

DISCOURSE

By President George Q. Cannon, at the Quarterly Conference, Salt Lake City, Monday Afternoon, September 2nd, 1889.

This Conference has been a very interesting occasion, and I have no doubt but that everyone who has attended all the meetings has felt amply repaid for the time that has been spent. I suppose the most of us are very busy and could furnish excuses for not being present if we wished to do so. But I do not know any place where time could have been spent more profitably or to better advantage than attending this Conference. There is plenty of work for us all to do, but if we were to allow ourselves to be deterred from our duties or permit ourselves to be engrossed with worldly cares, there is no doubt we could justify ourselves to some extent in doing so. But would this be right? I have always felt (as soon as I reached an age to reflect upon this subject) that our spiritual natures require as much care as our physical natures need nourishment. I believe that we can starve our spirits, impoverish them, and dwarf ourselves by so doing. I have found in my own experience—although I have labored a good deal mentally—that by attending meeting regularly on the Sabbath day it has been a day of rest to me; yet many persons might be disposed to excuse themselves by saying that their brains were tired and going to meeting on Sunday only added to the weariness. I know by experience we can rest by attending meetings and partaking of the Spirit which generally prevails, and which should always prevail in our meetings. And I am sure from personal observation that men and women who do this prosper in their worldly circumstances, and get along just as well and better than those who think they cannot spare the time to worship God. You may notice it that men who work on the Sabbath day accomplish no more, and frequently not as much as those who confine their labor to the days appointed for labor. And such occasions as the present occur none too frequently to give us the opportunity of coming together and listening to the words of counsel and instruction imparted by the Spirit of the Lord unto us.

We need constant instruction, and I have wished since the Conference commenced that every Latter-day Saint in this Stake could have been present to hear the teachings that have been given. There have been many precious counsels given and many precious testimonies borne. I know it takes all my time and all my attention to keep myself straight, to keep myself in the condition I think I should be in, and indeed I am not satisfied even then—that is, with myself.

There are many things growing up among us that are contrary to the spirit of Zion; many things operating upon our people that call for grave thought and careful consideration. We are now, as has been the case with us from the beginning, passing through new

scenes, encountering new difficulties; and so much has this been the case that our lives as Latter-day Saints have possessed, it might be said, dramatic interest. Our history, as a Church, has been like a drama. No scenes acted upon the theatrical stage ever possessed more engrossing interest than have the scenes of our lives as Latter-day Saints. And there is a constant change of circumstances. We are environed by new difficulties, and it requires constant watchfulness on our part to avoid taking a wrong step or committing ourselves in some direction, that might be injurious to us. Therefore, God has ordained that there shall be Prophets and Apostles whose duty it is to guide and counsel, to instruct, to reprove when necessary, to warn; and great responsibility rests upon them in connection with these duties. I tremble at the very thought of it. I am filled with feelings that cause me to shrink when I think about the great responsibility that God has placed upon the leading Elders of this Church. The welfare, the future happiness and the prosperity of the people are to a great extent entrusted to those men who are called to be the shepherds of the flock of Christ. I often ask myself, how can I appear before the Lord Jesus, my Master, if He should call me to account for the charge that He has placed upon me: can I stand up and say I have not obstructed the work with which I am connected; I have not obscured the light of heaven; I have not acted in any way to divert the rays of truth from shining in the midst of the children of men—I ask myself, can I stand in this position and look upon the face of God without feeling condemned, and that my garments are unstained with the blood of this generation; that I have been a faithful minister of the Lord, a faithful shepherd of the flock of Christ, a watchman who has never slept at his post, who has never failed to utter the cry of warning when danger has menaced the Zion of God. This is a feeling it seems to me every man who bears the holy Priesthood ought to have. I say, every man, not any one class of men, but every man bearing the Priesthood of the Son of God in this Church, should feel that there is a responsibility resting upon him, and that perchance if he be not careful he may wake up in eternity and find himself under serious condemnation for having neglected to do his duty to his fellowman, and to magnify the holy Priesthood that God has placed upon him. It would be a dreadful thing, in my view, to be found with the blood of man staining our garments—that is, to feel that God had intrusted to us powers, and afforded us opportunities, and laid upon us responsibilities, and we had failed to discharge them honorably and faithfully in the interest of our fellowman.

We are at present in peculiar circumstances. I need not say to you, for you doubtless are familiar with the fact, that those who oppose us

expect in a very short time to gain a great victory over us; this, in fact, has been the expectation of our enemies from the beginning of this work. It is not a new thing for those who have opposed this work to anticipate a triumph over it, and to imagine that they had laid the plans and perfected the details for a victory, for the overthrow of the church and the destruction of the power of the Holy Priesthood. Already they are revelling over their expected triumph, revelling in the prospect of having us in their power—something they have labored for long and hard. Much depends upon us, brethren and sisters, whether this will be so or not. We hold, so to speak, our destiny in our own hands. If we are overcome we ourselves shall be to blame; the work that we are connected with cannot be charged with this. If defeat befall us and we are subjected to the power of our enemies, the cause of defeat will be found within ourselves, tracable to our own conduct, either through neglect to do that which we should have done, or doing that which we should not have done. This every one of you should take to heart. Trouble of any kind has never yet come upon us that was not traceable to ourselves. There never has been a people, I don't think, in any dispensation who have had the flood of light bestowed upon them that has been poured out upon us in this day. For forty years and upwards the voice of instruction has been heard in these valleys; the voices of inspired men teaching the people the principles of life and salvation have become familiar to us. Can you think of any people who have had such opportunities as we have had? Doubtless the Nephites had in some parts of their history. But there never was a more favored people than we. When I think of the mighty men that have stood in our midst, filled with the power of God—Prophets and Apostles, whom God chose and whom he honored, and upon whom He bestowed His gifts and graces; and how many of them have worn themselves out preaching to this people, entreating them in the most eloquent manner, adducing the greatest and strongest reasons that could appeal to our human natures, and revealing to us the mind and will of God, it does seem to me that a terrible responsibility rests upon us if we depart from the path which God has marked out. We can never say we have not been taught, that we have not had opportunities. We can never blame our Father for not imparting to us, in the utmost plainness, and through the demonstration of His Holy Spirit, His word and His counsel. President Young, while he lived, labored indefatigably to the utmost of his ability; never sparing himself, but constantly teaching the people, teaching them with his counsels, and giving them suggestions that are unequalled. I do not know such a record anywhere to be found as even the record of his discourses to this people; and then, think of President Taylor, and the others associated with Presi-