

Endowment Lecture 3

The Holy Spirit And The Church

Sermon - 1966



by Evangelist Arthur A. Oakman

Endowment Lecture 3 – The Holy Spirit And The Church by Evangelist Arthur A. Oakman

A series of six lectures to members of the Melchisedec Priesthood, given at the R.L.D.S. Stone Church, Independence, Missouri from October 3 to 13, 1966.

In a discussion of the Holy Spirit why is it that we began with the story of creation? The answer to that question is the fact that the creation itself reflects the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Creation itself is an actualization of the Holy Spirit. And the universe is a framework so to speak, in which the Holy Spirit or God through the Spirit, is eminent. You remember the other night we talked about the scaffolding that was put round a building? This is an analogy by which we can view the universe as the scaffolding through which our Heavenly Father ministers his life to us. And the important thing for us to remember is that there is the universe that is around us and the universe that is within us. We stand between the two, and take the universe that is around us and put it within us. And as we do this as much of the life of God as is in the universe which we describe through the spirit of truth is given to us.

Every search for knowledge is an enticement of the Holy Spirit. Doesn't matter in what field it is; truth when it is made manifest brings with it a certain uplift of spirit. And there is no truth that man can acquire but what does not require of him some physical effort and spiritual effort. Every truth that you apprehend has come to you because of some realization of yourself in the act of knowing.

And so it is that the function of the universe is to reveal the knowledge of God and to minister immortality and eternal life to men. And the knowledge of God as you know is eternal life. And I'd like to say here that eternal life isn't simply a very long time. Time and eternity are in two different dimensions and we can illustrate this if we draw a straight line on a sheet of paper. The straight line may represent time and the piece of paper on which it is drawn represents eternity. Eternity encompasses time and there can be drawn on a plain sheet of paper an infinite number of straight lines, because as you know, from a geometrical definition a straight line has length but no width; no area. And so we are in the midst of eternity which surrounds us and surrounds the whole human endeavor.

God has so ordained that his servants shall become knowledgeable. He has ordained that they should acquire understanding of him, an understanding of him through his work, so that coming to know him as he is reflected in that which he has created, he can have fellowship with them.

You recall what we said the other night, that creation was undertaken by our Heavenly Father, that he might find himself in what he has made. All creative artists do this. Man writes a piece of music, he puts himself into it. Man paints a picture, something of himself goes into it. Or makes a statue, or builds a building, something of himself goes into it. And in the act of creating he expresses himself. And in the act of creating too, looks for himself mirrored in that which he has made.

And so it is with our Heavenly Father. He looks for himself in what he has made. And, as the Book of Genesis said when creation was sort of "finished," and I don't like to use that word because creation is still going on and our Heavenly Father

is still in the act of creating, creating a new manhood; he looked upon his work and pronounced it very good.

And so it is even today when the universe is looked at with the eyes of innocence, our Heavenly Father renews his ancient rapture. And,

“Tyger Tyger burning bright” ... (The Tyger from Songs of Experience by William Blake, 1794)

...the delicacy of a butterfly’s wing. Our God finds grace, and peace, and satisfaction in that which he sees is the reflection of his handiwork. But the great response which man is destined to make to our Heavenly Father yet awaits, is yet awaited by him. He seeks himself in us; has made us in his image. And because he has, he seeks himself in us. He desires to make us equal with him.

And when you think of this tremendous calling to which each one of us has given his allegiance. That we may become like him; to sit with him on the throne of his glory to use scriptural language. In other words to sit enshrined in the depth of intelligence which is the power by which he works. When you think of this calling brethren, it is a humbling and ennobling experience at the same time. Humble to think that we weak human creatures have been called to such a calling and ennobling when we recognize that we do, as a result of the new birth, bear the image of the Eternal. And so, our Heavenly Father seeks himself in us, so that he may find himself.

When we look at history under the influence of the Spirit we are turned again to the life and ministry of Jesus. And gentlemen, every jot and tittle of every man’s experience is reflected in the life of Jesus. There is no sorrow but what he has

encountered; there is no joy but what he has known. And, if the true measure of man is to be found it will be found in his life. In Jesus history reaches its climax. The end of the world is seen in the life and ministry of Jesus. Because for that kind of man, appearing in the historical experience of Jesus, for this kind of man, was the whole creation undertaken. And when we look at Jesus, we see the purpose and the end of life. And not only this, as you see the way in which his life impinged upon the lives of others, you are watching, actually, the approaching end of the age.

Now, creation, when it rolled forth complete at the created word was pronounced very good, and in the center of creation as its apex and its minister was placed man. It was his destiny under God to rule creation. To be the vicegerent of God, so that God could rule his creation through man. And this was his high calling. This is the meaning of the scripture which said that Adam was placed

“...{in} [into] the Garden of Eden, to dress it, and to keep it.” (Genesis 2:18) [corrected wording] / {added wording}

And then when sin entered into the equation, man fell. He fell within himself; something happened inside him. And he became lost to the freedom which, to which God had called him. He not only became a dis-crowned king, he became a wicked one. And in order to save his creation from the thralldom of a rebel will, God must of necessity ceased to rule creation through man and began to rule him and creation through the laws which he had set in motion.

There was a higher law, the law which was revealed in Christ. The law which is complete, and utter, and total freedom.

And Christ remember was free. And remember that freedom is the cardinal problem that humanity faces today. Man was free and he lost this freedom. He became subject to follow after his own will and desires; and because he had surrendered himself to a rebel will. And because the whole of creation was thus involved in this fall, our Heavenly Father had to rule through a lower order of existence.

Let me illustrate this to you by simply stating that there are many laws and many levels of laws. In other words if you walk on an icy street and do not obey the law of prudence, you will find yourself obeying the law of gravity. And it's the same situation with respect in a larger measure of course with respect to creation. Our Heavenly Father now had to rule men through the laws of chemistry and physics. Adam in the first place I verily believe was lord of creation. He had complete and utter and total mastery over himself. And this he lost, and because he lost, the whole order of creation became engulfed in sin. And as a result there was made manifest in the outer world around him the results of his transgression. And the earth of course as you know according to the good word was cursed and certain changes took place in mankind and from thenceforth began the story of the ill-fated end to which man was pointed.

And then remember we said that all of us are connected in the inner man to a vast sea of consciousness, to a spirit; which is the spirit of mankind in each one of us. "No man is an island" says John Donne, and this is true. There is a sort of a common humanity which binds us all together, and which sometimes is made manifest in moments of crisis. When you feel, deeply and sincerely, compassionate feelings for your fellow man in misfortune. And when you are touched by some tragedy, and when momentarily you experience in your own life an

imagination that tragedy which you see. And especially is this true if you're bound with the close ties of friendship to other people. And this common humanity is the humanity which our Lord Jesus took at his incarnation.

Please remember that this common humanity is a fallen humanity and that everyone who is born into this world is born to die. And death is the law of this world, not life. And so our Lord Jesus Christ came from beyond the gulf that separates creature from creator and he took this common humanity of ours and lived the life of God in it; so far as a human being can really reveal the fullness of the Godhead, Jesus so revealed it. And so far as man is capable of reflecting and revealing the Godhead, Jesus so revealed him. He is God and man met together. A new order of humanity, because in him our sinful humanity was penetrated by an endless and eternal life. And Jesus took this common humanity of ours and in his own body he purged it and cleansed it and took it with him into heavenly places. I cannot too strongly emphasize that the physical body which our Lord took from his mother was laid in the grave and was taken again by him after his resurrection, at his resurrection. The resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ was not a fantasy. It was not a piece of social psychology. Our Lord Jesus took the body which he had taken from his mother Mary, our humanity, and took it with him in heavenly places.

And brethren can you not see the implications of this? Because this has happened we know that there is in God a human life. We know that there is in God our humanity as it should be; as it will be; and as it must be, in Him. And what does this do? This parts the veil of mystery which has bothered philosophers and sages all through the years. This parts the curtain of mystery and we can approach to our Heavenly Father

with boldness, knowing that he knows our frame and understands our nature and that he in the person of his Son has lived a truly human life. I cannot too strongly emphasize that; this is the meaning of the incarnation gentlemen. And it so often escapes us; so many times we in the church are caught up in a feverish round of activity. One thing follows another; one program is devised after another program and consequently caught up in the feverish activity of an endless round of social activity in the church, we miss the wonder, and the beauty, and the glory, which should be ours in the contemplation of the principles of the doctrine of Christ.

Some years ago, John Rushton, oh, many years ago now, it's a, see, thirty six years ago; yes, thirty-six years ago. I never liked John when I first met him. I thought he was kind of an oily rascal, you know; kind of suave, two faced. And I knew that he was on the wrong side in 1925, (*transcriber's note - referring to Supreme Directional Control*) although I didn't know what it was all about, I knew he was on the wrong side. And consequently I kept him at a distance. And John always had a habit of coming up to me and grabbing me by the lapel and talking to me and I resented it, very much. Couldn't see him, how he ever got to be an Apostle, and so forth; even though he was an Englishman which commended itself to me. Then one day I heard him preach a sermon on the incarnation of our Lord, in St. Louis. I'll never forget that, because it was a turning point in my life. It was one of those days when all of John's insights, and his study, and his learning, and his experience was fused into one moment of clear vision. And I saw the Son of God as he ministered. And strangely enough all my resentment of him left me.

You know brethren that the revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ brings charity; that's what it's for? All my resentment left me and because I love the Lord Jesus, I didn't love him enough, I don't love him enough yet and neither do you; because I love the Lord Jesus I opened my arms to John. And after the service I waited for him. And he grabbed me by the lapel, which I didn't resent this time, took me over into the corner and started speaking to me in prophesy. He didn't use a "thus sayeth the Lord," he simply told me what would happen to me if I behaved myself.

He said, "Arthur, I was a young man like you are once."

He says "And I have learned a few things in life."

He says, "You remain true to your calling, behave yourself, he says, and the time will come when you will bask in the knowledge of the principles of the doctrine of Christ."

He said, "And as the texture of the flesh wears thinner and thinner and the natural delights of the human life fade into insignificance, there will come to your consciousness the knowledge of these things. And you know, and you will know that that knowledge is eternal knowledge; and when the time comes for you to pass, he says, you will part the veil and step onto the other side, free."

I've never forgotten those words. Part of that of course is yet to be fulfilled, but I have found keen delight in acknowledging and basking in the principles of the doctrine of Christ. For when his Spirit is given to me, as it is given to you, and insights come under the impulsion of that Spirit; when I experience within myself the knowledge of the Son of God, then all else vanishes into insignificance. And this thing madden world and thing madden man, fades; and I know in those moments that I am where I am suppose to be; that I am doing

what I am supposed to be doing, and as I worship I recognize that I am doing the thing for which I was made. Has not that been your experience gentlemen? Oh, isn't it true too that these experiences come to us, not as often as they should, not as often as they could were we more careful in our stewardship of time, in our spending of our energies? And if this principle of stewardship were made more effective in our lives, how much happier we would be, how much surer, how much freer; freer to do the things we know we ought to do. Keep the commandments.

And so the Lord Jesus, as I said, came here, a new level of life. He took our humanity and he was the embodiment of the Spirit. His body was taken at the resurrection into the being of God, transformed and transfigured; and that body has become the source and the fount of a new life to man. Through the body of Christ, which sits on the right hand of God, there is bequeathed to us by the power of the Spirit, the image of the Lord Jesus, the promise of Godly life. As I said a moment ago, charity is a fruitage of the revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ.

As you turn to the Doctrine and Covenants, brethren, and you read some of the manifestations there, that were sustained by the early Elders of the Church, does not your heart burn within you?

“We, Joseph Smith, Jr., and Sidney Rigdon, being in the Spirit on the sixteenth day of February...our eyes were opened, and our understandings were enlightened, so as to see and understand the things of God.” (Doctrine & Covenants 76:3a)

Marvelous, Section 76; a vision given to the prophet. Why? Simply because the same vision was to be shared by all those who came under this means of grace. That manifestation given to Joseph Smith was not for him alone. It was given to him and as he saw, it was given to him that we too might see what he saw, for the revelation goes on to say at the end,

“But great and marvelous are the works of the Lord...which he showed unto us...while we were [yet] in the Spirit, and are not lawful for man to utter, neither is man capable to make them known, for they are only to be seen and understood by the power of the Holy Spirit, which God bestows on those who love him, and purify themselves before him;” (Doctrine & Covenants 76:8a, b)

There you have it brethren, the opportunity is yours, just as it was his, to see, and to know, and to understand the things of God. And brethren, that must take place in our church on a much wider and deeper scale than ever it has hitherto. Only God can tell us who he is. Only God can tell us what he will do. Only God can show us how to accomplish his work.

“ye are not sent forth to be taught, but to teach [the children of men] the things {that} [which] I have put into your hands by the power of my {Holy} Spirit; and ye {shall} [are to] be taught from on high.” (Doctrine & Covenants 43:4b, c)

Do we believe it? Not that learning outside of such means of revelation is not profitable; we are told to study all good books, but how do you know a good book? The only way you

can know a good book is to have some standard of a judgment within you, and that's given to you, not of man, but of God. As Saint John says, I think it is in the sixth or the fourth Chapter of St. John concerning those who come forth in the resurrection of the just, he says these all shall be taught of God, not of man. And I don't think that revelation which I have just quoted to you is a bit of nineteenth century theology that we have to outlive and outgrow. For the means are still in this church, the opportunity is still in this church, the need is still around us in the world for the revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ. And gentlemen, it will not come outside of the Church of Jesus Christ. Men know him after the manner of men, like Saint Paul did before he was converted. And this as we shall see in a few moments is necessary and natural.

And so our Lord Jesus Christ initiated and inaugurated a new humanity, just as we partake of the old humanity, in him we partake of the new humanity, and become linked deep in the nethermost parts of our consciousness with that great company of witnesses. The roots of our church are not in the middle ages, nor are they in the reformation; the roots of our church are in heaven with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph, with all the prophets, with Peter, with James and with John, and all the apostles and those who have passed through the body and gone. This Church was inaugurated by a revelation from heaven by the power of the Holy Spirit. And one of the most significant things about the ministry of Joseph was that he never told people to believe him because it was him. He told them, if you want to know,

“ask and ye shall receive; {seek and ye shall find,} knock and it shall be opened unto you;” (Doctrine & Covenants 85:16d, e)

And when the young men came to him and says how do we know this church is true, that what you have presented to us is so? How do we know the Book of Mormon is true? He didn't enter into a lengthy philosophical disquisition. He said ask! And then when they wanted to know how, if they had any place in the church, again he said seek and ye shall find. And when they wanted to know how they should get ready for the place which they had in the church, the same answer came:

“...seek to bring forth and establish the cause of Zion: seek not for riches but for wisdom; and, behold, {you shall be the richest of all people} [...then shall you be made rich]”
(Doctrine & Covenants 6:3a, b) and so forth.

The validation of the Spirit as to the authenticity of the movement of the restoration is available to any man who asks and if any man who inquires does not receive the witness it is because he doesn't ask. For God gives freely to all those who seek him in humility.

And this new humanity is inaugurated by our Lord Jesus Christ through the ordinances of the Church. Let me emphasize something Joseph Smith said years ago. Being born again comes by the Spirit through ordinances. Being born again comes by the Spirit through ordinances. And how is this so? Would you permit me to make a simple, maybe a silly illustration?

Years ago, years ago when I, oh, used to engage in a little athletic work; I remember in 1932 I went down to Stanford University. I was under appointment then. I knew a lot more then brethren than I know now, I'll tell you that. I went down to see Myron Schaal. Myron Schaal, who has recently passed away, was an able athlete. He was a boxer and he taught corrective gymnastics at Stanford University. He was a personal friend of David Star Jordan. A man of competence and he was a Priest in the Church when I first met him. And I became acquainted with him because he had injured his knee and asked for administration one day. And then it wasn't long before I was going down to see him from San Francisco to Palo Alto. One day I said to him,

“Myron, would it be possible for you to give me a little instruction in physical training?”

“Why,” he said, “I'd be glad to. Let's go to the gym.”

So we went to the gym, and I changed, showered, and put on suitable clothing.

“Now,” he said, “Arthur, the first thing that you must learn to do is to stand up straightly.”

“Oh?” I said.

He said, “Yes.”

“Now,” he says, “I want you to go into the middle of the room and stand up straightly.”

So I went into the middle of the room and I stood up straight.

He said, “Do you think you're standing straightly?”

I said, “Yes.”

“No,” he said, “all you've done is taken another crooked stance.”

He said, “Go over against that wall.”

I said “all right.” Went over against the wall.

He said, “Put your heels against it, now the calves of your legs, backs of your knees and your thighs and your hips, but feel it all the way down at the same time.”

And I began to stretch and to strain.

“Now,” he said “the small of your back, your shoulder blades and the nape of your neck.”

“But,” I said “Myron, that hurts!”

He says, “You stand there until you feel that wall all the way down.”

I tried to do it; I never quite succeeded.

He said, “Now while you’re against the wall do you notice how it feels?”

I said, “Yes.”

“Now,” he said, “go back out in the middle of the room and try to recreate in your bones the feeling you had when you were against the wall.”

And I did this. Tried to recreate the feel of that wall down my back.

He said, “That’s better, you’re doing a lot better now.”

You see, most of us live crooked lives and when we think we’re doing right, we’re not; we’re just simply living another crooked life. And until there’s a straight edge laid down our backs so that we know the feel of righteousness, what it’s like to experience righteousness, we can have no knowledge of righteousness. And so the Lord has designed the ordinances of the church to give us the feel of righteousness. And these ordinances are created and made by God for the specific purpose of introducing man to the life of God. We come to church, we take the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper, and if the Spirit is there in our partaking, as so often it is not; if the Spirit is there at our

partaking we glimpse and gleam and have the feel of righteousness. And then God tells us to go forth and live seven days a week like we felt when we were in his presence.

This is true of baptism, which is an ordinance, a sacrament, designed to put in the middle of man's life the feel, the experience, of death and resurrection, that he might know that he has come to the point in his life where he must walk with newness of life; where the past is behind him, and where the future opens up in bright and glorious aspect to him. But brethren, change the form of the ordinance and you have a crooked wall. Any change in the form of the ordinance means a change in the Spirit back of the ordinance. That's why it is that we must be so careful in the ministration of the ordinances. And the ordinances of God's house are our chief means of worshiping him.

I remember well the first lady I baptized as a young man. And there was a piece of hair about the size of a dollar that didn't get wet. And some Elder told me that I had to go back and re-baptize that lady; she wasn't immersed.

"Well," I said, "What part of her wasn't immersed?"

Well he said "Her hair."

Well I said, "That will grow out."

But that man was right. He was a stickler for the correct form of the ordinance. The same thing is true of the administration of the Lord's Supper. The laying on of hands of course, which is one aspect of baptism; the spiritual aspect of baptism in which we submit to the imposition of the Elder's hands, which means we go forth from then under a commission. Our minds under the guidance of the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ to minister for him. And again I say any change in the

form or the ordinance, the form of the ordinance means a change in the Spirit of an ordinance.

You can't expect to play a Beethoven symphony on a piano. You could play a transcript of a Beethoven symphony on a piano. But you can't make middle c on a piano sound like a French horn, or a violin, or a brass instrument. And so it is, if a symphony is to be given its fullest and completest expression you need four choirs of instruments, all blended together under competent direction. The same is true of the Church of Jesus Christ; its form was dictated by the Holy Spirit. It was divinely appointed and not man made. It is his body, not ours. The Church was not, did not grow up as a result of the example that was put before it in the Roman world, as a lot of theologians seem to speculate.

“...he [that prayeth] whose spirit is contrite, [the same] is acceptable [accepted] of me, if he {obeyeth} [obey] mine ordinances.” (Doctrine & Covenants 52:4c)

The ordinances of God's House have yet to be lifted and taken by us and enshrined as the main part of our worship experience. We have not done this yet in the church. The Church of Jesus Christ then represents that new humanity which Christ came to create. We take part in it, we are bound together in a fellowship, a fellowship of love, the fellowship of his sufferings, because we are called as members of the Church of Jesus Christ to exemplify in our bodies, the life which he lived. And this is a tremendously significant, difficult, and holy calling; one to which we strive daily and to which generations of men before us have striven. The body of Christ is made and

constituted by the operation of his Spirit. It is an expression of his Spirit.

No man can understand the work of the Lord Jesus Christ apart from his building of his Church, as he said,

“I will build my Church” (Mat. 16:19). And as Paul said, *“God hath set in the Church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, pastors and teachers [thirdly teachers]”* (I Corinthians 12:28),

and you brethren know the rest of the quotation. Which indicates certain function of ministry, the apostolic function, the prophetic function, the teaching function, the pastoral function. We'd be in a pretty bad way in this Church if the only apostles in this Church were in the Council of Twelve. We have a Council of Twelve Apostles, men who are selected specially for certain administrative responsibilities. But they are not the only apostles; what is an apostle? An apostle is one who has received the testimony of the Lord Jesus. It came to Peter you remember at Caesarea Philippi.

And may I relate this experience which will give to you perhaps, oh a little enlarged insight. One day I was down at Carthage, Missouri presiding over a prayer meeting with William Patterson and some others of the brethren. The meeting was going well; it was a meeting of Priesthood by the way. And four men walked in; they came late through no fault of their own. And as they came in the door something fell upon me. I discerned their needs, each one of them; I knew what it was in the inner man. My heart went out to them. I was in the midst of their lives, for that brief instant. Just at that moment Brother Patterson stood up and read the sixteenth chapter of the Book of

Matthew 16 to 18. But as he read, it was changed a little differently in my mind;

“*Whom do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?*” (Mathew 16:14)

You can get all kinds of answers to that question this day too, all kinds of them, and most varieties of them come from the theologians. Let me tell you brethren that modern theology is in a welter of indecision. They don't even know what the word of God is. They know there is such a thing, but how to discern it, how to evaluate it, how to take it and use it, they do not know.

Anyone who reads the *Christian Century* or *Christianity Today*, or takes any part at all in the discussions through the many, many hundreds of books that come out in theology must be aware of the fact; that theology is in a welter of indecision. Men arise today who say one thing and in another ten or fifteen years someone else has a fresh insight and again the whole body of theology is reinterpreted. And the names that stand out in the history of theology stand for this aspect or for that aspect, or another aspect, in which each man has looked and seen the reflection of himself and given it to us in his theology.

Elbert A. Smith wrote a book once, called In The Beginning, God. And what do you see in that book? Elbert A. Smith; and that aspect of divine reality which he has apprehended. So it is with these men. And there's no settled, basic, grounded, body of doctrine in the midst of the Christian world, as we commonly know it. That's why the Lord set the revelation in these the latter days.

“Whom do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?” (Mathew 16:14),

he said. Why did He say it? He said it because he wondered whether the mystery of his person had penetrated into the foundations of their being. He wanted to know whether they had come to apprehend him as he was.

For remember that I told you that the basic revelation that God has to give to us is not first to tell us what to do; the first revelation in point of time and in order of importance is the revelation which says to us,

“I am the Lord thy God.” (Exodus 20:2)

The revelation which claims us; the revelation which demands an answer from us. I’m not talking about something we may read or intellectually discover. I’m talking about the movement of the Spirit when a man is in the presence of God, and he knows it, and he knows God knows it. And this happened to Peter.

“Whom do {ye} [men] say that I, the Son of Man, am?”
(Mathew 16:14).

Jesus was interested; he wanted to know.

For this purpose came he into the world; that God might be made manifest, and he might be recognized. And then Peter, something happened to him in that moment of clear insight, on that beautiful Sabbath morning at Caesarea Philippi, and in this close communion all his past experience gathered itself together

into one fused insight. And he said under the influence of the Spirit,

“Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Mathew 16:17).

And Jesus turned and commended him, said,

“Blessed art thou, Simon [Bar-Jona]; for flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee, but my Father {which} [who] is in heaven” (Mathew 16:18). And I say unto thee, thou art *“...Cephas, which is, by interpretation A seer, or a stone”* (John 1:42).

And Jesus was referring to the Urim and Thumim in ancient Israel; the stone into which the Prophet or the High Priest looked once every year to see made manifest there the will of God for his people. And Jesus likened Peter, as a result of this knowledge, thou art

“...Cephas, which is, by interpretation A seer or a stone.” And I'll give unto thee the keys of the {kingdom of God} [kingdom of Heaven]; [and] whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven.” (Mathew 16:20).

Peter never forgot that, you know? For just before his death, he wrote to the Saints. How does the scripture go? Something about “living stones;” Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone, and ye, I'm probably getting Paul mixed up with Peter but it doesn't matter, its scripture. And

“Ye also, as {living stones or} lively stones, are built up {unto him} a spiritual house...” (I Peter 2:5)

a habitation of God through the Spirit or words to that effect.

Here it is, the apostolic gift; a man apprehends the nature of the Lord Jesus by the authority of the Spirit. Who is chosen for this? That’s God’s business. And then there is given unto him as a result of the apprehension of this knowledge, insights as to the nature of man. He sees clearly as never before, that before him in his vision of the Lord Jesus Christ is the vision of the new humanity, is the vision of humanity as it ought to be. Is the vision of man as God sees him. And he knows, gentlemen, when this insight comes to him, he knows that he is conversing and looking at his own better self, and the better self of all mankind. For that’s what Jesus is. Not only a Jew of the first century, not only generic man, not only the revelation of the kingdom in its individual mode, but humanity’s better self growing up in our midst. And on this rock, the rock of the revealed will of God manifested through those who have apprehended the Lord Jesus Christ, will I build my Church. You see how important priesthood is gentlemen?

It’s in you, and through you, that the Church of Jesus Christ must be built up. God has no other means through which he can build up his Church. The organs of growth and development are already within the body. And woe be to us if we neglect or misuse those organs of growth.

And I, returning to this experience at Carthage, as this enlightenment came to me, somehow or the other, I knew that I had the same authority and power at that moment, at least, as Peter had. And I stood up under the influence of that power and

spoke to these four men. Not my words, but the words which had been given to me of the Holy Spirit. But after that something else happened too. I recognized that this power and this authority was given authentically to the Apostle Peter. It was not something that was given and taken away; it was a gift which was his, which he had the right to use according to the Spirit's direction, the Spirit of Wisdom. And that he could use it for good or for ill. And I recognized too, that this was the basis of the apostasy of 1844; that men took these gifts which were authentically theirs and used them to build up their own empires.

The church is founded on the apostolic gift, the knowledge that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and was crucified for the sins of the world. We'll talk about spiritual gifts Monday night. But this is the basic gift of the Spirit; the foundational gift of the Spirit. On this gift and its related gift are all the other gifts and blessings given to the Church. And what is the other gift? To some it is given to believe that Jesus Christ is the son of God and was crucified for the sins of the world, and to others it is given to believe on their words that they too might have eternal life, if they continue faithful. The apostle testifies, and woe be to him if he doesn't; he loses his gift. For the first major basic responsibility of an apostle, whether he is in the Counsel of Twelve or whether he isn't, is to bear record of that which he knows and most assuredly believe. And gentlemen, if a man who is an apostle does not do this, he loses his gift of apostleship. The gifts of God are to be used, not stored up. Man's character is formed not by the gifts he has, but by the use he makes of the gifts he has. This is basic to our whole endeavor.

This apostle testifies and the same Spirit, which quickens his utterance, conveys the Lord Jesus to those who hear and

causes them to believe so that belief itself is a gift of the Spirit. No man can say Jesus is Lord but by the Holy Ghost. To some it is given to know and to others it is given to believe on their testimony, that they too might have eternal life if they continue faithful. And on these two gifts, the gift of the knowledge of the Son of God, and the gift of belief, for,

“...how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent?” (Romans 10:14-15)

It is by the word of God we hear the word of God. It is only as the Lord Jesus opens our ears and causes us to understand by his Spirit that we receive the word of God. He utters his word and by his word he opens our hearts and our ears, so that we receive his word.

No wonder Paul told his young friend,

“Neglect not the gift that is in thee,...{ through the putting on of my hand} [with the laying on of the hands]...” (I Timothy 4:14).

There are buried, I was going to say buried, I hope it's not so, latent, let me use the word latent, that's a better word; in this Church gifts and blessings which we have not yet appreciated, do not know we have, they have long lay dormant. And the people of God have suffered as a result of the fact, that we have been dilatory at times in the exercise of our gifts.

After all brethren, what validates your calling? Seeing an angel when you were called? Hearing a voice when you were called? Having someone stand up in a prayer meeting and tell you thus saith the Lord you are called to this office? That

doesn't validate your calling at all. The only thing that ultimately validates your calling, is as the Spirit of God moves with you in your ministry; and what you do is a reflection of the work of that Spirit, and built into the lives of other people is the image of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Church of Jesus Christ is of divine appointment; it is not man made. It is not of man's origin. And I fear that sometimes we run the risk of losing this conception of the Church as the body of Christ. There is a, shall I say, a blurring of lines between denominations today. The ecumenical movement seeks to gather into its grasp all peoples, all denominations.

We cannot compromise at any point whatsoever in the foundational doctrine of the Church. Not "a church," but "The Church." I stand on that with all the emphasis of which I am capable. This is the Church of Jesus Christ,

"...the only [true and living] church {on} [upon] the face of the whole earth, with which I the Lord am well pleased, speaking {of} [unto] the church collectively and not individually;" (Doctrine & Covenants 1:5e)

God has not forsaken his people; although we have been untrue to him, he has not been untrue to us. And although at times we have been frivolous, he has always dealt with us according to his holiness, taking his word utterly and completely and seriously that his promises might be realized. The Holy Spirit which dwells within you, brethren, seeking to have expression in your life. This is the gift that has been given to you through the ministries of the Church, through the ordinances of the Church, through the worship of the Church, through the association of the Church, through the fellowship of the Church.

Had you lived in the early days, the days immediately following the coming of our Lord and his ascension, there would have only been one or two things which would have marked you out as a Christian. You would have acknowledged that Jesus was the Lord and you would have received his Spirit. These two things; you would have acknowledged that Jesus is the Lord and that you had received his Spirit. And anyone that acknowledged Jesus as the Lord and received his Spirit found there glowing within their lives a love of their fellowmen, for the Holy Ghost is an expression of that love.

And where we are unconcerned about one another we dwell in sin. We talk about the gifts of the gospel. There are people languishing on beds of affliction right in this city today who could be healed if there were more virtue in this church and if we were more concerned about those who suffer. God would still vindicate his work with the signs following, not that we should strive after manifestations or miracles because we are commanded not to require miracles except we are commanded. Yes, occasionally there is a break through. Occasionally there is a trickle that comes to us. Occasionally there is a manifestation of the Spirit which is authentic and genuine and how we hunger and thirst and long for it knowing that's the only source of life for us.

Brethren, again, remember that what happens in you is more, more significant than what transpires around you. Remember that within yourself there are the gifts and blessings necessary for you to achieve all that God has demanded of you to achieve. No one else can do it for you; nobody can receive a revelation for someone else. Might receive a revelation through somebody else but not for him, there is no substitutionary revelation or salvation in this Church. Therefore again, let me

emphasize and conclude by the appeal that I tried to make the other night, brethren neglect not the gift of God that is in you. There are vistas, and visions and insights which await you if only you will make the effort. And remember that every acquisition of the knowledge of God is a realization of your own better self.

How many of us read the scriptures daily? Simple thing isn't it? We are so harried some of us by the requirements of our daily work, that often times our physical energy is depleted. And yet gentlemen, do you know that in this kind of exercise the acquisition of the knowledge of God there is life and renewal even for the physical body? For our Lord has said in Section 85 is it or 83?

“...whoso is faithful {to} [unto] the obtaining these two priesthoods...and the magnifying {of} their calling, are sanctified,” ...not shall be in some distant time, “are sanctified by the Spirit unto the renewing of their bodies: they become the sons of Moses and of Aaron, {and the church of the elect and the kingdom of God}...and the seed of Abraham and the church and kingdom and the elect of God;...” (Doctrine & Covenants 83:6c, d)

May his Spirit abide with you. Monday night we'll discuss “Spiritual Gifts;” Tuesday night “Angelic Ministry” and then I trust a week from tonight we shall be blessed with the outpouring of the good Spirit in a greater measure than we have hitherto.

*Transcribed by Morris Heide, and published by
LatterDayTruth.org, 2013.*

*For other Church materials, please visit our website at
www.LatterDayTruth.org*