



Type: Magazine Article

Lessons from the Life of Nephi

Author(s): William A. Morton

Source: *The Latter-Day Saints' Millennial Star*, Vol. 70, No. 45
(5 November 1908)

Published by: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Page(s): 705–708

Abstract: The account of Nephi's conduct and Laman and Lemuel's treatment of him while crossing the ocean teaches important principles of the gospel. A righteous person will prosper and the unrighteous will not. We bind ourselves by cords that hinder us by evil speaking, neglect of prayer, disobedience, and failure to pay tithing.

THE LATTER-DAY SAINTS'
MILLENNIAL STAR.
[ESTABLISHED 1840.]

"Let us have faith that right makes might, and in that faith let us to the end dare to do our duty as we understand it."—
LINCOLN.

No. 44, Vol. LXX.

Thursday, November 5, 1908.

Price One Penny.

LESSONS FROM THE LIFE OF NEPHI.

IT is recorded that the Prophet Joseph Smith said that a man could get nearer to God by reading the Book of Mormon than by the perusal of any other book. This assertion has been ridiculed by people who have read the sacred volume, not for the good that it contains, but for the purpose of finding slips and flaws in it; and also by others who have not as much as seen a copy of the inspired record. But there are thousands of living witnesses who could testify to the truth of the prophet's declaration concerning the influence of the Book of Mormon upon those who would read it with a prayerful heart and with a desire to be benefited by the truths and lessons which it teaches.

In the opening chapters of that book there are, in the life of Nephi, examples of faith, obedience, perseverance, fidelity, patience, forbearance, charity, purity, holiness, etc., that call forth our admiration and inspire us to emulation. In the nineteenth chapter of the First Book of Nephi there is chronicled an event from which profitable lessons can be learned. The sacred writer tells us that after the company had been sailing for some time towards the promised land his brothers Laman and Lemuel, the sons of Ishmael and their wives, began to conduct themselves improperly, indulging in lightness and rudeness of speech, dancing and singing, and excluding from their minds all thoughts of Him who had saved them from captivity and bondage and by whose

almighty power they were being preserved from day to day. This vexed the soul of the righteous young prophet, Nephi, who remonstrated with the merrymakers; pleading with them to desist from such unseemly conduct and to act soberly in the sight of God. His gentle reproof, as it had on several previous occasions, aroused the anger of the rebellious ones, and seizing Nephi they bound him with strong cords to a stake.

Then the Lord spoke in a manner which caused the wicked to fear and tremble. The director refused to longer point the way, a terrible storm arose, and for four days the company was driven back upon the waters. Seeing destruction staring them in the face, the rebellious members of the party repented of their evil deeds and released Nephi, when, through the faith and prayers of that devout and God-fearing man, the storm subsided, the wind reversed its course and the vessel proceeded on her journey toward the land of promise.

It is scarcely necessary to point out the moral which this narrative teaches. It stands out so clear and distinct that he who runs may read. It teaches us that righteousness means progress, unrighteousness retrogression. While Laman and Lemuel and their associates conducted themselves properly, the vessel kept her course and sailed on steadily toward the desired haven; but when they deviated from the path of right, they were driven back. There are Latter-day Saints who have had a similar experience. They started out well; their souls were full of love for the Lord and His work; they were faithful in attending their meetings and to the other duties which devolved upon them as members of the Church of Christ; and while they were in this condition they made progress; they grew in grace, in knowledge of the truth, and in favor with God and man. But after a time they became slack in the performance of their sacred duties, and then they began to retrograde.

Another lesson we can learn from this item of history is: that just as the Nephite vessel did not make progress while her captain was bound, neither can we make progress in the Church of Christ if we tie ourselves up by cords of our own weaving. These are some of the bands by which, if we bind ourselves, we shall stay our progress and go back in the way of life and salvation.

JEALOUSY.—It was the jealousy of Laman and Lemuel that led them to bind their brother. Nephi had been chosen by the Lord to be their teacher in righteousness, but they refused to receive instruction from him. Time and again the jealousy which was in their hearts manifested itself in both word and act. Jealousy was one of the chief causes of their downfall. If there be a Latter-day Saint who is jealous of his brother or sister, because he or she has been placed in a position above himself, let such a one learn a lesson from Nephi's jealous brothers. Jealousy is one of the strong cords by which men bind their souls. Another cord is:

EVIL SPEAKING.—"Speak not evil one of another, brethren,"

was the advice given by one of the ancient apostles. This is as applicable to the Latter-day Saints as it was to the saints in former days. We should love one another, be kind to each other, and be ever ready and willing to lend a helping hand to a brother or sister in need. We should be as careful of our brother's or sister's character as we are of our own. A word once uttered can never be recalled. Knowing this, let us see to it that we speak good, not only of the dead, but of the living also. What untold suffering has been caused by people speaking evil of one another!

NEGLECT OF PRAYER.—A home without prayer is like a body without a soul. Prayer is to the soul of man what rain and sunshine are to the flowers. We are told in the Book of Mormon that it is an evil spirit which persuadeth men not to pray. Neglect of family and secret prayer has been a cord by which men have bound their souls to earth and kept them from soaring to heaven. As prayer delivered Peter from prison, so has it delivered men out of temptation and preserved them from the power of Satan. No Latter-day Saint can neglect his prayers without seriously affecting his spiritual life.

DISOBEDIENCE.—Through disobedience to the commandments of God millions of the human family are bound to-day in chains stronger than steel. All the sin and wickedness in the world are the results of disobedience to the laws of heaven. Men and women have become slaves to their appetites and passions, and they are bound by them. The Lord, in order to set His children free and to preserve them from many of the evils of the world, revealed the Word of Wisdom. Great are the blessings which have come to the people of God through the observance of this divine precept. There are tens of thousands of Latter-day Saints who do not know the taste of intoxicants of any kind, neither of tea nor coffee. They are free from the use of these things, while some are bound by their use. We earnestly urge upon those who are not observing the Word of Wisdom to pray to the Lord for strength to enable them to burst the bands which bind them, that they may be free from the use of those things which He has declared "are not good for the body."

TITHING.—Non-observance of this law is another manacle upon the souls of some members of the Church. By failing to observe this commandment men have not only robbed God of His just due, but they have robbed themselves of the blessings of heaven. By faithfully keeping this and other commandments, thousands of saints have been delivered from the bondage of Babylon and have been gathered with the chosen of the Lord in the heights of Zion, while others who failed to observe the law have been left behind. During the past two years the writer has seen thirty members of the Church emigrate from two small branches, and every one of them that was a money-earner paid an honest tithing. Not a single non-tithe payer has emigrated from those branches during

that time. This is a very important principle of the gospel of Christ; its observance opens the heavens and draws down the blessings of God upon the cheerful giver, while its non-observance has just the opposite effect. Like as the runner divests himself of all incumbrances, so let the saints free themselves from those things which bind them, that they may be able to run with patience the race which is set before them, and finally win the crown in the celestial kingdom of the Father.—W. A. M.

MINUTES OF THE LEEDS CONFERENCE.

ONE of the most soul-inspiring and instructive conferences ever held in this part of the Lord's vineyard convened on Sunday, November 1st, 1908, in the Temperance Hall, Bradford. President Charles W. Penrose and Sister Romania B. Penrose from Liverpool, and a very large congregation were in attendance at the opening services.

Conference President Julius A. Rockwood welcomed the people and urged upon them to feel at home and mingle and associate freely together as members of one body. In voting to sustain the officers of the Church he said we should consider it a glorious privilege. It was not simply a form, but has an underlying significance.

The statistical and labor reports for the past six months were read, showing a membership in the conference of eight hundred and fifty souls. The report of the labors of the twenty-six elders in the conference showed commendable zeal and activity. The general and local authorities of the Church were unanimously sustained.

Elder Carl E. Erickson gave a report of the Halifax branch, showing that the members had been visited, were faithful in their duties and assisted the elders in proclaiming the truth among the people. He paid glowing tribute to the efficient work of the Relief Society, Sunday School and Mutual Improvement Association, which were thoroughly organized and meeting regularly. According to his knowledge there was not a dissenting voice in the whole branch. Prospects were indeed very encouraging. He bore an impressive testimony to the truth of the gospel and the joy that it brings.

Elder John A. Harter reported love and unity among the saints in the Pudsey branch. Meetings were well attended and there were earnest investigators. He made some pointed remarks on gospel principles.

The Bradford choir and congregation rendered the song "Be it my only wisdom here."

President Penrose addressed the people upon the comprehensive-