

# **Youthful Experiences—Preaching Without Purse and Scrip—Individual Testimony Abundant and Satisfactory—Joseph Smith not An Impostor—His Promises Fulfilled—Form of Church Organization Imperative—Its Restoration in Prophecy and Fact**

*Discourse by Elder Orson Pratt, delivered in the New Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, Sunday Afternoon, Aug. 20, 1876.*

We have heard, this afternoon, the testimony of one of our young brethren, Elder Mathoni Pratt, who has just returned, rejoicing in the truth, from his first preaching mission abroad.

When speaking of his late experience, my mind was carried back to the days of my youth, when, at the age of nineteen, I went forth to the world to preach the great principles embraced in the faith of the Latter-day Saints. I, too, felt my weakness, being then very timid and bashful, never having been accustomed to public speaking. But the Lord, in whom I placed my trust, gave me strength according to my faith and perseverance, to proclaim the truth to the people. The Holy Ghost, which had been given me, brought to mind the Scriptures of eternal truth, in the very moment needful to present them to the people. Passages which I had merely read, in my early school days, came as vividly to my mind as though I had committed them to memory. This was in fulfillment of a promise of God to all his faithful servants. The Lord, through new revelation, has commanded his servants, who go forth as missionaries in this last dispensation, to take no thought before-hand what they shall say, for it shall be given them in the very moment what they shall say. This has been verified in very deed in my experience. Sometimes, in consequence of my weakness, I would take forethought upon some few subjects, but after rising to express these things to the people, they would be taken from me.

There are many promises which God has made to his servants in these latter times, and in connection with these promises he has given many commandments which we are required to observe and keep. One of these commandments, given to his missionary servants in the year 1832, reads as follows: "Verily I say unto you, let no man that goes forth to preach my Gospel, from this hour, take purse or scrip." We therefore went forth, as the ancient Apostles, taking no thought for the morrow what we should eat, or what we should drink, or wherewithal we should be clothed. For, said the Lord, consider the lilies of the field, they toil not, neither do they spin, and the kingdoms of this world, in all their glory, are not arrayed like one of these. There was another promise made in connection with these commandments: "They who go forth without purse or scrip, and are faithful in all things, shall not be weary in mind, neither in body, limb, nor joint, neither shall they go hungry or athirst."

This is another great promise which has been verified upon me to the very letter. I have gone to foreign nations, without one farthing to either procure food or a night's lodging, and God has opened up my way, so that I have lacked no needful thing. This is not only my experience, but the experience of thousands who have also tested, in like manner, the truth of this promise. In the early rise of this Church, I sometimes had to sleep out in the open air, the same as our Savior had to do, as he said, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head." And so it hath been with many of his latter-day servants. Yet we experienced no particular inconveniences by being obliged to sleep at night on the ground; neither have we suffered when calling on the people from time to time, as servants of God, to obtain food, any more than Elijah did, when he fasted forty days, or Moses when he was forty days and forty nights without eating or drinking. There was a power over and in those ancient servants of God, that satisfied the cravings of the appetite, in passing through such circumstances, and such power was not withheld from us.

After the Lord told us how to go forth to the world with this Gospel message, he said, He that receiveth you, receiveth me; and he that receiveth me, receiveth my Father; and he that receiveth my Father, receiveth my Father's kingdom. He also said, He that rejecteth you, and your words and testimony, rejecteth me; go away from him and cleanse your feet with pure water, and bear testimony of it to your Father, and return not again to that man or house; and whatsoever village or city you enter do likewise. And another great promise, made in connection with this, is that every soul that believes on your words, and is baptized in water for the remission of sins, shall receive the Holy Ghost, and these signs shall follow them that believe. In my name they shall cast out

devils, heal the sick, open the eyes of the blind, unstop the ears of the deaf, and the tongue of the dumb shall speak; and if any man administers poison to them, it shall not hurt them.

The promise, therefore, unto all who receive this Gospel, is that they shall not only receive remission of their sins, but they shall also receive the Holy Ghost through the laying on of hands; a promise which God alone can fulfil. Suppose this Church was an imposition, and this Gospel message not divine, would not the people who have rendered obedience to its requirements have proved it long ago to be false? Certainly they would, and the message itself, with its advocates, would have died away and come to nought. Would they have continued, as many have done, for over forty years in this Church; and would the people, numbering in this Territory about one hundred and fifty thousand, have gathered as they have done from nearly all the civilized nations, to the great interior of this continent, if the promises made them through this Gospel had not been fulfilled. No, you might have preached and promised, but it would have been of no effect. There is a vast cloud of witnesses, not only these of this congregation, but I speak of the entire people.

Do you know, Latter-day Saints, that this work is true? You do. How do you know it? Not merely because the men who proclaimed it told you it was true. How then do you know it? You know it by virtue of your obedience to the message; you have done the will of the Father, and you have realized the fulfillment of the promise; so that it is not a matter of guesswork, of mere opinion; you know beyond a single doubt that it is the work of the living God.

Suppose an impostor was to undertake to preach this Gospel, offering the same promises to believers, which of course would not be fulfilled. Do you not therefore see that it would be impossible to gather such people together from the different nations? But, when the promises are realized, the people receiving something they never before experienced, when those effects are strictly in accordance with the words of God, then they have a testimony that cannot be denied. But says one, "We hear people belonging to the different Christian sects and denominations say that they receive the spirit of God; you say the same. How are we to judge between you and them?" I would answer in the language of the Apostle John, who, in the first verse of the fourth chapter of his General Epistle said, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world." The true spirit imparts signs to all believers. Do the Methodists, the Baptists, the Presbyterians, or any of the Christian sects receive a spirit of this kind? Do they lay their hands on the sick, and are the sick healed? If they do then they are true believers; but if they do not, it shows that they have been deceived. Do they even profess to have these signs? No. Why? Because they know they are not in possession of them; and in order to excuse themselves with a view of making everybody believe they are true believers, they say these signs were only to follow the servants of God in the first age of Christianity. Let us examine carefully the written word, to see whether this is so or not. Jesus, as is shown in the 16th chapter of St. Mark, commencing at the 15th verse, said to the Eleven Apostles, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them: they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover." Were the believers here referred to confined to certain individuals? No, this Gospel message was to be preached to every creature in all the world, and the promise was to everybody that believed and obeyed. Some argue that when the Gospel was first introduced, it was necessary that these signs should follow the believers, in order that all the world might be convinced of its divinity; but that when the Gospel had been fully established, by signs and wonders, they were no longer needed. This is believed in and accepted as truth by the great majority of the Christian world. This being the case, I have often wondered why there were not more infidels in the world, than we have a knowledge of. Because a man inclined to infidelity might say, "If you do not believe in one part of the Gospel, what use is there in my believing any of it? If you can take upon yourselves the right to do away with a part of the Gospel, why may not I do away with the whole of it?" The signs which the Savior promised should follow believers are just as much a part of the Gospel as salvation itself is.

But how shall we "try the spirits?" I do not know of a better and surer way than to follow the word of God. In ancient times hands were laid on the head of the baptized believer and the Holy Ghost was given, and it produced certain effects, insomuch that when the hands were taken from the heads of the individuals thus blessed, often

times they would speak with other tongues, and prophesy, foretelling future events, etc. And the effects of the Holy Ghost were so miraculous and manifest that a certain sorcerer, named Simon Magnus, doubtless thinking it would be a great acquisition to his catalogue of wonders, offered the Apostles money, if they would empower him to perform the same. But Peter said unto him, "Thy money perish with thee; repent of this thy wickedness," etc. "For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity." There was a power attending the demonstration of those men of God, in ancient days, that left no doubt in the minds of those who experienced it; they knew that it was a power not from man.

After the Lord had commissioned the Elders of this Church, some forty-four years ago, to preach this Gospel to all nations, he promised that to those who would believe and obey their words, should be given power to do many wonderful works, they should open the eyes of the blind, and unstop the ears of the deaf, and the tongue of the dumb should be made to speak, and the lame man should be made to walk, etc. Has this promise been fulfilled, Latter-day Saints? Yes, you know it has been literally fulfilled. You yourselves when living in a scattered condition, in places where the Gospel found you, have laid your hands upon the heads of your little children and others, who were sick, and, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by virtue of the holy Priesthood, you have rebuked the sickness, and you have seen the sick restored to health. You have also witnessed the deaf restored to their hearing, and the blind receive their sight. By these and other manifestations of the power of God, you knew that we were the servants of God, and that our message was divine. The world say that Joseph Smith was an impostor. I would ask, Can there be any more effectual means of detecting an impostor, of determining the truth or falsity of his profession, than for him to make to public promises of this kind? If he were an impostor, the signs spoken of would not follow believers, and the power to perform these wonderful works would not be given to those who obeyed his words. Do you not know, strangers, that an impostor would carefully avoid giving such unmistakable proofs of his impositions? Yes, he would be as cautious as the Methodists, and the rest of the so-called Christian denominations, for they do not even profess a belief in them, much less to declare themselves to be in possession of them. But the fact that these signs do follow believers, that this power does exist, is testimony sufficient, and it is a testimony to all the world, that this Gospel message which we preach is divine, and that God is able to do today the same as he did anciently; and you, Latter-day Saints, are witnesses concerning these things.

Having examined the message that these missionaries proclaim, let me speak a little upon another subject. If you now travel over the broad face of the Christian world, and ask the several Christian sects if they have inspired Apostles in their church, who receive revelation as they of old did? The answer will be positively no. Why do you not have them, are they not part of the Gospel? Hear what the Lord has said upon this subject through the Apostle Paul—"God hath set some in the Church, first Apostles, secondarily Prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues." And these are members of the body called the Church. Yet you say you have not the first member necessary to constitute the body. God has certainly set in his Church Apostles. Where are they, and where are their revelations? When there happens to be some difficulty on points of doctrine among you, do you go to the ministers you profess to have, requesting them to inquire of the Lord concerning the matter? Oh no, you say, the canon of Scripture is full, and there is to be no more revelation. No wonder, then, you have not the first officer of the Church; he would be to you a superfluous member, if there is to be no more revelation. But how do you know this? Has the Lord ever said that the time would come when he would have no more inspired Apostles in his Church? Says one, My minister says so. I would advise you to go to your minister and ask him where he obtains his evidence to prove that the canon of Scripture is full. You will find that he will appear dumb, because no man can put his finger upon a single passage of Scripture proving such an assertion. Perhaps some have tried to believe it, by quoting certain verses from the last chapter of the Revelation of the Lord to St. John, when on the Isle of Patmos; I have had them quote it to me. You will recollect that John, while on the Isle of Patmos, ninety-six years after the birth of Christ, received wonderful revelations, the Lord commanding him to write them. He wrote them on parchment, and upon the closing up of the scroll the Lord says, "If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book." This is often quoted, perhaps without knowing or considering that John, after his release from Patmos, as history informs us, wrote the Gospel of St. John. Supposing that John was questioned on this point, how do you think he would have explained himself? He would have said that that caution had reference to the book written on Patmos. He would have said further, that the caution was against man's adding, but that God has the right to give to his people line

upon line, precept upon precept, here a little, and there a little, book after book, yea, even ten thousand revelations, or more as he may deem proper; and he never pronounced a curse against himself, but that man has not the right to add a single word. The same language may be found in the book of Deuteronomy, which of course has a direct bearing to the five books of Moses, without any reference whatever to the succeeding books of the Bible. May not the same objection be just as consistently raised against all the books of the Old and New Testament which follow the last book written by Moses, containing the same caution, as against the new revelation of today? Surely the people who lived in and after the days of Moses might just as consistently have objected to receiving any further revelations from the Lord, because of the caution referred to appearing in the Book of Deuteronomy, as the people of today have for objecting to receive any new revelation, because the same caution appears in the last chapter of the revelation on Patmos. Both have reference to particular books only, and it is absurd and folly in the extreme for men claiming to have any knowledge of God, and the great plan of salvation to interpret it otherwise. And it can be for no other reason than to attempt to cover up the state of apostasy which the whole world is in, that causes the ministers of the various sects to quote this passage as they do.

There is another passage of Scripture which I will refer to, in connection with this; it reads as follows: "When Christ ascended up on high, he led captivity captive and gave gifts to men. And he gave some Apostles; and some, Prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the Saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ," etc. It is acknowledged that you have not Apostles as part of your Gospel. Let us inquire further. Have you got Prophets? No, you assert there is to be no more Prophets. Have you workers of miracles or healers of the sick? No. Have you discerners of spirits, or speakers with tongues, or do angels minister to you? No, you assert that these are all done away. Do you not know that all these constitute the body of the Church of the living God, and that all these are necessary to form the whole, so that one part or member cannot say to another, "I have no need of you?" What then have you got? You reply, We have teachers and pastors. Then you consider that you have the body of Christ among you? You reply, "O yes; we are the Church of Christ." Who authorized you to do away with these essential parts of the body or Church of Christ? Have you not been instructed of the Lord through the mouth of his Apostles, that "If all were one member, where were the body?" If pastors and teachers are the only members you have, how is it possible that the body can exist among you? The Apostle, in thus comparing the human body complete with all its members to the body or Church of Christ, said—"The head cannot say to the foot, I have no need of you," etc. By what principle of right, therefore, can the legs or feet, which may be said to represent pastors and teachers, say to the head, which represents the Apostles, "I have no need of you?" You say you have only a couple of the members of the body, and that you have received no further revelation from God, the canon of Scripture being full, authorizing you to do away with the other members. Where then is the Church organization as established by the Savior? Nowhere, among the sects, upon the whole earth, neither has it been for many generations past. You say, we are uncharitable. We are only comparing your church organization with that of the Bible. We are told to "Try the spirits," and I know of no better way than to do so by the Word of God. Remember that he who dwells in the heavens will judge you by his words in the great day of judgment. You pastors and teachers, you who profess to be authorized of God, how will you feel in that great day, when you shall appear before him to be judged out of the books? When you hear him declare that he placed in his Church, first Apostles, then Prophets, etc., and when he shall ask you the reason why you did away with them, how will you feel, what will you say? Your only answer can be that "we did away with them, because they were unpopular, and because we had not faith sufficient to obtain revelations ourselves, and in order to hide our apostasy we said they were no longer needed." Remember, all ye, the testimony of the Savior—"My words shalt judge you in the last day."

The Lord has restored his everlasting Gospel, with all its gifts and blessings, and in all its fullness, and has called men and commanded them to publish it among the inhabitants of all the earth. Judge ye whether it be the Gospel, or whether it be a man-made system. If it be false, prove it to be so; bring forth your strong reasons; otherwise lay your hands upon your mouths, and let your tongues be dumb. There may be imperfections in some of the people who represent this Gospel, for the wheat and tares are to grow together until the second coming of our Lord, when he will separate them; but there are no imperfections in the Gospel; it is perfect so far as God has seen proper to reveal himself to the human family. Will an imperfect system save the people in any part of the world? No. If the Gospel we preach is not true, there is certainly among you none true; and we, therefore, are only one among the

others; for we know they are not true, because the written word testifies against them. But we present to you a system which is perfect, and which we know to be true, because the promised signs follow the believers.

This Gospel must be preached to all peoples everywhere, fulfilling the prophecy of John the Revelator, contained in the 14th chapter of Revelation. Judge ye whether that day has come or not. We declare that the angel referred to there has flown, and we bring forth the evidence of the witness who saw and conversed with him. And we are commissioned of God to carry the Gospel to all nations under heaven, bearing testimony that it is the eleventh hour—the last time that God will ever send laborers into the vineyard. We testify that when this Gospel is preached faithfully to all the world, then will the end of the wicked world come; then shall the Son of Man come, sitting upon a white cloud, as predicted in the same chapter. Then woe to the nations that reject this warning message, for they shall be visited with consuming fire, and all that shall be found doing wickedly shall be burned up. This is the dispensation of the fullness of times that should come in the last days, gathering out the Lord's elect from the four winds of heaven; a dispensation of the Lord's judgments spoken of in connection with the flying of the angel in the midst of heaven; and these judgments are nigh, even at the door. Amen.