



Type: Book Chapter

Temperance; the Sabbath

Author(s): Joseph F. Smith

Source: *Gospel Doctrine: Selections from the Sermons and Writings of Joseph F. Smith*

Published: Salt Lake City; The Deseret News, 1919

Pages: 300-311

Abstract: Man Should Be Master of His Appetites—Moderation—Temperance—How to Teach Temperance—Use of Tobacco and Strong Drinks—Do Not Smoke—The Saloon—Defeat the Liquor Interests—Vitality and Patent Medicines—Stamp Out Profanity and Vulgarity—Saturday's Work;—Purpose of the Sabbath—The Meaning of Sunday—What Shall We Do on the Sabbath Day?—Necessity of Sunday Worship—Be Wise in All You Do—The Nature and Purpose of Fasting—Keeping the Sabbath Holy—Do Not Rob the Sabbath Day—Man Must Be Master of Himself

CHAPTER XIV

Temperance; the Sabbath

MAN SHOULD BE MASTER OF HIS APPETITES. How humiliating it must be to a thoughtful man to feel that he is a slave to his appetites, or to an over-weening and pernicious habit, desire or passion. We believe in strict temperance. We believe in abstinence from all injurious practices, and from the use of all hurtful things. Poison, in the judgment of the physician, may be beneficial, under some conditions in life, as a momentary relief; but poison, under any circumstance, should only be used as a temporary expedient, necessary, perhaps, in our best judgment, for the time being, for the instant—for sudden and certain desired relief—but the continued use of that poison will fasten its fangs upon us, so to speak, in such a way that by and by we will find that we are overpowered by it, and we become slaves of the pernicious habit that becomes a tyrannical master over us.—*Apr. C. R.*, 1908, p. 4.

MODERATION. We may make evil of all amusements, but the Saints should not be unwise, but rather understand what the will of the Lord is, and practice moderation in all things. They should avoid excesses and cease from sin, putting far from them “the lusts of men;” and in their amusements and pastimes adopt a course that looks to the spirit as well as the letter, the intention and not the act alone, the whole and not the part, which is the meaning of moderation. In this way their conduct will be reasonable and becoming, and they shall find no trouble in understanding the will of the Lord.

Let me exhort the young people particularly, and the Saints generally, to weigh well the value of moderation in all their actions and amusements. Remember, too, that ex-

cessive feasting is not good; neither is excessive labor, but idleness and waste of precious time is infinitely worse. "Let your moderation be known to all men."—*Improvement Era*, Vol. 6, p. 857, Sept., 1903.

TEMPERANCE. We endorse any movement looking to temperance, looking to virtue, tending to purity of life and to faith in God and obedience to his laws; and we are against evil of every description; and we are, in our faith and prayers, against evil-doers—not that we would pray for evil to come upon evil-doers, but that evil-doers might see the folly of their ways and the wickedness of their acts and repent of them and turn away from them.—*Oct. C. R.*, 1908, p. 8.

HOW TO TEACH TEMPERANCE. The best way to teach temperance is to keep the Word of Wisdom; and the next best is to assist others to keep it, by removing artificial temptations from their lives. Such temptation is the saloon, and it is time that the sentiment in the communities where the members of the Church reside should be declared against this soul-destroying evil.—*Juvenile Instructor*, Vol. 46, p. 333, June, 1911.

USE OF TOBACCO AND STRONG DRINKS. The use of tobacco in its various forms and of strong drinks to some extent is also to be lamented and deplored, especially among the youth, and this evil should be stamped out. The people of God should set their faces like flint against these practices, and they should see to it that their children are taught better, and that a better example is set before them by their parents, in order that the children may grow up without sin in these things.—*Oct. C. R.*, 1901, p. 2.

DO NOT SMOKE. Teach your children not to smoke; persuade them not to do it. Watch and look after them, and try to teach them better, and to be courteous and kind.—*Apr. C. R.*, 1905, p. 86.

THE SALOON. No member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints can afford to do himself the dis-

honor, or bring upon himself the disgrace, of crossing the threshold of a liquor saloon or a gambling hell, or of any house of ill-fame of whatever name or nature it may be. No Latter-day Saint, no member of the Church, can afford it, for it is humiliating to him, it is disgraceful in him to do it, and God will judge him according to his works.—*Oct. C. R.*, 1908, p. 7.

If, I say, the people would observe the principles of this revelation, (Doc. and Cov. 89), there could not exist in their midst that most obnoxious institution known as a saloon; it can not exist where only Latter-day Saints dwell.—*Oct. C. R.*, 1908, p. 6.

DEFEAT THE LIQUOR INTERESTS. The liquor interests—the enemies of the race—are again making keen efforts to restore the former low-down conditions. In some places, we understand, enough petitioners have already been obtained and the names filed with the commissioners requesting an election this June. With all good people we join in hoping that these efforts may utterly fail to restore the saloon. This should be the desire of all Latter-day Saints, and their prayers should be supported by their works and votes. In these elections the wives, mothers and sisters have their golden opportunity with fathers and brothers to arise and utterly crush the cursed traffic in drink for which so many have suffered in sweat, and pain, and tears.—*Improvement Era*, Vol. 16, 1912-13, p. 824.

VITALITY AND PATENT MEDICINES. Instead of flocking out to hear smooth-tongued impostors, people should leave them severely alone. Instead of dosing themselves with patent medicines, they should learn to keep their bodies healthy by right living (See Doctrine and Covenants, Sec. 89), by inhaling pure air, taking plenty of exercise, and bathing not only often in fresh water, but also in the sunshine with which our merciful Father has so abundantly provided us. If there are cases of sickness, as there will be

notwithstanding any precaution we may take, which common sense and good nursing, or simple home remedies do not suffice to cure, let us follow the advice of the Scriptures (James 5:14-16), but if we do not believe in the elders, or in the prayer of faith saving the sick, let a reputable and faithful physician be consulted. By all means, let the quack, the traveling fakir, the cure-all nostrum, and the indiscriminate dosing with patent medicine, be abolished like so much trash.

The young man who would cope with the world, who would be full of vigor, and fresh for the battle of life, will find his strength in living according to the word of the Lord; for the promise is that all "who remember to keep and do these sayings, walking in obedience to the commandments, shall receive health in their navel, and marrow to their bones, and shall find wisdom and great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures; and shall run and not be weary, and shall walk and not faint; and I, the Lord, give unto them a promise, that the destroying angel shall pass by them, as the children of Israel, and not slay them."—*Improvement Era*, Vol. 5, June, 1902, p. 624.

STAMP OUT PROFANITY AND VULGARITY. We should stamp out profanity, and vulgarity, and everything of that character that exists among us; for all such things are incompatible with the gospel and inconsistent with the people of God.—*Oct. C. R.*, 1901, p. 2.

SATURDAY'S WORK. A good modern eighth commandment might read something like this: Do not so overwork and fret on Saturday as to deprive the Sabbath of the devotions and worship that belong to it as a day of rest.

In the home, Saturday is the day set apart for housecleaning, for extra cooking, for mending and all sorts of repairs that the Sabbath is thought to require. In business, Saturday is a day for picking up all loose ends, for closing up all the unfinished details of a week's work.

The consequences of our modern treatment of the last day of the week are too often manifested in an indolence and supine indifference that make our feelings and a total lack of energy almost incompatible with the spirit of worship. No worn out man or woman, by the excessive toil of an early Saturday morning and a late Saturday night, can properly worship God in spirit and in truth.—*Juvenile Instructor*, Vol. 44, July, 1909, p. 295.

PURPOSE OF THE SABBATH. The Sabbath is a day of rest and of worship, designated and set apart by special commandment of the Lord to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and we should honor and keep it holy. We should also teach our children this principle.—*Oct. C. R.*, 1901, pp. 1, 2.

THE MEANING OF SUNDAY. True, Sunday is a day of rest, a change from the ordinary occupations of the week, but it is more than that. It is a day of worship, a day in which the spiritual life of man may be enriched. A day of indolence, a day of physical recuperations is too often a very different thing from the God-ordained day of rest. Physical exhaustion and indolence are incompatible with a spirit of worship. A proper observance of the duties and devotions of the Sabbath day will, by its change and its spiritual life, give the best rest that man can enjoy on the Sabbath day.

Saturday evening may be wisely set apart as a time for thoughtful conversation or helpful reading as an introduction to the Sabbath day.—*Juvenile Instructor*, Vol. 44, July, 1909, p. 297.

WHAT SHALL WE DO ON THE SABBATH DAY? My belief is that it is the duty of Latter-day Saints to honor the Sabbath day and keep it holy, just as the Lord has commanded us to do. Go to the house of prayer. Listen to instructions. Bear your testimony to the truth. Drink at the fountain of knowledge and of instruction, as it may be opened for us from those who are inspired to give us instruction. When

we go home, get the family together. Let us sing a few songs. Let us read a chapter or two in the Bible, or in the Book of Mormon, or in the book of Doctrine and Covenants. Let us discuss the principles of the gospel which pertain to advancement in the school of divine knowledge, and in this way occupy one day in seven. I think it would be profitable for us to do this.—*M. I. A. Conference*, June 11, 1916, *Young Woman's Journal*, Vol. 27, pp. 455-460.

NECESSITY OF SUNDAY WORSHIP. It is imperatively necessary, at all times, and especially so when our associations do not afford us the moral and spiritual support which we require for our advancement, that we go to the house of the Lord to worship and mingle with the Saints that their moral and spiritual influence may help to correct our false impressions and restore us to that life which the duties and obligations of our conscience and true religion impose upon us.

“Good times” are often dangerous times, and social fraternity, if not of the right character, will prove more harmful than helpful. Let us, therefore, in the midst of our worldly callings and associations, not forget that paramount duty which we owe to ourselves and to our God.—*Juvenile Instructor*, Vol. 47, March, 1912, p. 145.

BE WISE IN ALL YOU DO. Leave these poisonous and injurious things alone; live within your means; get out of debt, and keep out of debt; do not run faster than you can go safely; be careful and cautious in what you do; advise with those who have wisdom and experience, before you leap, lest you leap into the dark; and so guard yourselves from possible evil and disadvantage, that the Lord can pour out the blessings of heaven upon you, yes “open the windows of heaven” and pour out upon you blessings that you shall scarcely have room to contain them.—*Apr. C. R.*, 1910, pp. 6, 7.

THE NATURE AND PURPOSE OF FASTING.—The law to the

Latter-day Saints, as understood by the authorities of the Church, is that food and drink are not to be partaken of for twenty-four hours, "from even to even, and that the Saints are to refrain from all bodily gratification and indulgences. Fast-day being on the Sabbath, it follows, of course, that all labor is to be abstained from. In addition, the leading and principal object of the institution of the fast among the Latter-day Saints was that the poor might be provided with food and other necessities. It is, therefore, incumbent upon every Latter-day Saint to give to his bishop, on fast day, the food that he or his family would consume for the day, that it may be given to the poor for their benefit and blessing; or, in lieu of the food, that its equivalent amount, or if the person is wealthy a liberal donation, in money, be so reserved and dedicated to the poor.

Now, while the law requires the Saints in all the world to fast from "even to even" and to abstain both from food and drink, it can easily be seen from the Scriptures, and especially from the words of Jesus, that it is more important to obtain the true spirit of love for God and man, "purity of heart and simplicity of intention," than it is to carry out the cold letter of the law. The Lord has instituted the fast on a reasonable and intelligent basis, and none of his works are vain or unwise. His law is perfect in this as in other things. Hence, those who can are required to comply thereto; it is a duty from which they cannot escape; but let it be remembered that the observance of the fast day by abstaining twenty-four hours from food and drink is not an absolute rule, it is no iron-clad law to us, but it is left with the people as a matter of conscience, to exercise wisdom and discretion. Many are subject to weakness, others are delicate in health, and others have nursing babies; of such it should not be required to fast. Neither should parents compel their little children to fast. I have known children to cry for something to eat on fast day. In such cases, going without

food will do them no good. Instead, they dread the day to come, and in place of hailing it, dislike it; while the compulsion engenders a spirit of rebellion in them, rather than a love for the Lord and their fellows. Better to teach them the principle, and let them observe it when they are old enough to choose intelligently, than to so compel them.

But those should fast who can, and all classes among us should be taught to save the meals which they would eat, or their equivalent, for the poor. None are exempt from this; it is required of the Saints, old and young, in every part of the Church. It is no excuse that in some places there are no poor. In such cases the fast donation should be forwarded to the proper authorities for transmission to such stakes of Zion as may stand in need.

So shall we gain favor in the sight of God, and learn the acceptable fast before him.—*Improvement Era*, Vol. 6, December, 1903, p. 146.

KEEPING THE SABBATH HOLY. To observe the Sabbath day properly is the plain duty of every Latter-day Saint—and that includes the young men and young women and the boys and girls. It may seem strange that it should be necessary to repeat this often-asserted fact. But there appears to be some people, and sometimes whole communities, who neglect this duty, and therefore stand in need of this admonition.

What are we required to do on the Sabbath day? The revelations of the Lord to the Prophet Joseph are very plain on this subject, and these should govern us, for they are in strict harmony with the teachings of the Savior. Here are some of the simple requirements:

The Sabbath is appointed unto you to rest from your labors.

The Sabbath is a special day for you to worship, to pray, and to show zeal and ardor in your religious faith and duty—to pay devotions to the Most High.

The Sabbath is a day when you are required to offer your time and attention in worship of the Lord, whether in meeting, in the home, or wherever you may be—that is the thought that should occupy your mind.

The Sabbath day is a day when, with your brethren and sisters, you should attend the meetings of the Saints, prepared to partake of the sacrament of the Lord's supper; having first confessed your sins before the Lord and your brethren and sisters, and forgiven your fellows as you expect the Lord to forgive you.

On the Sabbath day you are to do no other thing than to prepare your food with singleness of heart, that your fasting may be perfect, and your joy may be full. This is what the Lord calls fasting and prayer.

The reason for this required course upon the Sabbath day is also plainly stated in the revelations. It is that one may more fully keep himself unspotted from the world; and to this end, also, the Saints are required to go to the house of prayer and offer up their sacraments on the Sabbath day.

Now, what is the promise to the Saints who observe the Sabbath? The Lord declares that inasmuch as they do this with cheerful hearts and countenances, the fulness of the earth is theirs: "the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air, and that which climbth upon the trees and walketh upon the earth. Yea, and the herb, and the good things which cometh of the earth, whether for food or for raiment, or for houses, or for barns, or for orchards, or for gardens, or for vineyards." (Doc. and Cov. 59.)

These are all made for the benefit and use of man, to please the eye and to gladden the heart, to strengthen the body and to enliven the soul. All are promised to those who keep the commandments, and among the commandments is this important one, to observe properly the Sabbath day.

The Lord is not pleased with people who know these things and do them not.

Men are not resting from their labors when they plow, and plant and haul and dig. They are not resting when they linger around the home all day on Sunday, doing odd jobs that they have been too busy to do on other days.

Men are not showing zeal and ardor in their religious faith and duty when they hustle off early Sunday morning on the cars, in teams, in automobiles, to the canyons, the resorts, and to visit friends or places of amusement, with their wives and children. They are not paying their devotions in this way to the Most High.

Not in seeking pleasure and recreation do they offer their time and attention in the worship of the Lord; nor can they thus rejoice in the spirit of forgiveness and worship that comes with partaking of the holy sacrament.

Boys and young men are not fasting with singleness of heart, that their joy may be full, when they spend the Sabbath day loafing around the village ice-cream stand or restaurant, playing games, or in buggy-riding, fishing, shooting, or engaged in physical sports, excursions and outings. Such is not the course that will keep them unspotted from the world, but rather one that will deprive them of the rich promises of the Lord, give them sorrow instead of joy, and unrest and anxiety instead of the peace that comes with works of righteousness.

Let us play and take recreation to our hearts' content during other days, but on the Sabbath let us rest, worship, go to the house of prayer, partake of the sacrament, eat our food with singleness of heart, and pay our devotions to God, that the fulness of the earth may be ours, and that we may have peace in this world and eternal life in the world to come.

"But," says one, "in our settlement we have no other

day for amusement and sports, excursions and outings, ball games and races.”

Then demand one.

Is it possible that parents, in the face of the promises of the Lord, will deny a day in the week when their children may have recreation; and so force them to spend the Sabbath in sports!

One prominent man, in one of the northern states, where ball games and other sports are said to be the rule on Sunday, asked what could be done to remedy the evil. He was told to try a half holiday on one of the week days.

“Then,” he replied, “we can have no change nor remedy. Here are hundreds of acres of hay and ripening fields crying for workmen, and we cannot spare our boys for play.”

The best reply to such an argument is the question: “Which is best—to let the hay go to ruin, or the boy? Let the hay go; save the boy. He is worth more than all your material possessions. Save him in the spirit of the gospel—protect him from Sabbath-breaking—by offering a little temporal sacrifice, and the Lord will keep his promise to you. Get together in your ward, unitedly select a day for play and recreation; and like faithful Saints demand that the Sabbath day, as far as you and yours are concerned, shall be devoted to the Lord our God.—*Improvement Era*, Vol. 13, 1909-10, pp. 842-844.

DO NOT ROB THE SABBATH DAY. It is incumbent on members of the Church to so plan their work that there shall be no excuse for robbing the Lord’s day of its sanctity. To this end let the boys and girls have a half holiday during the week, which may be profitably used for recreations, leaving the Sabbath for spiritual culture and worship. It is equally obligatory that we so plan our amusements that these shall not interfere with our worship. Let therefore some other night than Saturday be provided for the purpose. The Lord has commanded his people to ob-

serve the Sabbath day to keep it holy, and on that day to go to the house of prayer and offer up their sacraments in righteousness with willing hearts and penitent spirits.—*Improvement Era*, Vol. 12, 1909, p. 315.

MAN MUST BE MASTER OF HIMSELF. No man is safe unless he is master of himself; and there is no tyrant more merciless or more to be dreaded than an uncontrollable appetite or passion. We will find that if we give way to the groveling appetites of the flesh and follow them up, that the end will be invariably bitter, injurious and sorrowful, both to the individual and society. It is hurtful in example as well as in its individual effects; dangerous and hurtful to the unwary; while the denial of these appetites—the crucifixion of the flesh, so to speak—and an aspiration for something noble; whenever possible, doing good to our fellow creatures, hoping for the future, laying up treasures in heaven, where moth and rust cannot corrupt, and where thieves cannot break through and steal—all these things will bring everlasting happiness; happiness for this world and the world to come. If there is no pleasure in the world except that which we experience in the gratification of our physical desires—eating, drinking, gay associations, and the pleasures of the world—then the enjoyments of the world are bubbles, there is nothing in them, there is no lasting benefit or happiness to be derived from them.—*Deseret Weekly News*, Vol. 33, 1884, p. 130.