faith for their salvation, they too will find that they have missed their aim, and that faith without works is dead and of no value.

I have heard a legend told of the Desert of Sahara. There is a clump of trees situated in one of the most desolate spots in that great arid region. The roots of the trees are fed by hidden and undiscoverable springs, and in the shade of those trees the weary traveler is tempted to sit down and rest; and as he rests, the wind whistling through the leaves lulls him to sleep, and he dreams of home and loved ones, and of those he loves consciousness and the spirit takes its flight, his physical organism having been poisoned by the odor from the trees and the surrounding ground. It looks as though mankind were in this condition. We are tempted by the plausible theories of men to pay a little for our religion, and must be lulled to sleep, picturing in our imaginations the beauties of eternity, until we gradually pass away from life and find that our sleep has been the sleep of death—eternal death, because we have neglected the opportunities which God has placed in our way for our exaltation.

It is the duty of the Latter-day Saints to preach to the world the Gospel of the Son of God, to guide them for their sins, to repress them for their iniquities, to encourage them in everything that is good and ennobling, but to be fearless in the defense and proclamation of truth. For truth will be sustained. It may for the time seem to be overcome by the sophistries of men, but God is at the foundation of truth, and as He will stand, so will all that which emanates from Him stand and endure, in time and in eternity. Upon this people rests the duty of crying repentance unto this generation, teaching them unto God, that there is an existence hereafter, that not as the tree falleth so shall it lie, but as our bodies are placed in the tomb so will they forever remain; but there will come a time in the experience of every soul when the spirit will reunite itself with the body, and that men will appear before God and be called upon to give an account of the deeds done in the flesh. This faith which we desire men to receive is the faith which works miracles—which has the power to raise the dead unto life, the power to converse with God, and to receive His Spirit to such a measure as to make men and women prophets and prophetesses. This is the faith which we desire to implant in the hearts of the children of men.

Then we want them to be filled with the spirit of repentance, which follows faith, and which is the natural result of faith in God; for if men are filled with faith in the Father and in the Son, they will naturally desire to place themselves in a condition to be in association for such holy beings, and they will look back upon their past lives with sorrow—with a sorrow which will prompt them to be more righteous, more God-fearing, more upright in the future. Then repentance of sin will come, from them; as sure as the sun rises and goes down, not such as men yet who are called to account in the flesh for their crimes, and who, when the penalty is paid, go back to their iniquities, and only fail to sin because the opportunity to do so is lacking; but a repentance that will prompt men to make restitution, so far as it is possible for them to do so, for the sins which they have committed, and to restore honestly, if necessary, in order to obtain pardon for the wrong done; a repentance which will keep before our minds continually the view of our own weaknesses, our own weaknesses, and fill us with a desire to avoid the sins and weaknesses of the past. This is the repentance which worketh salvation to the souls of men, and prepares them to receive any ordinance, however humiliating it may be considered.

They will then go into the waters of baptism; they will do anything else, in order to receive a forgiveness of their sins. They will be buried in the water, as Christ was; they will come forth out of this water new men, laying off the old Adam, the old sinfulness of their lives, and determining that thereafter their lives shall conform as near as possible to the divine pattern which Christ set.

Then they will be prepared to have the Holy Ghost conferred upon them, with all its powers, gifts and blessings by the administration of men who possess the authority to act in the name of Christ. This is the same power which Jesus conferred upon His disciples in times of old, and which made them mighty men in the midst of an unbelieving world. It gave them the courage to offer their bodies to be tortured, their lives to be taken, still proclaiming the name of God. It gave them strength to withstand every temptation and to pass through every trial, still holding on to the faith which God had given them—that faith which brings out of trouble salvation and blessing. It is this spirit and this faith which have gathered this people together from every nation of the globe, and enables them to testify of the resurrection of the Gospel of the Son of God, and to tell in solemn language that the Lord has again spoken from the Heavens, revealed His Gospel, called His servants to go forth for the last time to teach to the world the plan of salvation, that before the end comes, every people upon the whole earth may hear the sound of the truth and receive or reject it, as seemeth them good. It is this spirit, received through the laying on of hands, that gives our elders strength to go to the nations of the earth and preach the Gospel, and during hardships of every kind, persecutions, and even suffering death, to testify of the truth which the Lord has restored to the earth. And this is the spirit which every man and woman will receive who accepts the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

"But," says one, "how can you expect men and women to receive these doctrines? We have your testimony, but what other evidence do you have that this is the truth?" We may ask you in place to the test that same request which Jesus made of His disciples and people in His day when He said to them, "My doctrine is not mine, but His that sent me. If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." We say to the people of the world today, "Do not accept our testimony alone. You have heard the words which the Elders have spoken; you have seen our diligence in warning the nations of the earth; you have heard of the restoration of the truth; now listen no further to these men, but appeal directly to God. Seek Him in prayer, exercise faith in Him, and He will tell you for yourselves whether or not this doctrine is His or the doctrine of men. You need not accept the testimony of any man concerning this religion. You need not receive baptism until you yourselves are converted through the warnings of the Holy Spirit upon you—that spirit which God alone can bestow, and which men cannot give, except as they are made the instruments, under God, of exercising the authority which He has restored to the earth. You can seek the Almighty in your closets. He is not a God that is afar off, but one whose ears are opened, or whose arm is withdrawn from His children; but He is a God whose eye is upon the humblest creature that lives, of every race and color, and whose love is extended to the whole human family. It is to this God that you should appeal for a testimony of the truth of this work which the Lord has established. And if you will do this, in humility and in faith, we have no fear as to the results of your prayers; for God will hear and answer every soul."

I know the prejudice which has existed and which now exists against this Church; but it is only a renewal of the old-time prejudice that existed in the days of Jesus and at every time when the Church of God has been upon the earth. Men, however, have got to become as humble that they are willing to endure persecution for the name of Christ; and if they cannot maintain their standing through all the trials of life, then they are unworthy of their calling as followers of the meek and lowly Jesus.

Now, going still further, we find that this same Gospel will yet be preached and is now being preached to the spirits behind the veil—the spirits of men and women who have died in the ages that are past. Does it seem a fanciful idea that these beings who exist today as much as they ever did, though in a different condition, are having the Gospel preached to them? It is, I know, a new doctrine to the world, it was still newer in the day when it was first announced by the Prophet Joseph Smith under the inspiration of God. At that time it was new to teach the first principles of the Gospel, which now finds many advocates among different sects and parties, and this doctrine for the dead was also new. True, it existed in some sort of mary condition. A belief in this doctrine in some form existed in the minds of many people. It is illustrated in the practice of the Catholic church, who from generation to generation have held masses for the dead, believing that through their prayers some indescribable working could be had upon the spirits of men and women who had passed away. In travelling in Europe I frequently came to the Catholic cemetery, a place almost removed from civilization, this idea prevailing to a very marked extent, and was illustrated in an incident which was described by a family who afterwards joined the Church. A man who was considered an infidel, and upon whom the priest had operated for many years previous to his death, happened to pass away. He left behind him a widow, with several grown up daughters. Some little means was her between and she died and buried at the time, the priest came around to visit the family. He told the woman, who was a devout Catholic, that the night before he had been visited by the spirit of her dead husband. He had a very hideous countenance, and he had come to her and inquiring because of her misery, and said he, "Your husband told me that I should come to you and say that I be paid to say masses for his soul." The poor widow accepted the statement of the priest, and gave of her means so that her husband might be relieved, as she believed, from the great misery to which he was placed because of his unbelief while in the flesh. After few weeks the priest again came, and said he had another visit from her husband. He said his circumstances had bettered somewhat, and he had noticed that one half of his body was white and the other half was black; that he was only half redeemed, and with the expenditure of a little more money he could be fully redeemed. He gave to some extent of her means. The third time he came with the same excuse and extracted from the widow a little more means. His fourth appeal, however, so disgusted the lady that she told him her husband would have to suffer in the purgatory which he was supposed to be in redemption. This is an extreme instance, and I believe very few such occurrences can be found in the world, but this came to my personal knowledge.

Some idea of this doctrine of salvation for the dead has prevailed, in a vague and indistinct way, in the minds of many people; yet it has the glimmering of the light which undoubtedly was that upon the earth, especially in the hearts of the saints, in the days of Jesus, and which was gradually taken from them in consequence of their apostasy. Paul, the doctrine of salvation for the dead. Two, there are very few passages in scripture to produce in proof of this; but one very pointed remark of Paul gives evidence that the saints to whom he was writing understood this principle, for he wrote unto them in the course of an epistle on the resurrection and the glories of the future, "Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all?" Then we read in Peter of Jesus himself having gone, while His body lay in the tomb, to visit the spirits in prison. What for? To fulfill the prophecies of ancient men, that He should go and throw open the prison doors and cast to the captive Come forth. This was the mission Jesus had in view, for four years in advance, and it was done when He was crucified on Mount Calvary. It was necessary for Him, the Redeemer, the only person whose name will bring salvation to mankind upon the earth, to throw open the prison doors of those who were captive and bound, and who had been suffering since the days of Noah because of their sins. You scriptures know that when Noah was upon the earth it was necessary, in order to check the evil which prevailed, that the Lord should send a flood to destroy the family of men, that it could be Almighty Being whom we worship destroy His children! Yes, because death meant salvation to them. They were sinning away the day of grace; they were going to those limits where the saving power of the Redeemer's blood would not reach them, where mercy and love for those children the Lord sent a flood to destroy them, that there might come a day to the future when redemption and salvation should come to them. Jesus, as the Savior of the world, and I this morning, to perform of going to those spirits in prison and throwing open the doors, that they might come forth and receive the blessings which their brethren and sisters in the flesh were receiving under the administration of the Apostles of the Lord.

When Jesus said to the thief, in answer to his request, "Today thou shalt be with me in paradise," He did not mean that the thief, vile and corrupt, would go immediately into the presence of God; but he should go to paradise, where Jesus Himself went. Even at the last moment, when the breath was leaving his body, as he showed true repentance so did he go into a place of rest and peace. The heathen do not go to hell because they have not heard the name of Jesus. They are not thrust into darkness because the sound of the Gospel has never reached their ears. No, God forbid that this should be the case! It is not one of the attributes of the Lord to be unjust or unmerciful to His children, and we, as a people, who know much of God, ought to be the height of uncharitableness to throw out from hope and from salvation men and women who through no fault of their own had never heard the Gospel or the name of Jesus. It certainly would be, but this is not the case. All men, as is told us by the ancient Prophet, who have lived righteous lives upon the earth, though they have not received the Gospel in its fullness, when they die go to a state of rest and peace, and there they remain and gradually advance in the way that the Lord has provided, until they receive their exaltation and glory in the presence of God.

Joseph Smith, just after receiving the revelation of this Gospel, was concerned about his brother who had died without the truth, and the Lord opened the heavens to him that he might see his brother in a state of joy and peace, and unto them in the course of an epistle on the resurrection and the glories of the future, "Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all?" Then we read in Peter of Jesus himself having gone, while His body lay in the tomb, to visit the spirits in prison. What for? To fulfill the prophecies of ancient men, that He should go and throw open the prison doors and cast to the captive Come forth. This was the mission Jesus had in view, for four years in advance, and it was done when He was crucified on Mount Calvary. It was necessary for Him, the Redeemer, the only person whose name will bring salvation to mankind upon the earth, to throw open the prison doors of those who were captive and bound, and who had been suffering since the days of Noah because of their sins. You scriptures know that when Noah was upon the earth it was necessary, in order to check the evil which prevailed, that the Lord should send a flood to destroy the family of men, that it could be Almighty Being whom we worship destroy His children! Yes, because death meant salvation to them. They were sinning away the day of grace; they were going to those limits where the saving power of the Redeemer's blood would not reach them, where mercy and love for those children the Lord sent a flood to destroy them, that there might come a day to the future when redemption and salvation should come to them. Jesus, as the Savior of the world, and I this morning, to perform of going to those spirits in prison and throwing open the doors, that they might come forth and receive the blessings which their brethren and sisters in the flesh were receiving under the administration of the Apostles of the Lord.

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Now, I want to say in passing, to the Latter-day Saints, if you have only succeeded in obtaining the name of one of your loved ones who is dead, do not allow a day to pass, when the opportunity is given you, without doing the work for that one. I have my hesitation in saying that those who will come upon the opportunities that are given them we will do the work for those whose names and genealogies they can find and find the way open before them and names will be given to them, either by human agencies or by the revelations of God to them directly. I know of numbers of instances that go to prove this. I only mention one perhaps now. A man who had the names of seven of his dead, and who thought it or too small moment to make the trip to Manti to work for them in the Temple, (this Temple in Salt Lake was not completed then) was encouraged to go, and was promised that if he went he would soon find the way to obtain other names. Before he had completed the work for the seven he learned of a society in the east to whom he wrote and received immediately a book containing the names and the direct ancestry of more than three thousand of his kindred. This a favor was opened up before him which he has not yet been able to accomplish. This is the experience of many Latter-day Saints who have worked in the Temples. I fear that we are drawing away too much from these sacred ordinances and neglecting the duties which we owe to the dead.

Another thing, which is of more serious consequence perhaps to us who are living, is the fact that we are neglecting the duties which we owe to ourselves in receiving our partners for life. We do not appreciate, it seems to me, the privilege of being sealed for time and eternity. What family organizations in the other world! I imagine the startled feeling which takes possession of some people at the thought of family government behind the veil, and their minds will revert to the saying of the Savior, that in the resurrection there is neither marrying nor giving in marriage, but remember the people to whom He was speaking then; they did not believe in the resurrection. There is verily neither marrying nor giving in marriage in eternity, because such things must be here. The power which Jesus conferred upon Peter, that whatsoever he bound on earth should be bound in heaven, and whatsoever he loosed on earth should be loosed in heaven—that same power exists in the Church of Christ today, and men and women can be sealed here in the flesh and know that they are sealed for eternity as well as there. And I say to you, as I have said on other occasions, that those who think to escape their marriage vows, and get away from them, are deceiving themselves. They are sealed by the holy law of God for time and eternity, and when the keys of the priesthood separate them for time, the power is not conferred upon any human court to separate men and women in eternity. That power is held by God alone, or the man to whom He has delegated the authority. And the children will be bound to their fathers and mothers in eternity. The family organization will exist there. It exists here today. You know that God is behind it as a factor. He stands at the head of the family. We are His children. We are His offspring. We are His representatives here on the earth. I can speak from my own experience through which we will pass if we are faithful. We will some day be gods—gods of our own posterity, if we perform the duties required of us here and adapt the principles which will make us worthy to be added in eternity. But otherwise we will be as the angels of heaven, if we are worthy of such a blessing as being the angels of heaven. And who are they? They are ministering servants, created and have things they are, to those who will receive the fullness and inherit the celestial world.

When I hear of young men and women raised in this Church, who should have inherited the faith of the Gospel, who should have sucked it at their mothers' breasts, who should have it instilled into them from the earliest years—even I hear of them neglecting these blessings which are held out to them, it pains me, indeed it pains me sorely. I know this is the work of God. I know that He has established it never more to be overthrown. He stretched out His hand a second time to recover the remnant of His people, and I say unto you, if you do not do your duties and labor for them, we may use the testimony which we now possess, but this work of God cannot be overthrown by any act of ours, by no opposition, by no power of hell. Men may rage, let them rage, let them gnash their teeth against the Church, let them do what they may, the work of God will go on, and it will triumph. Men may be cut off, but the work will continually grow, and that buildings such as this Temple, and still greater, will be erected on the face of this land.

They will be filled with loving posterity, with children whose hearts are turned to their fathers, for God has fulfilled Seal. But what knowledge we have today we should utilize. We should not neglect the opportunities which we now have of laboring in these Temples. I know of many people among us who have received some intelligence concerning their kindred, and they think the work is so slight that they are postponing it day after day, and some of us will die without having done this work which our kindred are expecting us to perform for them. Then, in the world, how will we appear before our dead ones? Shall we be as them we were so engrossed in business and in the things of this life we could not find time to do something for their redemption and exaltation? I imagine we will feel then something at least of the bottomless of hell; for we will have lost what we might have had if we, in the hall of duty neglected, of opportunities postponed, and of failing to do things which my conscience tells me I ought to do.

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