

THE DESERET WEEKLY.

Truth and Liberty.

No. 22.

SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH, MAY 14, 1898.

VOL. LVII.

DISCOURSE

Delivered at the Sixty-Eighth Annual Conference, in the Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, Utah, Thursday Afternoon, April 7th, 1898, by

PRESIDENT WILFORD WOODRUFF.

[At President Woodruff's request, President Cannon read the 1st Section of the Book of Doctrine and Covenants.]

I want the attention and the prayers of the Saints who have assembled upon this occasion. I have been sick and very weak in my body for a month past, and did not feel that I would be able to attend this Conference till the day before it opened. I have been blessed in this respect to be with you. I desire to say some things to you, and perhaps some strange things, too. I feel disposed to say something about myself, to give you a little of the history of my life, because of what I may want to say, before I get through, to the rising generation of Israel. My remarks may be very eccentric to any but Latter-day Saints, and to them also, I expect.

I suppose when I was born the devil knew what I should be called to do; for there has been from the day I was born until the present two powers with me—one to kill me, the other to save me. I stand before you today a pretty sound-looking, for a man ninety-one years of age. I stand before you with a body in which almost every bone has been broken except my back and neck. I have had through my life a power after me to take my life. When I was about three years old I was pushed into a caldron of boiling water, which had just been taken off the fire. My grandmother took me out, and my skin all dropped off excepting off my head and feet. I was wrapped up for months in cotton and oil. That was the beginning of my troubles. When I was twelve years of age I was drowned; at any rate, I lay in thirty feet of water long enough to drown anyone. After several unsuccessful attempts, I was brought up out of the water. This was under the Farmington mill dam. I was just as dead as I shall be thirty years hence. I lay on my back and saw the sun go out, and passed through all the sensations of death that any man would in drowning. After an hour's labor, I was brought around to life again. I shall not go into the particulars of many of these things, but I have passed through what may be termed death a number of times in my life. When I was 15 years old I was in one of those Connecticut blizzards. I walked four miles through a wood into the open country, and I sought some place where I could hide from the storm and rest. There was but one house within a mile of me—that was the poor house, which was about twenty-five rods away. The man was moved upon to go up in his garret to get some pennyroyal to give to a sick woman, and he felt led to look out of the window. He saw me crawling into the

hollow of a big tree. He knew what the result of that would be better than I did. He took his horse and sleigh and came to me, and when he got there I was asleep, and he preserved my life. When I was 14 years old I was bit by a mad dog, and ought to have died; but I did not. So I continued on, until I can say that I have broken both of my legs, one twice; broken both of my arms, breast bone, several ribs, and altogether been through a pretty hard experience for a man who had to be called to preach the Gospel, at least. I was a miller by trade. I have been in two water wheels under full head of water, and I suppose I ought to have been killed in either of them, but I was not hurt.

That preserving power has followed me all the way through my life. It has been with me upon my missions abroad as well as at home. It has followed me until the present day, and I have been placed in a great many strange places.

I was ordained to dedicate this Salt Lake Temple fifty years before it was dedicated. I knew I should live to dedicate that Temple. I did live to do it. I had a great desire in my boyhood to receive the Gospel of Christ, to see a prophet or somebody that could teach me the Gospel of Christ as taught by the ancient Apostles and as I read of in the New Testament. I desired this with every sentiment of my heart, and on the first Gospel sermon I ever heard I was baptized, with my oldest brother. I immediately went to Kirtland. I was in Zion's Camp with the Prophet of God. I saw the dealings of God with him. I saw the power of God with him. I saw that he was a Prophet. What was manifest to him by the power of God upon that mission was of great value to me and to all who received his instructions. I will refer to one instance. A short time before we landed in Missouri Joseph called the camp together. He there prophesied unto us, and told us what lay before us. He gave us the reason why chastisement was before us. He says: "You consider me a boy with the rest of you. You have not realized my position before the Lord. But there is a chastisement before this camp." He told us that this would come upon us because he had not been obeyed in his counsels. In one hour after we landed in Missouri and pitched our tents at Mr. Burkett's, one man began to fall here, another there, and in a few moments we had a dozen of our camp stretched upon blankets with the cholera. The Prophet of God, when he saw this, felt to sympathize with them, and he and Hyrum laid their hands upon Brother Carter, the first man that was taken sick, but as soon as they did it they were seized themselves, and they both had to leave the camp. He said afterwards: "I told you what was coming to pass, and when affliction came I stretched out my hand to stay it, and I came very near falling by it myself." That mission was very interesting to me.

I want to say here that in all my life since joining this Church and kingdom, notwithstanding these powers that have been with me to kill me, I have always had the revelations of God with me. That is something I want to talk about to Israel before I get through. The power of God has told me what to do and what not to do. While the devil has had power to afflict my body very seriously, there has been a power with me that has saved me through it all. And, whenever I have had the Holy Spirit with me to tell me what to do, I have had to do that. By that I have been saved. By listening to that still small voice I am here today with you. There are two reasons why I am here today. When I went back after the pioneer journey, President Young said he wanted me to take my family and go to Boston, and stay there till I could gather all the Saints of God in New England and Canada and bring them to Zion. That was the mission he gave me on my return from the pioneer journey to Winter Quarters. I went in the spring, as he told me, and took my family. We came one evening to one of the brethren's houses in Indiana. Several of us were there. Orson Hyde had a team as well as myself. We drove into a long yard. I set my carriage within six inches of his. I had my wife and children with me. I tied my animals to an oak tree on the other side of where we camped. I went to bed in my carriage. As I laid down, the Spirit of the Lord told me to get up and move my carriage. I did not ask the Lord what He meant. I did as I was told. The same Spirit told me to go and move my animals away from that tree. I did that. My wife asked me why I did it. I told her I did not know. I had not been in bed twenty minutes when there came a whirlwind and took that oak tree, which had stood there perhaps fifty years, split it right through the trunk, and it swept through both of those fences where my carriage had stood. It never touched Brother Hyde's carriage, but it would have crushed me and my family to the earth if I had not listened to the voice of the Spirit. After spending two years and a half in New England and Canada, getting the Saints out, I started back with the last lot, about a hundred, from Boston. We landed in Pittsburg at dusk. We were anxious not to stay there, but to go on to St. Louis. I saw a steamer making steam ready to go out. I went to the captain and asked him how many passengers he had. "Three hundred and fifty." "Could you take another hundred?" "Yes." I was just about to tell him we wanted to go aboard when that Spirit said to me, "Don't go aboard that steamer, you nor your company." All right, said I. I had learned something about that still, small voice. I did not go aboard that steamer, but waited till the next morning. In thirty minutes after that steamer left, it took fire. It had ropes instead of wheel chains, and they could