

DISCOURSE

By President Brigham Young, Tabernacle, April 6, 1855.

[REPORTED BY G. D. WATT.]

Twenty-five years ago to-day this Church was organized with six members. More had been baptized by br. Joseph, but he having received a revelation to organize the Church, and only six members being present they were all that were then incorporated. Many of the faithful brethren and sisters, who embraced the gospel of salvation in the early days of the history of this work, have no doubt often looked over the ground this Church has traversed, and have been enabled to discern the invisible hand of the Lord in the preservation of this people in the various scenes they have passed through.

Many times, to all human appearance, there was no temporal salvation for the saints. Again, those who were not faithful, beholding things as the natural man beholds them, have left the Church; yes, scores of them, hundreds of them, thousands of them, both male and female. They looked at this kingdom and, considering its progress upon seemingly natural principles, discovered it was best for them to leave it, and if possible save their lives. Those who have been faithful can witness this day, that those who have sought to save their lives have lost them, while those who have sought diligently to build up the kingdom of God, who have clung to the commandments of the Lord, who have not counted their lives dear to them, have saved their lives.

It is marvelous, it is marvelously strange, and truly it is a marvelous work and a wonder, to those destitute of the revelations of Jesus Christ, when they reflect upon the history of this people, in their travels and progress; and it has been a wonder to all who have been acquainted with it.

Those who were acquainted with the rise of this Church, with the lives and acts of the few who then believed the gospel, and with the lives and acts of many who surrounded them, discovered then that the powers of darkness, the powers of the enemy of all righteousness were leveled against the few who believed in the Book of Mormon, and who believed that Joseph Smith was a Prophet. Whether they were six in number, or six times six, or whether there was but one it made no difference. Just as soon as the Book of Mormon was declared to the people, or to a neighborhood, and proclaimed to be the history of the aborigines of our country, and to contain the will of God to the people formerly, and that the Lord Jesus appeared to the inhabitants of this continent and revealed to them the gospel; that the kingdom of God was built up here; that the Lamanites were a remnant of the house of Israel; and that the set time had come for the Lord to favor Zion and gather Israel; at that very time, on that very day, the powers of darkness were arrayed against the Prophet, against the Book of Mormon and those who believed it to be what it purported to be.

Has this spirit of persecution ceased? No, not in the least, but it has steadily increased. I was somewhat acquainted with the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, not only through what I read in the newspapers, but I also heard a great many stories and reports which were circulated as quick as the Book of Mormon was printed, and began to be scattered abroad. Then the spirit of persecution, the spirit of death, the spirit of destruction immediately seemed to enter the hearts of the pious priests more particularly than any other portion of the people, they could not bear it. Among those who professed great faith and great piety, and believed in the blessings of sanctification, and professedly believed in the ministering of angels, and in the gift of the Holy Ghost, and that it was the privilege of Christians to enjoy the gifts and graces of the spirit now, as well as in ancient times, as quick as the Book of Mormon was introduced into conversation, a spirit would rise in them causing them to wish to destroy that book and every person who believed in it. They would say, "it is from hell, it is from the bottomless pit, it is of the devil; and those who believe in it ought to go to hell; it is a pity that such a delusion should be permitted to rise in our christian country." Such expressions came from the mouths of religious priests, from the mouths of leading characters in society, from those who professed to hold the keys of salvation, and to teach the people the way of life. Has this spirit ceased? No, it has not, but it has constantly increased. And to my certain knowledge, through the visions of the spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ, I did know, I did see, I did understand, before I went into the waters of baptism, that this spirit of persecution would increase. As the kingdom of God increased upon the earth, so would the power of the enemy increase in like manner, to keep pace with it; and there never would be a time, except for a short period, that this people would have rest until Israel was fully gathered, was redeemed and built up, and the Lord had drawn the dividing line between the righteous and the wicked.

This Church has lived twenty-five years and is not dead yet, although a great many of its members have gone behind the veil. Those who were first baptized into the Church have almost entirely left this stage of action. I presume there is not a single person in this congregation who embraced the Book of Mormon in the fall of 1829, or in the fore part of the year 1830. The Prophet, his father, and his brothers, except one, are gone behind the veil. I suppose that Martin Harris, and Joseph's mother are living, but Oliver Cowdery has gone to his long home, and most of the witnesses of the Book of Mormon have died; and I know of but very few in these valleys who embraced the faith of the gospel in the early days of the rise of this Church. When I call to mind the multitudes with whom I have been acquainted in this kingdom, and reflect how few there are who have stood firm, and how many have apostatized, I often at first think it is strange, but again, it is no marvel, realizing as I do that every person who lives in this

Church must be faithful. They cannot run by sight, but must actually exercise faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, in order to enjoy the light of the Holy Ghost. When they neglect this the spirit of the world takes possession of them, and they become cold and fruitless, and pine away into darkness, and spiritual death, and finally leave us. Will this continue? Yes.

Perhaps there are many who are astonished to see people apostatize, but it really is no marvel, it is no astonishment at all. If you wish to know the reason why they apostatize, it is because they neglect their duty, lose the spirit of the Lord, and the spirit of the holy gospel that they received when they first embraced it. Many receive the gospel because they know it is true; they are convinced in their judgment that it is true; strong argument overpowers them, and they are rationally compelled to admit the gospel to be true upon fair reasoning. They yield to it, and obey its first principles, but never seek to be enlightened by the power of the Holy Ghost; such ones frequently step out of the way.

Say they, "Mormonism is true, but I am not going to stand it; I am not going to abide this severe temporal loss; I am not going to stay here and have my rights trampled upon; I am not going to be checked in my career; I do not wish to be trampled in my doings, but I want my liberty perfectly; still I believe it to be true with all my heart."

Well, right upon these statements, if such men only believe Mormonism to be true, and that too no stronger than they do, they are not so far ahead, in this particular, as the devils in hell, for they both believe and know that the gospel is true. They believe and know that Jesus is the Christ, they believe in the old and new Testament, and in the Book of Mormon, and know that they are true. They know when a true prophet comes forth upon the earth, if they did not they would not raise up persecution against him. Not only believing, but knowing that the gospel is true they are arrayed in opposition to the truth, and lay every plan and scheme, that it is possible for devils to invent, to overthrow the kingdom of God on earth, that they may retain possession of the world still longer.

Will there still be apostasy? Yes, brethren and sisters, you may expect that people will come into the Church, and then apostatize. You may expect that some people will run well for a season, and then fall out by the way. For example, take the parable of the sower that went out to sow, "and when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up; some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth, and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth; and when the sun rose up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprung up, and choked them; but other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundred fold, some sixty fold, some thirty fold."

When the seed falls into good ground it takes root, and brings forth fruit; such individuals will be faithful to the end. The seed that falls by the way side, for want of root cannot endure the scorching sun of persecution. Those who are represented by the seed among thorns cannot endure because of the cares of the world, and the pride of life. The influence and power of the world, and of the adversary surrounding such individuals they are by and by turned away, and cease to be saints, cease to serve the Lord, and turn every one to his own way. Is this strange to you? Yes, for a moment, you say it is very strange. What did you embrace Mormonism for? Some have embraced it for the truth's sake; some love the gospel because it is the gospel,—because it is based upon true principles, and because it is the only system of doctrine revealed to the children of men, that is built upon a sure foundation. They love truth because it is truth, because it is light, and there is no darkness in it; and they fear not to come to the light that their deeds may be reprove, for they wish to get rid of their evil deeds. They love virtue because it is a holy principle by which the angels live; they love all the gospel principles because they are connected with eternity, and are the foundation of eternal lives, and will exalt the faithful to happiness and felicity, to kingdoms of glory, power, and immortality, and to all the knowledge and happiness that can be enjoyed by the intelligent beings who inherit eternity.

It is not for me to say how many embrace the gospel for the sake of the loaves and fishes; but I really think from their conduct, that many have embraced the gospel to see if they cannot make gain of it; to see if there is any temporal advantage in it. Let this kingdom, or this people prosper,—let them be free from persecution at this day,—let our friends, our relatives, our former neighbors speak well of us and tell the truth with regard to our temporal prosperity, as they would of other people, and what would be the result?—Thousands would professedly embrace the gospel for the advantages to be derived therefrom, to get a good name, and to obtain the riches which are of this world, and to be perfectly free from restraint. Let this kingdom prosper in a manner that all men will speak well of it, and let there be no trials, no threatenings, none to say "you shall be killed, you shall be destroyed," but let all say "peace shall be with you, we will bless you, we will neighbor with you, and hail you as our friends and brethren"; under such a state of things, thousands would professedly embrace the gospel for the sake of living in peace, and to obtain the riches of this world; thousands would professedly embrace the Book of Mormon and the Book of Doctrine and Covenants for political advantages, for a great name, and to obtain what they are seeking after continually. What is that? To be spoken well of by everybody, to obtain power and great influence among men. Where I to give my own private opinion concerning the matter, I cannot say that a great many have come into this Church solely for the worldly advantages which they would derive therefrom. On the other hand,

do all people join this Church with a pure intention? A great many embrace the gospel to be free from the iron hand of oppression, under which they are laboring continually, from year to year, in servile chains, toiling to get a morsel of bread to subsist upon. They are ground down and afflicted; their wages are cut down to the last penny they can live upon, when they know that they must labor or die.

Thousands are in this pitiable condition, and would embrace anything, I do not care what under the heavens was preached to them. You may go and preach the doctrines of Universalism, of Infidelity, or of any other belief in the world, you may boil them down and get their very essence, and with it tell those who are oppressed and borne down by the rich and the great, "you shall be delivered from your factories, you shall make your escape from your shops of toil; we are preaching this to the poor, now embrace our system and our doctrine, and you shall be delivered from this iron hand of oppression. We will take you to a land of plenty, to a land of freedom, where you can enjoy your rights and be blessed, and have the privilege of obtaining, with comparative ease like other men, all the comforts of this life." What is their reply? "O we will embrace your religion, if you will only take us away from these toils and this starvation." Many embrace the gospel actuated by no other motive than to have the privilege of being removed from their oppressed condition to where they will not suffer. They will embrace any doctrine under the heavens, if you will only take them from their present condition.

Are there any with us who act upon the same principle? O yes, you may, once in a while, see one who is acting upon that principle. Let persecution be heaped upon this people as it has been heretofore, even let the persecutors threaten, at the great distance from us that they are now, and those who have embraced the gospel with motives that are not in every sense pure, will say, "I am for embracing something else to get rid of persecution; I am for leaving these Latter Day Saints, lest affliction, trouble, and persecution come upon me and I be killed, or be made to suffer in the flesh. I am going to leave for California, or for the United States, or I am going to do something; I want to do that which will free me from all earthly suffering and trouble." Do these considerations touch one who has embraced the gospel because of its principles? No. Those who feel like forsaking the religion of Jesus Christ for such considerations, embraced it at first to better their temporal position in life, and for nothing else. This has always been the case with many, and when persecution has come, men and women have said, "I cannot bear it, I thought I was going to have happiness, and to enjoy life; I really supposed that my sorrows were all ended."

A great many have embraced the gospel believing that their sorrows would come to an end, at a certain period in this Church and kingdom, on the earth, and that too, speedily. I am a witness to this in my own experience and feelings. When I yielded obedience to the commandments of the Lord, the brethren were preparing to gather to a place that was called Zion, in Jackson county, on the western borders of the State of Missouri. I then actually had faith and the spirit of Zion to such a degree, that I supposed that if we got to Zion our worldly sorrows and afflictions would cease. I had not however a disposition to go there myself, for I wanted to go to the world and proclaim the word of the Lord that was revealed to me, and on that account I never had the privilege of settling in that county. The spirit of Zion which I then possessed is the spirit that inhabits the heavens and fills them, it is in and round about all heavenly beings.

When that spirit is imparted to individuals they realize it as it is in its purity, and are not mindful, at all times, that they are still embodied in a tabernacle of clay that is subject to the power of the devil, and that is liable to be afflicted at any moment, and to have severe trials, and be opposed and persecuted as long as they are in the flesh. But when the spirit that fills eternity is breathed into a person everything else is dispersed in a moment, and he sees Zion as it is in its purity, he then enjoys the spirit of Zion.

A great many people imbibed the same idea which I did in the beginning, and really believed that in Jackson county all the earthly sorrows, afflictions, disappointments, and weaknesses pertaining to the flesh would be at an end, and that every one would be sanctified before the Lord, and all would be peace and joy from morning until evening, and from year to year, until the Savior should come.

The brethren who went then found themselves mistaken, in a very short time. Those who went there, and those who were acquainted with their going and coming, found the world, the flesh, and the devil there, just as much as any where else, unless they had faith to turn every spirit of the world out of doors, that is, out of their hearts. They found the same tempter, the same covetous feelings, and the same allurements there, as in other places.

When our Elders go out to preach the gospel, they tell the people to gather to Zion. Where is it? It is at the City of the Great Salt Lake, in the valleys of the mountains, in the settlements of Utah Territory, there is Zion now. But you perceive when you come here the same covetous feelings imbibed in the hearts of many, as in other places, the same tempter is here, and there are plenty of allurements; and unless the people live before the Lord in the obedience of his commandments, they cannot have Zion within them. They must carry it with them, if they expect to live in it, to enjoy it, and increase in it. If they do not do this, they are as much destitute of Zion here as they are in other places. Some enquire, 'why cannot we serve God in other countries as well as here? You can just as well in England, in France, in Germany, in Italy, or the Islands of the Sea, in the United

States, in California, or any where else, as you can here. 'Well then, let us go,' say they. But hold on, you can serve him just as well any where else, when it is your duty to be there. If it is not your duty to be any where else, if you would serve him acceptably, it must be where he calls you. To what part of the earth is the Lord now calling his saints? He has opened up their way far into the interior of North America, they are widely removed from all surrounding civilization.

If you will examine the map you will find that we are located in an isolated portion of what? Of Zion. And what is Zion? In one sense Zion is the pure in heart. But is there a land that ever will be called Zion? Yes, brethren. What land is it? It is the land that the Lord gave to Jacob, who bequeathed it to his son Joseph, and his posterity, and they inhabit it, and that land is North and South America. That is Zion as to land, as to Territory, and location. The children of Zion have not yet much in their possession, but their territory is North and South America to begin with. As to the Spirit of Zion, it is in the hearts of the saints, of those who love and serve the Lord with all their might, mind, and strength. We have opened up the way, and come here, and what will you see? Just as much weakness and trouble as in any other place, if you have a mind to make it—which you will if you do wickedly, and perform that which is derogatory to the principles of righteousness. We can make the Territory of Utah one of the greatest sinks of iniquity upon the face of the whole earth, and exceed the abominations of the ancient Sodomites, if we are so disposed.

The first founders of this Territory, those who dug their way through the mountains, cut the sage brush, killed the snakes, made the roads, built bridges and houses, opened farms, laid out and built cities where no white man ever thought that civilized people could subsist, unless they brought provisions from a distant country, can now assemble together surrounded with the comforts, and many of the luxuries of this life. No white man who ever passed through this country believed that a settlement could be made in these mountains, and prosper in cultivating the earth. The Lord has brought us here, and what have we brought? Most certainly ourselves, and after we get here some want to go away, and say 'that the place is not holy enough for them, that they will not endure it, but will withdraw from this society, until we are pure enough, and then they will come back again.' Such persons are like those who stayed in Jackson County, they are too pure and holy for themselves. But if they stay they stay with themselves, and if they go they take themselves with them, and that is their great difficulty. If they could leave themselves behind, we might succeed in cleansing them from sin, but no, they go and have to take themselves with them.

The Saints who first came into these valleys necessarily brought their tabernacles with them, but we endeavored not to bring any selfishness with us, any erroneous prepossessed notions, any feelings, laws, rules, or acts pertaining to ourselves, except such as the Lord should dictate day by day.

Suppose that every person who comes into these valleys should come with a determination to be led by the Lord, from day to day; suppose they should say, "I will serve my God and keep his commandments, I will not set a stake here, or there, or any where else; I will not say that I will rise up to-morrow, and go to this city, or to that town, to exchange and trade to get gain, only as the Lord will say, and this will I do from this time, henceforth and forever;" and then let each one faithfully maintain such a determination, and we could truly say that we have the Territory of Zion, and the spirit, light, glory, and power thereof, and that the God of Zion dwells with this people.

But if we bring our old traditions with us, our prepossessed feelings and notions of this, that, and the other; and set our stakes, build our habitations, and locate our position in accordance therewith, and say, "I will do so and so, this is the path I will pursue, and I am determined to walk in it, regardless of every thing else," then we may expect to be overtaken, and the spirit of the holy gospel will depart from us. Then you would soon learn that there was no temporal, no natural prospect for this people to escape from utter destruction; and you would rise up and say, "I am off to California to save my life." But those who try to save their lives by their skill and craftiness, will lose them, both temporally and spiritually.

A great many say, "I believe the gospel," but continue to act wickedly, to do that which they know to be wrong. I wish you to fully understand that merely believing the gospel, that Jesus is the Christ, in the Old and New Testaments, that Joseph Smith was a prophet sent of God, and that the Book of Mormon is true, does not prepare you to become angels of light, sons and daughters of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ to a divine inheritance. Nor does mere belief entitle you to the possession of the crowns and thrones that you are anticipating. No, such preparation can be made, and such objects attained only by doing the work required of us by our Father in heaven, by obeying him in all things, letting our will, dispositions, and feelings fall to our feet, to rise no more, from this time henceforth, and actually operating upon the principles that we will do the will of our Father in heaven, no matter what comes upon us. Then, if you are going to be killed by your enemies, or destroyed by the adversary, you can say "kill away, destroy away."

True the enemy of all righteousness, Lucifer the son of the morning, the devil, is in possession of the world, and of nearly all that is in it, and says, "I am determined to destroy every man, woman, and child that will not yield to my kingdom, obey my mandates and renounce the Lord