DISCOURSE

DELIVERED BY

PRESIDENT GEORGE Q. CANNON,

in Sunday, September 18th, 1892, in the Tabernacle, Salt Lake City.

REPORTED BY ARTHUR WINTER.

I will read a portion of the 8th chapter of the First Epistle of John:

"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits, whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus is come in the flesh is of God: and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world. Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world. They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error. Beloved let us love one another: for love is of God; and everyone that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another."

The Apostle says further:

"If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?"

In standing up to address you, I do so with a desire that I shall have the assistance of your faith and prayers, as we are often told, it is our privilege when we come together as we have done this afternoon to have the presence and the assistance of the Spirit of God, that the very things may be given unto us that are adapted to our various conditions and circumstances. I do not know your thoughts, nor your needs, nor the condition of your minds, nor your temptations or trials, but God knows them, and therefore it sets His servants, when they speak to the people, in the very spot He wants them to speak, if we will do as faith tells us we will do, if we will do as faith that He will give us that which shall be appropriate for the instruction and benefit of the people. Therefore, it is not necessary that we should prepare our discourses beforehand, because if we did that we would thwart the purpose of God and prevent the free flow of His Holy Spirit. We are commanded, however, to prepare upon the language His disciples, and he will give unto us at the very time that we need that which is adapted to the circumstances and conditions of the people; and we are also commanded not to speak unless we are moved upon by the Holy Ghost. It is a great responsibility to stand up as a servant of God, and speak in His name, and now minutely point them it. But when we speak against as we should do, then our souls are filled with light, and therefore some who have come to meeting in darkness feel as if they would go away without being satisfied.

There is a good quote expression by one when they hear the testimony of the servants of God, to know whether what which they testify is true or false. The Latter-day Saints have a very remarkable testimony when they address the world. They Elders who go forth to preach the Gospel offer a challenge which perhaps was never heard in the people to believe, and there is they frequently meet with great opposition. This is an age of religious liberty. There never was a time when there was more opposition which priest hath unto all degrees in every direction on the earth. We are the butts of all sorts of lies and slanders. We are the subjects of a very remarkable work. We are looked upon as a very remarkable people. We are supposed to be connected in the breasts of living men by ties, but only religious truths, but by ties of every character. We are looked upon as a very hard people, especially for the religious world, that God has again spoken from the heavens and revealed to the earth the everlasting Gospel, and that the miracles which are organized among us have departed, in many respects, from the sectarian pattern. This is an offense and pride of the world. They feel very much hurt at such revelations, and anger is aroused frequently in their minds because they believe and a great many believe that we are doing in a very progressive way to the full blaze of Gospel light. But there are certain principles in this that the statements which are held by the Latter-day Saints should be.

Take the inquiry when, How are we to know that that which you tell is true?

Some do not take the trouble to make such an inquiry as this, because they are with contempt the message that they have. They consider it unworthy of their attention. They look upon those who have made statements as a great crazy, and pass them up as unworthy of their notice. But there are those to whom this inquiry is, "All this be true, how are we to know it?"

All the churches that are now organized profess that they are true. Each one claims to be the Church of Christ, and its ministers claim to be the servants of Christ. They claim that by entering their church by a great many means salvation may be secured. And the effort is to make everyone believe this, and to put aside all doubts concerning the efficacy of the plan of salvation as they teach it. We have in this city at the present time—I did not intend to allude to this in the commencement, but it seems to mind as appropriate—meetings to which the public are invited, and they are appealed to to further and to turn to godliness, and to be saved, so I understand, which seems they wish to follow. The idea is thus presented to the necessity of coming up and becoming religious. Now, according to our view, this is a wrong. There can be but one plan of Christ. There can be but one plan of salvation. As Paul expressed it, "One Lord, one faith, one baptism." not many Lords, not many faiths, not many forms of baptism. If we had the truth as it is from Heaven there would be but one plan of salvation, and but one plan of baptism, and but one plan of life for men and women would be required to walk in order to obtain salvation and the glory which is the eternal reward and narrow path. That was the path to which He expected His followers would adhere. I may have the authority to point out different and different paths, and to place different plans and different ordinances, and to make different requirements to the children of men in order that they may be disciples of Christ, then there is something needed to authenticate these statements to be found in the bible. Certainly, the Bible, which is the Word of God, then is warrant any such thing, and I believe Christians generally speaking, if they have any revelation from God since the Bible was finished, or since the writers of the different books in the Bible have passed away.

I believe sincerely the design of our Lord in revealing the plan of salvation and in commanding His servants to go forth and proclaim it, I believe that our Lord intended that there should be but one character of baptism. It would seem the character of our God into a certain degree, I might say, of contempt if He were to leave so important a matter as the authority of His children to the judgment and imagination of men; if He were to have men to say the ministers is needful and this doctrine is necessary, but that is not, or that the son shall have salvation, or you need not do any thing, for it is not necessary to salvation. If it was necessary in the days of Jesus and His Apostles that men should believe in Jesus and repent of their sins, it is necessary today; and no human judgment, or no human opinion can do away with that necessity. God is the being to grant salvation, and He is the being to withhold salvation, and He is the being to place the terms upon which salvation shall be obtained. Therefore, as God did establish in Jesus's doctrine that was necessary for men to do, it is still necessary. Though ages may have passed, this has not changed. It cannot be changed. It takes a mighty power to make little alterations in a God eighteen hundred years ago. There may be any amount of enlightenment, of wisdom and of knowledge, but the power of God may be, it does not affect in the slightest degree the principle that men must believe in Jesus as the foundation of their faith and of their salvation. They must also repent of their sins. Especially, no human wisdom, no human knowledge can remove from the plan of salvation the necessity of the repentance of sin for the Gospel of Jesus Christ demands absolutely that sin must be forsaken, and in order for it to be forsaken it must be repented of. Therefore, if men say that you can be saved without faith and without repentance, or if the whole world should say that you can be saved in the least degree the salvation of men? Would God be saved towards the whole world and they would be lost? Would God be saved? Certainly not. God, who grants salvation, and who is the Author of salvation, has laid down these principles in His Gospel as essential to salvation.

I believe, however, that Christendom generally admits that faith in Jesus and repentance of sin are essential. But there are Christians who are in large millions of professed believers in Jesus who say that anything beyond that is unnecessary to salvation. Of course, there are differences of opinion among these mothers. Still, there are many who pronounce other things unnecessary.

But the Gospel of Jesus not only begins with faith in the Lord and repentance of sin, but they said that it was necessary for men to be baptized. I have only alluded to this case to show the importance some of the Apostles thought this ordinance to be. You remember the visit of Peter to Cornelius, the Gentile, and the miraculous manifestations which Peter was led to come with this request which Cornelius had sent to him. It was contrary to the custom of the Jews and sometimes of a very important thing for an orthodox Jew to associate with Gentiles. But Peter, having received a vision in which he was shown that he should not call anything unclean which the Lord had made clean, complied with the request that was sent to him, and went with the messengers to the house of Cornelius. Cornelius and his household, under the preaching of Peter, received the Holy Ghost, and Peter and his companions were compelled to admit that the Gentiles had received the Holy Ghost as well as the Jews, and after he witnessed this remarkable and unexpected manifestation, he said in a very important way, "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?"

Now, if there was such a marked manifestation was witnessed in our day, and by some who call themselves ministers of Christ, according to their benchings they would have said it was entirely unnecessary to use water, or to have the ordinance of baptism administered unto these people, because they had received the Holy Ghost, and that was all sufficient. The very thing that Peter offered as a reason why they should not be baptized, some modern ministers as a reason why they should not be baptized. It is evident from this that the great Apostle who he companions demand the continuance of baptism essential, even though the persons had received the Holy Ghost. If he had not taken this view of this ordinance he would not have required Cornelius and his household to be baptized. But he considered it necessary, and he baptized them.

Suppose a number of ministers, calling themselves servants of Jesus Christ, should say to their fellow men, "We consider faith in Jesus and repentance of sins essential to salvation, but we do not believe baptism essential to salvation; people can be baptized if they wish, but there is no particular advantage in it." If you will only come to the cross and cast your sins at the foot of the cross, they will be washed away by the blood of Jesus, and therefore the ordinance of baptism is not essential." Would that division of theirs change the plan of salvation framed in heaven and taught by the Son of God? Can mortal men prescribe the terms upon which mankind shall be saved and depart from those required by the Lord?

There are many, however, who have done this and who teach the people in something like the language I have quoted, while others say, "Yes, it is needful to be baptized, but what way do you wish to be baptized? Would you like to be sprinkled, would you like to have water poured upon your head? Would you like being immersed?" I have heard it stated that there are many ministers who refer to the converts their choice as to the manner of their baptism. This is not the way God intended, according to the scriptures. This is not the plan of salvation as taught by Heavenly Messengers. There was but one form of baptism, and that was not sprinkling, Jesus, the greatest Being that ever lived upon the earth, is being without sin, went into Jordan to be baptized. But John did not say to Him, How will you be baptized, my Lord Shall I sprinkle you, or pour water upon your head? Shall I immerse you? Jesus did not propound any such question to the Baptist. Neither did the Baptist suggest any such ceremonies as these. But He came to be baptized, and John, realizing his own unworthiness to perform that sacred ordinance on behalf of the Son of God, said, "I have need to be baptized of Thee, and comest Thou to me?" "Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness." Thus was the Saviour's expression. He looked upon it as essential that there was any being that was ever born on the earth that could have dispensed with the holy ordinance, and even Jesus Himself was the Redeemer of the world. But He "obeyed Himself" was example to all the sons of men offered Himself as a candidate for the holy ordinance to a man to whom God had given the authority to baptize. John had received that priesthood from the hands of a man who was in possession of the administration and in administration he recognized by God the Eternal Father. Therefore, Jesus submitted to the ordinance, and, notwithstanding the fact of men that should follow afterwards that it was an ordinance essential to salvation. His disciples taught the same doctrine, and administered the same ordinance unto all who received the Gospel and were willing to enter into the Church of Christ.

After this there was another ordinance that they looked upon as essential in those days. You remember that one of the disciples went to Samaria, and he preached the Gospel there, and it seems that he had authority to baptize, for he baptized the converts; but for some reason he did not administer the ordinance of John the Baptist did not either. He said: "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire." When the Apostles heard that Samaria had received the word, they sent two of the Apostles there, who, when they came to Samaria, and met with the men and women who had been baptized, laid their hands upon them and they received the Holy Ghost. This was an ordinance in the ancient Church, and it was considered essential to salvation by the Apostles, for if they had not so considered it, they certainly would not have put the Apostles to the trouble of going down to visit the Saints and administer that ordinance to them.

So that we have here, not only faith, not only repentance, but we have baptism, and we have laying on of hands, as ordinances in the Church of Christ.

Now, let me ask this of all of you. How can it be expected that where a succession of generations has made these important ordinances by which they are not essential to salvation, that the spirit and power and blessing of God will rest upon them? It cannot be so that any one who would reflect upon this subject would believe. But there are thousands and millions of professed believers in Jesus who say that anything beyond that is unessential to salvation. Of course, there are differences of opinion among these mothers. Still, there are many who pronounce other things unnecessary.

But the Gospel of Jesus not only begins with faith in the Lord and repentance of sin, but they said that it was necessary for men to be baptized. I have only alluded to this case to show the importance some of the Apostles thought this ordinance to be. You remember the visit of Peter to Cornelius, the Gentile, and the miraculous manifestations which Peter was led to come with this request which Cornelius had sent to him. It was contrary to the custom of the Jews and sometimes of a very important thing for an orthodox Jew to associate with Gentiles. But Peter, having received a vision in which he was shown that he should not call anything unclean which the Lord had made clean, complied with the request that was sent to him, and went with the messengers to the house of Cornelius. Cornelius and his household, under the preaching of Peter, received the Holy Ghost, and Peter and his companions were compelled to admit that the Gentiles had received the Holy Ghost as well as the Jews, and after he witnessed this remarkable and unexpected manifestation, he said in a very important way, "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?"

Now, if there was such a marked manifestation was witnessed in our day, and by some who call themselves ministers of Christ, according to their benchings they would have said it was entirely unnecessary to use water, or to have the ordinance of baptism administered unto these people, because they had received the Holy Ghost, and that was all sufficient. The very thing that Peter offered as a reason why they should not be baptized, some modern ministers as a reason why they should not be baptized. It is evident from this that the great Apostle who he companions demand the continuance of baptism essential, even though the persons had received the Holy Ghost. If he had not taken this view of this ordinance he would not have required Cornelius and his household to be baptized. But he considered it necessary, and he baptized them.

Suppose a number of ministers, calling themselves servants of Jesus Christ, should say to their fellow men, "We consider faith in Jesus and repentance of sins essential to salvation, but we do not believe baptism essential to salvation; people can be baptized if they wish, but there is no particular advantage in it." If you will only come to the cross and cast your sins at the foot of the cross, they will be washed away by the blood of Jesus, and therefore the ordinance of baptism is not essential." Would that division of theirs change the plan of salvation framed in heaven and taught by the Son of God? Can mortal men prescribe the terms upon which mankind shall be saved and depart from those required by the Lord?

There are many, however, who have done this and who teach the people in something like the language I have quoted, while others say, "Yes, it is needful to be baptized, but what way do you wish to be baptized? Would you like to be sprinkled, would you like to have water poured upon your head? Would you like being immersed?" I have heard it stated that there are many ministers who refer to the converts their choice as to the manner of their baptism. This is not the way God intended, according to the scriptures. This is not the plan of salvation as taught by Heavenly Messengers. There was but one form of baptism, and that was not sprinkling.