

TALK by ELDER WM. C. PARKINSON

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at the

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To me this is a very trying position, and I feel almost on the verge of mental collapse. I am not altogether a stranger in this position of standing before the Latter-day Saints to talk to them about the plan of salvation as it has been revealed in this dispensation; but I never stand before a body of people of this kind but my heart is filled with fear and trembling. I really and earnestly desire your sympathy, faith and prayers, that the few moments I occupy will not be in vain. I was born and reared in the Church and have attended general conference for the last thirty-five years.

Some people say, "I guess they could get along without you, Brother Parkinson, if you don't go down this time." No doubt they could, but I want to say it is a very hard thing for me to get along without them, hard for me to feel as I should and keep the faith, and spirit of the gospel, and up with the times, unless I come closely in contact with the spirit of inspiration and revelation that emanates from the prophets of God. It requires more, perhaps, to save some men than it does others, and I feel I ought to be pretty close to the powers that be, and to the things of our Father in heaven, if I may successfully resist the influences of the world, and maintain my standing in the Church, and finally win out in the great battle of life, and obtain the reward of the righteous. Perhaps the influence that first started me to thinking seriously, the most serious impression that was ever made upon my mind with reference to the restoration of the gospel in this dispensation, was made in what was called the Endowment House, here on this block, when I listened to some words uttered by President Joseph F. Smith. At that time he was only a young man. But those words penetrated my soul from the crown of my head to the very soles of my feet. I have never forgotten them. I made a resolve then within myself that if God would give me health and strength I would always respond to the requirements of his servants who were presiding over me. So far, I have never refused; so far, I have never hesitated. When the call has come to me, I have responded with fear and trembling, and, I think, perhaps to the best of my ability under the circumstances.

Our first speaker referred to the origin of life, the final destiny of the human race. As far as the origin of men is concerned, the final destiny of man and the human race and the purpose and object of our mortal existence, it is something that troubles me but very little. I feel sure and satisfied that we had an existence before we came here. I feel that this mortal existence through which we are now passing is a matter of greatest importance in the great plan of final development, I feel that the sphere beyond is the reward of eternal life to those who are faithful, exaltation, power, principalities and blessings and privileges beyond our power to understand. And still, there are many problems yet in human life that have not been solved, but there is this one thing that I am absolutely assured of, and that is, that the God of heaven has come to the world and he has spoken. Jesus Christ, his Son, also appeared in this dispensation, and has given to us the power of the holy priesthood, the authority to officiate in the name of God, and restored the truths of the everlasting gospel, line upon line, principle upon principle, here a little and there a little, until all of the principles we possess of the great plan of redemption have been revealed for our benefit.

There are many sacred and very encouraging promises made in this book of Doctrine and Covenants, that should be a source of comfort and consolation, in this period of our existence, when there is so much trouble and sorrow and uneasiness in the hearts of the children of men all over the world. This truly is a time when men's hearts are failing them for fear, for something they know not what is coming to them; and if during these terrible times the righteous hardly escape, where shall the wicked and the ungodly appear?

The Lord promised, in the early history of his Church, that if his people would keep his commandments, he would fight their battles, he would preserve them, and he would take care of them. If we keep his commandments, are we entitled to have verified to us these promises that God has made? Individually perhaps we have erred, gone astray, done many things that are careless and indifferent and out of harmony with our profession as Latter-day Saints. But I am grateful to say, and I find great consolation in the fact, that the Church itself, with the heads of the Church, have always marched on in the line of progress, have always kept the faith; they have never forsaken the principles of revelation that have come from the Lord in his dispensation. They have maintained them with all their might and with all their strength, from the beginning up to the present hour. Thank God for that. Individuals may not be entitled to these promises, but I feel that God, our Eternal Father, will not forsake his people and his Church, and when it comes to the great struggle that is now going on in the world, I think we have no fear whatever as to the final outcome of this nation, of this government, or the destiny of this nation and this government. The history of the past has been pointed out, the various events and conditions before they occurred, almost as clearly as they could be presented after they have happened, and there are predications yet to be fulfilled in the future that are just as clear, and I have no doubt that they will be fulfilled also.

There is to be a time come when the Zion of our God shall be built upon this continent, and the law shall go forth from Zion and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. Then all nations shall yield obedience to the laws of God. Sometimes we wonder; I hear men say who profess to be Latter-day Saints, they wonder why our prophets are not having revelations that are being written like those contained in this book. How is it that for so many years, revelations have not been written and published to the world? I have long since come to the conclusions that we have all the revelation now that we are willing to live up to, and a great deal more, and I do not know but we have all that we really need, and I cannot see for my part the necessity under these conditions why the Lord should be giving us more revelation. You must remember that in the beginning the Lord was dealing with a boy, with a young man, only a youth, unlettered, and who knew nothing about his great purposes in the great plan of redemption which he designed to bring about, and he came and instructed him, and sent angels and messengers time and time again and taught him until every branch and authority of the priesthood was revealed and bestowed upon him. He came and gave comfort and consolation through the revelations. Why, a prominent man scarcely joined the Church but he would go to the Prophet and want to inquire of the Lord what he wanted him to do. That was frequently done, and men were called by absolute revelation to do this, that and the other. But after a while the great plan of salvation was revealed, the organization of the Church was established, There were prophets and apostles in our midst who had been chosen by revelation, and they were endowed, with power from on high, to bear the authority of the holy priesthood and to minister unto the people, and they have been doing it ever since, and they have carried with them the power and the spirit and the mission of their calling. And if we would yield obedience to them and listen to their teachings, we would have no need to fear for the final result and as to whether the Lord would take care of this people as he has promised.

I thank the Lord we live in these isolated valleys today. I do not believe there is a better people on earth than the Latter-day Saints who are gathered in these valleys of the mountains, where we find greater freedom, greater liberty, and still we will have all the trials, I imagine, that we are able to stand. We are to be tried as gold seven times purified in the furnace.

I was talking with one of the bishops recently with reference to the reports that are sent in annually from the various stakes all over the Church. He called my attention to the fact that sometimes even government officials come into the presiding bishop's office to get information with reference to these reports. They want to know about the death rate and the reason for death, and something about our marriages and divorces, etc. They inquired, he told me, a few days ago what was the cause of death among our people, whether it frequently occurred from venereal diseases, or from diseases that are recognized as being caused by unrighteous living and by impure and immoral habits or manner of life. They were surprised to learn that there were scarcely any of that kind, scarcely any at all. They again, they inquired into the marriage statistics, and found very few divorces.

I do not suppose there is a people in the world, and especially in a land where it is so easy to secure divorces as in the United States, that have so few as are found among the Latter-day Saints. I have discovered that those who are married in the temples are seldom divorced. Most of the divorces among our people are those who have not been married in the temple. We sometimes talk about this kind of marriage. We refer to it in speaking to our young people, and we advise them to go to the temple and be sealed for time and eternity, and try to impress upon them the importance of it. Why, it is the only marriage law in the world that has been revealed from heaven. It is the eternal order of marriage. Some people when they read the great revelation found in this book of Doctrine and Covenants, 132nd section, imagine that it refers only to plural marriage, when the fact is that it refers to the eternal or celestial order of marriage, including the plurality of wives, which has been done away with. But this celestial order of marriage, this divine system of marriage, is something that should be taught to our children. I am always grieved and very much surprised when I find our young people drifting away and marrying outside of their own people and outside of the temple.

Now, my brethern and sisters, I know the gospel is true. I rejoice in it. I thank the Lord that I live in this dispensation. I thank the Lord that I am numbered with the Latter-day Saints. I rejoice in the fact that the Prophet Joseph Smith came forth, and had the courage and the manhood and the spirit to withstand the world, and bring forth the message which he delivered unto us. I am thankful that the priesthood which was bestowed upon him by heavenly messengers has been handed down without a break, and we still have the divine authority and the right to act in the name of the Lord. I could wish we might act more intelligently, more readily, more universally, because practically all of us have the priesthood, and we should use it. The priesthood means service, and there is always plenty to do. It is hard to find men and women enough to carry the responsibility of presiding and helping others.

I have enjoyed this conference, so far, and I have no doubt but we will enjoy it to the end. May the Lord bless us all. Amen.