

Christ, and each of us will have to answer for the deeds done in the body, whether they be good or whether they be evil; and the judgment that will be pronounced upon us will be a righteous judgment. If we have done wrong, we shall have to atone for that wrong. If we have done that which is right in the sight of God; if we have walked before Him uprightly, confessing our sins and obtaining the forgiveness of them as we have gone along from day to day, then the reward that will be bestowed upon us will be because of our faithfulness in keeping the commandments of God. A great many have misunderstood the scriptures on this point and have fancied that some were elected for exaltation and glory and others for damnation. But they have lost sight of the other passages of scripture to the effect that every man has his agency and will himself be held accountable for that which he does.

Now, there are a great many people who are asking the Elders of this Church what evidence they can obtain that that which the Elders teach is true. They say that if the Elders would work a sign or perform a miracle, it would furnish them with evidence that they were true servants of God. I suppose this request has been made thousands of times in various lands and by different people of the Elders of this Church. They say, "Your Church professes to have the gifts that once accompanied the preaching of the Gospel. Now let us see the exhibition of this power. Do something that we will be forced to admit is done by the power of God, and we will believe you." Invariably the Elders have declined to do this because they have been commanded not to work signs to satisfy curiosity. Signs are given to follow the believer, not to convince people. The experience of the Elders in preaching the Gospel has been that where men and women have joined the Church through seeing some wonderful manifestation of the power of God, it has seemed to require a continued exhibition of this power to keep their faith alive. This is the experience, I suppose, of all the Elders that have noticed these things. There have been, however, a great many who have seen the power of God manifested and who have been led by that to seek God and to know for themselves, and have not joined the Church merely because they have seen the power of God manifested, but because their hearts were touched and their faith was aroused to believe that this was the Church of Christ. The best evidence that men can get, so far as I know, concerning the divinity of the work of God is to take the course recommended by the servant of God whose words I have read in your hearing. He compared the word of God to a seed. If it were received in the heart, and it began to swell, and to sprout, and to grow, those who received it might know that it was a good seed. This is the effect that the preaching of the Gospel has had upon the honest in heart in every land where the Elders of this Church have gone. The word of God has been like seed. It has fallen in many instances in good ground, and where it has thus fallen it has sprouted and grown and brought forth fruit, which, as the prophet said, is sweeter than all sweetness, whiter than all whiteness, and purer than all purity. I am sure the Latter-day Saints will see the appropriateness of the figure used by

the prophet in their own case. When they heard the Gospel they knew but little about the power of God; but they received it in their hearts, they cherished it, they nursed it, and it began to swell, and to sprout, and to grow, and it has filled them with light, with joy and with peace, and they know beyond all question that the seed which they have received in their hearts is a good seed, and that the fruit it has borne has been good fruit. It has satisfied the longing of their souls, and they testify before God and angels that it is the truth that they have received. They may never have seen an angel; they may never have seen the dead raised to life; they may never have seen the blind made to see, or the deaf made to hear; they may not have even seen the sick healed by the laying on of hands; but because they have not seen these mighty works it has not deprived them of a knowledge concerning that which they have received. That has rested upon them in power, and they know for themselves it is of God. They have cherished the seed; they have dug about it, and nourished it, and it has grown in their hearts until it has produced most precious fruit, filling their souls with joy, with peace, and with a heavenly feeling. And this is a greater testimony, my brethren and sisters, than visions, or dreams, or angelic manifestations, or the power of God manifested through the healing of the sick, because it is a living testimony in the soul of man.

There are instances, however, such as this prophet alludes to, where men do not cultivate the seed, and do not watch over it; they do not, in other words, pray. Prayer is to the soul like the irrigating stream to our dry and parched fields and orchards. Prayer nourishes, strengthens, and imparts vitality to the seed. The seed grows under the influence of prayer. But where prayer is neglected, the results are just as we see them when we neglect to irrigate our fields and orchards. That which is planted there begins to wither and dry up. So it is with the word of God in the human soul; it must be watered by the Spirit of God. Prayer must be exercised in order to invoke the power and blessing of God to rest upon it. Then the seed grows; the tree grows and flourishes; its branches spread abroad and fill the whole man, and he knows that it is the word of God that he has received. He has a living and abiding testimony in his heart concerning it, and doubt has no room within him. But let him neglect his prayers; let him neglect to cultivate the seed and to watch over it, then it begins to wither, and he begins to doubt, and to ask himself whether this is indeed the work of God. This is not because the seed was not good; it is because of the neglect of the individual.

This is the history of the people who have joined this Church. Thousands have been faithful to the Church. The ground of their faithfulness has been their devotion to the commandments of God, watching over themselves, and invoking by faith the blessing and power of God to rest upon them that they might be kept from sin and from darkness and unbelief, that doubt might never enter into their hearts. They have stood firm and steadfast in the midst of all the persecutions that have come upon the people of God. There has been no wavering in their faith, no trembling in their knees, no shaking in

their hands; but they have been firm in the power which God has given unto them, and they have lived and died faithful to the truth, bearing testimony to their last moments that God has indeed established His Church in the last days; that He has restored the everlasting Gospel from heaven in its original purity, with the power and authority to administer the ordinances thereof unto the children of men. But there is a large class who have not taken this course. It brings very sorrowful reflections to think of the number who have joined this Church and who are now not numbered with it, and who have died without the fellowship of the Saints of God and without the promises which God made unto them when they were faithful. Is this because the seed that was sown in their hearts was not good seed? No. We can testify, as did this ancient prophet, that this is not the case. It is not because there is any defect in the word of God, nor any unwillingness on the part of God to bestow His blessings; it is not because He has elected them to be damned; but it is because they have neglected to keep the commandments of God. No man ever fell away from this Church without a cause. God does not deal with His children in that manner. He does not leave them to themselves; He does not desert them. This is the glorious feature connected with the service of God. In the hour of the greatest extremity, in the time when His children need help the most, He is always near to them; He surrounds them with His power, and He bears them off as on eagles' wings. Therefore, no man ever fell into darkness; no man ever became weak in the faith; no man ever lost his standing in this Church, without a cause, and that cause has had its origin in himself. Within himself the cause can be traced, and the all-piercing eye of God the Eternal Father has penetrated it. He knows it. The Spirit of God, from which nothing can be hidden, knows it. The Holy Ghost is one of the Godhead, and when anything of this kind is done, He is grieved and withdraws Himself from the individual, who is then left to fall into the dark. The light of heaven withdraws itself from such an individual, and he no longer feels the testimony of the Spirit, and he wonders within himself how he could speak as he once did. This does not take place all at once. Rarely is the Spirit entirely withdrawn in a moment. It is like the sinking of the sun in our western horizon. We see the great orb of day disappear behind the mountains, and the heavens are still illumined with his glory; but gradually, and almost imperceptibly in our latitude, darkness spreads over the scene. So it is with the Spirit of the Lord. Being grieved and offended, and there being no repentance, it gradually withdraws itself from the soul, until darkness takes possession, and the man is left then to whatever influence and spirit he has yielded to. One noted man who was once one of the Twelve Apostles, and had been cut off the Church—a man who had testified that he had seen angels of God,—said on one occasion to some who had been his brethren, "I would give my right hand if I could feel as I once felt." That is a strange remark to make, but he had become so dark, and so hardened in his heart, that there was apparently no room within him for the Spirit of God, and it had