PART 2 DESERET EVENING NEWS. 9 TO 12

TRUTH AND LIBERTY.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 5, 1896. SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH.

THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST.

Saving Faith. Works as well as Faith Essential to Salvation. The First Principles of the Gospel. Restoration of the Church of Christ.

Discourse Delivered in the Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, Sunday, (August 9th, 1896, by

ELDER CHARLES W. PENROSE.

[REPORTED BY ARTHUR WINTER.]

I have been requested to address this congregation this afternoon, and sincerely desire in doing so as I may be assisted by the spirit of light and truth, and that same spirit may rest upon all the congregation, so that our assembling together may be profitable to us. I have no desire to ventilate any views or ideas of my own in reference to the plan of salvation and the dealings of God with mankind; but I have a desire to explain that which God has revealed, so much of it as may be wisdom to us for this afternoon and as the Lord may give us attendance.

I will read a text of Scripture which has been the foundation for a great many sermons among the various religious denominations—one which perhaps people who profess to be Christians have heard at some time. I may, however, take an altogether different view in regard to the meaning of this passage of scripture from that which is entertained by many Christian teachers and which has been proclaimed to the people almost entirely throughout Christendom. It is found in the Gospel according to St. John, and the 16th verse of the third chapter:

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Take that verse as it stands and it expresses the essence of modern Christian teaching. The burden of the preaching of most of the ministers of religion that all people have to do to be saved is to believe that Jesus of Nazareth was the Son of God and that He died for the redemption of mankind. Taking this verse as it stands, without comparison with other sayings of the Lord Jesus Christ, it would appear that this is true doctrine—that all that is necessary for the human family in order to obtain everlasting life is simply to believe in Jesus Christ. Now, there are various sayings in the religious world in reference to theology; but on the point of faith they are very the essence of their teachings, as comprehended in this verse. "Only believe," they say to the people, "and you shall be saved, and heaven is yours to inherit."

Now, when Jesus Christ uttered this saying that I have read to you, He did not intend to convey to the people the idea that that was necessary for them to do in order to obtain eternal life was to believe in Him, in His atonement and in divine mission. He did not intend to put in company with other sayings of our Savior. For instance, in the same chapter from which I have read the first verse, and the following:

"Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.—v. 5.

"Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.—v. 7.

"Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.—Mark vii. xi. xvi. xx. xx. xx.

"Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."—v. 5.

Now, if anybody in this congregation has built his house upon a sandy foundation—upon which so many millions have built their houses—according to Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world, his house will fall, and great will be the fall thereof.

What did Jesus mean by this saying to Nicodemus, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God?" It appears that there must be a second birth—and that birth is not simply believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, but something must take place in the soul to fit man to enter the kingdom of heaven, according to the teachings of Jesus. Jesus exemplified this saying in His practice. He was a little different from a great many preachers! He did not say to the people, Do not as I do, but do as I say. He showed the way, and walked in it and said they were to follow Him. He gave His word to the people as He received it from the Father, and as the Father commanded Him so did He. He practiced what He preached, and He left us an example that we should follow in His steps. We read that when Jesus entered upon His ministerial career He went to the river Jordan, where a man by the name of John, called John the Baptist, was administering the ordinance of baptism, which he had received from Jesus Christ. In an epistle to the Saints, which we still find in the New Testament, John on the subject of faith and works, he showed that faith without works is dead; that as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is also. He says:

"Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.—v. 24.

"Even so faith also, if it hath not works, is dead being alone.—v. 17.

"Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works.—v. 18.

"Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.—v. 19.

"But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?—v. 20.

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He showed also that the devils believe. "The devils also believe," said John, "and tremble." So that the idea that faith alone is all that is necessary is a mistake. I view it as a fatal mistake. I believe it has done more harm in the world to preach that doctrine as viewed by modern divines than almost any error that has been promulgated, because of people come to the belief that all they have need to do is to believe in Jesus Christ and in His salvation, and that there is nothing for them to do themselves, they lay down and lull themselves to sleep which is the sleep of spiritual death. They will not do the works which are essential to salvation. They adopt the belief that they are not necessary on their part, that Jesus has done it all; they will come to Him and go on their way in the broad road that leadeth unto destruction, which so many walk, while according to Jesus, "strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."

Now, what did Jesus mean when He said: "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God?"

Here is something else besides mere belief; the will of our Father is to be done; and if the people do the will of our Father, then they shall know concerning Christ whether it is of God or whether He spoke of Himself. So that when He said that people must believe in Him to have everlasting life, He meant that they believed in Him they would believe in His commandments and would accept the ordinances of His institution; they would receive the doctrine that God had given to Him to proclaim; they would learn to live as He said men must live—by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God; for, said He, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." After His resurrection, when He sent His disciples into all the world to preach the Gospel to every creature, He said to them they were to go and "teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." You will find that in the closing chapter of the Gospel according to St. Matthew.

There is something to be done, then, before we can know that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is our Savior. We must believe in Jesus Christ, we must believe in Jesus, you will do the things that He commands. That is the kind of faith that Jesus taught. That is the kind of faith that His Apostles taught. That is the kind of faith that is called a saving faith, for He that really believes in God the Father and in Jesus Christ, His Son, will accept and obey their commandments, and by that means they will obtain eternal life. Jesus said, when He was preaching to the multitude:

"Not every man that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

"Therefore whoso heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock:

"And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.

"And everyone that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand:

"And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.—Matt. vii. xi. xi. xi. xi. xi.

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baptism, that they might receive the Holy Ghost.—Acts viii. xi.

"For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

"Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.—Acts viii. xi. xi. xi. xi.

In the 19th chapter of the Acts we read that Paul traveling through the upper coasts and coming to a place called Ephesus, where he found certain disciples.

"He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost.

"And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism.

"Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.

"When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

"And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spoke with tongues, and prophesied.

"And all the men were about twelve.—Acts xix. xi. xi. xi.

They had been baptized apparently in the wrong way. Whoever had baptized them either did not have authority to baptize or had taught them improperly, and as Paul found the servant of God who baptized them properly, and laid his hands upon them. Then the Holy Ghost came upon them. They were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. This is the simple doctrine of Jesus Christ; that He taught in person, and that His Apostles taught wherever they went, and that they are the New Testament and you will find, all the way through, allusions to this. Paul calls these principles the first principles of the doctrine of Christ. In the 6th chapter of his epistle to the Hebrews, he says:

"Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God,

"Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.

"And this will we do if God permit.—Hebrews vi. i. i. i.

He chided some of the people, as you will read in the preceding chapter, for not understanding these things thoroughly. He said:

"When for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God.—Hebrews v. i.

It seems to me that this is what is the matter with the people of this generation. They all claim to be teachers, but the people that all they need to do is just to believe in Jesus, and they have need to be taught the first principles of the oracles of God. What are these first principles? Let Paul answer: the doctrine of "repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment." These are the first principles, that a man or a woman must learn before they can be the people who had received them to go on to perfection. There are only a few of the principles of the Gospel. It is just as Jesus taught: "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." We are to follow Jesus as our exemplar. Having learned His doctrine, and obtained His Spirit, we are to live in the light thereof, and regard the things that He taught; to live together in love and harmony, and to do unto others as we would that others should do unto us, doing good in return for evil, and shining in that spirit which Jesus Christ had with His when He dwelt among men on earth. The essence of it all was that He came not to do His own will, but the will of Him Who sent Him. That is the doctrine—to learn of God, to be taught of God, to walk in His ways, to keep His commandments, to live by His principles in the world, and to "flee out of the world; be come out of it in spirit and approach unto God. Jesus taught that His Father is our Father, that His God is our God, and that we can approach Him; that if we ask we will receive, if we seek we shall find, if we knock the door shall be opened unto us.

That is one of the doctrines of Jesus Christ. Now is there one that believes it now in the full sense in which He taught it? What did He mean by that? Why, that we can go to the Father, by Jesus Christ, Who is the only mediator that God has erected between Himself and His children, but that the way is open; that He is the same yesterday, today and forever; that He is the same in goodness now as He was at Jordan and the Transfiguration; and if He was a God of revelation in olden times, that He is a God of revelation still; and that the Lord Jesus Christ will reveal Himself through holy men or by direct intercourse with His children in olden times, it is just as possible now, since prayer is the same as it was in olden times, and the Lord Jesus Christ is the same as He was when He answered Him, and Jesus taught the doctrine that we could come to the Father as He did. That is another doctrine that is almost lost sight of, especially believed in these modern times. Revelation, says the Christian world, was given in former times, but is not in latter times. Jesus said it was given by the prophets, and also by His Son Jesus Christ; and many people entertain the idea that that was the last of His revelations. Yet we find Paul, after revealing Himself to the twelve Apostles whom Jesus sent out to the world, and the Book of Revelation, which is regarded as the last revelation of John, is declared to have been given, through Jesus Christ, to His servant John, who was on the island of Patmos for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. The Gospels and the New Testament is that God is the same now that He ever was in the time of the old patriarchs and prophets, and that we can go to Him and learn of Him, and that He sends Apostles and prophets, wise men and teachers inspired of Him to bring forth His word. Why should God do that in one age of the world and not do it in another? Has He changed? No; we are told that He is an unchangeable being. But who is there that really believes, nowadays, that we can approach God and obtain manifestations from Him? Who believes now that God has prophets on earth through whom He reveals His will to the people? "Oh, that is an antiquated doctrine, an old fashioned idea, belonging to the ages when men were ignorant of the laws of nature, and when people called the dark ages. This is what our Christian friends say. But Jesus Christ declared:

"Behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify, and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city:

"That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar.—Matthew xxiii. xi. xi.

Jesus also said that false prophets and false christs would arise, and they would deceive many. But Jesus said false prophets never arise false doctrine, and it is by that that men are deceived. True prophets, men inspired of the Holy Ghost and of God, never teach the true, or it is, the subject of Jesus Christ. He that keepeth His sayings are His disciples. John said:

"If ye love me, keep my commandments.

"And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever.

"Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.

"I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.

"Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also.

"At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.

"He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself unto him.

"If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.

"He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me.

"These things have I spoken unto you, being present with you.

"But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

"Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye love me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I.

"And now I have told you before it come, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe.—John xiv. xi. xi. xi. xi.

They had been baptized apparently in the wrong way. Whoever had baptized them either did not have authority to baptize or had taught them improperly, and as Paul found the servant of God who baptized them properly, and laid his hands upon them. Then the Holy Ghost came upon them. They were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. This is the simple doctrine of Jesus Christ, that He taught in person, and that His Apostles taught wherever they went, and that they are the New Testament and you will find, all the way through, allusions to this. Paul calls these principles the first principles of the doctrine of Christ. In the 6th chapter of his epistle to the Hebrews, he says:

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