DISCOURSE

DELIVERED BY

PRESIDENT GEORGE Q. CANNON,

At the Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, Sunday, August 6, 1893.

[REPORTED BY ARTHUR WEBBER.]

In standing up before you this afternoon, my brethren and sisters, I desire an interest in your faith and prayers, that my mind may be directed to those subjects that will be of the greatest profit to us; for I do not want to stand here and speak my own thoughts, nor to say those things that I may think proper; I would rather the Lord would dictate that which shall be said. To this end I desire His Holy Spirit. How do I know what you need? How do I know the yearnings of your souls, or that which will satisfy you and cause you to leave this meeting thanking the Lord for that which He has given? I do not know, nor does any human being but the Lord know, and I have never yet attended a meeting, when we have sought for the Spirit of God, that we have not gone from that meeting rejoicing in that Spirit and in the testimony of the truth. This is the beauty of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. It feeds those who hunger after righteousness, it dispels darkness, it gives light, it imparts comfort and consolation, it lifts the soul, and lightens the burdens which rest upon the children of men.

The experience that we have had, as individuals and as a people, has been most remarkable. There are men in this congregation who have traveled thousands of miles to preach the Gospel of the Son of God as the ancient Apostles did—that is, without purse or scrip. They have traversed sea and land; they have labored in the cause of God efficiently and been the means of bringing hundreds and scores and even thousands, of souls to the knowledge of the truth. They have gone out into an unfriendly and uncharitable world, where they have had but little or no sympathy, where all the religious world has been arrayed against them; and yet they have wrought great good, they have won souls, they have returned rejoicing, even as the Apostles of old did, when they came back and told the Master that even devils were subject unto them. No other people that I know anything about have had such an experience. Men have gone forth trembling, because of their weakness. They did not know when they went out how they would succeed. But when they wanted clothing, God put it into the hearts of men to give it to them; when they wanted money, there were those raised up to furnish it. They did not have to go naked; they did not have to go without food; neither did they have to go hungry. I myself have been in this condition, as well as hundreds doubtless who are here today. I have had brethren meet with whom I labored, "What in the world are you going to do, your clothing is nearly gone; you must have some clothing, and where shall we get it?" They did not know; I did not know. But I can bear testimony today, in the midst of this congregation, that during many years' labor in the ministry, without purse and scrip, I never went hungry, I never went destitute of clothing. I never had to go without shelter; when I needed money it was given to me, and I never yet in my life asked a congregation or an individual for any of these things, except to ask at a house, perhaps if I could stay there over night.

On one occasion, in the Sandwich Islands, I went over from the town where I was living to Waioha, where Brother Francis A. Hammond (who now presides over the Swan Island mission) and his wife were living, and I stayed with them over night. We were destitute of garments, and we did not know what to do about it. Money then in that country was exceedingly valuable. Why, they would have thousands over dollars for a chicken, and it seemed impossible to obtain money to supply our wants. We knelt down in the morning and asked the Lord to open the way. Brother Hammond and I started to go to a branch about twenty miles distant. On our way through the hills we met a man who had been up to the place where I lived to get a Presbyterian preacher to come down and perform a marriage ceremony; but the minister was gone, and he asked me if I would go with him and marry the couple. We went with him. It was a Canadian half-breed that desired to be married to one of the native women, and after the ceremony was performed and we gave them some instruction, he gave us five dollars. That five dollars was as large an amount as five hundred dollars would be under some circumstances. If it had dropped out of the heavens it might not have been more welcomed than it was. And it was where the purse, and the Lord put it in the way. The Presbyterian minister lost the five dollars by being absent; but I expect he could spare it better than we could.

This is only a single incident, but I could stand here and relate hundreds of similar incidents, how the Lord opened the way before His Elders. I was sent on a mission to California. I had translated the Book of Mormon in the Hawaiian language, and we had succeeded, by borrowing money, in procuring a press and type and paper with which to publish it. Our agent had bought it and sent it to the Islands while I returned home; but when it had reached the Islands, Brother Parley P. Pratt, who was in California, called to have the press and type and paper sent over to San Francisco or his use, and he built a printing for a paper called the *Mormon Herald*, and sent for me to join Pratt, saying that I should be sent to assist in its labor. I had only been home a few weeks after an absence of five years. President Young told me that he thought I had earned my rest; and he and twelve others were selected to go along as Elders and help in the work. We reached San Francisco on Friday, with our means almost exhausted, and to our surprise we learned that Brother Pratt had started home. I followed him to his ranch, and found that everything had closed up in San Francisco. There had been an attempt made to buy a vessel in order to bring the saints from the Sandwich Islands to this country, and a good many saints had invested their means in this. Some copies had got possession of the vessel by giving a bottomry bond for it, after which they took it down on the coast of South America and had it wrecked. The people lost their money, and it discouraged everyone. Brother Pratt said he earnestly knew where I could count on a meal of victuals in San Francisco; the people left so badly. I was a comparative youth at the time, and it was quite discouraging. One of the leading men of the church in San Francisco said, "If you have got a thousand dollars, you can start the press here." I told him I had not a thousand dollars, but the Lord had sent me and I was going to do what I had been sent to do. The result was the Lord opened the way wonderfully. Money increased in our hands. A twenty-dollar gold piece would go as far, it seemed to me, as a hundred dollars would under other circumstances. Everything worked to the accomplishment of that which had been designed. Two thousand copies of the Book of Mormon were published, bound and sent to the Islands, which islands—at least the greater portion of them, and a paper was published, churches were raised up, organized and were organized, and a great work was done. The Lord raised up friends and put money into the hands of the Elders, and that which seemed so dark and impenetrable was changed, and the Lord's blessing rested upon the efforts that were made. This was all done without purse and scrip. Of course, money was furnished; but the Lord did it, men simply being His agents.

So it has been all through the history of God's people. The saints of the Elders of the Church have been of such a character as to inspire them with the greatest of faith and confidence in God. When He wants a work done, there is nothing that can prevent its accomplishment, if the men that attempt it will only have faith. See how this was illustrated to the men of the sons of Lehi. Lehi was impressed of the Lord to send his sons back to Jerusalem for the brass plates that were in the possession of a man who belonged to an other branch of the family, "Laban by name. The Lord had a work in Lehi that if he were to go into the wilderness and across the ocean to the land which He had promised to him and his children without some kind of record, there would be danger of their falling into idolatry and of bringing hard lines and trouble upon the posterity of Lehi. Therefore, it was necessary, to the mind of the Lord, that these records should be obtained from Laban. Lehi went to his elder sons and explained to them the necessity of the case, and he was so impressed with the spirit of Jerusalem and get the plates from Laban. But they had no faith. They said Laban would kill them. He was a man of influence and power, and it was no use for them to go back. They thought it was a shame that he should take their property, but he would not listen to it, and in fact his servants chased them away, and the two elder brothers looked upon this as a confirmation of their fears, and became their brothers were not of their opinion they beat them with a rod. But Nephi determined to do the thing that God required, believing with all his heart that God would ask nothing of him that He would not assist him to doing. He went forth again and obtained the plates, and they were the means of saving that people and their descendants from the evils.

This is a striking illustration of what can be done. It was the sons, brethren and sisters, in coming to this land. There were doubters who said, "You cannot go into the wilderness and live." Why, they said, "the Rocky Mountains you will fail." But the servants of God did not have these fears. President Young was moved upon by the Spirit of God to take a certain course, and most of his brethren were carried away by the faithfulness of the Twelve. But there were some of the Twelve that did not see as he did. Lyman Wight and James E. Page did not want to go, and did not go; but the rest of the Twelve were one in President Young. He said the Lord had revealed to him the course to be pursued, and he led the people forth. They were penniless and destitute of almost everything necessary to make such a tremendous journey. Why, as we passed through Iowa the people had to sell their farm tools, and afterwards everything they had that could be sold to get provisions. If we had looked at this naturally, men would have said, "This man is leading this people to destruction. What have they got to sustain them. They are going forth into an unknown land, and who knows when they get to any place that they are going for that they can live? If we may so say, they were just as ignorant as this people are of the future, because no one knew anything about this country, comparatively speaking. A few men had crossed it, but they knew nothing about the climate, of whether the soil was capable of producing food or not. Few men had lived here and had lived like Indians; they had hunted and trapped and lived on game, and a little corn, where the Indians could raise a little along the streams.

How was it in Winter Quarters? The people suffering from exposure. I remember myself, when a boy, going day after day for my mother's family to Brother John Van Cott's, and wanting to my turn at his big coffee mill; grind a little corn that we might get, like the rest of the people, food and eat it, and not to send home to Sister Young a little corn, and live in the poorest and most humble manner, and enough scarcely to eat. But the Spirit of God rested upon the people, and they were cheerful. They had a testimony from the Lord that that which they were doing was right, and that it was the Lord's will that they should do it. Then, as I have said, we started across the plains from Winter Quarters, traveling without knowing the point of destination. Of course, it was thought we should go to Upper California, for all this country was then called Upper California. The family of President Young's father had settled in Sonora, and Mexico owned this country. But Upper California was a conquered country. It was known we were going to the Rocky Mountains; but where is the Rocky Mountains? What could we do when we came, and if there we should find a suitable place or not, was a mere matter of faith; there was no knowledge on the subject.

But the Lord led these people forth. He led them when they were hungry. He furnished them meat. I never heard of one starving to death. We were pinched for hunger, and many were afraid of the Indians, and we were in the exposure and trouble that they had to endure; but the bulk of the people were sustained by the power of God. Their faith was rewarded, for the Lord blessed them; and though they had but little to eat and little to wear, they could rejoice continually in the blessing and favor of God and the knowledge that He was their friend. So happy people ever lived then, are none, that those who lived here the first two years that we came into this valley—from fall to 1849—when the people were deprived of almost all the comforts of life and suffered indescribable privations and hardships. They were happy because the peace of God rested upon them, and they were strengthened and lifted up in the midst of their trials and difficulties.

It has been so throughout the history of the Church. It was so in the early days, when the people were driven out of Missouri, after suffering the persecutions that they had endured there. They did not lose their faith. They knew that God had led them to Missouri, and they knew that God had organized His Church, and that He had restored the Gospel of the Son of God and the everlasting Priesthood. That testimony was a living and burning testimony in the heart of every faithful man and woman. Persecution, trial, hardship, could not extinguish it; nothing but death could destroy it in the breasts of the faithful saints. So it has been from that day until the present.

As I have said, the experience of this people is different from that of any other people upon the face of the earth that I know anything about. We have proved God. We know He lives. We know that He will feed us, that He will clothe us, that He will shelter us. We know that He watches over us. We know that He angels are round about us, and that nothing occurs but in His providence, if we do right, will be controlled for our good and for our eternal salvation. He will let no evil succeed upon us without giving us strength and grace to endure it, if we will live so as to obtain it. This is His promise to us. And God is bound inviolably by His covenant to us. Are I never in saying, that I hope and I do not say it in the spirit of doubt, but that it is a fact. When we went forth into the waters of baptism and covenanted with our Father in heaven to serve Him and keep His commandments, He bound Himself to bless us in the midst of trials and hardships, when everything was arrayed against us, He would be near unto us and would assist us. That was His covenant, and He has amply fulfilled it up to the present time, and has shown that we can be in the promises that He has made. We have proved these things through experience. When a man goes out on a mission and knows that God hears his prayer; when he wants a pair of shoes and he gets the shoes; when he wants a coat and he gets the coat; when he wants a hat and gets the hat; when he wants shelter and someone kindly gives him shelter, and when these things are taken up to him, can that man doubt after that? Can he fear after that? Why, his faith is built upon a rock, and he knows that God will hear and answer him if he will do right. He knows that God is his friend, and that He cannot forget him.

Now, here is a combination of people of this kind. This Church is composed of this element. Our little children know this. They grow up in that atmosphere of faith. They know that the Lord hears their prayers. One of my little boys had lost something one day, and he wanted to find it, as it was something he was very desirous not to lose. After searching for some time and not finding it, it occurred to him that he might ask the Lord; and he knelt down by himself and asked the Lord to help him find that article. He got up from his knees and not a minute passed before he found it yet he had searched before in vain. Now, that was the natural impulse of that child, because he had been told that God would hear and answer prayer. Our children have this faith, and grow up to it. Of course, there are some who lose this faith, either through their own carelessness or the neglect of their parents; but the bulk of them have the spirit of faith.

We are passing through difficulties at the present time. We have heard a great deal said about famine. We have not talked so much about it of late; but for very many years the Elders of the Church spoke about famines that were coming. Now we have a famine of money. I am thankful that the famine of money has come before the famine for food. I do not want to see this people pinched for food. I would rather that we should take to heart the counsels we have received concerning these matters. Some have stored up food, and because the famine has not come they have settled down to the feeling that there will be no famine and they need not store any more food. But a famine is coming, and it may be as unlikely as this famine for money has. It has come in waves, unexpected, almost sweeping over this entire nation, causing indescribable trouble, paralyzing every business enterprise, apparently. I trust the Lord that it is not a judgment upon us. It may be a season in us to prepare for that which may come after. The Lord has only to let loose the grasshoppers throughout this country and we should soon have a famine for food. Many may think this will never come; but it is folly to talk about a famine in this land. But a member of Congress, who had devoted a great deal of time to investigating that subject, was footsteps upon us in this land, and he found the evidence was clear and indisputable that there had been times when all the vegetation of the Mississippi valley had been devoured by insects or grasshoppers, and that several families had been the result, with great destitution and misery. When I heard this it strengthened me of the prophecies that had been made in our day concerning the famine that would come. If grasshoppers were let loose, they could soon spoil the prospects for crops in those regions where land has hitherto been so productive. But whether this shall come or not, I think it is wise precaution for the Latter-day Saints to store a year or two's food ahead on hand.

In our present circumstances, when so many men are deprived of employment, we should be filled with sympathy for our brethren who are without work, and not allow them or their families to be hungry or destitute; but if they will work, we can give them food for work, and not let our stores be filled with the unemployed, wasting the necessities of life. It seems as though we shall have to return to the primitive ways, and that the lesson that have been imparted unto us by the Presidency and Elders of the Church in years that are past are going to be required to be put into practical operation. Home manufactures have been dwelt upon until our ears have become almost sick to the tire; but now we can begin to feel the value practically of home manufactures. President Woodruff was impressed that something should be done toward the manufacture of sugar. Some of the Twelve were doubtful about its success. We met together, we prayed and sought to know the mind of the Lord about it, and the Lord revealed to great satisfaction that it was our duty to go in the Lutersday Saints "Go to work and build up a sugar factory, and seek to produce sugar in this land." Some of us have been carrying a heavy responsibility ever since, looking to work out the mind and will of that earthly sort. But now many Latter-day Saints are there who have felt to contain the hands of the authorities of the Church in trying to urge this forward. We have been opposed, as it were, and left to stand by ourselves. We have been broken upon as unmerciful speculators enterprises that would encourage the people. Home to put money in works that are useful. Where are we? Where are we? We are there and are compelled in a measure to call back upon those manufactures. How are we going to live if money is not all? We have been depending upon everything. Everybody that wanted work wanted work, and we have become so used to it that it seems as if we cannot live without it. Now the prospect before us is that the mission which promoted the establishment of the sugar factory may be frustrated. We cannot see what the obstacle may be between this and the harvest, but the prospect is that a quarter or a million of money will be kept in this country that would have gone out and bought foreign sugar. In other words, this season's run at the sugar factory is likely to be worth two hundred and fifty thousand dollars at the very least, according to present calculation. Two hundred and fifty thousand dollars will get men for them. They cannot sell their wheat, potatoes, they cannot sell anything scarcely that they produce but the best or, if it should be a success, can be sold, and if so, consumption for the sugar will be made of the raw material. This is given to women and children, and to home, in this business. See the men that it requires to convert the beets into sugar. Well, who has seen that? Why I can make sugar myself. I can do it. I can do it for my household. The sugar factory won't pay 10 per cent, in fact, may not pay at all. I want my money in a bank, or to use it in other ways. Will give me at least ten per cent? That is the spirit of the world. Wisdom that God has given has not been listened to. Wisdom has cried aloud in the streets, and her counsel has been unheeded.

But the Lord will call a halt. He will put at His people to foolish things and continue to do them. We have all been among them. I confess this day in this congregation that I have, for one. Still, I have been doing the very best I could, it seemed to me; but now I can see many mistakes. Can not you, too, see your mistakes? I think you can. At any rate, I am willing to confess that I am a fallible man. But if I have done wrong—and I know I have—I try to repent of it, and beseech God, in humility, to forgive it. I ask Him to forgive His people, and not let disaster come upon them. I pay for this with all my heart, and I know there are many who do so. We do not want disaster to come upon the people—the flock which God has gathered together, and of which He has made us the shepherds. It is an awful responsibility, and it makes me shrink and feel as though I was kneeling before the Lord or before the people, but it is our duty to cry about into the people and entreat them to listen to the voice of the Spirit of God, and if we will do so, we will be led through our difficulties.

In all my conversations in the East—and I have had a great many with leading men of both parties—I have never failed to elicit the impression that in the mountains there was a conservative element that could be relied upon in the days of trouble. They would not organize into mobs, they would not raise riots, they would not do any of those things that the fanciful ideas which find circulation from time to time throughout the country, but in days when other people would be speaking and thundering, and perhaps breaking forth in riot, they calm be relied upon as conservative and stable. I have endeavored to create this impression, and with some degree of success. I have also called attention to the fact that we were a people who were true to our engagements; that when we entered into an obligation that obligation would be maintained, and that our country was not plastered with mortgages, as many parts of the land were. Therefore, our people were not disposed to run after every will-o'-the-wisp. I am thankful that this has been sustained by the testimony of the people. I am proud of the Latter-day Saints so far; and if we will pursue a quiet, conservative course, and not be carried away by fear, we will establish a name for ourselves that will in the future redound to the benefit of the people of this Territory. I hope the Latter-day Saints will do this. I hope we will exercise the wisdom that we are capable of exercising in accordance with our Father in heaven. I can truthfully say that I have no hard feeling for brethren in all this, although I have objections and only responsibilities weight upon me that I feel to be kindness to them. I do not desire them to suffer, and I have not felt to do them. I would, however, do so the best I can to prevent my children. I have remarked to my counselors that when I came out of the Penitentiary I was as innocent as a babe out of which I had only been in the day time before. I had never seen a hundred dollars in my life, and I was not in debt. My family took to washing and ironing, and I took to shearing, which was my business. I have been in it for a good deal for the Church in performing missions, but they were paid debts and have been attended to. I have had a horror of being in debt—the mortgages sometimes place upon men in public positions to another responsibility.

Let us, brethren and sisters, profit by this experience that we are now getting through, and let us seek to live according to the counsels that have been so plainly and powerfully given, and we will be the favorite of God from the beginning. Where we have gone wrong of late months, let us repent of it. Let us teach our families economy. There is an extravagance in our method of living that I feel to say to my own family should be repaired of. We can bring in a lawful, careless way, because purchased on former situations. I have seen the day and many of you have—when water was more precious than and in this town. I remember in the going to Bishop Leonard W. Hardy and asking him to let me have ten pounds of sugar or ten dollars. I saw the other day some of my children, who was about to eat some crushed wheat, put as much sugar in his little bowl as he had crushed wheat. I thought to myself, how different this is! I made it a text afterwards to talk to the folks, and to ask them whether they let little children do as they pleased. That is not the way to bring up children. They should not be allowed to bring themselves to everything and to have home. But we fall into these ways. It is not an uncommon thing to see people who cannot afford it go to the butcher shop and get tenderloins or particular steak, paying the highest price for meat, and living in a way that is not least impudence. Many of us have fallen into ways of this kind. Now is a good time to reflect, to call to mind the lessons of the past, the privations we have gone through, and we thankful we were for a little of what people were wont to use, in some instances, as worthless food. We have seasons of the abundance, we have ceased to value. I remember myself, when we came here, paying to grind a little unknown sort of corn shake. It was very rare food, I was fond of it, but it was wearisome and it helped us. Then some made sweetening out of watermelons, and out of other products. We were glad to get anything of all to those days. It affected good. I know in the spring, when I was a boy, my stomach went thistle tops. I used to eat them. We were allowed with a little salt a little boiling off thistle tops, and they were the sweetest greens I ever ate. I have often reminded to my family that I wished I could get a mess of them now, to see whether they tasted as they did then. It was a delicacy to me.

I mention these things to show the blessings that God has given us. We have in fact this to the acquisition of every value. Here is an old house of mine, which I have in Nauvoo I was in it last year—Brother John Kelser, a brother of the Apostle C. O. Kelser, and one of our initiation boys. He was here in the early days, and remembers when we lived in the fort. He can scarcely imagine that this city is in the same place he supposed it to be changed. God has blessed this land. He has made it fruitful. It brings forth fruit in abundance. It brings forth vegetables of the best kind. It brings forth cereals that are unsurpassed. Brother George H. Fryer told me at Chicago that the best crop per acre he had met, and a man who is on the commission to judge the wheat, and who has raised wheat in self, said that the wheat from Utah was the best there was in exhibition in the World's Fair. The Emperor of Russia—and Russia is a great wheat growing land—sent out and got better flour than every working man in this Territory does, and there is no one on the face of the earth that wots better wheat than we do. We have as good potatoes and other vegetables as are produced on the earth. We live on the kings. And if we should not be in doubt about our strength as to let the evil spirits take possession of them, we would have as good fruit as can be found anywhere. Then we have this blessed sky above our heads, and this pure air that we breathe. There is no better air on the globe. God has given us everything that heart could desire in righteousness. Then let us use these blessings as we should do, and not be forgetful of our former condition, and become lifted up in pride, forgetting the hand that has bestowed these things upon us.

Brethren and sisters, we have every reason to be proud. I have been asked for some years, and I let one of my sons with me—another Utah product. He has only just turned sixteen years of age and he measures six feet two inches. People on the ship wanted to know if we had many such boys as that in this country. I said, plenty of them. Well, they said, Utah must have a tremendous race of men growing up. We have plenty of young men growing up here that are natural the admiration of all who know them. We will have beautiful men and beautiful women, virtuous men and virtuous women. Of course, there will be some that will not be of this character; they will lose the faith; but those who cling to the faith, God will adorn them with beauty, for they will have the spirit of God with them, and every care and that comes in contact with them will love them. The Latter-day Saints will be loved. God loves them, and good people will love them. The virtues that they possess will live. They cannot be destroyed unless all the people are destroyed. That is a good foundation for the Latter-day Saints. I say to the Latter-day Saints, be comforted. Do not be depressed. When you feel gloomy, humble yourselves before the Lord, and seek for His holy spirit. Let him fill you with good cheer and with peace. He will do it, and He will overrule and control everything for your good and for your salvation, if you will put your trust in Him. God bless you all, in the name of Jesus. Amen.

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