

Faith—Fulfillment of Prophecy—Restoration of the Gospel—Priesthood

Discourse by Elder Wilford Woodruff, delivered in the Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, Sunday, June 30, 1878.

There is a principle that I feel disposed to say a few words on, in connection with what brother Rich has been saying, and that is the principle of faith.

[The speaker then read the 11th chapter of Hebrews.]

I have taken the liberty of reading this catalogue of blessings which ancient men of God obtained through the principle of faith; which principle is as much needed today by the people of this generation, as by any people at any age of the world. We might continue the chapter of results and operations of the principle of faith to the present day. For by faith Joseph Smith received the ministration of God out of heaven. By faith he received the records of Nephi, and translated them through the Urim and Thummim into our own language, and which have since been translated into many different languages. By faith he made the foundation of this Church and kingdom, just as much as Noah, by faith, built the ark, and received the fulness thereof. By faith he prophesied, leaving a record, a testament which has been given through his mouth to the inhabitants of the earth, and which contains the revelations of God yet to be fulfilled. The testator is dead, but his testament is in force to all the world. By faith the Elders of this Church left their homes and families, and went, when called upon, to foreign nations without money and without learning or experience, to preach the Gospel of the kingdom without price to this generation, and warning the inhabitants of the earth of the judgments of God which await the world, and which must overtake the wicked. Faith is necessary on the part of the Latter-day Saints, say nothing about the outside world, in order to read and believe the records of divine truth which have come unto us; and it requires faith on the part of the Christian world to really believe this record, the Bible—to believe that the Lord, through his servants, really means what he says, and says what he means. It requires faith on the part of the Latter-day Saints to perform their duties acceptably before God, for we, in this dispensation, must walk by faith and not by sight, just as much as the people of God in any previous dispensation. And this principle we should exercise and live by. Some of the revelations which God has given unto us point to the future condition of the world, and foretell what must shortly befall the world of mankind. These predictions were uttered by holy men as they were moved upon by the Holy Ghost; and although the men themselves have passed away, not one jot or tittle of their words will fail in their fulfillment. Notwithstanding all the unbelief and infidelity of the modern world, there is not a man living that can place his finger upon the first revelation of God to man, from the days of father Adam to the present time, but what has had or is having its fulfillment as fast as time and opportunity admit of. God lives. These revelations which have been given through men who were inspired of the Holy Ghost, will have their fulfillment, even if the results should effect the destruction of the generation now living. When Jesus brought the Gospel to his father's house—the Jews, they rejected him and the words of life he taught them. He found them intently looking forward to the coming of their Shiloh in the person of a king, a ruler who should possess great power, even power sufficient to deliver them from the Romish yoke. They never once dreamed that he would appear in their midst as the babe of Bethlehem, who should be born in a stable, and cradled in a manger, a man who should know sorrow, and who should be acquainted with grief, and who should choose as his disciples illiterate fishermen of low degree. And although he was their Savior King who would have redeemed them, and delivered them, and given unto them the Gospel of peace and of liberty, yet they in their vanity and pride despised him, and persecuted him, and at last shed his blood. But was there a word ever uttered by him concerning their Temple or nation but what met with its fulfillment to the very letter? The history of the Jews, which chronicles the days of their glory and power, when they held the Urim and Thummim, the ephod, the Priesthood, and when they offered sacrifice, taken in connection with the prediction of Jesus foretelling their downfall and dispersion, is of itself sufficient to teach every infidel mind that there is truth in the revelations of God to man. The Jews have been trampled under the feet of the Gentiles for the last 1,800 years, fulfilling, too, what Moses said of them; and they have been overthrown as a nation, and led captive unto other nations, and are held in scorn by the Gentiles even to the present hour. And you may begin at the beginning, taking, for instance, those great cities that figured anciently in their splendor and magnificence, and which were built to defy all time, such as Nineveh, Thebes, Tyre and Sidon, Memphis and Babylon. Where are they,

and what became of them? They are gone, their history buried as if it were, in oblivion, and that too in fulfillment of prophecy. Yes, the words of some poor honest prophet or apostle raised up to declare the Gospel to the inhabitants thereof, but whom they despised and rejected, have met with their fulfillment, and the disobedient and wicked have passed away to be judged according to the deeds done in the body. And you may trace the history of the world from father Adam to the present time, and I can defy any man to point to a single prediction, uttered by inspired men raised up of God, but what has or will come to pass in its time and season. And if the Gentiles today would read these revelations of God, and exercise faith in them, they would no longer wonder when they come among us, to see these valleys, for 600 miles, filled with cities and towns, gardens and orchards, temples and tabernacles, and with comfortable dwellings. But the fact is, unbelief has overwhelmed the Christian world, and man has spiritualized the Scriptures until there is no faith in him, and he has no faith in God, nor in the literal fulfillment of his revelations to man. That is what ails the world today. The predictions of the Bible never would have been fulfilled, had not the Lord, in these last days raised up a prophet as an instrument in his hands to again establish his Gospel on the earth, and gather together the house of Israel to the valleys of these everlasting hills, according to his decree to old father Jacob; and his seed have yet to make this western desert to blossom as the rose, bringing forth "the fir tree, the pine tree, and the box together, to beautify the place of my sanctuary." The whole history of this people has been foretold by the prophet Isaiah, thousands of years ago; and it has been a steady growth from the commencement to the present. And will the Lord stop here? No; whether men believe or not, this Zion so often spoken of in holy writ, has got to arise and put on her beautiful garments; these mountain vales have got to be filled with the saints of God and temples reared to his holy name, preparatory to the time when "the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising." And this time will come when the nations are fully warned by the preaching of the servant of God, and his judgments commence to be poured out upon the world, in fulfillment of the revelations of St. John. Faith then is what the unbelieving world needs to exercise in God and in his revelations to man; but as I have said, whether we do it or not, our unbelief will never turn the hand of God to the right or the left.

God has restored again his Gospel. He has raised up men and commanded them to go forth and preach it to the world, and they have been engaged doing so now for nearly half a century, ever since the organization of this Church. It was organized by revelation, with prophets, apostles, pastors, teachers, helps and government, and the principles of it were taught by revelation, the same as Jesus and the Apostles taught them, there is no change whatever. The Lord never revealed but one Gospel to the inhabitants of the earth, in any age of the worlds, nor never will; the Gospel is the same yesterday, today, and forever, and the principles thereof are faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, believing that he is, and that he lived and died as a ransom for the sins of the world; and baptism for the remission of sins, being immersed and buried in water, by one having authority of God, that you may rise in newness of life, in fulfillment of the testimony of Jesus, and then receive the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands confirming the believers members of his Church. And when you are born of the water and the Spirit, you can enter into the Kingdom of God, and being born of the Spirit, you can see the Kingdom of God. And such believers, when they receive the Holy Ghost receive the inspiration and revelation and light of it. Our eyes and ears may be deceived by the cunning and machinations of man; but the Holy Ghost never deceives anybody. It bears record of the Father and the Son, and it bears record in the Gospel to those who possess it. The Lord never had a church on the face of the earth, from its first organization until today, unless that church was organized by revelation, with prophets and apostles, pastors, teachers, helps and governments endowed with the Holy Priesthood—that power delegated from God to man, which authorized him to act for God; and without this Priesthood no man, from the day the world rolled into existence, has any right to administer in any of the ordinances of his holy house, neither has any man a right to that Priesthood save he be called of God as was Aaron who, we are informed was called by revelation. What is the priesthood for? It is to administer the ordinances of the Gospel, even the Gospel of our Father in heaven, the eternal God, the Eloheim of the Jews and the God of the Gentiles, and all he has ever done from the beginning has been performed by and through the power of that Priesthood, which is "Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life," and the administration of his servants holding this priesthood is binding, being the savor of life unto life or death unto death. It was by virtue of this priesthood the twelve apostles anciently went into the world to preach the Gospel, and it was because of this priesthood which they held that men, in rejecting them, rejected Him who sent them and consequently brought

upon themselves condemnation. Light has again come into the world; but men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil. Hence condemnation rests down upon the world, for the consequences of rejecting the Gospel must overtake the world in this the last dispensation, just as much as they did in former ones, in the days of Noah and Lot and those of the Savior.

As I before stated, so say I again, the Gospel of Christ requires faith all the day long, for no man can continue faithful to the end without it. God has set his hand a second time to build up that kingdom which Daniel was permitted to see in vision, and to establish that Zion in the mountains which Isaiah saw. He has set his hand, for the last time, to gather together all things which are in heaven and on earth which are in Christ, unto himself. The day has come when the Lord has sent forth a proclamation to warn the nations to prepare for his second coming; and the signs of both heaven and earth all indicate the coming of the Son of Man, which is near at the door. No man knows the day or the hour when Christ will come, but the generation is clearly pointed out, the fig tree is leaving, and great changes are near at hand. Great Babylon is coming in remembrance before God, and the Lord has called upon the inhabitants of the earth who are very wicked, to repent of their sins and turn unto him. The generation in which we live is a wicked and an adulterous generation, and wickedness and abomination of every kind are increasing, and the earth has commenced to groan under the evil practices of man. The heavens are in pain over the disobedience and unrighteousness of the children of men, and the angels, we are told, are waiting in their places in the Temple for the time to come when they will be called upon to go forth and reap down the earth. Judgments await the world, but they heed not, and apparently do not care. With fire and sword the Lord will plead with all flesh, and as the prophet has said respecting this event, "the slain of the Lord will be many;" and these things will overtake the world in an hour when they expect them not, when they will be crying peace, but alas, peace will have departed from them, and they left to devour and destroy each other. All these things are foretold and many of them are written in these revelations given in our day, and they are already being fulfilled before our eyes; and they will continue to be fulfilled, until all that is spoken of shall have come to pass. Therefore, I want to say to the Latter-day Saints: exercise faith in God, and exercise faith in his revelations, and read them and ponder over them, and pray earnestly that you may have a correct understanding of all that God has revealed, that you may grow in the light and knowledge of God, and see the importance of living your religion and of living uprightly before him; for all men, both Jew and Gentile, Saint and sinner, will be judged according to the deeds done in the body, and for the opportunities which we have of informing ourselves of the will of God concerning us, which if we allow to go unimproved, we cannot be held guiltless. It certainly becomes us, who have named the name of Christ, to walk uprightly before God, for we cannot escape his chastening hand if we reject the light we have received. Our condemnation will be far greater than those who never embraced the principles of the Gospel, if we apostatize, or through indifferent carelessness we allow the cares and things of this world to choke down the good seed planted, we have "tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come;" we "know the Master's will," and if we do it not we will be "beaten with many stripes." The religious world talk about nonessentials, there are no such things existing in the Gospel of the Lord Jesus. He requires us to obey the same laws that he himself obeyed, and which he taught in his day. Why did he go into Jordan to be baptized of John? To fulfil all righteousness. It was a righteous law, it belonged to him, and his example is in force to all the world. No man can enter into the kingdom of God except he is born of the water and of the Spirit. Men may be judged and their bodies lie in the grave until the last resurrection, to come forth and receive of a celestial glory, but no man will receive of the celestial glory except it be through the ordinances of the House of God. Jesus performed that act that he might set the example; he was the way for others to follow. The Jews, as I have said, rejected him and the Gospel he brought to them, and they shed his blood. They have been paying the penalty of their misdeeds for the last 1,800 years. It costs something to shed innocent blood, it costs something to shed the blood of prophets and apostles. And I have sometimes taken the liberty, before strangers as well as Latter-day Saints, to express my views in regard to shedding the blood of Joseph Smith and other prophets. It has cost this nation four years' war, laying in the dust nearly a million and a half of men, and it has also cost millions upon millions of dollars, creating a debt which it will never live to pay. This is the faith of Wilford Woodruff, and I think I have a right to exercise my faith in this matter. I say then, it costs something to shed the blood of righteous men in this as well as in previous generations.

My testimony is that judgments await Babylon, judgments await the Christian world, and if people will read their Bible, they will see these declarations written down, and these judgments will increase until the world is cleansed

from wickedness. And I say to all the world, Repent of your sins, and be baptized for the remission of them, that you may receive the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands, and be saved in the kingdom of God. Without complying with these requirements, you nor I can never go where God and Christ dwell, worlds without end, for these things have been made known to us by ancient and modern prophets.

Therefore, yours, as well as my eternal destiny, our future position throughout the ages of eternity, depend upon the few hours, the few days, the few weeks we spend in the flesh. If I ever obtain a full salvation it will be by my keeping the laws of God. If I sin against God and man, I shall have to foot the bill; it will be so with you and with the whole world. This is the Gospel of Jesus Christ; this is the Zion of God, and what you see already accomplished in this desert land is really in fulfillment of the revelations of God. The hand of God has guided this Church from its incipiency to the present time. God will continue to direct its affairs, and there is no power on the earth or under the earth that can ever stop its progress, for he himself, has decreed that the Zion of the latter days shall never be overthrown; but on the contrary, as he has said through the mouth of the Prophet Isaiah, "For the nation and the kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted." Pretty strong doctrine to be taught by a humble man of God. Nevertheless, time will bring it about and it is not in the power of man to prevent it. I am a believer in revelation. I am a believer, from the crown of my head to the soles of my feet, with every particle of spirit in me, that God will bring about, literally and to the very letter, all that he has spoken through his servants, ancient and modern.

By way of concluding my remarks I wish to bear testimony to this congregation and to the strangers present, that Joseph Smith was a prophet of the living God; he was raised up by the Lord, and laid the foundation of this Church. He lived to accomplish the work he was raised up to do. He received the keys of the Priesthood from under the hands of Peter, James and John, and those pertaining to the gathering of scattered Israel, from under the hands of Moses, the leader of ancient Israel. Elijah, or Elias, also visited him and bestowed upon him the keys to "turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to the fathers," which was in fulfillment of a prediction by the Prophet Malachi. He also received the keys of the Aaronic Priesthood under the hands of John the Baptist, which Priesthood pertains to the temporal government of the Church. After performing his work he sealed his testimony with his blood, passed behind the veil, and he with his brethren who have also gone, is still engaged in carrying on the same great work. He still labors by virtue of this Priesthood which he received on earth, and which he will continue to hold, worlds without end. And this will be the case with every faithful man of God who magnifies his calling and Priesthood here below.

May God bless you, my brethren and sisters and friends, with his Holy Spirit, and give you faith in him, and in his revelations, that you may be led to do his will while you live upon the earth. But whether you live to be thus favored or not, my testimony is that they will have their fulfillment. Even so, amen.