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THE SEED OF THE WORD OF GOD.

*Discourse delivered in the Tabernacle,
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[REPORTED BY ARTHUR WINTER.]

I will read some of the words of Alma which he addressed to the Zoramites, as recorded in the 32nd chapter of the Book of Alma, commencing at the 26th paragraph:

Now as I said concerning faith—that it was not a perfect knowledge, even so it is with my words. Ye cannot know of their surety at first, unto perfection, any more than faith is a perfect knowledge.

But behold, if ye will awake and arouse your faculties, even to an experiment upon my words, and exercise a particle of faith; yea, even if ye can no more than desire to believe, let this desire work in you, even until ye believe in a manner that ye can give place for a portion of my words.

Now we will compare the word unto a seed. Now if ye give place, that a seed may be planted in your heart, behold, if it be a true seed, or a good seed, if ye do not cast it out by your unbelief, that ye will resist the Spirit of the Lord, behold, it will begin to swell within your breasts, and when you feel these swelling emotions, ye will begin to say within yourselves: it must needs be that this is a good seed, or that the word is good, for it beginneth to enlarge my soul; yea, it beginneth to enlighten my understanding, yea, it beginneth to be delicious to me.

Now behold, would not this increase your faith? I say unto you, Yea; nevertheless it hath not grown up to a perfect knowledge.

But behold, as the seed swelleth, and sprouteth, and beginneth to grow, then you must needs say that the seed is good; for behold it swelleth, and sprouteth, and beginneth to grow.

And now behold, are ye sure that this is a good seed? I say unto you, Yea; for every seed bringeth forth unto its own likeness;

Therefore, if a seed groweth it is good, but if it groweth not, behold it is not good, therefore it is cast away.

And now, behold, because ye have tried the experiment, and planted the seed, and it swelleth and sprouteth, and beginneth to grow, ye must needs know that the seed is good.

And now behold is your knowledge perfect? Yea, your knowledge is perfect in that thing, and your faith is dormant; and this because you know, for ye know that the word hath swelled your souls, and ye also know that it hath sprouted up, that your understanding doth begin to be enlightened, and your mind doth begin to expand.

O then, is not this real? I say unto you, Yea, because it is light; and whatsoever is light, is good, because it is discernable, therefore ye must know that it is good; and now behold, after ye have tasted this light, is your knowledge perfect?

Behold I say unto you, Nay, neither must ye lay aside your faith, for ye have only exercised

your faith to plant the seed, that ye might try the experiment to know if the seed was good.

And behold, as the tree beginneth to grow, ye will say, Let us nourish it with great care, that it may get root, that it may grow up, and bring forth fruit unto us. And now behold, if ye nourish it with much care, it will get root, and grow up, and bring forth fruit.

But if ye neglect the tree, and take no thought for its nourishment, behold it will not get any root, and when the heat of the sun cometh and scorcheth it, because it hath no root, it withers away and ye pluck it up and cast it out.

Now this is not because the seed was not good, neither is it because the fruit thereof would not be desirable, but it is because your ground is barren, and ye will not nourish the tree, therefore ye cannot have the fruit thereof.

And thus, if ye will not nourish the word, looking forward with an eye of faith to the fruit thereof, ye can never pluck of the fruit of the tree of life.

But if ye will nourish the word, yea, nourish the tree as it beginneth to grow, by your faith with great diligence, and with patience, looking forward to the fruit thereof, it shall take root; and behold it shall be a tree springing up unto everlasting life.

And because of your diligence, and your faith, and your patience with the word in nourishing it, that may take root in you, behold, by and by ye shall pluck the fruit thereof, which is most precious, which is sweet above all that is sweet, and which is white above all that is white; yea, and pure above all that is pure; and ye shall feast upon this fruit, even until ye are filled, that ye hunger not, neither shall ye thirst.

Then, my brethren, ye shall reap the rewards of your faith, and your diligence, and patience, and long suffering, waiting for the tree to bring forth fruit unto you.

These words that I have read in your hearing were addressed to a people who were making inquiry of this prophet concerning the manner in which they could worship the Lord. They were a poor people who had been thrust out because of their poverty from the synagogues which they had helped to build, and they were brought down in humility and were desirous to be instructed, and this man of God was led to speak to them in this strain. I was reminded very much of this in listening to the last hymn that has been sung this afternoon. These people called Zoramites had apparently apostatized from the Church. Alma, who was the presiding High Priest of the church, took his brethren and went among them to labor in the ministry and to teach them the word of God. He found them in a very peculiar position. They had built a great stand, elevated above the people, and each man went up there, and extending his arms prayed unto God in a very peculiar fashion, such as had not been known among that race before, and this was part of their prayer:

Holy God, we believe that thou hast separated us from our brethren; and we do not believe in the tradition of our brethren, which was

handed down to them by the childishness of their fathers; but we believe that thou hast elected us to be thy holy children; and also thou hast made it known unto us that there shall be no Christ;

But thou art the same yesterday, today, and for ever; and thou hast elected us, that we shall be saved, and whilst all around us are elected to be cast by thy wrath down to hell; for the which holiness, O God, we thank thee.

I do not know what effect this hymn that has been sung has upon the young, but when I heard it in my boyhood it filled me with a feeling of fear. These words had a great effect on me:

"We seem alike when here we meet,
Strangers may think we all are wheat,
But to the Lord's all-searching eyes,
Each heart appears without disguise."

And then the last verse:

Of awful thought, and is it so?
Must all mankind the harvest know?
Is every man a wheat or tare?
Me for that harvest, Lord, prepare.

Now a great many people have believed, and many still believe, that there are some who are predestined to salvation and others to damnation. I had heard of this belief when a child, and was filled with great dread lest I was elected to damnation and was one of the tares that would be plucked up. These Zoramites entertained the same belief. They had the idea that they were elected by the Lord to go to heaven, while others were elected to go to hell. This doctrine is horribly false. All mankind are elected to be saved. No man is a tare unless his conduct makes him such. He is not predestined to be a tare or to be damned, but he is predestined to receive, if he will, salvation and glory in the presence of God. We should understand that there is a difference between foreknowledge and foreordination. Because the Lord knew before the birth of Esau and Jacob what their course would be, it did not follow that He had predestined one to be a faithful man and the other to be unfaithful; but by His foreknowledge He was able to comprehend that. By His foreknowledge he is enabled to comprehend all our lives; but because He has this knowledge it does not follow that we are impelled, despite ourselves, to take the course that he may foresee we shall take. God has given us our agency, and we can exercise it in doing that which is right or in doing that which is wrong. This lies with ourselves, and I would like the young who are here today to understand that their lives are before them; good and evil are before them. They have the power to choose the good and reject the evil or to choose the evil and reject the good. In no other way can we be held accountable for the deeds done in the body. We shall stand before the judgment seat of