DISCOURSE

DELIVERED BY

PRESIDENT GEORGE Q. CANNON

At the Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, Sunday, June 26, 1892.

REPORTED BY ARTHUR WINTERS.

As I see a great many of the youth present, I would like to give our boys a little chapter of my experience. My hair is growing white now, and although I do not think I am old, I suppose everybody else would call me old. I therefore may say something that if I were younger might not be counted proper. When I was a boy I used up my mind that I would be just as good a boy as I possibly could be. When I was quite a young fellow I had a very dear friend. He was the most brilliant young man of his age, that I ever knew in this Church. Some of our ancestors would drink whisky when they could get it, and he found fault with me because I did not drink whisky. He, he, "Oh-ego, you are so-ciable. Why can't you drink a little whisky with the boys? It won't run you. I don't care anything about whisky, but I like to be sociable; and it don't look well for me to refuse to drink with them." I said, "All right, so far as you are concerned, but I don't drink whisky." And I refused to taste it. Well! I knew that it made me an unmanageable young man with them. He was a man of fine promise and occupied prominent positions; but when he was thirty-four years of age he died a drunkard's grave, and left the reputation as a drunkard legacy to his family. When I talked and reasoned with him he did not think that he would ever become a drunkard. He said that he did not care about liquor, but that was his idea.

Now, then I have been in a great deal of society where wine circulated, has been common, and where sickness has been rife, and it is my experience that I was always more respected than if ever I had either drank, smoked, or tasted tobacco in any such form. I have never been in for not partaking of these things. On the contrary, I remember I had some influence with men who felt respect for me, and if in my company, would respect others. We are free in these matters. There is no man who drinks that does not in his soul feel that he should be better off if he did not drink, and he admires a man who does not drink. Now, I am as my parents age and I have never drunk a cup of liquor in my life. I came up my mind when I was a boy that I would not make my chief object to be well I never knew. I hoped to live, I did, and I have observed that wonderful is my life, and I wished I might be called to be a Latter-day Saint, and I wanted to be an Elder in this Church. That was the highest position in life I ever had. I never wanted to hold any other office, but I did desire exceedingly that I might be an elder, so as to be with the Priesthood of the Son of God. When that office was conferred upon me, that was all I desired. I never sought from that office, I have brought my business and to whose me to fill positions. I know when I was a boy that I should be a man of the Apostles, and I care now not more than once in every and tonight the Lord to whose wonderful ways, for I did not want to fill that position. I desired it, for I knew how serious a thing it would be to hold so sacred an office as that of an Apostle. I have said to the Lord, if I could be saved and exalted without that office, to whose sometime one. When I was chosen one of the First Presidency I brought Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, my brethren and to choose any that there were others who were far more capable than I to fill the position. But I was so ordained, and I have had to do it to the best of my ability, in humility, to fill the position.

I do not speak in this sermon to locals in your minds inclination to office, but to encourage you to put yourselves in positions where you can be useful. Do not acquire those habits which will destroy influence, such as using tobacco, drinking liquors, or any other way to drinking tea or coffee and other things of this kind. Be Latter-day Saints. Be Saints wherever you are, and set an example to everybody.

I wish to say that much to the young boys. I need not say it to the girls, for I am satisfied the girls of Zion are a remarkable class. They are, as a rule, do not drink liquor nor use tobacco. They are not given to these evil practices, and in this respect they are an example to their brothers, to their sons, to their husbands, and in some instances, no doubt, to their fathers. The women in this Church are worthy, as a class, of great praise. They are sensitive to their surroundings, more faithful to the correctness of the duties which they have to perform, and have proved themselves advocates of the truth and faithful to the teachings in our recent journeys than the men have. I know that the men are exceedingly proud of the women of this Church, but they have shown charms exhibited that are worthy of the angels in heaven. I know that God will bless the mothers and the daughters of Zion for their fidelity to the Gospel and for the course which they have manifested. At the same time the sisters of this Church might take lessons from the elders in the way they attend to meetings and perform the other duties that devolve upon them. Therefore, I say it is not necessary to talk to our sisters about drinking. I do not know a woman in the church that smokes or chews tobacco. A young man would think he was a mighty queer kind of a girl if when he went to visit her, she should pull out a cigarette and commence to smoke it, or she should produce a cigar and offer him it, he would take a smoke; or she should produce a bottle of beer and ask him if he would not take a glass of beer with her. And why have they not just as much right to do that as the boys have? Why have not the girls as much right to drink liquor of beer and smoke or chew tobacco as the boys have? I wanted to see why our sex should have liberties of this kind that it is considered improper for the other sex to take. I think if a man drinks he should not be shocked if his wife does the same. If he smokes a cigarette of her to his cigarette he will have a great deal to answer for.

These are things, my brethren and sisters, that enter into our everyday lives. I would like myself to see a generation of young men growing up that would stand from these sins. And we who are fathers should set our minds of this kind. I know it is not necessary to be talking to our families all the time about this word of Wisdom. If we set a proper example ourselves, that if we do not set such an example, then we have to be continually talking in order to counteract the influence of our own example. I feel that I should not have to be so exercised in these matters if I could be a perfect model of a man to my children, so that they would follow me in the path of duty. Our children are exceedingly anxious to follow in the footsteps of their parents, and we have to be very careful how we conduct ourselves, lest we set them an example which we would not desire they should follow. We have to be continually on our guard in order to counteract the influence of our own example. I feel that the men who are responsible for a family should be very careful how they conduct themselves. If a man takes a correct course in this direction, his children will follow his example. And even if he should be so unfortunate as to set an example the gospel may have wisdom given to them, even great treasures of wisdom. And there are the men who are responsible for whole families. Are will you have women if you take this course? Just as sure as God lives and is in the Heavens, the Word will not fail. And those who observe the Word of Wisdom will be distinguished among other people because of the wisdom that God will give them. God will give them the blessings that He has promised, and He will preserve them. When you come home to assemble in a place that shows that God is with you, and that you are faithful to the words of God, you will have faith in my heart to the end and to have the blessings of God in their behalf, and to heal them through the power of God. Whenever of they are living in violation of these words, the faith of the Elders who are the principal instruments will be weakened, and they will not have enough to make the promises that God has made. This is plain and simple. Our children are going through the country as merely producers of the pestilence that will go among them in the latitude of the earth, and we are required to stand in holy places that we may escape these pestilences. Our children are not keeping the word of God, and God has given unto us these remarks that we may be satisfied, so to speak, against these scourges. You know what they did in Israel. The Lord commanded them, through Moses, to sprinkle the blood of the chosen of their doors. They did this, and the destroying angel passed them by and did not enter the dwellings of any of the Israelites, but every Firstborn of the Egyptians was slain. In the museum at Berne, I believe, there is a record in stone, dated in Egypt, which substantiates the fact that the priests of Egypt thought that the King of Egypt himself had the firstborn in entire condition, and it is made plain, they think, that the same one has the destroying angel passed over Egypt. Not a Hebrew had his firstborn, because they observed the ceremony required. Now, the fact is this is to remind us, and this fact is to bring home to us the importance of the course we are running with our children, and what we are doing with our children.

Therefore, we should have faith in God in these matters, believe that which He says, and obey the commandments. Did that we can gather energy, or much to do the work of the kingdom, may escape these pestilences and judgments that are going forth among the nations of the earth. A Power is manifest through the elements that seem to move with a vengeance that has not been known for generations past. Hail the sea coasts of the Gentiles, the first, the earthquakes, the tempests that measure of destruction that has come upon the people in various places. This has been foretold through the mouths of His holy prophets, and He has commanded us to gather out from the nations of the earth. He has given unto the people a wonderful spirit of gathering. He has done this for the express purpose of separating the Tares from the wheat, and preserving a righteous seed in the earth, that when the judgments of God are forth there will be some that will escape. But how few there are out of those that have received the truth who have maintained their integrity and kept the faith! It is sad to think how large a number of people who once knew the Gospel have fallen away from it, and are not sharers now in its blessings. You have of middle age children of your former associations and ancestry, the families that you knew in your early life—the people with whom you were associated, of whom are they now? Some have gone to the end there. Some have died out of the Church. Others have left the faith and gone to our enemies. It is a sad thing to contemplate how many have received the Gospel who have lost the Spirit of God and have fallen away, and are now having no name or place, nor their children among the people of God. Why is this, brethren and sisters? It is because they have withdrawn the blessings and power from them out of negligence, and because they were problematical in their belief. Do you think there was any faithless man that ever had that power taken and help taking what they have done? Why, no; it is as plain as the light that shines through these windows that this is not the case. It is because they themselves have laid the foundation for apostacy, and have grieved the Spirit of God and caused its withdrawal from them.

Now, if we who are here today do not give faithful obedience to the Spirit of God, we shall be in danger, and not that. We cannot blame the Presidency of the Stake, nor the High Council, nor the Bishops, nor the Presidency of the Church, nor the Twelve, for our apostacy will be the eternally deep saddle for that which we have brought upon ourselves. How is the Spirit of God grieved! Why, in various ways. But there is an central cause, and I want to call the attention of the young men of Israel to it. The Lord has given us few revelations He expects would concerning a sin that is fearful in Heaven. He declares that any man that will have more a woman to lust after her shall deny the faith, unless he repent, and I say to you plainly and emphatically that as sure as you live you will fulfill that word. If you seek a new woman to lust after her, you will deny the faith, unless you repent, and that's right. You cannot indulge in this dreadful sin without grieving the Spirit of God and causing its withdrawal from you. And if we cannot lust upon a woman to lust after her without grieving the Spirit of God and causing its withdrawal from the faith, how much more serious would it be if any of us should act upon the other? If any of us should act upon the other we are in an awfully awful position. I say to you, in the name of the Lord, there is no more truthful sin of a nature in our time, and you had better be warned, for I have spoken with the strongest testimony this. The moment of distinguishing that would cause us to separate from the Church is the moment we have lost our interest and faith in our heart. It has filled me with sorrow that my language is unable to express and if I thought there was anything that I would do which would lead to such a dreadful result as this, I would fly from it with all my might. The Lord does love purity and chastity in women and in men. Why should not men, or our daughters, or our wives, be required to be more pure than we are? Are we not equal in the same law? Do we not expect to receive the same exaltation? Certainly. Then why should a man think that he can do a thing with impunity which his wife cannot do? When he thinks that he deceives himself. Yet he is the guilty one of the world. He may indulge in these passions and think they are justified in it, but he is a sinner unknown among our sex. Under the law of God, the other sex become the victims of lust, and are preyed upon by libertines. It is this that bringing destruction upon the children of the earth. And it would destroy the Latter-day Saints if they gave way to it, and it will destroy us if we will have a virtuous people. He will have a people in whom inheritance dwelleth of God with a spirit of God, and well in robust intelligence. The whole history of our people is a proof of this. Our Deliverer, who was sent unto us, who came to us, was sent unto us by an angel from heaven, where he was sealed. Later in the Church, who received the Keys of God himself, who saw many wonderful things, was chosen of God as an Apostle—this man whom the world thinks would have about 1 in man to the Elder ever could be called to sin. Joseph warned him against that which he did, but he persisted in it, and the result was he apostatized and was taken from, and the crown that he would have had was given to another. Hyrum Smith received the blessings and Oliver Cowdery received blessings, too, and which he had forfeited by his unjust conduct. Oughtn't we to be a people who are free from sin? Man is free in the flesh who can calculate upon being secure from condemnation, or if he could not? This is the fate of other men who received great gifts from God. Apostle Lyman Johnson had great opportunities. Apostle Phelps? with Cain, and he was the first man in this dispensation to be chosen one of the Twelve Apostles. Yet he apostatized, denied the faith, and became an enemy to the Kingdom of God. These are illustrations of the truth of what God has said, and our history is full of such illustrations. You can see them for yourselves. I have searched them in my literature, were written my love book power. They love his life that was in them. What is the course? Why, they have committed sin. They have probably gone in missions, remembered themselves while there, and come home the victim of the Spirit of God. They are brilliantness, so to speak, on the road, so that we can see that the Church has revelated left them. I am speaking from the same of members of such cases in your experience? I am sure you do.

There is only one way, brethren and sisters, to be safe. We must be faithful to the presence of God, and that is to keeping the commandments of God, to bring pure in our hearts as God is pure, so to the angels. It should be our aim to get a knowledge of godliness as fast as we may, to know what godliness exists, what then encourage godliness exists, and then encourage godliness in our hearts. Is there anything that my brethren—the most far-sighted of them—are doing that I do not do? Then I want to be what they are. I want to be like them. And I ask myself, Is there anything that my brethren