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FIRST PRINCIPLES OF SALVATION.

PRINCIPLES OF TRUTH.

RELIGION, true religion, concerns itself with a person's whole life, with every task. The principles that underlie it are those of any or every righteous human activity.

To become a shoemaker one must learn certain truths and then use them. Then good shoes may follow. To enter any worthy organization, one must learn its regulations and subscribe to its terms of admission. Then membership may be secured. The same holds with religion.

The first or underlying principles of religion are principles of truth, like those that lead to success in any honest human activity. The difference, if any, is that religion is universal and comprehends all principles of truth. To understand and to accept the first principles of religion is to have more power in life.

LAW.

The universe is ruled by law. Nature is orderly. Every cause has its effect. Obedience to these natural, unchangeable laws is the first step towards securing benefits from the world about us. These are truths of religion as of science. In the words of the Prophet Joseph Smith, "There is a law, irrevocably decreed in heaven before the foundations of this world, upon which all blessings are predicated—and when we obtain any blessing from God, it is by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated."

OBEDIENCE TO LAW.

Progress or any human benefit comes only from obedience to law. This principle is illustrated in every human activity. Justus von Liebig proved that plants feed upon certain elements in the soil, and Sir John B. Lawes, obeying this law, built up the vast business of artificial fertilizers. Edward Grieg discovered that by certain combinations of notes he could reproduce the weird and delightful music of the Norse peasants, and thus, by obedience to the laws of music, became a world-famous creator of immortal music. Thomas A. Edison applied the law that a current of electricity does not destroy a carbonized thread when in an air-free container, and the incandescent electric bulb became a household possession. Louis Pasteur proved that spontaneous generation is impossible, and by the use of this law created the science of bacteriology, which has enabled man to conquer many diseases. These men could not have done their great work if they had not sought out law and obeyed it.

SPIRITUAL LAWS.

Knowledge of law and obedience to it are indispensable foundation stones of religion. Spiritual benefits or blessings are obtained by obedience to spiritual laws. It is folly to believe that the higher domain of life is without law. The Gospel of Jesus Christ, which is the path to perfect happiness, on earth and beyond, is a code of divine laws which must be obeyed if happiness is to be obtained. The first step toward wisdom is to learn law; the second, to obey or use law.

THE FIRST LAW OF THE GOSPEL.

The first principle of human action in the spiritual or material world, is faith. Belief precedes action—mere hope does not suffice. In a general sense, faith is the assurance within a person, of the existence of things unseen by the natural eye. Such faith in the unseen world is the cause of human achievement, the vitalizing element of all progress, for in science as in religion, belief in unseen realities is necessary. Atoms cannot be seen, but we know that they exist; there are sounds too shrill for the ear to hear, but they exist. Faith is a principle of power, the inspirer of all human efforts, a spiritual force. By faith the wonderful works of man, thinkers, workers, prophets and apostles, recorded in the history of humanity and in holy books, were accomplished. Faith is the oldest and the most used of the forces at the command of man.

FAITH RESTS ON EVIDENCE.

The power to believe, implanted in man, is developed and made firm, by the evidence of the visible effects of invisible things. To have faith is not to take things on trust. For example, radio activity has given proof of the invisible electron; the order, beauty and sublimity of the heavenly bodies, proceeding in fixed orbits through everlasting ages, are proofs of an intelligent direction of the universe, for without intelligence, chaos and confusion reign. Faith in the divine mission of the Lord Jesus Christ is confirmed by His marvelous teachings and acts; and the results of man's communion with Him. Countless such evidences of the existence of the unseen world lie everywhere about us.

FAITH IN GOD.

Full faith must begin with belief in God. The existence of God is proved by the deep whisperings within every soul; and also by the whole of surrounding nature. The Lord Jesus Christ revealed God to man as a personal being. He declared God to be not only His own literal Father, in the spirit world, but also of every living soul. All mankind are the children of God; therefore brethren and sisters within one great family.

The influence of our Father in Heaven proceeds from Him throughout the immensity of space, and permeates all things, and is the life and light of all things and guides all men into truth. By this influence, often called the Holy Spirit, God knows and sees and governs all things. God is everywhere present, not in person, but by His Spirit.

Faith is the first principle of religion. A person's spiritual progress may be measured by his growth in faith.

THE SECOND LAW OF THE GOSPEL.

In every pursuit of life it is necessary to use the knowledge gained to make progress. A shoemaker leaves his poor pattern when a better one is obtained. The man who owns a field ploughs and sows, or no crop is obtained. Every step of progress is taken in the spirit of the principle of repentance.

Repentance, the second principle of true religion, is the fruit of faith. It is a rational result of faith within men who desire to use truth for human good. By faith, men learn truth and obtain power. By repentance, knowledge and power are used for the establishment of the purposes of the Lord, which means, for human advancement and betterment. Repentance may be said to be faith in action. When an honest person has become convinced of a truth he proceeds to use it in his life, first by a solemn decision that he shall not again do that which God has forbidden; and secondly by an equally firm decision that he shall do that which the Lord has commanded. The

repentant man turns his face and strength against evil and toward righteousness. Failure to obey truth, as learned and understood, is sin. To obey every truth is to be truly repentant. That is the full forsaking of sin. Those who repent in this high sense achieve irresistible power. The memory of their sins is blotted out; happiness waits upon them, and they progress rapidly.

Every person is to some degree sinful, and therefore in need of repentance. The message of Jesus Christ is, "Except ye repent, ye can in no wise enter the kingdom of heaven."

THE THIRD LAW OF THE GOSPEL.

An outward evidence of the obedient faith and repentance of a person, his inward condition, is the third requirement of true religion. Faith and repentance may both be passive. Active use of truth is proof of a correct spiritual condition.

Baptism is required by the Lord as an evidence of the inward, obedient, spiritual condition of an individual. It may be compared to the signature to a contract, the testifying to an agreement by a visible outward act as is the common practice in all human organizations. The willingness to be baptized implies belief in God, His Son and the Gospel Plan, and a desire to be in harmony with divine law. Baptism is also a covenant to obey the laws and regulations of the Gospel. It is moreover the mode of entrance into the Church. In essence baptism does not differ from the requirements made by man-made institutions for benefits to be received or membership to be obtained, in all of which established requirements must be obeyed.

Only those who are old enough to be accountable, who can understand what it means, can accept such a baptism; therefore, the ordinance should not be administered to infants or young children, who are sinless. Since baptism is the doorway into the kingdom of heaven, it must be performed only by those who possess divine authority. Baptism by man-made authority is invalid before the Lord. Since baptism symbolizes the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the central figure of the plan of salvation, it should be administered only by immersion. These are all divine requirements and beyond the right of man to change.

EFFECTS OF BAPTISM.

The first, glorious effect of baptism is the remission of sins. Coming out of the waters of baptism, washed clean as it were, all will have an equal start on the eternal, progressive journey that constitutes the basis of life in the Church of Christ. Former sins will not forbid man's attainment of the highest blessings. The second result of baptism is the Gift of the Holy Ghost, by which new and mighty power is given to the individual to overcome the handicap of sin and to meet successfully the requirements of the Gospel. Finally, membership in the Church of Christ accompanies baptism, which carries with it a host of opportunities for progress. Thus, in baptism, the past is left behind and the future opened to new life.

Jesus Christ commanded, "Repent and be baptized, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

THE FOURTH LAW.

Conferring the gift of enlightenment on the baptized person is the fourth law of the Gospel. It is as a second baptism, a baptism of spirit.

Baptism by immersion in water is followed by the laying on of hands for the Gift of the Holy Ghost. Through this gift comes the illumination that leads into all truth. There is a power, proceeding from the Lord, that enlightens, in a greater or less degree, every soul that comes into the world;

but the Gift of the Holy Ghost is a special enlightening endowment received only by those who become members of the Church of Christ.

This also is in harmony with all of our experience. Compliance with law is the only method of controlling natural forces. Obedience is always rewarded by effects that enlighten the mind and yield life's satisfactions. The shoemaker who learns his art, adopts correct methods and uses them, produces a pair of good shoes. So runs the humble parallelism to the great and holy introductory principles of the Gospel.

EFFECTS OF THE GIFT OF THE HOLY GHOST.

The fruits of faith, repentance, and baptism, as shown in the Gift of the Holy Ghost, are the choicest known to man—and multitudes have testified to them. They manifest themselves in greater understanding, stronger wills for righteousness, greater power in daily labour; are the same in all ages and among all peoples. The Apostle Paul makes specific enumeration of some of these fruits: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." "To one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge; to another faith . . .; to another gifts of healing . . .; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues; but all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He will."

The Gift of the Holy Ghost renews a person because of the greater enlightenment and initiates him into the joys of a member of the Church of Christ. It links earth and heaven. It fills the soul with joy unspeakable, and he who gains and keeps it has boundless eternal wealth.

These gifts that follow obedience to Gospel requirements are for all faithful members of the Church of Christ.

THE FIRST PRINCIPLES OF THE GOSPEL.

These, then, are the first four principles of the Gospel of Jesus Christ; Faith, Repentance, Baptism and the Gift of the Holy Ghost. They are the cornerstones upon which an acceptable, useful and joyous life may be built. They are logical. They are indispensable for progress. They are doorways into the kingdom of joy, happiness and success, for which the whole world is now seeking. They are precisely the steps, in counterpart, which must be followed in securing success in every department of human activity. The knowledge of truth, the turning away from untruth and the compliance with truth, compels mighty rewards. To know truth and to obey it, in business, science or religion, is the key to progress; then naturally comes the desired effect.

THE RESTORATION OF THE GOSPEL.

These First Principles are taught in plainness and with authority by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, which is the original Church of Christ, re-established in this day, by divine authority, after centuries of departure from the true principles of the Gospel.

Every person who desires full happiness must accept them. Will you?