

Actions Should Harmonize With Professions—“Mormonism” a System of Power—All the Faithful Are Entitled to Revelation—Leading Men But As Instruments in the Hands of God

Discourse by Elder George Q. Cannon, delivered in the New Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, Sept. 23, 1877.

I have listened with a great deal of pleasure to the remarks which have been made by our brethren, and the instructions which they have given unto us upon the principles of the Gospel. The interesting remarks of brother Brigham Young must have appealed very strongly unto all of us, and impressed us with their truth. First, he has said if our professions are greater than those of the rest of the world, and if we testify that we have received truths in advance, and authority greater than that possessed by others, our lives should correspond with our professions, or we can never justly expect that we will receive any greater reward than they; and this is a truth that should be taken home to the hearts of all the people who are called Latter-day Saints. The Lord requires of us that our acts, and that our desires, and that all our labors shall be in harmony with our professions, and that when we testify that we know that God lives, and that he has restored the everlasting Gospel to the earth, in its primitive simplicity, purity, and power, with the authority to administer in the ordinances thereof for the salvation of the children of men—that making these professions and bearing these testimonies, we should exhibit in our lives the fruits of the glorious doctrines and truths that we profess to have received. In no other way can we truly bear testimony to the veracity of these things. “A tree is known by its fruits; a good stream does not send forth bitter waters; men do not gather grapes of thorns and figs of thistles.” And so with us and the rest of mankind. When we profess to have received the truth, we should exhibit the fruits of that truth in our lives. When we profess to have received the everlasting Gospel and the Spirit of God, we should rejoice in the gifts of that Spirit. We should live so as to enjoy them, and in times of trial, of difficulty, of perplexity, and of affliction, we should exhibit a self-control and power and strength that might be expected from a people situated as we are, and having the blessings that we enjoy. Do the Latter-day Saints exhibit these fruits as they should? In some respects they are to be seen, and in others they are not so fruitful as they should be. There is an abundance of room for improvement on our part. There is room for an increase of exertion and an exhibition of greater faith as a people, than we have ever yet exhibited. The Lord is ready, according to our own testimonies, to pour out upon us every blessing that we need. Are we sick? Are any of our households sick? What is the privilege of the Latter-day Saints according to our doctrines, according to the teachings of these books (the Bible and the Book of Mormon), and according to our own belief? It is our privilege to exercise faith in the name of Jesus Christ, to have the sick, where not appointed unto death, restored to life. This is the privilege of the Latter-day Saints, the privilege of every faithful man and woman in the Church of Christ upon all the face of the earth. If there be a misfortune impending that is fraught with difficulty, or disaster, or trouble of any kind, what is the privilege of those who are the servants and handmaidens of the Lord Jesus Christ? It is the privilege, and has been the privilege in all ages of the world, according to the records that have come down to us, for those who live godly in Christ Jesus to have revelation concerning those events, that they may be prepared for them, and not be taken unawares. I would not give much for a religion that did not prepare me for events of that character; I would not think it the religion of Jesus Christ. I would not give much for a church, to me it would have no attractions, in which God did not manifest his power, in which there were no evidences received of God’s power and of God’s ability to deliver in the hour of trial and difficulty. It is this which makes the Church of Christ, it is this which makes what men call “Mormonism,” so attractive to me. It is because it is a system of power; it is because there are gifts connected with it; it is because I was told when a child that if I would be baptized for the remissions of my sins and repent of them, I should receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. It is because there are in this Church Prophets and Apostles, the gifts of revelation, of healing, and discerning of spirits, and all the other gifts, that were ever enjoyed by the ancient people of God. It is these gifts that make the Church of Jesus Christ a power in the earth, and that makes the teachings and doctrines of this Church so attractive to all the inhabitants of the earth who believe truthfully and sincerely the doctrines contained in the Old and New Testaments. It supplies the want that is felt by every honest heart, a yearning after a knowledge of God, a yearning after the things of God, and a yearning after that certainty that dispels all darkness and unbelief, and is a rock, which is like the rock of ages, upon which the foundation being built, the building is forever without fear of being shaken or overturned, when the storms and tempests shall beat upon it.

This is the secret of the union that has always characterized this Church of Jesus Christ, and yet we do not live up to our privileges. What is the privilege of the Latter-day Saints? Are the privileges of this Gospel confined to a few individuals? Revelations have been given to our departed President—President Brigham Young—but were the gifts, powers and qualifications of this Gospel confined to his person alone? Were they confined to his Counselors? Are they confined to the Twelve? Are they confined to the Bishops or to any other class in this Church? Certainly not. They are like the air we breathe; they are like the light that enlightens our understandings and gives light to our intellects. They are free to all who will live so as to receive them. There is none so old, none so learned, none so high, neither is there any so low, nor so young, nor so illiterate, unto whom these are denied. They are the free gift of God to all His children; to all who keep His commandments. They shall receive these gifts, and enjoy them if they will live so as to have them in their hearts, so that the Holy Spirit will bestow them upon them, and it is this also that causes this Church and this Gospel to be so delightful, there is an equality about it. It is not, as I have said, confined to a few, but it is extended to all the inhabitants of the earth, who will place themselves in a position to receive it. "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, for this promise is unto you and to your children and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." Even all. Whom does he call? Go preach this gospel to every creature, therefore every creature is called, at all times and in all generations throughout the earth. None are excluded from its glorious benefits. It is therefore the privilege of every member of this Church to enjoy revelation for himself or herself, to know the mind and will of the Father, to know concerning the doctrine whether it be of the Lord or whether it be of man, and I would not give much for a people or an individual who is destitute of this knowledge. Sooner or later unless they repent and feel after it, they will stand in slippery places, and when the floods come and the tempests beat upon them, they are in danger of falling away and becoming castaways from the Church of Christ; but the man who receives his knowledge from the Father, and the woman who can come to the Father in the name of Jesus and ask and receive for herself a testimony concerning this work, and concerning the government of God, in times of trial and difficulty, they are safe, because they know where their strength is and unto whom they can apply for light and guidance in the hours of temptation, trial and difficulty. They know then the voice of the true Shepherd.

My brethren and sisters let me address myself more directly to you upon this point. We have been bereft of our President. We have been bereft of the man who has stood at our head and guided us for thirty-three years, and we have learned to look upon him as the mouthpiece of our Father to us, but we ought, also, to have learned, as I have no doubt the majority of this people have learned, that he was but an instrument in the hands of God to accomplish the work entrusted to him, and that he being gone, the Lord will raise up and strengthen those who remain, and give them the power necessary to accomplish his work and carry it forward in the earth; and if they fall too, as they likely will, the column of humanity, the column of the Priesthood will still press forward, until all that the Lord has appointed to his people, he will accomplish on the earth, and Zion will be established and fully redeemed according to all the words of the Prophets. And further, it will cause us to draw nearer unto the Father and live so that we shall receive revelation from him for ourselves, that the knowledge of the Spirit shall be in our hearts, that the voice of the true Shepherd will be known to our ears, that when we hear it we will know it, that we cannot be deceived or led astray. This is the privilege of the Latter-day Saints, and the man and woman in this Church who does not live so as to enjoy this privilege comes short of being what he should be. It is these blessings that compensate for the falsehoods, for the contumely and for the persecution to which the Latter-day Saints are subjected. If it were not for these gifts and blessings our case would not be a very enviable one; but in possession of these blessings, and knowing for ourselves the truth, and understanding the will of our Father in heaven and rejoicing in the blessings of peace, quietude, union and love, such as cannot be obtained elsewhere, with those other gifts to which I have alluded—having these in our possession we can look calmly upon the efforts of the wicked. We can, without being afflicted in our souls, receive the persecution which they may seem fit to heap upon us; to have our names cast out as evil, to be accused of all manner of wickedness and crime. We can submit to these things cheerfully, knowing that the day will come when these lies shall be swept away; when the will of the Father and the glorious light of truth will shine upon us, and we shall be vindicated in the sight of the inhabitants of the earth, in the sight of heaven and angels. This being our condition, we can rejoice under these circumstances, and look forth to the time when we shall receive the happiness and reward alluded to. Brethren and sisters, live so

that each of you can go to the Father and ask and receive from him the blessing that you need. He has said, "Cursed is he that putteth his trust in man, or maketh flesh his arm." Do not build upon man. Do not lean upon him, but lean upon our Father in heaven. Seek unto him; implore his blessing; ask for light and strength from him; humble yourselves before him, and confess your sins; be of a broken heart and contrite spirit, and he will visit you with his Spirit, and bestow upon you gifts such as you have never yet received.

That you may do this, and that we all may do it, that we may be eventually saved and exalted in the kingdom of our Father, is my prayer, in the name of Jesus. Amen.