

# "HEAR YE HIM"

## A Devotional Series For Radio

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The Sermon: FAITH, THE SEED OF ETERNAL LIFE

Scripture: Book of Mormon, Alma 16:152-159 with omissions.

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 motions, ye will begin to say within yourselves, It must needs be that this is a good seed, ..... for it beginneth to enlarge my soul; yea, it beginneth to enlighten my understanding; yea, and 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 good seed swelleth and sprouteth and beginneth to grow, then ye must needs say that the seed is good; for behold it swelleth, and sprouteth, and beginneth to grow. .... And now, behold, because ye have tried to experiment, and planted the seed, and it swelleth and sprouteth and beginneth to grow, ye must needs know that the seed is good.

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Awake and arouse your faculties ... and exercise a particle of faith; yea, even if ye can no more than desire to believe, let this desire work in you.

Someone has said that faith is believing something which you know isn't so. That is not faith, but superstition. Superstition ignores intelligence, mistrusts the evidence of the senses, and believes the impossible. Faith is based on intelligence, but it supplements intelligence. It goes where knowledge cannot go. As Weatherhead says: "We must proceed as far as we can on the path of knowing, and then make the leap of faith to which the trend of knowing points." Faith is not believing something which you know to be impossible and untrue. Faith is acting on the assumption that the thing which reason tells you may be true and ought to be true, is true. Faith is acting as if the thing in which you intelligently believe and confidently hope is really true. Or, as Dean Inge says: "Faith is the resolution to stand or fall by the noblest hypothesis."

In every area of life it is necessary to have faith before one can obtain knowledge. Faith is the basis of the scientific method. The scientist gathers all the facts, and classifies and analyzes them with his best powers of reason and intelligence. Then he formulates a hypothesis which seems to be indicated by the facts. The hypothesis is based on his faith in a stable and orderly universe that functions according to law. Intelligence, reason,

and intuition say, "This ought to be true; this ought to work," but there is no test of whether the hypothesis is right or wrong until it is put to the test of action. If action proves it wrong, the scientist checks his facts and tries again; if it proves right, the leap of faith has led him to new knowledge.

Action is therefore an essential part of faith. If you have faith, you will act as if your hypothesis or belief were true. You will stake your life on it, if necessary. Donald Hankey says that faith is betting your life there is a God. Alma, our Book of Mormon writer quoted earlier in this service, urges his hearers to exercise a particle of faith, even if it is no more at first than a desire to believe; then to let this desire work in them until it had proved itself. He compared faith to a seed, which if planted, will grow. If it is never planted, if faith is not followed by action, there can be no growth. But if the planted seed does grow, the life and growth prove that it is a good seed.

Many people find it difficult to exercise faith. Some honestly find it hard to believe in anything they cannot see. Some are too stubborn to exercise faith. They will not believe in anything they cannot prove with their physical senses;

and yet they never seem to realize that all the evidence of the senses must be taken on faith; that there is no way to prove that their sensory perceptions are completely reliable. Some people say, "Show us a sign, and we will believe," or "Perform a miracle for us, and we will have faith." Faith that requires proof before it is acted upon is not faith at all, but knowledge. There is no need for faith if you already know.

When faith is put into action, and is proved by the results of that action to be justified and reasonable, then faith in that area becomes knowledge. Adding that knowledge to what we already have, and exercising reason and intelligence, we can then venture by faith in new directions and into new fields, until faith again becomes knowledge. Signs follow the believer. The proof comes after we act on our faith, not before.

Reason tells us that there must be a God. The order and beauty of the universe did not just happen. The mathematical probabilities that chance produced all the conditions we find on earth that make it a suitable habitation for man are so stupendous as to be unbelievable. For a more complete discussion of this idea, I recommend the little volume by A. Cressy Morrison, called "Man Does Not Stand Alone." Creation tells of a Creator. The order, law, and harmony of the universe speak of a Lawgiver and Ruler. So far as our intelligence can determine, only personality can manifest purpose, plan, order, or intelligence. A clod or a lump of rock never manifests purpose or plan, never puts things together in orderly fashion, never creates life.

If our premises thus far have been reasonable and true, then there must be a God, and he must be a person -- the infinite Person manifesting to the infinite degree all that we find highest and best in human personality. A person is interested in other persons. He desires fellowship with other persons. Two-way communication is possible between persons. If there is a God, and if he is a person, then both reason and faith tell us that he will hear and answer our prayers, and that if we are worthy and desirous of hearing, and tuned to hear him, he can and will speak to us.

Faith is acting as if God is. Faith is betting your life that there is a God. The man of faith prays to him as if he

were there, expecting the sort of answer which an infinitely wise, powerful, kind, intelligent and loving person would give. Such faith gets results. The prayer of faith is answered. Faith becomes knowledge, and we know that God is, and that he answers prayer. But in the very nature of things, God cannot answer the prayer of the man who doesn't believe in God, who won't exercise even a particle of faith by desiring to believe; because such a man will never pray any prayers to be answered.

Intelligence and reason can think of many reasons why eternal life ought to be so. Man instinctively longs for immortality. His hearts tells him that it ought to be so. He can see no sense, no rhyme or reason in extinguishing life just as we reach the stage of development where at last we begin to know how to live. We can observe the continuity and constancy of life in spite of the ever-changing material of the body. We can observe that all life gathers and organizes and controls the material substances which form its physical body, and reason that what has happened once may easily happen again in the resurrection.

Christianity teaches us that immortality and eternal life can be ours. It tells us of Christ's atonement which made our immortality possible. We can spurn and ridicule this offering for us, or we can have faith in it, believe in it, and act as if it were true. We can ignore Christ, or believe in him and act as if he is real, and as if his life, death, and resurrection are true. In the humility of faith we can repent of our folly and rebellion and unbelief, and begin to trust in him and obey him. We can base our lives on the premise that complete obedience to his precepts will bring the more abundant life. This is planting the seed of faith. If the seed begins to swell and grow, to enlarge the soul, expand the mind, and enlighten the understanding, then we know that the seed we have planted is good.

The seed of faith, once it is planted by action and obedience, must be nourished and cultivated, not neglected. Then its fruit must be awaited with patience. But if faith is supplied with a favorable environment, and properly nourished, it will in due season become knowledge and produce the fruit that is sweet, and white, and pure and precious above all other fruit -- the fruit of eternal life.