

The Spirit and Principles of the Gospel the Same As of Old—Early Experience of Settlers of Utah—Religious Liberty—Modern So-Called Civilization—Baptism for the Dead

Discourse by Elder John Taylor, delivered in the 13th Ward Assembly Rooms, Salt Lake City, Sunday Evening, Jan. 12, 1873.

It was announced this afternoon that I should speak here this evening. Brother George Q. Cannon is here, however, or will be I expect, and when he comes I would much sooner listen to him than speak myself, and I presume you would also; therefore when he comes I shall be pleased to give way that you may have the pleasure of listening to him. He is only here today and will be going away again; I am here frequently.

I always take pleasure in speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God to my fellow men, and especially to the Saints. I feel that my lot is identified with theirs, and I expect to be associated with them, not only in time but in eternity. The Gospel that we have received has unfolded unto us principles pertaining to eternal life that we were entirely ignorant of heretofore. It has put us in possession of certainty in relation to the future, and we always have confidence so long as we are keeping the commandments of God. We know for ourselves of the truth of the doctrines that we believe in, because, having obeyed the Gospel, the Spirit, which in Scripture is called the gift of the Holy Ghost, has been imparted unto us, and that Spirit does in the latter days just as it did in former days—it unfolds the things of God to those who receive it and reveals to them the relations they hold to each other and to God and his Church and kingdom, not only in this life but in that which is to come; for we have entered into eternal covenants. The covenants which men enter into generally are of a transitory nature, and pertain only to time, and when time ceases with them these obligations terminate. Our covenants, however, are of another character. We enter into eternal covenants with God to serve him faithfully here on the earth, and then we expect to be associated with him in the heavens. Having entered into covenants of this kind we feel that there are certain responsibilities and obligations resting upon us, which it is our bounden duty to perform. And then we consider that there are certain duties which God has laid upon us in relation to ourselves, to those who have existed before us and to those who shall come after us. Our religion is not something in which we alone are personally concerned, but the moment people are put in possession of the Spirit of God they begin to feel interested about the welfare of others.

It would be a very hard thing for many people in this day to do as the Apostles did in former days, that is to go without purse or scrip, trusting in God for their sustenance, to preach the principles of life to mankind. It has never been considered a hard thing by the Elders of this Church to pursue that course. Inspired by the Spirit of God they feel as God feels towards the human family—a desire to bless, comfort, and instruct and to lead them in the paths of life. God places this principle in the hearts of his servants—it emanates from him and is part of his nature; and inasmuch as the orders are dictated by this spirit in their acts insomuch do they resemble their heavenly Father, who is full of benevolence and “causes his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and makes the rain to descend on the just and on the unjust;” and hence whenever we become acquainted with the principles of life ourselves we feel a desire to communicate the same unto others, and I see those all around me, here in this assembly, who, as well as myself, have traveled thousands of miles—I have traveled hundreds of thousands—on the same principle as the ancient disciples did, trusting in God for sustenance while proclaiming the principles of life to the people. Men do not always appreciate this; but that makes no difference, the principle is the same.

God is kind, benevolent and merciful to the human family. He feeds and clothes them as he does the lilies of the field, or the birds. He takes care of them, but they do not appreciate this. Thousands and millions of the human family seem hardly to comprehend that God has anything to do with them, or that they are under any responsibilities or obligations to him. Still as a father, full of kindness, benevolence and love, he feels after the human family and he seeks to promote their happiness and well-being, and he would save and exalt them in his kingdom, if they would be obedient unto his laws. We understand this principle, and therefore are governed and actuated by it, and no matter what the thoughts and feelings of others may be in relation to us, we know for ourselves that God has spoken. I know for myself, if nobody else does, that God lives, and I obtained this

knowledge through obedience to the Gospel that he has revealed unto us in these last days. I know that it is the privilege of all men to have this knowledge if they will obey the Gospel and be governed by its principles; and hence when I and my brethren have gone out to preach the Gospel, we have told the people precisely the same things as were taught, in former times, by the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He told his disciples to preach the Gospel to every creature, the promise being that he that believed and was baptized should be saved, but he that believed not should be damned; and said he: "These signs shall follow them that believe: In my name they shall cast out devils, they shall speak with new tongues, if they drink any deadly thing it shall not harm them, they shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover." They, in other words, should receive the Holy Ghost, and that Spirit would take of the things of God, and show them unto them.

I have gone forth and I have told the people as the disciples did formerly. When they have asked me what to do to be saved, I have said, "Repent, and be baptized in the name of Jesus for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the Holy Ghost." "What is that?" "It is the same that it was in former times, or it is nothing at all. It produces the same results as it did in the days when Jesus and his Apostles were upon the earth, or it is not the Holy Ghost. It is not a fantasy, or I am a false teacher." That is the position that I have assumed always, wherever I have gone; there is no mincing this matter. I felt like Moses did when he was leading the children of Israel to the land of Canaan, as we heard Brother Pratt talking about this afternoon. The Lord said he would not go with Moses and the people because the people were rebellious and stiffnecked, but Moses plead with him, saying, "Oh God, if thou goest not with us, carry us not up hence;" and if I cannot have a religion that God will sustain with the Holy Ghost, I want nothing to do with it, and I will have nothing to do with it. Feeling these sentiments and principles, I have always had confidence in God. I know in whom I have believed; and understand that God is at the helm, leading, guiding, controlling and governing the affairs of his people.

What is it that has brought you Latter-day Saints here? It is the principles of the Gospel. You heard them perhaps in England, Scotland, Ireland, Wales, France, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Germany or some other parts of the earth; no matter where you heard them, when you did hear you believed them. You had the same teachings that I have spoken of today. And I have heard men praising God in these different languages for sending the Gospel unto them, and for communicating unto them the principles of eternal truth. They knew by the same principle that we knew it, that the Gospel which they had heard was true, and they could bear testimony to it. And it was in consequences of this that you Saints came here. You heard Brother Pratt talking today about the gathering, about the Lord taking one of a city and two of a family, and bringing them to Zion. Did you come here because you considered that this was a better land? No. Was it because you had friends and associations here? No, you left your friends and associations. Was it because there was something very desirable for you here? No, it was because God had dictated it, and because the Holy Ghost which you had received planted a desire in your bosoms to come and mingle with your brethren. As the Scripture says, "I will take them, one of a city and two of a family, and I will bring them to Zion, and I will give them pastors after my own heart that shall feed them with knowledge and understanding." You hardly knew, in many instances, how or why on earth you struggled and toiled and obtained the means to come to this land. Your brethren, here, operated upon by the same spirit, sent forth their means to assist you; and before railroads were built here, as many as five hundred teams were sent year after year to the frontiers, to bring from there those who were desirous of coming. Those who were scattered did what they could, and those who were here did what they could, and the result of these united operations is that thousands of you are now here who would not have been had it not been for this.

The question then arises, What are we here for? "Oh," say some, "we have a pretty good country here." Yes, but what about the country? We did not come here after gold or silver; most of us came before that was discovered. I came to this city before it was known that there was any gold in California. We did not come here because it was a beautiful place, for when we arrived it was inhabited by Digger Indians, wolves, bears and coyotes—a desolate, arid plain, a howling wilderness. That was the position in which we found the country. And to get here we had to make the roads and build the bridges, and when we got here we did not have orchards and vineyards, and beautiful pleasant places ready for us, we had to make them. We had to roll up our sleeves and take our teams and go into the canyons and drag down the logs, and saw our boards by hand. I have sawed many a one by hand and George Q. Cannon has assisted me. "What," say some, "do you ministers saw?" Yes, we ministers saw and we

work, and I would be ashamed to be dependent upon anybody but myself for a living. I hope that God will ever preserve me from that, and I shall feel grateful to my Heavenly Father if he will always enable me to obtain my own. I remember being over in Tooele a number of years ago, and a party said to me, "Brother Taylor, I wish you would come here and preach." "Well," said I, "I am here, am I not?" "Yes, but we would like you to come again." Said I, "Perhaps I will, when I get ready." "Well, but if you will come here, we will make you up something, we will get you some chickens, a little flour and some pork," and I do not now remember what else. Said I, "I am very much obliged to you, very much indeed, for your proffered kindness, but I always prefer to dig my own potatoes, and I would just as soon plant them as not, and then dig them." These are my sentiments, and also those of my brethren. Here is Brother Woodruff; he has traveled hundreds and thousand of miles, as I have, and he generally digs his own potatoes and he knows how to plant them, and on these points, for diligent labor, I will set him against any man in this Territory.

We did not come here then, for anything of that kind. There were no houses here when Brother Woodruff and I first came here, and before we had any we had to make them. Before we had any gardens we had to make them; before there were any flowers we had to plant them, and we had to plant the seeds before any trees grew. I have got trees in my orchard now that grew from seeds planted by my first wife, which she brought from the East when I came here. People come here now, and many of them say, "You have a very beautiful city here." Yes, our city is well enough. "And you have a very pleasant place, and nice streams of water." Yes, but we had to make the ditches for them to run in, they did not run as they now do when we first came, we have had to do everything that has been done.

Well, what do you gather together for? What is your object? Just precisely what the Prophet told of thousands of years ago. You know that Brother Pratt was talking about fleeing "as doves to the windows," and while I was listening to him I was very much interested, and thought we had been fulfilling the words of the Prophets. I think that some of our folks, both young and old, sometimes forget "the pit whence they were dug, and the rock whence they were hewn;" and I think they spend a great deal of their time in frivolity and nonsense. This is not the case generally, and I do not care, this evening, to make accusations; for I delight to see that many are engaged in Sunday Schools, and in acts of benevolence and kindness and many of our young brethren and sisters are engaged in labors of a similar kind. But a large number are thoughtless, forgetful, careless and indifferent in relation to the things of God, and to the duties and responsibilities devolving upon them, and I fear are forgetful in many instances of the object of their existence.

Many strangers are now amongst us, parties whom we term, "Gentiles." They have their ideas, feelings, systems, and modes of worship, and we have ours. Do we wish to interfere with them? No, no, and I would protect, to the extent of my ability, any religious denomination in this Territory, and no man should interfere with them. What, the Episcopal church? Yes. The Methodist? Yes. The Presbyterians and the Catholics? Yes, no matter who or what they are, I will protect them. If God has a mind to bear with people, I will. Then, you would not persecute anybody for the sake of their religion? No, not at all, that is a matter between them and their God, and they have a perfect right to worship as they please, or not to worship at all, and they ought to be protected in all their rights to the fullest extent. No man ought to interfere with them, and no gentleman, no Latter-day Saint who understands himself would do so. They have a right to worship as they please, or not at all if it suits them. Then we have our rights, and one of them is to protect the people—everybody, socially, morally, religiously and politically—in every position, and to preserve a good, wholesome state of affairs in our midst, and not to be interfered with by anybody, outsiders or insiders. Ministers and editors preach and write and tell us that when the waves of "civilization" shall roll over Utah, things will be changed, and say they, "The people will become elevated and refined in their feelings and they will be like us." Some of their waves are not very pleasant, they have brought a lot of scum with them, and it babbles and stews and froths and foams, and exhibits anything but that which is pleasant and enticing, or that is calculated to promote the happiness and well-being of man. We do not have any sympathy with gambling, drunkenness and prostitution, for instance, and these are among the waves they have brought. They find fault with us for having more wives and children than they, and for preserving purity and chastity in our midst, and they would introduce their infamies amongst us. Gentlemen, we hope you will keep your waves back, where they belong, put them in your own cesspools, keep them where they originated. No such things have been originated by

us, we came here to get rid of them, and that we might fear God, and worship him in spirit and in truth, according to the principles that he has revealed. The Scriptures say, in speaking of the last days, that perilous times shall come—men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, trucebreakers, having a form of Godliness but denying the power thereof.” This is a very singular statement, but I do not think you would have to travel very far among our reformers—those who have come to reform and regenerate us—to find this pattern fully exemplified. Are they lovers of their own selves? There are a great many here who would not object to take our possessions, and give us nothing for them. Covetous, the Scriptures say. Why, at the time Buchanan commenced his raid upon us, they had it all planned, and had our possessions apportioned, and had agreed who should have this establishment, that and the other. But it did not exactly work, and they did not get them, but that did not alter the feeling or principle that existed. Covetous, boasters and proud! I am quoting from your own Bible—King James’ translation—and one of your own Prophets predicted these very things of you. Boasting! How much swaggering do we see around everywhere? No matter where you go you see little boys growing up full of pride, impudence and impertinence. They are called “Young America.” Beautiful specimens, and fine men they will make when they are full grown! Plenty of them come along here. We know all about them. What is the feeling abroad in the world in relation to disobedience to parents? Who the devil cares about father or mother? Say the young folks, “I am of age and I will do as I d—d please;” and off they go, and do as they please. The Prophets have testified that these things would be, and what we see and hear is only fulfilling their words.

What kind of people should these be? They should have a form of godliness, many of them be very pious, have long faces, and for a pretence make long prayers. Jesus in his day accused some of being men of this kind, and said he, “These shall receive the greater condemnation.” They shall be truce and covenant breakers. Have we any such now-a-days? Why if a man borrows five dollars he must give a mortgage on something, because the lender fears he will be cheated out of it. Men have no confidence in each other’s word. I would not give a straw for a man if I could not trust his word. There is nothing of him, no foundation, nothing to tie to. Yet these are the very people that the Prophet said should exist in the last days. They enter into covenant and never think of fulfilling it. Their word amounts to nothing, their integrity has no foundation.

I speak of these things for your information, for this is the condition of the world. And are we free from it? Not by a long way—I wish we were. I wish there were more honesty, virtue, integrity and truthfulness, and more of every principle among us that is calculated to exalt and ennoble humanity. I speak of these things as a shame to the human family; and if they exist among the Saints it is a crying, burning shame, and we all ought to be disgusted; for if anybody in the world ought to be men of integrity, truth and honesty, we should be, everywhere and under all circumstances. And if we say a thing it ought to be as worthy of belief as if we had sworn to it, and as if we were bound by ten thousand ties to accomplish it. But if a man has not the principle of integrity in his own self you cannot put it there. The Latter-day Saints should be ashamed to mix up with these things, and to prostitute the principles which God has revealed unto them. I speak of these things to warn you against them.

The Lord has brought us here, that we may be taught and instructed in correct principles and led in the paths of life. Did we gather here to get religion and to prepare to die? Nothing of the kind. I do not care one particle about death. I have had him grin at me numbers of times, but I care nothing about him, and I ask no odds of him. I know something beyond death. We are here to prepare to live, and to teach our children how to live after us; and to teach the world the same lesson if they will only receive it. We know that our spirits existed with the Father before we came here. We know that we are immortal as well as mortal beings, and that we have had to do with another world as well as this. We know that the world abounds with corruption; but it is our business to keep ourselves from it, and to progress in virtue, truth, integrity and holiness. We came here to be saviors. “What, saviors?” “Yes.” “Why, we thought there was only one Savior.” “Oh, yes, there are a great many. What do the Scriptures say about it?” One of the old Prophets, in speaking of these things, says that saviors shall come up upon Mount Zion. Saviors? Yes. Whom shall they save? In the first place themselves, then their families, then their neighbors, friends and associations, then their forefathers, then pour blessings on their posterity. Is that so? Yes. This reminds me of some remarks I heard a short time ago. There was a number of gentlemen, travelers, passing around the world, and on their way they stayed here awhile. They wanted to obtain some information from me upon certain subjects, and I

took them around a little, and among other places I took them to see the Tabernacle and the foundation of the Temple. Said one, "When you get that Temple built you will have another place to meet and preach in." "Oh no," said I, "that is not for preaching." All the idea that most men have about a Temple of the Lord is that it is for preaching. "Well," said these gentlemen, "what is it for if not to preach in?" I answered, "The Christian world have no knowledge of what Temples are for, but we build them for the same purpose as they were built for anciently—to perform ordinances in them." "To perform ordinances?" "Yes, among others, baptism for the dead?" "Baptism for the dead?" "Yes, baptism for the dead, that those who have lived before us, and have not been in possession of the light that we have, may be placed in a position in which they can receive intelligence from God, and salvation at his hands; that all God's creatures who have lived may have an opportunity to have the Gospel preached to them, and to participate in its blessings. As Paul says, 'If the dead rise not at all, why, then, are ye baptized for the dead?'" Said I, "The Christian world know nothing about these things, but God has revealed them to us, hence we are baptized for our dead, that they may partake of the Gospel and have the opportunity of being exalted in the kingdom of God." Hence, as the Scriptures say, "saviors shall come up on Mount Zion."

There are a great many more reasons why we engage in these operations, which it is not necessary to talk about to you Saints; you understand them in part, but not much; but you will understand more when it is developed. Well then, we are desirous of blessing our posterity. We read of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, before they left the world, calling their families together, and under the inspiration of the spirit of prophecy and revelation, putting their hands upon their heads and pronouncing certain blessings upon them, which should rest upon their posterity through every subsequent period of time. We have the same Gospel and Priesthood, and the same light and intelligence, and we are after the salvation and exaltation of our families that shall come after us, as they were, and we are seeking for God's blessings to be poured upon their heads as they were. And if our fathers have died in ignorance of the Gospel, not having had an opportunity to listen to it, we feel after them, and we go forth and are baptized for them, that they may be saved and exalted in the kingdom of God with us.

Is this the Gospel? Yes, the very Gospel that Jesus taught, and when he was put to death in the flesh, and was quickened by the Spirit, he went and preached it to the spirits in prison who sometimes were disobedient in the days of Noah. Did he preach to them that they should stop there? No, not at all. What did he come here for? To open the eyes of the blind, to unstop the ears of the deaf, to preach glad tidings to the poor, to open the prison doors to those that were bound, and to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. That is what he came to do; and when he got through preaching to the living he went and preached to the spirits in prison, and "opened their prison doors," as the Prophets said he would do, "to those that were bound."

We are after these things. God has shed upon us the light of eternal truth, he has revealed to us the everlasting Gospel, and that Gospel brings life and immortality to light. We are seeking to walk in that light, to enjoy these privileges ourselves and to impart them to others, that others with us—the living and the dead, those who have been, those who are and those who are to come, may rejoice with us, that we and they may obtain exaltation in the celestial kingdom of God.

May God help us to be faithful, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.