

ness of mankind, to how liable they are to step out of the way, how easy it is for them to sin and not know it, and how important it is that we should have compassion upon them; yet mercy is not always to be extended to the people, judgment must claim its right.

If we wish this Church and kingdom of God upon earth, to be like a fine, healthy, growing tree, we should be careful not to let the dead branches remain too long. You have seen limbs which you supposed completely dead, yet when the genial influences of spring operate upon them, only a twig or two of the branch proves to be winterkilled.

The entire limb is not dead but still draws sustenance from the trunk, and partly lives and is partly dead. It is so with some of the members of this Church and kingdom, they partly live and partly do not live. Sometimes they enjoy the spirit of the Gospel and feel quite happy, and speak in prayer meetings, and sometimes make confessions of their sins. Their hearts occasionally become a little warmed up, and at times they feel and act as though they wish to bear fruit, and perhaps among the twigs of the limb, you may find here and there a cluster of fruit. Sometimes such members of this kingdom will be found performing good acts and doing their duty, and again they are overcome and turn away, that is for a time, and seemingly enjoy none of the spirit of their religion.

In this manner they pass along, first to the right and then to the left. By and by they will either receive nourishment from the trunk of the tree, shooting forth into the various twigs of the sickly branches, filling them with life and vigor, and turning the diseased into thrifty growing limbs, or the twigs will continue to die until there are none left alive. Who can tell whether a limb is actually dead or not, without proper time to test the matter? This is a point

which ought to be closely scrutinized by every Latter-day Saint. You see the failings of your neighbor, he has performed an act today which you know is dishonest and wicked, by and by he does something else which is wrong, and you begin to lose confidence in that person. When you saw no evil and many traits of good in him, then you had a foundation for reposing implicit confidence, but he commits a wrong act and your confidence begins to be shaken. You see him commit another evil and another, but can you yet tell whether that limb is alive or dead? I think that we, as a people, as individuals, have got to learn more and more of the mind of God than we now possess, before we are prepared to judge quickly, distinctly, and truly when limbs are dead and should be severed from the body of the tree.

When we have learned that they are really dead, then there is danger in suffering them to remain too long, for they will begin to decay and tend to destroy the tree. When we are satisfied that a limb is dead we clip it off close to the trunk, and cover up the wound that it may not cause any more injury. That is the principle which brother Frost has just been upon. But the nice point is, for us to be able to determine when a limb is entirely dead. Twig after twig may die, and you may often see half the limbs of a tree killed by the severity of winter, yet in the course of the summer the living portion begins to rapidly put forth young and tender branches, and the increase may be as great, perhaps, as though no part had died. That proves the soundness of the trunk, even though many twigs and branches have died. It requires great discrimination, to be able to rightly decide upon the condition of persons in their religious views, their honesty and integrity before God.

There are many in this kingdom who are as foolish as men and women