

The Saints Prospered—Restoration of the Gospel—Should Listen to Instruction—God’s Gifts to the Church—Salvation for the Dead—Examples Before Children

Discourse by President Angus M. Cannon, delivered in the Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, Sunday Afternoon, August 25, 1878

I have listened with deep interest to the instructions we have received through Elder Teasdale this afternoon; and rejoice in being numbered with the people of God. I have just returned from a trip through the southeastern portions of our Territory, having visited localities that, five years ago, were barren and unfruitful, and where frosts were known to appear every month in the year; and finding these places cultivated by our people, and their crops in a flourishing condition, and the crops themselves acknowledging the overruling hand of God in tempering the elements for their good, I have felt to magnify God in my soul; and I return to you, my brethren and sisters, with heartfelt gratitude to our heavenly Father, in thus blessing the land and the elements for the good of his Saints. And this is only an additional testimony to me that God lives and rules, and that Jesus is indeed the Christ.

We have been called out from the world, to be separated from the world. When John the Revelator was on the Isle of Patmos, he beheld the darkness that the churches indulged in, and realized that they would drive the Priesthood from the earth because of the errors that had crept in amongst them, which were being tolerated, and which were antagonistic to the truth. And while there the Lord favored him with heavenly manifestations, among which was that of an angel flying in the midst of heaven, the bearer of the everlasting Gospel to every nation and tongue and people. And after this he says he heard another voice, saying, “Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.

We have received the Gospel; the Angel Moroni brought it, and with faithfulness he delivered it to the Prophet Joseph. He watched the record for centuries with increasing care that he might reveal unto us the lost knowledge of the Gospel in its purity. God has taken one of a city and two of a family, and brought us to Zion, and he has taught us the principles of his Gospel, and the testimony of his servants, who were instrumental in his hands of introducing those principles of divine truth to the world, was sealed by the blood of his anointed. When our enemies have expelled us from our homes, and deprived us of the sustenance we had provided, God has blessed the endeavors of his people in cultivating the soil, and he has rebuked the destroyer, and where sand and aridness seemed to prevail, the earth has been made productive, and we have reaped abundance. When our enemies have sought to follow us, he has rebuked them, and the divisions which they would introduce in our midst, to enfeeble us, he has caused to be visited upon those who have sought to destroy us. The Lord has said through Isaiah, “The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master’s crib,” and they will come where they are used to be fed. We have been fed by the hand of God, we have been succored in the hour of our deepest distress; he has made us strong out of weakness, he has blessed us beyond our most sanguine expectations. He has taught us the principles of eternal life; and has taught us to turn our hearts to the fathers, as our fathers’ hearts have been turned towards us, lest he should smite the earth with a curse and we not be permitted to inherit it.

Lehi, when he led his little family from Jerusalem, was shown of the Lord that he would lead him to a land of promise, a land that was choice above all other lands. The Almighty blessed his posterity, and they enjoyed peace and plenty until they became envious toward each other, and their hearts were filled with hatred towards God. Lehi was told that this land should be consecrated as a blessed land to his posterity and they should continue to enjoy it and possess it, and that the pure in heart should dwell upon it, but the corrupt in heart should not possess this land in peace and prosperity. He led us to this land when we were oppressed, when we were wounded and afflicted, when we were bleeding and hungry and naked; and here he has succored us and fed us, promising to be our Father and Friend if we would continue to rely upon him. Witness the extent of our increasing population, and the multiplicity of our settlements, as well as the prosperity that has attended us on every hand; and then ask ourselves the question: Are we possessed of the same humility, of the same love, and of the same undying devotion, as when our enemies were driving us from the rear, and apparently nothing but destitution unto starvation presented our front. Jesus once said to his Apostles, when he saw some of his disciples forsake him,

“Will ye also go away?” But Peter answered him and said, “Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.” Then, if we now begin to idolize our possessions, the creations of our own hands, under the blessings of God, what profit is it to us in our having been led of the Lord to this land? Wherein, I ask, are we profited, if we turn a deaf ear to his words. Has he not said through Paul, as recorded in the 4th chapter of Ephesians, that he has placed in his church apostles, prophets etc. What for? “For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith,” etc., remaining in this condition until that which is perfect is come. And when we shall have arrived at that state of perfection, seeing as we are seen, and knowing as we are known, we shall not need Prophets to teach us, for we will then see alike, dwelling in the presence of God. Then, shall we turn a deaf ear to the voice of Prophets before we become united, before we see eye to eye? If we do we shall prove ourselves no better than the world of mankind whom we have left. We have come here and demonstrated that the Lord has blessed us—for he has demonstrated this to our heart’s content; he has given us wives and children, pledges of an eternal union that is to exist between us and them forever. Our children are the offspring of the Almighty, they are placed under our guardian care to be instructed in the principles of eternal life; they should be taught that they are created in the image of God, that they owe allegiance to him, and that they have not come upon the earth to do their own will, but the will of their Father in heaven. It is said and understood by us that Jesus will come and take unto himself the people that are prepared to meet him. What is our condition? We are anxious to bless the earth we occupy; we are anxious to nourish and cherish our flocks and our herds. We say our prosperity depends upon these things, and that they are created for our sakes, that they were created for man, to be subject to him, and that our children will succeed us in the possession of them. How important that they be filled with intelligence; how important it is that we endeavor to keep open communication between God and our children, how important it is that we see that they receive a good sound education, and that they have proper associations, and that they are early impressed with truths calculated to make them immortal and bring them everlasting joy and happiness, and that they do not become infidel and ungrateful in their hearts. Moses was raised under peculiar circumstances, having been taught in all the learning of the Egyptians—a people who were estranged from God and received the best education that the Court of Pharaoh could afford. But did his heart become alienated from God, his kindred and people? No, he learned to love them. And as he saw them plodding and laboring under the most unpleasant and adverse circumstances to make brick, his heart was drawn out in sympathy towards them; and he never rested until he prevailed with God to rescue them from their bondage. And when his mission to deliver his people was made known to them, and when he had obtained their confidence, did they hearken to his counsels? And when he had so far led them on their way to the wilderness, the Red Sea before them, the forces of Pharaoh in rear of them, with no chance of escape on either hand, did they relent and want to retrace their steps, or did they follow their leader, he acting as a God unto them? They followed the man whom it has pleased God to place at their head, between Him and them, and they never questioned him, they knew there was no salvation for them only through him. And he led them to liberty; he led them to prosperity; he led them to the favor of God, and with uplifted hands, while his mortal strength endured, he plead their cause with the Lord.

God has given us Apostles; he has given us homes that are beautiful to look upon, and lands that are productive and fruitful; and he has made us gracious and precious promises in that eternal union with our wives and children, restoring us to the society of our fathers in favor with God. He has placed great and glorious blessings within our reach, but has first called upon us to erect sacred edifices to his name in which to receive them. Shall we, my brethren, withhold our substance and the labor of our hands necessary to complete this work? If we do we shall be found in the condition of those that Jesus came to. What did he say to them on a certain occasion? “It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves.” And he further said: “I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify.” Why? “That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar.” Infidels say, this is injustice, why should they be condemned and held answerable for the blood of their forefathers who were slain before they came into existence? These very men had the chance to redeem them. The Messiah himself stood before them inviting them to be taught in these principles of salvation. The burden of his soul was to draw men to him that they might be fed with the bread of life. “Come unto me, all ye that are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and

learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." Would they do it? No. But on the contrary, they took John the Baptist and slew him; and they took Jesus and crucified him. Why? said they, "His blood be on us and on our children." Part of the Savior's mission was "to preach deliverance to the captives," which he did when he passed to the other side of the veil. They rejected the Gospel, and therefore would not go into the temple to administer in the ordinances on behalf of their fathers who had not the opportunity to hear the Gospel through the Savior, and could not pass through the ordinances of His house; and they took part with their enemies and with those who slew the Prophets, and consequently they were under this condemnation. The work that was required at their hands is required of us, namely to perform ordinances for our fathers and forefathers which they were not permitted to do for themselves while living in the flesh. Let us lay our hand to and never cease our labors until the Temples of our God are erected, and our fathers' hearts are warmed into their knowing that their children are laboring for their redemption.

Our fathers, for many generations, knew not the Gospel. Hireling ministers preach, and have preached for years, what they conceive to be the truth. But God has, in our day spoken from the heavens; he has proclaimed the regeneration of the human family, the redemption of Zion and the establishment of His kingdom in power. And he has told us that he would make us instrumental to this end. Then if we would have our sons be faithful, and not infidel in their hearts, let our acts conform with our doctrine, let them understand from our conduct and the spirit within us, that we love God more than we love anything on earth; that we revere His Apostles, from the fact that we listen to their counsels and carry out their instructions. And I will tell you, my brethren, that our children will respect and honor us; and when we sleep we will be numbered among the blessed dead who die in the Lord; we will rest from our labors, and our works will follow us. There is no consistency in our acts when we say, we will receive this principle or doctrine, and reject another. If we have the Spirit of the Lord within us, we well know, as has been said, that Jesus is the Christ; but if we lose claim to the Holy Spirit we can no longer testify that Jesus is the Christ and that His Apostles are his ministers. And when once bereft of this we enter into temptation, and by and by fall into darkness, and will be found walking in bye and forbidden paths, and our sons and daughters begin to view us with distrust, and they say in their hearts, "Surely, father must have lost faith, for he does not practice what he once professed."

As I have said, we have left our homes; for what? To be taught to be instructed by the servants of the Lord, in other words, to do the will of God, and not of man. And the Lord's manner of instruction is to give line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little, until we become perfect in the knowledge of his laws. Under these circumstances we will not refuse to go and proclaim the Gospel to the world of mankind, without purse or scrip; we will not refuse to contribute of our substance to build temples to His name, neither will we reject any of the counsels of the Almighty. Are we not to have the full liberty of our agency? Yes; and we are to be responsible for our conduct, just as much as Moses was when he undertook to rescue his brethren from bondage. There is a danger of becoming fainthearted. You remember what Jesus said: "As the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away: so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." How is it today? Only a few consult the Spirit. Has he not likewise said, the kingdom of heaven shall be likened unto ten virgins, five of them wise and five foolish. Has he not said the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net which is cast into the sea, it gathers of all kinds of fishes, and that when the net is brought to shore, a separation takes place? I would ask if it is difficult for Latter-day Saints to perceive that a separation must sooner or later take place among us? This work in which we are engaged is the kingdom of God, and those who are found keeping the commandments of God will be possessed of His Holy Spirit, they will know the voice of the good shepherd, and the place where they have been fed, and then he will separate from the ungodly, the disobedient and the wicked even as a shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats. The Holy Spirit is given to men, who have rendered obedience to the requirements of the Gospel, to enable them to comprehend the will of the Father, or that they may know the voice of the true shepherd; and it is only by constant watching, living the lives of purity and uprightness and carefully eschewing evil, that we can retain it in our hearts, as our guide and revelator, after we have received in the way prescribed. Peter was enabled to say, in answer to a question put to him by the Savior, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." It was by virtue of the Spirit of God which he possessed, that he was enabled to say this, nothing but it could reveal that knowledge

to him. And it was against this Spirit he said the gates of hell should not prevail; and it is this same Spirit that enabled Peter to say that Jesus was the Christ enables us to declare that these men who preside over us are His Apostles, servants of the living God. But let a man, possessing this Holy Ghost, indulge in drinking, profane the name of Deity, or violate in any way his covenants, will he then enjoy its light and influence? No; the Spirit of the Lord dwells not in the tabernacles of such men. What is their condition? They may be found in groups and on street corners, idling away their time, and assailing the characters of those God has called to lead us, ever ready to cast doubt into the minds of the honest; while their children, as a general thing, become like unto them—distrustful, disobedient, and in time alienated from God. There is only one way by which we can ensure eternal life, and that is by abiding by all the counsels of God, seeking to cherish in our hearts the quiet, peaceable influences of the Holy Spirit, which will grow within us until we become fully developed, perfect men and women, in the likeness and stature of the Lord Jesus. And our children will also partake of this influence. Will they all do so? They will, unless they are inclined to be willfully wicked, or we neglect to afford them such care and attention as is due to them.

We know it is essential we should be faithful in all things: pay our tithes and offerings, and let children be witnesses of our faithfulness to God and His kingdom, and although they may wander for a season from the true path, their hearts will warm towards us in days to come, and they will remember the examples and precepts of their fathers and mothers, and they will say, I will return to the God of my fathers, the communion of whose spirit I enjoyed in childhood before I knew sin. And they will repent of their folly, and like the Prodigal Son of the Scriptures, they will learn to appreciate the good by the things they suffer. Let us not be filled with jealousies, and vanities and strifes. Let us cherish in our hearts the peaceful influences of God; they will lead us to be good fathers, good husbands, to be good sons and good daughters, and to be good wives and mothers; and the blessings of the Almighty will rest upon us, and peace will flow unto us, and prosperity will attend us, and our children will inherit these blessings after us. And when the days of calamity and the justice of God overhangs the nations, our children will be found with oil in their lamps, prepared for the coming of the Savior.

May God help us so to live that this may be our happy lot, is my prayer, in the name of Jesus. Amen.