

These valleys surrounded by these towering mountains were by nature made grand. But when they became the abode of men; when they were made habitable by the industry of the people who came here, and beautiful cities were founded and grew up all through these valleys, men's attention was naturally drawn to our situation, and it was felt that our position was a very commanding one, and in some respects a unique one, situated, as it were, midway between the two oceans and in a sort of half way house for travelers across the continent. All these causes combined to make Utah a noted place. Then the railroad was built across the continent. This brought travelers to our land, and their descriptions of what they saw, of the beauty of our country and the magnificence of our scenery, naturally created additional interest in regard to us and our land; and it is not too much to say that today there is probably no portion of our continent more talked about and looked upon as more favored than the land which we inherit. For beauty, for health, for magnificent scenery, for the agricultural, mineral and other resources, Utah is considered superior almost to every other portion of this favored continent. The result is immigration—not "Mormon" immigration altogether—has rushed in, and to-day the expectation is generally indulged in by those who are not of us, that the fate of "Mormonism" is nearly sealed; that the day is not far distant when the people will be overwhelmed, when the land will be possessed by others, and we be compelled either to bow to the dictates of others in regard to our religion or do as we have done in times past—vacate our homes and go elsewhere. I do not describe these expectations so much from what I have been told as I do from a knowledge of the spirit which prevails and of the failings which exist in the breasts of men concerning this religion of ours, which we testify in the most solemn manner that God has revealed.

Under these circumstances, as I have said, we require, as we always have done; the guidance, the assistance and the comfort of the Spirit of God. Many have been the hours that the only light the Saints of God have had has been that which God has given through His Holy Spirit. The only comfort which they have had has been the comfort that God's Spirit has imparted unto them. We have passed through troublous scenes. We have witnessed many times in our lives when it has seemed as though we should be overwhelmed. Israel fleeing before the hosts of Pharaoh, with the Red Sea in front and the armies of Pharaoh behind, was not a more threatening prospect than the Latter-day Saints have witnessed many times in their career. Metaphorically speaking, we have had the sea in front, we have had the armies in the rear, and we have had mountains on either side, and there has seemed to be no escape for us. But God by His wonderful power, has interposed and has delivered us;

and we have emerged from our trials and from these seemingly inextricable difficulties stronger and more famous, and with greater faith than when we entered upon them.

Will this be the case at the present time? This is a serious question for all of us. What shall our future be? Shall we emerge from the seemingly overwhelming difficulties that now surround us as we have done in the past, and be stronger for the trials that we have endured, or shall we be overcome by them and be compelled to succumb to these influences which are so threatening? These are questions that we should ponder upon and answer in our own hearts.

There is only one thing that we, as a people, have to dread, and that is our own weaknesses and our failure to keep the commandments of God. This alone can do us injury. If all the hosts of earth were to band together, with their wealth, their influence, and with all the power at their control, and they were to unitedly oppose this work of our God, and the Latter-day Saints were united and full of faith and integrity, and determined to keep the commandments of God, I say to you this day, in the presence of all that I have attempted to describe to you that there is no power upon earth that can injure or in any manner retard the advancement of this cause and the deliverance of this people from every peril to which they may be exposed. I care not how threatening the prospect may be. I care not how many may be the seeming causes that menace us with overthrow and with destruction, if the Latter-day Saints are only devoted to their religion and are determined to keep the commandments of the Lord.

There has not been a step taken by this Church that has not been foretold in revelation. From the commencement of this work until the present time, the pathway of this Church and the obstacles with which it would have to contend and overcome, have been described in plain language to the Saints, through the spirit of prophecy which has rested upon those whose right it was to teach the people upon these points. Have you not heard from the time that you entered the Church; or, if you were born in the Church, from the time that you were old enough to understand, that Joseph Smith, in the beginning of this work, predicted that it would have to meet with obstacles and difficulties of the most formidable character, and that it would have influence brought to bear against it that would be very potent? Did he not prophesy that in the commencement it would excite the opposition of a neighborhood? But said he, it will not be confined to this; it will excite the opposition of a township and of a county, and then of a State; and after awhile it will meet with opposition of a national character. Would it stop there? No; but it would extend until it would call forth the opposition of the world itself. Have you not, therefore, been prepared for

such scenes as we now witness? And we have not only his word; but the concurrent testimony of all who have had the spirit of prophecy, and who have spoken to the Latter-day Saints under its influence, is to the same effect. There has been no Elder whose mind has been enlightened by the Spirit of God, and who has looked forward to the future, who has not had visions of this character, in which he has plainly foreseen that such would be the result of the growth and advancement of this work of our God on the earth. Besides this, we have the Book of Mormon—a record translated and published before the Church itself was organized—in which all these scenes that we are now passing through are described with wonderful minuteness and accuracy. The opposition that we now have to contend with, and the character of that opposition, are foretold in that book with exceeding great plainness. And the prophets of God have written these things in such simple language that a child can read and understand them. The Prophet Nephi describes the condition of the world at the time that this record should come forth. Had he been in mortality and witnessed these scenes, he could not have described them, it seems to me, with more minuteness and accuracy than he has done, although he wrote about twenty-four hundred years ago. He describes that which should be done when this work should come forth and the character of the opposition it would have to meet. He has told us the very words that men would use in fighting this work. He says that there would be but two churches upon the earth—one the Church of the Lamb of God and the other he describes as "the whore of all the earth." He says there would be such a combination against the Church of the Lamb of God as would threaten it with destruction, because the people of the Church of the Lamb of God would be very few and their possessions would be very small, and they would be very insignificant compared with the forces that should be opposed to them. But he makes this remarkable declaration, and repeats it: "But the righteous need not fear." Oh! what comfort there has been in those words to those who have perused them in hours of trial and darkness, when difficulties and dangers have surrounded the Saints of God, and when it has seemed as though there was no deliverance for them. They have brought consolation, no doubt, to many a soul under such circumstances. I know they have comforted my heart many a time. I have felt that if I could only be numbered among the righteous, I had no cause for fear. And no one else, if he is righteous, has any cause for fear, however threatening the prospects may be.

Brethren and sisters, we are just in the position that the prophet described. If you will read his words, you will derive not only great comfort from them, but great light also; for you will see how plainly the Lord, by the spirit of