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A Meaning of “Hope”

Author(s): LeGrand L. Baker and Stephen D. Ricks

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<http://www.legrandlbaker.org/>

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Joseph clarified Peter's statement by showing that the destiny of God's children is to become like him. The Prophet reasoned:

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. ... Thus says John, in his first epistle, third chapter, second and third verses: “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” (Lecture 7:9).

In our colloquial language, “hope” is a wish overcast with doubt. But in the scriptures, to hope is to anticipate in the full light of life—to live as though the covenant were already fulfilled. The “things hoped for” are, as Alma described them:

Having faith on the Lord; having a hope that ye shall receive eternal life; having the love of God always in your hearts, that ye may be lifted up at the last day and enter into his rest (Alma 13:29).

Thus, Alma could also explain:

And now as I said concerning faith—faith is not to have a perfect knowledge of things; therefore if ye have faith ye hope for things which are not seen, which are true (Alma 32:21).

If one reads faith as *pistis*, the substance and the evidence of the covenants, then, in the triumvirate faith, hope, and charity, hope is greater than *pistis*, but lesser than charity, “which is the greatest of all.” (Moroni 7:46) Prayer is the way that leads to all three.

Prayer is like walking in the mountain with a friend. There are times when you see a sunrise so expansive and glorious that it must be shared with your friend to be fully appreciated. There are times you walk with the other in silence, then you stop and your eyes look—alone—as you ponder the perfect beauty of a columbine. Sometimes you talk

In the Book of Mormon.

together—your friend and you—but only briefly – because a smile can say so much more. Sometimes the words flow like the confluence of two great rivers and the ideas reach out to embrace a world as big as the open sea. Sometimes you walk together quietly and say nothing, and the unspoken words are more profound than speech. There is no aloneness in the quiet, just as there was no aloneness when all your conscious world was only the beauty of a single columbine. Friendship is like that. So is prayer.

Prayer in the name of Christ is requisite to show one’s reliance on the Father’s covenant that is personified in the Savior (see Moroni 10:32-33). One’s faith in Christ increases as one begins to rely more heavily on the feelings that can be identified as the testimony of the Holy Ghost. Those feelings are the evidence—the assurance—the *pistis*—of the divinity of Christ, of the validity of the Atonement, and of the absolute integrity of the Father who first made the covenant. When we exercise “faith in Christ,” we evoke the powers promised by the Father’s covenants, but we also give evidences of our own faithfulness to the conditions of the covenants. The Prophet Joseph concludes Lecture Seven:

That it was a system of faith—it begins with faith, and 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. ... 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; in a word, there was nothing impossible with 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, the ministering of angels, have knowledge of the spirits of just men made perfect, of the general assembly and church of the first born, whose names are written in heaven, of God the judge of all, of Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and become familiar with the third heavens, see and hear things which were not only unutterable, but were unlawful to utter (center of lecture 17).

...it was by obtaining a knowledge of God that men got the knowledge of all

Psalms of Israel's Temple Worship

things which pertain to life and godliness, and this knowledge was the effect of faith; so that all things which pertain to life and godliness are the effects of faith.⁹³⁷

For our part, the evidences of the covenants we make with God are as numerous as the covenants themselves. Ordinances are the evidences of the covenants—the acts of baptism, the sacrament, the other ordinances, and taking upon us the name of Christ. Ultimately, however, the evidence of the covenant is not what one wears or what one does, but *what one is*. As one “walks” the “path” that leads to the top of the “mountain” one receives many assurances. But, and perhaps more important, after one leaves the “mountain,” the “way” one continues to “walk”—forgiving, repenting, obeying God’s commandments and instructions, sacrificing a broken heart and contrite spirit, loving our Father’s children—all these are “the evidences of things not seen.” Then, as Christ *is* the personification, the fulfillment, and the token of the Father’s covenant with us, so, after much preparation and many preliminaries, the way we conduct our lives becomes the living evidence of our covenants with the Father through the Savior.

Mormon continues to discuss the practical meaning of faith by defining “hope” in a way that is compatible with the way we defined it—as living as though the covenants were already fulfilled.

40 And again, my beloved brethren, I would speak unto you concerning hope. How is it that ye can attain unto faith, save ye shall have hope?

41 And *what is it that ye shall hope for?* Behold I say unto you that ye shall have *hope through the atonement of Christ and the power of his resurrection, to be raised unto life eternal, and this because of your faith in him according to the promise.*

42 Wherefore, if a man have *faith* he must needs have *hope*; for without faith there cannot be any hope. [without defining the substance and giving evidence of the validity of the covenant there can be no anticipation of its unspecified fulfillment]

43 And again, behold I say unto you that *he cannot have faith and hope, save he shall be meek, and lowly of heart.*

44 If so, his faith and hope is vain, for none is acceptable before God, save the

⁹³⁷ Smith, *Lectures on Faith*, Lecture 7:19.

In the Book of Mormon.

meeek [as in the 5th verse of the Beatitudes] and lowly in heart [as “broken heart and contrite spirit”]; and if a man be meek and lowly in heart, and confesses by the power of the Holy Ghost that Jesus is the Christ, he must needs have charity; for if he have not charity he is nothing; wherefore he must needs have charity (Moroni 7:40-44).

Hope is living as though the covenants are already fulfilled, and charity is the binding power that validates the covenants and seals their promises into reality.