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REMARKS

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PRESIDENT GEORGE Q. CANNON.

[REPORTED BY ARTHUR WINTER.]

I do not know anything more interesting to which we can listen than the testimony of the Elders who have been abroad preaching the Gospel. To hear them testify concerning the divinity of the work in which they are engaged, and to relate their experience in proclaiming the Gospel, and also the testimonies which they bear concerning their prayers being answered and the power of God that has been manifested in their behalf—all this is exceedingly interesting.

This is an age of unbelief and scepticism. Doubts concerning the existence of God are prevalent; and the great bulk of the people, even among professors of religion, are destitute of genuine faith. It is, therefore, delightful to listen to men, and especially young men, who can testify that God lives, and that they know it. I sometimes wonder what the condition of the world would be and what would become of it, if it were not for the Latter-day Saints. They are the only people in an organized capacity, that I know anything about, who believe in God and in His power as did the ancients whose testimony has come down to us in the Scriptures. There is genuine faith among the Latter-day Saints. Of course, there are those who, as Brother Knight has said, after performing missions, grow careless and indifferent. I am happy, however, in the belief that these are not very numerous. But there should not be any among us who will yield to that spirit, especially when they have had experience such as missionaries obtain. I often think that some of our missions are too short. Young men do not get thoroughly broken to the harness, and they do not enter into the spirit of the work as they should do. I believe, however, that the changes which have occurred of late years by which attention has been called to the commandment of God concerning preaching the Gospel without purse and scrip, is having a most excellent effect. When a man has to depend upon the Lord for his food, his shelter, his friends, and for the assistance which he needs to enable him to perform the duties that devolve upon him, it is very likely to compel him to seek unto the Lord with great faith. Then he has his prayers answered so often and in so marvelous a manner that he knows for himself that there is a God, and that He hears and answers prayer. My first mission was a lengthy one. I was a little over five years away from home. I have always been thankful that it was so long, although I yearned for home a great deal during the latter part of the mission. I learned that which the brethren have learned, that it is not a good thing to lay off the harness when one comes

home. I felt that it was an obligation resting upon me, as one bearing the Priesthood, to do all in my power to help establish the righteousness of God in the earth. I am thankful that I did have that spirit; and that I have had it since that time. It is wrong for young men, when they come home, to become careless, and feel, "Well, I've finished my mission now, there is no special obligation upon me now, and I can take it easy." That is a wrong feeling. My experience has proved that there is greater happiness, purer joy and more delight to be obtained in serving God and being active in His work than can be obtained in any other direction. I am sure this is the experience of others also who have kept on the harness.

The idea which many people indulge in, that there is something irksome about religion, something that deprives one of enjoyment, is a mistaken idea. There is nothing irksome, nothing that requires the sacrifice of proper enjoyment, in keeping the commandments of God. The Latter-day Saints have proved this. We illustrate the great truth that a people can be a profoundly religious people and at the same time be a very happy people. I do not believe there is any happier people on the earth than the Latter-day Saints. I have seen the Latter-day Saints in the most trying circumstances, destitute of the comforts and of many of the necessities of life, and they have been a happy people under those circumstances. Gladness filled their hearts. It was not gladness produced by external circumstances; but it was the gladness of the heart, produced by the influence and power of the Spirit of God, and that is always true happiness. Happiness that depends upon external circumstances is not genuine happiness. There must be the fountain of it within us; and wherever we go and have that spirit within us, we shall be happy. We may be in a most disagreeable situation as far as externals are concerned; but if we carry within us this fountain of which I speak, and which the Spirit of God furnishes, we can be truly happy. This has been the case with this people. We should cultivate this, and teach it to our children. It is not necessary to break the laws of God or to forget our obligations to Him in order to have enjoyment.

I am thankful, as I have said, that there is a generation of men growing up who know that God lives. It is a blessed thing. Our God has not gone on a journey. He has not gone to sleep. He is not like the god of the priests of Baal, whom Elijah mocked because they received no response from him. It is not so with the God of heaven. And we are living witnesses of this. It is a great blessing in the midst of our trials and perplexities, to know that we can call upon God and He will hear us. His ears are ever open. No matter if, as the psalmist says, we make our bed in hell, He is there. We may be on the sea or on the land, by night or by day, in adversity or in prosperity, He is always near to listen to us.

In the 139th Psalm it is said:

Whither shall I go from thy Spirit?
or whither shall I flee from thy presence?

If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there.

If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea;

Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.

If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me.

Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee.

And He has promised that whatsoever we ask Him in faith, in the name of Jesus, He will grant unto us, if it is good for us. This is a most precious promise, and we should live so as to have a realizing sense of it continually. If we are in such a position that we cannot get down on our knees, we can pray to Him in our hearts, and He will hear us, and He will grant the desires of our hearts unto us. As individuals and as a people, we should cultivate this habit of praying to Him constantly. This, my brethren and sisters, is our strength, if we will make use of it. We should also have the gift of prophecy, like the Elder who has been alluded to here, who said to a family who were in danger from a cyclone, "Don't leave the house; I promise you in the name of Jesus that you will be safe if you will stay in the house." What prompted him to say that? The Spirit of God. The spirit of prophecy rested upon him, just as it did upon Paul when he was on board the ship and he said that not a soul should be lost. The Elders of this Church have a right to that Spirit; and they enjoy it to a very great extent. It is one of the gifts of the Gospel, and instances innumerable might be mentioned where that Spirit has saved the people. Elders have been about to go on vessels with companies of Saints, and the Spirit has said to them, "Do not go on that vessel," and by that their lives have been saved. One instance comes to my mind, where President Woodruff was about to embark on a vessel with a company of Saints, and the Spirit said to him, "Do not embark on that," and it only went a few miles down the river when it was totally destroyed. It is a remarkable thing that notwithstanding the many thousands of Latter-day Saints who have traveled on the ocean, there is not on record an instance of a company of Latter-day Saints being lost in their journeying on the ocean. There was a sad catastrophe occurred on the Missouri river, but there are reasons for that, which those who are familiar with the circumstances have described. That is the only instance in our history where such an accident has occurred. It is miraculous that there should be so many thousands of people immigrated to this land, covering so