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## Lesson VI. The Rod

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## LESSON VI.

## The Rod.

(For Tuesday, November 23, or Sunday, November 21.)

In lesson three we quoted a prominent educator, not of our faith, as follows:

"The 'Mormon' conception of God, of Heaven, and of the resurrection, with its restoration of earth's ties and associations is the most inspirational doctrine I have ever listened to."

Latter-day Saints rejoice in such a glorious doctrine—it is the guiding star of their faith. To them eternal life is indeed "God's greatest gift to man."

Just as the Book of Mormon is unique in the certainty with which it declares the reality of the resurrection, so is it unique in the life it prescribes for one who would attain the full fruits of the resurrection. No doctrine of salvation through grace alone—no eleventh hour repentance—no "believe and be saved" doctrine is found in the Book of Mormon. Salvation is made a glorious achievement—the crowning event in a life of devotion and service.

It has always been incomprehensible to the writer that certain churches throughout the world should teach that the greatest thing known to man could be had for the mere asking. Everything in life gives the lie to such a doctrine. The young lady who performs beautifully on the piano has paid for her success in hours of practice. Recently a girl of seventeen charmed an audience in Salt Lake City with a recital consisting of eleven selections, all of which were played from memory. At the conclusion of the recital, one of the young

lady's admirers, charmed by the excellence of the performance, remarked, "How can you play so many selections so beautifully without any music? How do you remember all your pieces?"

"O, they're part of me," replied the young lady, "I've given myself almost entirely to my music for the last eight years."

Having paid the price, she had achieved success. Sitting at the piano and wishing to become a player never would have brought the results.

And so it is in all of life. The successful tennis player has served and received thousands of balls—the football star has practically grown up on the gridiron—the housewife with a reputation for delicious cakes has baked them by the score. Wherever we turn we find that achievement follows devotion and consecration. The one great outstanding illustration of this truth is the glory that attaches to motherhood. Mother is the wonderful character she is because she has devoted her full energies to blessing her children. No "saved by grace" attitude on her part would call forth the love and appreciation which mark her children. She is mother in that she has done for them what no one else could do.

And yet in the face of all these facts there are those who still cry "just believe and be saved." What would salvation be worth if we could secure it for the asking? Heaven will be Heaven to us because of its associations and its op-

portunities to achieve the things we have always had in our hearts to achieve.

How can we achieve these things if we have never made any preparation for them? The Savior never taught us such a doctrine as salvation without effort. Just as He came "To do the will of the Father" so he has enjoined us to do the same will.

Consider the following passages:

"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." Matt. 7:21.

"He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him." John 14:21.

And so with the disciples. Turn to their words as recorded in these references: James 1:22-25; James 2:14-26; I John 2:3, 4; Revelations 20:12.

The Book of Mormon is replete with passages that declare that the works which a man does are the measure of his salvation.

In fact faith and good works are companion words in Book of Mormon exhortations to righteousness.

"Therefore, I would that ye should be steadfast and immovable, always abounding in good works, that Christ, the Lord God Omnipotent, may seal you his, that you may be brought to heaven, that ye may have everlasting salvation and eternal life, through the wisdom, and power, and justice and mercy of him, who created all things, in heaven and in earth, who is God above all. Amen." Mosiah 5:15.

"And now I would that ye should be humble, and be submissive, and gentle; easy to be entreated; full of patience and long suffering; being temperate in all things; being diligent in keeping the commandments of

God at all times; asking for whatsoever things ye stand in need, both spiritual and temporal; always returning thanks unto God for whatsoever things ye do receive;"

"And see that ye have faith, hope, and charity, and then ye will always abound in good works;"

"And now, may the peace of God rest upon you, and upon your houses and lands, and upon your flocks and herds, and all that you possess; your women and your children, according to your faith and good works, from this time forth and forever. And thus I have spoken. Amen." Alma 7:23, 24, 27.

For further passages conveying the same truths turn to: Alma 5:41, 42; Alma 9:28; Alma 13:3; Alma 26:22; Alma 37:34; Heleman 12:24; 3 Nephi 27:12, 14; Ether 12:4.

One of the most dramatic presentations of this fact to be found in scripture is that contained in the eighth chapter of I Nephi—Lehi's vision. The account here given, together with its interpretation as found in I Nephi, chapter 11 and 12 is clearly one of the gems of the Book of Mormon.

"And it came to pass after I had prayed unto the Lord, I beheld a large and spacious field."

"And it came to pass that I beheld a tree, whose fruit was desirable to make one happy."

"And I beheld a rod of iron, and it extended along the bank of the river, and led to the tree by which I stood."

"And I also beheld a straight and narrow path, which came along by the rod of iron, even to the tree by which I stood; and it also led by the head of the fountain, unto a large and spacious field, as if it had been a world."

"And I saw numberless concourses of people; many of whom were pressing forward, that they might obtain the path which led unto the tree by which I stood."

"And it came to pass that they did come forth, and commence in the path which led to the tree."

"And it came to pass that there arose a mist of darkness; yea, even

an exceeding great mist of darkness, insomuch that they who had commenced in the path, did lose their way, that they wandered off and were lost."

"And it came to pass that I beheld others pressing forward, and they came forth and caught hold of the end of the rod of iron; and they did press forward through the mist of darkness clinging to the rod of iron, even until they did come forth and partake of the fruit of the tree."

"And after they had partaken of the fruit of the tree they did cast their eyes about as if they were ashamed."

"And I also cast my eyes round about, and beheld, on the other side of the river of water, a great and spacious building; and it stood as it were in the air, high above the earth;

"And it was filled with people, both old and young, both male and female, and their manner of dress was exceeding fine; and they were in the attitude of mocking and pointing their fingers towards those who had come at, and were partaking of the fruit." 1 Nephi 8:9, 10, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27.

Interesting as is the account of this vision itself, the interpretation as given to Nephi, chapter 11, 12 is doubly so.

The tree with its fruit so "desirable to make one happy" the Love of God.

The Iron Rod leading to it—the Word of God.

The Mist of Darkness—the temptations of the devil.

The large and spacious building—the pride of the world.

The river of filthy water—the depths of hell.

A number of features are fascinating in this description. In the first place, the Glory of God—His love, and the privilege of enjoying it—are desired and sought after by the great majority of mankind. Man yearns to associate with his fellows in the presence of God. He does not naturally seek for vice and evil.

But while this fruit of the love of

God is made so desirable it is not passed out freely to people reclining on downy couches of salvation through grace. The only way to attain the desired fruit is to tread the narrow path which can be followed only by holding to the iron rod—in other words, he who would attain it must plod forward doing the will of the Father.

Nor is this enough. He who would follow the rod must survive mist of darkness through which only devotion can lead. And then, through the mist, one is challenged by the mocking call from the proud of the earth as they revel in their luxury and gaiety.

The vision further makes perfectly clear that eleventh hour repentance cannot possibly guarantee the salvation so often claimed for it. For should one of the occupants of the house of pride decide suddenly to forsake his sins and join with those seeking the fruit of eternal life, he finds himself confronted by the river of filth across which it is impossible to go. He must first retrace his steps through repentance back over the paths that led to the house of pride and then back in the vale of humility he may begin anew, this time taking the right hand path of virtue and self denial to the iron rod by which he may guide himself to the fruit of paradise.

The fruit is delicious but the rod is a rod of iron—a symbol that bespeaks strength and courage on the part of him who would achieve salvation.

#### OUTLINE.

Eternal Life—The Great Gift of God—Such a great reward to be had only by paying the price of service.

The illustration of the young pianist. Other illustrations.

Jesus' teachings concerning salvation.

The words of His disciples.

Book of Mormon teachings.

Lehi's vision of the Rod and the interpretation of the vision as given to Nephi.

#### QUESTIONS AND SUGGESTIONS.

1. What is the Latter-day Saint conception of salvation?

2. Show by reference to our ordinary experiences in life that except in the case of gifts, we get only what we pay for.

3. Show how it is unreasonable to expect to receive salvation as a gift from God without an effort on our part.

4. Turn through and discuss the passages listed in this lesson.

5. Show how "salvation by grace alone" cheapens the idea of salvation.

5. What significance attaches to the Word of God as a rod of iron?

7. Discuss the appropriateness of likening the temptations of the devil to mists of darkness.

8. Discuss the thought that a river separates the vanity of the world and the tree of eternal life.

9. Show how the life of Nephi as compared with the life of Laman, illustrates the truth that a man must work out his salvation.

10. Apply this same test to other men, who have achieved distinction in the history of the world.

## Vital Problems of Life.

Advanced Senior Course of Study.

The Push of Poverty (Continued)

### LESSON IV.

#### Why People are Poor, or the Causes of Poverty.

**Bad Luck, Calamity.** As some people are made rich through an accident, so are some made poor through calamity. Calamity-poverty is usually temporary. The person of thrifty habits soon gets on to upgrade and climbs out of penury. Bad luck may knock a man down, but pluck rarely fails to put him on his feet and send him on his way rejoicing. One need not go into history for illustrations of this fact, they are all around us.

**Bad Management.** Poor management is much more prevalent than poor luck. Too many people practice suiting the thought to the action, rather than thinking first and then suiting the action to the thought. Their movements are like that of the hunter who aims after

the gun goes off. They are active but not industrious, because much of their activity is noncreative; they work at cross purpose. There is much busy-ness but little business in their lives.

An old pioneer used to say of two sons, one of my boys is always up at peep of day, but "putters" around all day, the other one lies abed until sunrise, and then starts and goes through his work as if he had planned it in his sleep.

The bad manager starts many things and finishes few; he makes progress like an automobile without chains, on a slippery turnpike.

**Super-contentment.** The apex of some people's ambition is to see the same sights that their fathers have seen, and run the same race