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## Lecture 7

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# Lecture 7

## ON FAITH

1. In the preceding lectures, we treated what faith was and the object on which it rested. Agreeable to our plan, we now proceed to speak of its effects.

2. As we have seen in our former lectures that faith is the principle of action and of power in all intelligent beings both in heaven and on earth, it will not be expected that we will attempt to unfold all its effects in a lecture of this description. Neither is it necessary to our purpose so to do, for it would embrace all things in heaven and on earth and encompass all the creations of God with all their endless varieties. For no world has yet been framed that was not framed by faith, neither has there been an intelligent being on any of God's creations who did not get there by reason of faith as it existed in himself or in some other being. Nor has there been a change or a revolution in any of the creations of God but it has been effected by faith. Neither will there be a change or a revolution in any of the vast creations of the Almighty unless it is effected in the same way, for it is by faith that the Deity works.

3. Let us here offer some explanation in relation to faith that our meaning may be clearly comprehended. We ask, then, what are we to understand by a man's working by faith? We answer: we understand that when a man works by faith he works by mental exertion instead of physical force. It is by words, instead of by exerting his physical powers, with which every being works when he works by faith. God said, "Let there be

light: and there was light” (Gen 1:3). Joshua spake and the great lights which God had created stood still (Joshua 10:12-13). Elijah commanded and the heavens were stayed for the space of three years and six months, so that it did not rain; he again commanded and the heavens gave forth rain (1 Kings 17:1; 18:1, 41-45). All this was done by faith. And the Savior says: “If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove . . . and it shall remove” (Matt 17:20); or “say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up . . . and . . . planted in the sea; and it should obey you” (Luke 17:6). Faith, then, works by words; and with these its mightiest works have been and will be performed.

4. It surely will not be required of us to prove that this is the principle upon which all eternity has acted and will act, for every reflecting mind must know that it is by reason of this power that all the hosts of heaven perform their works of wonder, majesty, and glory. Angels move from place to place by virtue of this power. It is by reason of it that they are enabled to descend from heaven to earth. And were it not for the power of faith, they never could be ministering spirits to them who should be heirs of salvation, neither could they act as heavenly messengers. For they would be destitute of the power necessary to enable them to do the will of God.

5. It is only necessary for us to say that the whole visible creation as it now exists is the effect of faith. It was faith by which it was framed, and it is by the power of faith that it continues in its organized form and by which the planets move round their orbits and sparkle forth their glory. So, then, faith is truly the first principle in the science of theology, and, when understood, it leads the mind back to the beginning and carries it forward to the end, or, in other words, from eternity to eternity.

6. As faith, then, is the principle by which the heavenly hosts perform their works and by which they enjoy all their felicity, we might expect to find it set forth in a revelation from God as the principle upon which his creatures here below must act to obtain the felicities enjoyed by the Saints in the eternal

world. And when God would undertake to raise up men for the enjoyment of himself, he would teach them the necessity of living by faith, and the impossibility of their enjoying the blessedness of eternity without it, seeing that all the blessings of eternity are the effects of faith.

7. Therefore, it is said, and appropriately too, that “without faith it is impossible to please him [God]” (Heb 11:6). If it should be asked why it is impossible to please God without faith, the answer would be that without faith it is impossible for men to be saved. As God desires the salvation of men, he must, of course, desire that they should have faith; and he could not be pleased unless they had it, or else he could be pleased with their destruction.

8. From this we learn that the many exhortations to have faith in him which have been given by inspired men to those who had received the word of the Lord were not mere common-place matters, but were for the best of all reasons. And that reason is that without it there is no salvation, neither in this world nor in that which is to come. When men begin to live by faith, they begin to draw near to God; and when their faith is perfected, they are like him. And because he is saved, they are saved also; for they will be in the same situation he is in, because they have come to him. And “when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is” (1 John 3:2).

9. As all the visible creation is an effect of faith, so is salvation also. (We mean salvation in its most extensive latitude of interpretation, whether it is temporal or spiritual.) In order to have this subject clearly set before the mind, let us ask, what situation must a person be in in order to be saved? or, what is the difference between a saved man and one who is not saved? We answer from what we have before seen of the heavenly worlds that they must be persons who can work by faith and who are able, by faith, to be ministering spirits to them who shall be heirs of salvation. They must have faith to enable them to act in the

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\* Bracketed material in the 1835 edition, but without brackets.

presence of the Lord; otherwise, they cannot be saved. And what constitutes the real difference between a saved person and one not saved is the difference in the degree of their faith. One's faith has become perfect enough to lay hold upon eternal life, and the other's has not. But to be a little more particular, let us ask, where shall we find a prototype into whose likeness we may be assimilated, so we may be made partakers of life and salvation? or, where shall we find a saved being? For if we can find a saved being, we may ascertain without much difficulty what all others must be in order to be saved—they must be like that individual or they cannot be saved. We think that it will not be a matter of dispute that two beings who are unlike each other cannot both be saved; for whatever constitutes the salvation of one will constitute the salvation of every creature which will be saved. And if we find one saved being in all existence, we may see what all others must be or else not be saved. We ask, then, where is the prototype? or, where is the saved being? We conclude as to the answer of this question that there will be no dispute among those who believe the Bible that it is Christ. All will agree that he is the prototype or standard of salvation, or in other words, that he is a saved being. And if we should continue our interrogation and ask how it is that he is saved, the answer would be that he is a just and holy being. If he were anything different from what he is, he would not be saved; for his salvation depends on his being precisely what he is and nothing else. For if it were possible for him to change in the least degree, surely Christ would fail of salvation and lose all his dominion, power, authority and glory, which constitute salvation. For salvation consists in the glory, authority, majesty, power and dominion which Jehovah possesses and in nothing else; and no being can possess it but himself or one like him. Thus says John: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure" (1 John 3:2-3). Why purify themselves as he is pure? Because if they do not, they cannot be like him.

10. The Lord said unto Moses, “Speak unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say unto them, Ye shall be holy: for I the Lord your God am holy” (Lev 19:2). And Peter says, “But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy” (1 Peter 1:15-16). And the Savior says, “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect” (Matt 5:48). If any should ask, why all these sayings? the answer is to be found from what is before quoted from John’s epistle, that when he (the Lord) shall appear, the Saints will be like him; and if they are not holy, as he is holy, and perfect, as he is perfect, they cannot be like him. For no beings can enjoy his glory without possessing his perfections and holiness, no more than they could reign in his kingdom without his power.

11. This clearly sets forth the propriety of the Savior’s saying: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father” (John 14:12). This taken in connection with some of the sayings in the Savior’s prayer recorded in John 17 gives great clearness to his expressions. He says, “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me. Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world” (John 17:20-24).

12. All these sayings put together give as clear an account of the state of the glorified Saints as language could give—the works that Jesus had done they were to do, and greater works than those which he had done among them should they do, and that

because he went to the Father. He does not say that they should do these works in time; but they should do greater works, because he went to the Father. He says, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory" (John 17:24). These sayings taken together make it very plain that the greater works which those who believed on his name were to do were to be done in eternity, where he was going and where they should behold his glory. He had said in another part of his prayer that he desired of his Father that those who believed on him should be one in him, as he and the Father were one in each other. "Neither pray I for these [the apostles]\* alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one"; that is, they who believe on him through the apostles' words, as well as the apostles themselves, "that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us" (John 17:20-21).

13. What language can be plainer than this? The Savior surely intended to be understood by his disciples, and he spake that they might understand him. For he declares to his Father, in language not to be easily mistaken, that he wanted his disciples, even all of them, to be as himself and the Father are, for as he and the Father were one so they might be one with them (John 17:21). And what is said in the 22nd verse is calculated to establish this belief more firmly, if it needs anything to establish it. He says: "And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one" (v 22). This is as much as to say that unless they have the glory which the Father had given him, they could not be one with them. For he says he had given them the glory that the Father had given him that they might be one, or, in other words, to make them one.

14. This fills up the measure of information on this subject and shows most clearly that the Savior wished his disciples to understand that they were to be partakers with him in all things, not even his glory excepted.

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\*Bracketed material in the 1835 edition, but without brackets.

15. It is scarcely necessary here to observe what we have previously noticed: that the Father and the Son have the glory they have because they are just and holy beings; and if they were lacking in one attribute or perfection which they have, they could never enjoy the glory which they have, for it requires them to be precisely what they are in order to enjoy it. And if the Savior gives this glory to any others, he must do it in the very way set forth in his prayer to his Father: by making them one with him as he and the Father are one. In so doing he would give them the glory which the Father has given him; and when his disciples are made one with the Father and Son, as the Father and the Son are one, who cannot see the propriety of the Savior's saying, "The works that I do shall [they]' do also; and greater works than these shall [they]' do; because I go unto my Father" (John 14:12).

16. These teachings of the Savior most clearly show unto us the nature of salvation and what he proposed unto the human family when he proposed to save them: he proposed to make them like unto himself, and he was like the Father, the great prototype of all saved beings. For any portion of the human family to be assimilated into their likeness is to be saved, and to be unlike them is to be destroyed. On this hinge turns the door of salvation.

17. Who cannot see, then, that salvation is the effect of faith? For as we have previously observed, all the heavenly beings work by this principle; and it is because they are able so to do that they are saved, for nothing but this could save them. And this is the lesson which the God of heaven has been endeavoring to teach to the world by the mouth of all his holy prophets. Hence we are told that "without faith it is impossible to please him [God]" (Heb 11:6), and that salvation "is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed" (Rom 4:16). And "Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by

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\* Bracketed material in the 1835 edition, but without brackets. John 14:12 uses "he."

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the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone” (Rom 9:31-32). And Jesus said unto the man who brought his son to him to get the devil who tormented him cast out: “If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth” (Mark 9:23). These references with a multitude of other scriptures which might be quoted plainly set forth the light in which the Savior, as well as the Former-day Saints, viewed the plan of salvation. It was a system of faith—it begins with faith, it continues by faith, and every blessing which is obtained in relation to it is the effect of faith, whether it pertains to this life or that which is to come. All the revelations of God bear witness to this. If there were children of promise, they were the effects of faith, not even the Savior of the world excepted. “Blessed is she that believed,” said Elizabeth to Mary, when she went to visit her, “for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord” (Luke 1:45). Nor was the birth of John the Baptist any the less a matter of faith. For in order that his father Zacharias might believe, he was struck dumb. And through the whole history of the scheme of life and salvation, it is a matter of faith. Every man received according to his faith: according as his faith was, so were his blessings and privileges. And nothing was withheld from him when his faith was sufficient to receive it. He could stop the mouths of lions, quench the violence of fire, escape the edge of the sword, wax valiant in fight, and put to flight the armies of the aliens; women could, by their faith, receive their dead children to life again (see Heb 11:33-35). In a word, there was nothing impossible for them who had faith. All things were in subjection to the Former-day Saints, according as their faith was. By their faith they could obtain heavenly visions and the ministering of angels. They could have knowledge of the spirits of just men made perfect, of the general assembly and church of the Firstborn whose names are written in heaven, of God, the Judge of all, and of Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant. And they could become familiar with the third heavens, see and hear things which were not only unutterable but were unlawful to utter. Peter, in view of the power of faith, says to the Former-day Saints: “Grace

and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, according as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue” (2 Peter 1:2-3). In the first epistle, he says: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” (1 Peter 1:3-5).

18.\* These sayings put together show the Apostle’s views most clearly, so as to admit of no mistake in the mind of any individual. He says that all things that pertain to life and godliness were given unto them through the knowledge of God and our Savior Jesus Christ. And if the question is asked, how were they to obtain the knowledge of God? (For there is a great difference between believing in God and knowing him—knowledge implies more than faith. And notice that all things that pertain to life and godliness were given through the knowledge of God.) The answer is that through faith they were to obtain this knowledge; and, having power by faith to obtain the knowledge of God, they could with it obtain all other things which pertain to life and godliness.

19. By these sayings of the Apostle Peter, we learn that it was by obtaining a knowledge of God that men got the knowledge of all things which pertain to life and godliness, and this knowledge was the effect of faith. So all things which pertain to life and godliness are the effects of faith.

20. From this we may extend as far as any circumstances may require, whether on earth or in heaven, and we will find it the testimony of all inspired men or heavenly messengers that all things that pertain to life and godliness are the effects of faith and

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\*Paragraphs 18, 19, and 20 in this edition were misnumbered 16, 17, and 18 in the 1835 edition.

nothing else. All learning, wisdom, and prudence fail, and everything else as a means of salvation but faith. This is the reason that the fishermen of Galilee could teach the world, because they sought by faith and by faith obtained. And this is the reason that Paul counted all things but filth and dross—what he formerly called his gain he called his loss. Yea, he counted “all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord,” because he had to suffer “the loss of all things” to obtain the faith by which he could enjoy the knowledge of Christ Jesus the Lord (Philip 3:7-8). This is the reason that the Former-day Saints knew more and understood more of heaven and of heavenly things than all others beside, because this information is the effect of faith—to be obtained by no other means. And this is the reason that men, as soon as they lose their faith, run into strifes, contentions, darkness, and difficulties. For the knowledge which tends to life disappears with faith, but returns when faith returns. For when faith comes, it brings its train of attendants with it—apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers, gifts, wisdom, knowledge, miracles, healings, tongues, interpretation of tongues, etc. All these appear when faith appears on the earth and disappear when it disappears from the earth. For these are the effects of faith and always have attended and always will attend it. For where faith is, there will the knowledge of God be, also, with all things which pertain thereto: revelations, visions, and dreams, as well as every other necessary thing, so the possessors of faith may be perfected and obtain salvation. For God must change; otherwise, faith will prevail with him. And he who possesses it will obtain all necessary knowledge and wisdom through it until he shall know God and the Lord Jesus Christ, whom he has sent, whom to know is eternal life. Amen.