

“Ye Also Ought to Retain in Remembrance”

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It is good to be at Brigham Young University. There is a legacy of faith that I think everyone feels who comes here.

I would like to speak today about heritage. Certainly 1996 and 1997 are years of heritage from a Church point of view. The year 1996 marks the 150th anniversary of the Saints arriving in California, and 1997 marks the same anniversary of the Saints arriving in the Salt Lake Valley.

At the opening of this devotional we heard the hymn *High on the Mountain Top*, which is a good pioneer heritage hymn—the first words being “High on the mountain top / A banner is unfurled” (*Hymns*, 1985, no. 5). This has reference to the banner unfurled in the tops of the mountains as a signal to the nations of the world that the gospel of Jesus Christ has been restored. From our Church history we learn this is the reason Ensign Peak, a small round peak at the north end of the Salt Lake Valley, got its name.

Prior to the time the Prophet Joseph Smith was martyred, he and Hyrum crossed the Mississippi River with the intent of coming west. He asked the Relief Society to sew a flag for him that would be a banner he would take with him in fulfillment of the commission that a banner would be unfurled in the tops of the mountains. The Prophet was encouraged by

those with him to not go west but to come back. He did so and eventually went to Carthage. Of course, that is where he met his death. As near as we can determine, the flag was never sewn. However, the Prophet Joseph, we are told from various historical sources, appeared to Brigham Young in vision after Joseph’s martyrdom and before they arrived in the West. From a hill to the north, he showed President Brigham Young the valley.

When Brigham Young arrived at his destination and before he chose the site for the Salt Lake Temple, he asked to go to the top of what is now Ensign Peak. There he surveyed the valley that appeared to be a sort of confirmation of what he had seen in vision. (See William Hepworth Dixon, *New America* [London: Hurst and Blackett, Publishers, 1867] 1:186–87; *JD* 13:85–86; Junius F. Wells, “Brigham Young’s Prevision of Salt Lake Valley,” *The Christmas News* section, *Deseret News*, 20 December 1924, p. 17.) It was after this that he designated the location of the temple. He also moved the

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center of the community north from where it originally was up next to the temple site.

In the 24th of July celebrations of the early Saints the next two or three years, we know that flags were flown from Ensign Peak as a symbol of the banner that would be unfurled (see Council Meeting, 26 February 1847, Thomas Bullock minutes, in Archives, Historical Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City).

Today Ensign Peak has been designated as a historic site and nature park, in honor of the sesquicentennial of the Saints coming into Salt Lake Valley.

And so it is appropriate to speak of heritage at this time.

One historical event not well known in the Church is the voyage of a courageous band of Saints who sailed from New York City to San Francisco on the ship *Brooklyn*. This year marks the 150th anniversary of the journey of the *Brooklyn*, as it arrived in San Francisco Bay on July 31, 1846. On July 29 and 30 of this year, the Tabernacle Choir performed in the Davies Symphony Hall in San Francisco in commemoration of this anniversary, and there were other related activities sponsored by the public affairs councils in Northern California.

I accompanied Elder David B. Haight and Sister Haight to this celebration. The Hights, of course, are much loved in California, having spent many years there before being called into Church leadership. As the choir performed so magnificently, seated with Elder Haight was Mayor Willie Brown of San Francisco, and I was seated next to Mayor Elihu Harris of Oakland. The choir's performance caught the interest of not only the audience but these two mayors. The choir sang an encore number of "San Francisco, Open Your Golden Gate" and "I Left My Heart in San Francisco" that brought Mayor Brown out of his seat. It was a wonderful celebration.

The voyage of the *Brooklyn* was, perhaps, the longest continuous sea journey of any

religious organization in history. It took six months and covered 24,000 miles. The Israelites crossed the Red Sea on their way to Canaan. The Pilgrims of 1620 crossed the Atlantic, a voyage of about 3,000 miles, and were on the water 63 days. The Saints on the *Brooklyn* crossed the equator on both the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, went from the icy Antarctic to the tropical Hawaiian Islands and then to California. There were 120 Puritan Pilgrims, whereas the *Brooklyn* Saints numbered approximately 240. The two groups were alike in many respects in that they were predominately young people with small children. They had dauntless courage, matchless faith, and an abiding trust in God.

After the martyrdom of the Prophet Joseph Smith in 1844, the persecution of the Saints continued and so did the plans of Church authorities to leave Nauvoo and to move west, there to establish themselves in the wilderness of what they referred to as "The Upper California," which at that time included the Great Basin.

About the same time, Church authorities decided that members living in New England and the Atlantic seaboard who didn't have the finances to go overland should pool their money and charter a ship. Orson Pratt of the Council of the Twelve went to New York to help organize the expedition.

Samuel Brannan, who was a printer from New York, was chosen as leader of the group, and he was also authorized to charter the sailing vessel. By combining their resources, the Saints were able to secure the 370-ton vessel *Brooklyn* under the command of Captain Richardson. The charge for the ship was \$1,200 per month if they would furnish all their own provisions and if the men would handle the cargo. The captain of the ship ordered the space between decks converted into living quarters. A long table, backless benches, and sleeping cubicles with bunks were built, and all were securely bolted to the deck.

They sailed on February 4, 1846, which also happened to be the same day that the Saints began leaving Nauvoo. There were approximately 70 men, 68 women, and 100 children living in cramped quarters with low ceilings where only the children could stand upright. Most everyone suffered from seasickness. Storms in the Atlantic blew them almost to the Cape Verde Islands off the coast of Africa. Storms battered them around the Horn. Scurvy was prevalent, and the water supply dwindled as they made their way north toward Valparaiso, Chile. Gale winds actually blew them back into Antarctic waters and out into the Juan Fernández Islands, made famous by Defoe in *Robinson Crusoe*. Here a young mother of seven was buried in what could have been the first LDS service held in the Southern Hemisphere. She had been thrown down a hatchway in a storm and died of her injuries. After five days' rest, the little group of pioneers sailed for Hawaii.

The *Brooklyn* stopped in Honolulu long enough to unload its cargo from New York. The passengers attended church services with missionaries who were serving there. They met Commodore Stockton, who informed them that the United States and Mexico were at war. He advised them to buy guns and ammunition and that Brannan should organize his men into military companies and drill them. They drilled all the way to California.

It took the Saints six weeks to travel from Honolulu to California. When they entered the Bay of San Francisco, which then was Yerba Buena, it was shrouded in fog, which, of course, is characteristic of San Francisco Bay even to this day. When the fog lifted, they were happy to see the Stars and Stripes flying. They would not have to fight. The passengers of the *Brooklyn* were the first colonists under the American flag. It was July 31, 1846. They had been at sea for nearly six months. Twelve deaths had occurred on the long trip. One boy, John Atlantic Burr, and one girl, Georgiana Pacific Robbins, were born at sea.

Yerba Buena was composed of nine dwellings and lay in the sand hills. The Saints faced the hardships of settlement in a raw, undeveloped land. The landing of the *Brooklyn* Saints doubled the population of Yerba Buena, which was renamed San Francisco six months later.

This band of pioneers established a number of firsts. The first school in California, where English was taught, was opened by Angelina Lovitt in an outbuilding of the deserted Mission Dolores. *The California Star* was the first newspaper in San Francisco, and Sam Brannan was its publisher. Twenty pioneers from the *Brooklyn* founded the first known agricultural colony in the San Joaquin Valley, called it New Hope, and planted the first wheat. Many went to work for John Sutter on his lands in the Sacramento Valley. Some of them were present when gold was discovered, and many went to the goldfields. Some of the *Brooklyn* Saints joined forces with the Mormon Battalion men who had been released from their service and were making their way back to Utah. Some remained in the Bay Area. They built the first public school in California. They established a ferry that served Fremont, San Francisco, and Sacramento. They founded a township named Brooklyn, which was later incorporated into the city of Oakland. Others began farming near Mission San Jose and in southern Alameda County. Some settled as far away as San Bernardino.

It is certainly proper for us to recognize and salute the Saints of the *Brooklyn* who came to California. Theirs was a journey that probably contained as many hardships as were encountered by most of the pioneers who came overland. Let us look in on one journal entry from this band of pioneers. This is an excerpt from a letter written by Mary Holland Sparks (1821–98) to Maria Clark dated November 15, 1846, some four months after they arrived at Yerba Buena. We pick up the account in the middle of the letter speaking of the sea voyage.

Then the wind began to blow. The ship began to roll and pitch. The sea broke over the sides of the ship. The water came down into the cabin in torrents some of the time. The captain came down into the cabin and said that he had done all that he could. The sails were all taken in and no one at the helm.

We now pick up another account of the captain's conversation. He said:

"My friends, there is a time in every man's life when it is fitting that he should prepare to die. That time has come to us, and unless God interposes, we shall all go to the bottom; I have done all in my power, but this is the worst gale I have known since I was master of a ship."

One woman . . . answered him: "Captain Richardson, we left for California and we shall get there." . . . The captain gazed upon them in mute surprise and left them. As he went upstairs he exclaimed, "these people have a faith that I have not," and added, to a gentleman: "They are either fools and fear nothing, or they know more than I do." [Augusta Joyce Crocheron, "The Ship Brooklyn," Western Galaxy 1 (March 1988): 81]

Returning to Mary Sparks' account:

Most all were seasick except myself and a few others. Mother was quite seasick. A few days after, I was taken sick with the canker and was sick almost all the voyage. And little Quartus had two spells of sickness. The last time he was sick, it seemed as though we should have to give him up. All remedies seemed to fail until we got some of the tincture of rhubarb, which soon relieved him.

But about the journey. The weather was very . . . cold around Cape Horn. We had good luck getting around the Cape, intending to stop at Valparaiso but could not get in on account of a very bad storm of rain and wind. But sailed on until we came to the island of Juan Fernandez, the former home of Robinson Crusoe, finding only eight inhabitants living in caves. . . . We then set sail for the Sandwich Islands [Hawaii] where we arrived in about

four weeks, finding quite a city where the King resided. Mr. Brannan was invited to preach in one of the churches where we attended meeting. Was treated with great respect. Got almost all kinds of fruit such as watermelon, mushrooms, pineapples, grapes and bananas. . . . Stayed about two weeks. We then set sail for California. Was about five weeks from Sandwich Islands and then we came in sight of the shores of California. Sailed up the Francisco Bay until we came in sight of a beautiful village on the shore where we landed. [Letter from Mary Holland Sparks to Maria Clark, 15 November 1846, in Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City; spelling has been corrected]

These intrepid pioneers of the Brooklyn certainly made their mark on this long sea journey from New York. They were inspired by their faith in Jesus Christ and in the restored gospel.

As we honor those who have gone on before us and as we pass on our own heritage to our children and grandchildren, this is best accomplished by keeping alive our spiritual heritage. This would include the heritage of our Church as well as the heritage and experiences that we have as individuals and in each of our families. Whether our ancestry is in the Church for five generations or we were baptized yesterday, there are those who went ahead and made the sacrifices and showed the faith and determination that brought us where we are today. They should be remembered and honored so that same faith and heritage can be passed on to the next generation.

Some time ago I went through the Book of Mormon and counted more than 220 verses where spiritual heritage was used as a means of preparing the hearts of the people to receive the doctrines. Listen to this from Alma:

And have ye forgotten so soon how many times he delivered our fathers out of the hands of their enemies, and preserved them from being destroyed, even by the hands of their own brethren? [Alma 9:10]

That message could have been taken out of our own Church history.

Yea, and he has also brought our fathers out of the land of Jerusalem; and he has also, by his everlasting power, delivered them out of bondage and captivity, from time to time even down to the present day; and I have always retained in remembrance their captivity; yea, and ye also ought to retain in remembrance, as I have done, their captivity. [Alma 36:29]

In each case, this approach was used to lay a foundation of faith.

This making reference to heritage was also used by the Prophet Joseph Smith. On June 8, 1830, Joseph convened the first general conference of the Church. In that meeting were five elders, three priests, and two teachers. The priesthood of the Church would not have filled up the front row here on the stand. To show the importance of the Aaronic Priesthood, the priests in that meeting were Martin Harris, Hyrum Smith, and Joseph Smith, Sr.

Joseph convened the meeting by reading the articles and covenants of the Church, which became a pattern for the conferences thereafter. These articles and covenants consisted of section 20 of the Doctrine and Covenants. He was harkening back to the spiritual foundation of the Church to make sure they stayed on course.

You will notice that the opening verses of section 20 tell of the divine organization of the Church and the role of the prophet. I have always felt our mission as members of the Church is to know enough of the history of the Restoration to teach fundamental principles and to bear testimony of the sacred work of the Prophet Joseph. Certainly to teach our heritage to those who come after us is a way of developing and maintaining faith by passing on our spiritual heritage to yet another generation as well as teaching the gospel to the world. But this is not all. Your own personal experiences should be remembered and recorded for the

sake of those who come after you. This is true whether you are just starting out or well established in life. Said President Gordon B. Hinckley:

It is good to look to the past to gain appreciation for the present and perspective for the future. It is good to look upon the virtues of those who have gone before, to gain strength for whatever lies ahead. It is good to reflect upon the work of those who labored so hard and gained so little in this world, but out of whose dreams and early plans, so well nurtured, has come a great harvest of which we are the beneficiaries. Their tremendous example can become a compelling motivation for us all, for each of us is a pioneer in his own life, often in his own family, and many of us pioneer daily in trying to establish a gospel foothold in distant parts of the world. [Gordon B. Hinckley, "The Faith of the Pioneers," Ensign, July 1984, p. 3]

I would like to finish today by recounting an experience in early Church history having to do with Israel Barlow. He was one of those who went up the Mississippi River from Quincy and helped scout out the area that later became Nauvoo. He lived in Nauvoo and came west with the Saints as one of the early pioneers. In the early 1850s he was attending a general conference of the Church.

It was in that meeting that Israel Barlow heard his name mentioned from the pulpit. In those days, this was how the brethren were called on missions. Israel Barlow was called on a mission to Great Britain. He didn't have to have an interview. He didn't have to have a medical examination. He was called to go on a mission. He had a family and was just getting started in his new area, so it was no small sacrifice to answer the call from the presidency of the Church. But he had enough faith that this was what he knew he must do. His wife was supportive of him, but she asked him for one favor on his way to the mission field. Would he stop at their old farm in Nauvoo and find

where they had buried their firstborn child and remove the grave to the Old Nauvoo Burial Ground? He said he would do this, and he made his way back across the Mississippi River and came up to Nauvoo.

He went to the farm and got the permission of the people who lived there to look for and move the grave. He said that at first he could not find it, but then he located it because his wife had planted ground cover around it. When he dug down, he felt that the grave was in such a condition that it could not be moved. According to his journal, he said to himself that he would leave it to the morning of the first resurrection and hoped that his wife would understand. As he turned away to continue his journey up the river and on to Great Britain, he turned back one more time just to be sure that he had made the right decision. He again felt that nothing more could be done, and as he turned away again he said that words came into his mind so clear that he knew he had not put them there. These words were, "Daddy, don't leave me here!" He said he stopped and took the necessary time and effort to move the grave of his firstborn child to the Old Nauvoo Burial Ground.

After he had completed the work, he said that he spent some time by the grave feeling this bond between himself and his firstborn child before he left, not knowing if he would return. To our knowledge, he never did return to the site. (See Ora H. Barlow, *The Israel Barlow Story and Mormon Mores* [Salt Lake City: Publishers Press, 1968], pp. 300–308.)

There is quite a message in the expression "Daddy, don't leave me here!" I feel that with the recent celebration in San Francisco the voyage of the Brooklyn Saints has been lifted from just a footnote of Church history to the position that it probably deserves. The faithful Saints who came on that ship deserve such attention. It is as if those who have written that chapter of Church history were saying to us, "Don't leave us here. Don't forget us."

And so it is with all of us as we remember our own heritage, as we remember the heritage of the Church, and as we pass it on to those who come after us and build their faith, just as our faith has been built because of the steadfastness of those who have gone on before us. Each of us is on his or her own sea voyage. Our steadfastness in finishing the voyage and just living from day to day the way we should live will leave a great heritage.

For the Book of Mormon people, it was the heritage of Moses leading the camp of Israel out of Egypt and into the promised land and Lehi and his family coming over the ocean. For Latter-day Saints, it is a young boy going into a grove of trees and, in an answer to faithful prayer, having God the Father and his Son Jesus Christ appear to him and speak to him. And then, through succeeding revelations and visions, it is having the fullness of the gospel of Jesus Christ restored with the priesthood, the authority, the covenants, and all that we enjoy today in the gospel of Jesus Christ. This is our heritage, and this was the heritage they sacrificed so much to establish. That heritage includes a thousand personal sacrifices taken from the lives of each member and deserves to live on for the sake of those who come after us. Like us, these early Saints knew the restored gospel was true and that there were living apostles and prophets. They were willing to sacrifice for that sacred knowledge.

I bear you my witness that there is a God in heaven and that he lives. I know God lives. I know that Jesus Christ is our Savior and our Redeemer. I know that Joseph Smith was a true prophet and that Gordon B. Hinckley is a prophet today. I know that this is the church of Jesus Christ and that the Book of Mormon is true.

May the Lord bless us that we may honor our heritage and pass the gift of faith to the generations who follow us. I say this in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.