

Rights and Spirit of Priesthood

“There are many called but few are chosen, and why are they not chosen? Because their hearts are set upon the things of the world and are aspiring to the honors of men; they do not learn the lesson that the rights of the priesthood, are inseparably connected with the powers of heaven; and that the powers of heaven cannot be controlled nor handled, only upon the principles of righteousness, that they may be conferred upon us, it is true, but when we undertake to cover our sins, to gratify our pride, vain ambitions, or to exercise dominion or compulsion over the souls of the children of men, in any degree of unrighteousness; behold the heavens withdraw themselves, the Spirit of the Lord is grieved, then amen to the priesthood, or to the authority of that man; behold ere he is left to kick against the prick; to persecute the saints, and to fight against God. We have learned by sad experience that it is the nature and disposition of almost all men, as soon as they get a little authority, as they suppose, to begin to exercise unrighteous dominion, hence many are called but few are chose. No power or influence can, or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by persuasion, by long suffering, by gentleness, by meekness and by love unfeigned; without hypocrisy, and without guile: reprovng with sharpness when moved upon by the Holy Spirit, and afterwards showing forth an increase of love towards him whom thou hast reprovd, lest he esteem thee to be his enemy, so that he may know, that thy faithfulness is stronger than the cords of death. Let the soul be full of charity towards all men, and virtue guard thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God, and the doctrines of the priesthood shall distill upon thy soul as the dew from heaven; thy scepter shall be an unchanging scepter of righteousness, the Holy Ghost shall be thy constant companion, thy dominion shall be an everlasting dominion, the ends of the earth shall enquire after thy name, fools shall have thee in derision, hell shall rage against thee, while the pure in heart, the wise, the noble and the virtuous shall seek council, authority, and blessing, constantly from under thy hand: thy people shall never be turned against thee by the testimony of traitors; although their influence shall cast thee into trouble, and into prison, thou shall be had in honor, and but for a small moment, and thy voice shall be more terrible in the midst of thy enemies, than the fierce lion, because of thy righteousness; and thy God shall stand by thee forever and ever.”

--Joseph Smith, Jr.

Written while imprisoned in the jail at Liberty, Missouri, dated March 20, 1839.