

## DISCOURSE

By Elder J. W. Cummings, Tabernacle, Sunday Morning, Feb. 8, 1857.

[REPORTED BY J. V. LONG.]

I stand before people this morning that have had the gospel preached to them from one to 25 years.

I am requested to make a few remarks and to tell you and my brethren who occupy the stand some of my feelings. I have been trying for the last three months to disseminate the principles of reformation among this people, or among that portion of them where I have been appointed to labor, and I shall make the same request of you this morning which I made of the people in the ward meetings where I teach, viz., to leave that which is out of doors entirely out of your minds.

We have assembled for the purpose of worshipping God, or I will say that if we have not come here for that purpose we had better leave the house and give room for those that have come for that purpose. I do know that no person can enjoy a full flow of the Spirit of God when his mind is wandering to the ends of the earth, neither can a man speak with that flow of spirit to a congregation under such circumstances that he could if their minds were upon the Lord. If we wish to enjoy a full fruition of the Spirit of the Lord we must let our minds relax and be free from the labors of the week, and to put away from our minds things that pertain to this world. It is but once a week that we assemble here for the purpose of worshipping the Lord and certainly we can afford to devote the time that we are here to that purpose, to the worship of our God.

I know not what subject I shall speak to you upon, but I do esteem it a great privilege to have the opportunity of standing before my brethren and sisters, and of declaring unto them my feelings and of telling them what I know about the gospel, for by so doing they will ascertain whether I know and understand the same as they do or not. If I can know that my words are dictated by the right spirit, and that they penetrate by the Spirit of the Lord into the hearts of the people, then I shall know that they are edifying, for all are one that have the same spirit; they will all know and acquiesce in the sentiments because the spirit that is in us agrees; but if I am of the spirit of the world, and I teach unto you the things of the world, and you have the Spirit of the living God within you, the things which I speak will not be edifying nor instructive unto you, consequently while I stand before you I desire to have your faith and prayers that I may say something that will be useful to you and calculated to enlighten your minds, because I feel when preaching the principles of the reformation that I am edifying myself as much or more than those I speak to, and I do believe that this is the case with every man who stands forth to teach the people, if clothed with the power and authority of heaven; then the Lord will speak through him, and teach him things that he never thought of before in his life. I do know this to be the fact by my own experience.

We have had, for the last three months, a great deal of preaching, and certainly a person would naturally think that we have had enough to live by while we remain in this probationary state, and that if we never heard another word that we had received sufficient, if we were to be steadfast, ever diligent, always found laboring to win the prize that is before us. But instead of this being the case we are made up of weaknesses, and we are so full of them and they are so complicated that we need to be instructed every day and every hour of our lives to keep us where we should be, in order that we may enjoy the Holy Spirit.

I have my ideas in relation to the reformation, and in relation to the situation and condition of this people, and in relation to the course that they will have to pursue in order to procure eternal lives. Now I do not feel the same responsibility this morning that I would if I stood here independent and alone, for if I should advance ideas that are not correct, there are those here whose duty it is to correct any principle that I may advance if it be erroneous.

In the first place, I will say that I have not, since the reformation commenced, tried to get a zeal that was not according to knowledge, but I have sought diligently to faithfully discharge my duties, obtain the Spirit of the living God that my mind might be enlightened, that my understanding might be expanded that I might see and understand the mind and the will of the Lord concerning me. I was always satisfied when I had got his mind and will concerning the people whom I had been sent to teach, and that Spirit is calculated to lead us on to the obtaining of eternal life.

There have been many who perhaps have run faster than their ballast would allow, or probably they have commenced the race in such a way that they were not able to continue it, though they run first rate for a season. We read of some who appeared to make great progress for a time, but after a while they left the principles of the gospel of life and salvation and went away into darkness. We have been taught, as I observed in the commencement, from one to 25 years, and if we look at the thing naturally, we have had teaching enough to make us perfect in the things of the Lord, but when the servants of God stand up to show us the way of life, and we begin to examine ourselves, to scan our ways and our thoughts, and they begin to show us the course we have to pursue, we find that we come far short of enjoying the blessings that we might have enjoyed, provided that we had followed the course marked out by them. We have been children, and we have had the promise by those that hold the keys of life and death, that if we would forsake our sins and worship the true and living God, that our former sins should no more be remembered against us, and that we should be held as though we had not sinned.

I contend that this is one of the greatest offers of mercy ever given to the children of men. When we consider the course that we have pur-

sued for the last seven years, we find that we have in a great measure forsaken the Lord and come far short of the blessings that it is our privilege now to enjoy. What has there been to prevent us from worshipping the true and living God? We have had no gentiles to interfere with us, we have no laws except those we have made ourselves, we have had no rulers except those that we desire to rule over us, and hence we have no excuse; if we have not made progress it is not the fault of the Almighty nor of his servants whom he has placed upon the earth.

Now, then, notwithstanding all our faults and weaknesses and the sins that we have committed, yet they have come out and told us that our sins should be forgiven, and that we should have an opportunity of being saved in the kingdom of God. Brethren and sisters, I do consider this to be the greatest offer of mercy that has ever been shown to the human family, and we should all appreciate it as such. If we are guilty of going on in our sins and trespassing upon the laws of God, and of committing sin against our brethren and sisters and against our God, we ought to be damned.

I will tell you what I believe, the next time we are called in question to be judged as we have been this time, it will not be said of us that the Lord will forgive our sins; I tell you I believe that mercy will step aside and that we will have to atone for all our sins that we have committed upon this earth. And if we go on sinning against the Lord and transgressing the laws that he has given us to walk by, every sin that we have committed since we have been baptized into the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints we shall have to atone for, for I can tell you that mercy will not have any claim upon such.

These are the views that I take of the subject, and these are the views that the people should take of it. Just ask yourselves the question, what progress have we made since we came into these valleys? Now if we have made no progress what has hindered it? Is it because the servants of God have not told us how to live?—and because they have not told us what to do day after day and week after week, and because they have not taught us to live our religion? No, it is not. Is it because we have had to go out and fight mobs? No, it is not. Is it because we have had to go and delve in the rocks from Monday morning to Saturday night to procure a subsistence? No, for I do believe that the Lord has never blest any portion of the earth and caused it to produce in greater abundance than he has these valleys since we have inhabited them, consequently we have no excuse to render whatever. He is willing to impart unto us knowledge continually if we are prepared to receive it; but we have placed our affections upon the things of this world and have forgotten our God; we have done that which we should not have done, and we have left undone the things we should have done.

We will take for granted this morning that you have forsaken all the sins that have been mentioned to you by the servants of the Lord, or in other words that you could raise your hands and say that you have not been guilty of those sins since the reformation commenced; for argument's sake we will say this, but does that end the reformation or place us in the presence of our God to enjoy the blessings and the privileges that are to be enjoyed by those who gain celestial glory?

Now if I understand the gospel correctly it does not, but there is much yet to be done. There are a great many who have made the observation that they have had the reformation and got through with it, and they are thankful for it, but I look for all such to leave in the spring for California or some other place. I look upon the matter in this light, and I verily believe that they cannot stay here a great while, at least I hope and pray that they may not be able to stay, whether it takes me, my family, or any other person. If we can answer conscientiously every question, I conclude that we are in a fair way for progressing in the things of the kingdom of God, and we are preparing for taking a step that we should have taken three, ten and some of us fifteen years ago. Now if we have got upon that platform we are preparing to take an important step in the kingdom of God.

Now in relation to the catechism or standard by which we have been measured, I could refer to many in the gentle world who profess to be infidels that have never been guilty of violating it so far as morality and virtue are concerned, notwithstanding they did not believe in God or in his divine law. Do we suppose that those persons are coming forth in the morning of the first resurrection to be crowned with glory, immortality and eternal lives? No, not for a moment; we do believe they will be rewarded according to the deeds done in the body. If we have become so that we can be measured by that standard and answer truly to all its requirements, then we are prepared to advance in the knowledge of God.

The Spirit of the Lord is a Spirit of wisdom, of understanding and of knowledge—a spirit that will enable us to see, understand and comprehend our duties to each other, to ourselves and to our God, and this will comprehend the whole. I do not believe that it is a spirit that will make us feel well for the moment and then leave us, but I believe that those who enjoy the Spirit of the living God will increase in knowledge and intelligence, all the time growing in grace and in the knowledge of the truth, and if they continue they will arrive at the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ, or in other words be prepared to enter into the presence of God, be crowned with glory, immortality and eternal lives. Are we going to get these things all at once, or in other words, are we going to become perfect in one day? No, we are not, because we are poor, frail, mortal beings, and it will require diligent perseverance in us to become perfect in the knowledge of God. Why have we sinned against our God? Is it because we desire to do wrong, or is it because we have been tempted by an unseen influence which is around us? I believe it is the latter that causes us to sin. I contend that if ever

we enter into the presence of our Father in heaven we will get there by a continual increase of knowledge and wisdom.

I have heard some of the Elders of Israel when addressing the people exhort them to love God with all their might, mind and strength, and they would preach for hours and never tell the people the way to love God, but I will tell you my belief respecting that. I do not believe that we can love any being whom we know nothing about. If I love br. Brigham, br. Heber, or any other man it is because I know them, it is because I enjoy the same spirit that they do, it is because I have received a portion of the same intelligence that they have received, and they have received a portion of the intelligence of the living God, and therefore I love them, and our feelings are amalgamated, and if I enjoy the Spirit of the Lord they feel well towards me, and they feel to love me, and the more my knowledge increases the more my love of God increases, and the more my knowledge in relation to them increases the more I will love them. This is the principle upon which I love any and every person in the world that I do love; it is because I know them.

Now then I may say that I know a wicked man, but do I love that man? I may say that I do or that I do not, and say truly both times. I may feel willing to spend any labor or time that is necessary to teach him the principles of the gospel of eternal life, but if I have the spirit of love and of the gospel of Jesus Christ, do I feel to associate with him? No. Do our spirits amalgamate with the spirits of wicked men? No, they do not; I know mine does not, neither do I wish to associate with such persons, so long as they are filled with the spirit of darkness and I filled with the spirit of life. You may as well take water and oil and try to mix them together, and to make them inseparable. You take two drops of water, big or little, and they will mingle together, but you take one of oil and one of water, and they will not mingle, there is no amalgamation, and it is just the same with good men and wicked men or with women either. I tell you the righteous will never strike hands with the wicked nor bid them God's speed; they will never have the spirit to do it; it is an impossibility. It is just so with our God. While we are doing wickedly and transgressing the laws of God, there is no feeling in him to associate with us, there is no feeling to mingle with us, for there is nothing to unite us together. We may labor and toil until the last resurrection, and unless we improve upon the knowledge of God given unto us, and endeavor to obtain a further knowledge by the teachings of his servants, and become acquainted with the principles that he possesses, we shall never dwell in his presence.

If I understand the principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ correctly, we shall never dwell in the presence of our Father in heaven until we become like him, and the more we partake of his Spirit the more we become like him, and just in proportion to the knowledge we have received and the intelligence given unto us, just in that proportion is our love for him. We may preach about the love of God, but unless we take a course to become acquainted with his attributes, let me tell you we never can associate with him, for he will not associate with us until we become like him. This is my opinion, whether it is correct or incorrect.

Now the world have taught us and have preached to us to love our neighbor as ourselves, which is very good doctrine when it is properly understood. The more you become acquainted with me, with br. Brigham, or with any other man, if we enjoy the Spirit of the Lord and the Spirit of revelation and you enjoy the same Spirit, the better you will love us, and this is perfectly natural. You might talk about the wicked loving the righteous, but you will never convert me to that faith, neither do I believe that we could mix and unite the righteous and the wicked. It is for us to take a course to become like God if we wish to love him and dwell in his presence, for I do not believe that ignorance or stupidity will ever be admitted to abide with him. If we are ever admitted into his presence it will be because we have become just like him. We may not have the same amount of knowledge, but we will have to get sufficient to qualify us to associate with him that he may associate with us.

I believe that the eternal gulf between the 'Rich man and Lazarus' was ignorance. He (the rich man) had been wicked all his life, and had never received the knowledge of God, and consequently there was an eternal gulf, and that ignorance and misery could not be lessened but by the rich man obtaining the same knowledge that Abraham and the poor man had of the Lord while living upon the earth. We may profess to be Latter Day Saints, and to be living our religion, but have we forsaken all our sins, and are we trying to get the knowledge of God and become sanctified before him, and magnify our priesthood and accomplish his holy purposes upon the earth. If such is the fact it is well with us.

Now let us by every laudable means procure the knowledge and intelligence that will prepare us for admission into the presence of our heavenly Father, and resist every opposing power whether it be visible or invisible. You may shout glory hallelujah till life is extinct, and that will never admit you into the kingdom of heaven, you must receive a fulness of the Spirit and become sanctified through the truth, and through the knowledge of God become like him. The Spirit of the Lord will abide with all who receive it, and abide its dictates, and you may improve upon the wisdom that is given you of the Almighty, whether through His servants, or by His spirit, and we can continue in this way until we do gain the victory, overcome and become like God our Father, and be admitted into his presence, and I do not believe we will ever be admitted unless we take that course.

If you have got the Holy Spirit, or any portion of it within you, I ask can you love the wicked? Do you feel to fellowship them, and to enjoy their society and presence? No, you do not for one

moment. A wicked man cannot be happy in the company of the righteous, neither can a righteous man enjoy the company of the wicked.—Can the angels of heaven enjoy themselves in the company of the wicked? No, and we may pray and pray in vain to behold their presence, unless we purge ourselves both in body and spirit, and become fit companions that they may associate with us and take pleasure in doing so. Now if we have not purity and knowledge enough to dwell with angels, how far short we come of being prepared to dwell with our Father.

I do not believe that I am going there until I become acquainted with his attributes, and just so soon as I become acquainted with them and become like him, will I be admitted into his society.

The knowledge that I have of the attributes of Deity, causes me to love and serve him; and the spirit that I have received causes me to love his servants. I have known those men for years, and I know if we follow their counsel we shall increase in wisdom and intelligence and in the things of this world.

The riches of this world will never secure unto us happiness in this life nor that which is to come, but to know how to live aright before the Lord, and then act upon that knowledge will secure to us happiness, and blessings in this life, and in that which is to come eternal exaltation and crowns of glory. These are my feelings in regard to the principle of the reformation or progression. We have now started anew, and there is no time for us to stop; we have slumbered and slept for a long time, and the words of the servants of God have fallen to the ground, and that which we have learned we have neglected to put in practice. It stands us in hand now to double our diligence, and to live so before the Lord that our knowledge and wisdom may increase daily, and that we may, in the future, make some advancement. I consider that the progress we have made since we came into these valleys has been a 'snail's gallop.' (Pres. Kimball: It has been on the lobe.)

I feel as I observed when I first arose, that I esteem it a privilege to speak to the Saints, that they may know my feelings and sentiments. I wish to understand and know the spirit you are of; nothing gives me so much pleasure as teaching the principles of the gospel, and the more I reflect upon them the greater my anxiety is to learn and to live in such a way that I may be filled with the Spirit of the Lord, and that I may be useful. We have but a few days to live upon the earth, and why not put away our sins that when we leave this vale of tears we may not be subject to the power the devil? We may suffer in this world, but let us not yield to temptation that we may suffer and be subject to the powers of darkness in the next. We may just as well be happy in our minds as to be miserable. You will find that the greatest conquest you will ever gain will be over yourselves. Alexander the Great conquered the world, and made all subject to him except one man, and that was himself and himself he never did conquer. We may teach like an angel from heaven, but unless we bring ourselves into subjection to the dictates of the Spirit of the living God, and become perfectly passive, in the hands of the servants of the Lord we shall never gain that glory we desire. When we gain that conquest over ourselves we shall love the household of faith as we love ourselves, then will the knowledge and love of God be and abound in us to a fulness that will make our joy complete. Which may God grant for Christ's sake.—Amen.

**POWER OF THE MUSCLES.**—The muscular strength of the human body is indeed wonderful. A Turkish porter will trot at a rapid pace and carry a weight of six hundred pounds. Milo, a celebrated athlete of Crotona, in Italy, accustomed himself to carry the greatest burdens, and, by degrees, became a monster in strength. It is said that he carried on his shoulder an ox four years old, weighing upwards of one thousand, and afterwards killed him with one blow of his fist.

He was seven times crowned at the Pythian games, and six at the Olympic. He presented himself the seventh time, but no one had the courage to enter the lists against him. He was a Pythagorean, and to his uncommon strength that learned preceptor and his pupils owed their lives. The pillar which supported the roof of the house suddenly gave way, but Milo supported the roof of the building, and gave the philosopher time to escape.

In old age, he attempted to pull up a tree by the roots and break it. He partially effected it; but his strength being gradually exhausted, the tree, where cleft, reunited, and left his hand pinched in the body of it. He was then alone; and, unable to disengage himself, died in that position.

Haller mentions that he saw a man, whose finger caught in a chain at the bottom of a mine, by keeping it forcibly bent, supported by that means, the whole weight of his body, one hundred and fifty pounds, until he was drawn up to the surface, a distance of six hundred feet. Augustus II., King of Poland, could roll up a silver plate like a sheet of paper, and twist the strongest horse shoe asunder. A lion is said to have left the impression of his teeth upon a piece of solid iron.

The most prodigious power of muscle is exhibited by the fish. The whale moves with a velocity through a dense medium, water, that would carry him around the world in less than a fortnight; and a sword-fish has been known to strike his weapon through the plank of a ship.

**FISH EPIDEMIC.**—A second fish epidemic is raging in Grand River, Michigan. During the past week the shores have been literally strewn with the dead and dying fish—some of them of almost fabulous size. A few months since all living, creeping things, by myriads, were cast dead upon the banks of the Grand River. Lizards of enormous size and disgusting appearance were piled in heaps where they were thrown by the eddying current. Rats, snakes, and every species of slimy, scaly monsters shared a common fate.