

Heleman 3

“Mormon’s narrative structure communicates his overarching purpose in these two original chapters. . . . [His] purpose is to explain that Nephite contentions lead to the Gadiantons and that the Gadiantons destroy at least some aspect of Nephite government. This pattern parallels events in Mormon’s day. Escalating contentions lead to the Gadiantons’ rise to power, which leads in turn to the Nephites’ total destruction. Mormon is telling us to look for the parallels between the events of his day and the events just preceding the Messiah’s arrival in the New World. Both have something to do with the land northward” (Gardner, Second Witness, 5:59).

Elder J. Devn Cornish of the Seventy: Our members often ask, ‘Am I good enough as a person?’ or ‘Will I really make it to the celestial kingdom?’ Of course, there is no such thing as ‘being good enough.’ None of us could ever ‘earn’ or ‘deserve’ our salvation, but it is normal to wonder if we are acceptable before the Lord, which is how I understand these questions” “The God of heaven is not a heartless referee looking for any excuse to throw us out of the game. He is our perfectly loving Father, who yearns more than anything else to have all of His children come back home and live with Him as families forever. He truly gave His Only Begotten Son that we might not perish but have everlasting life [see [John 3:16](#)]! Please believe, and please take hope and comfort from, this eternal truth. Our Heavenly Father intends for us to make it! That is His work and His glory [see [Moses 1:39](#)].“... None of us will ever be ‘good enough,’ save through the merits and mercy of Jesus Christ [see [2 Nephi 2:6–8](#)], but because God respects our agency, we also cannot be saved without our trying” (J. Devn Cornish, [“Am I Good Enough? Will I Make It?”](#) 33, 34).

President Brigham Young spoke of the privilege granted to several of the early brethren to see the Nephite records from which Mormon worked: “I could relate many very singular circumstances. I lived right in the country where the plates were found from which the Book of Mormon was translated, and I know a great many things pertaining to that country. I believe I will take the liberty to tell you of another circumstance that will be as marvelous as anything can be. This is an incident in the life of Oliver Cowdery, but he did not take the liberty of telling such things in meeting as I take. I tell these things to you, and I have a motive for doing so. I want to carry them to the ears of my brethren and sisters, and to the children also, that they may grow to an understanding of some things that seem to be entirely hidden from the human family. Oliver Cowdery went with the Prophet Joseph when he deposited these plates. Joseph did not translate all of the plates; there was a portion of them sealed, which you can learn from the Book of Doctrine and Covenants. When Joseph got the plates, the angel instructed him to carry them back to the hill Cumorah, which he did. Oliver says that when Joseph and Oliver went there, the hill opened, and they walked into a cave, in which there was a large and spacious room. He says he did not think, at the time, whether they had the light of the sun or artificial light; but that it was just as light as day. They laid the plates on a table; it was a large table that stood in the room. Under this table there was a pile of plates as much as two feet high, and there were altogether in this room more plates than probably many wagon loads; they were piled up in the corners and along the walls. The first time they went there the sword of Laban hung upon the wall; but when they went again it had been taken down and laid upon the table across the gold plates; it was unsheathed, and on it was written these words: ‘This sword will never be sheathed again until the kingdoms of this world become the kingdom of our God and his Christ.’ I tell you this as coming not only from Oliver Cowdery, but others who were familiar with it” (in [Journal of Discourses](#), 19:38; see also Packer, “Cumorah’s Cave,” 1, 50–57, 170–71).

Vs 20 - Elder Spencer J. Condie of the Seventy “Perhaps of all the evidence of true conversion and a remission of sins, this is the most significant: the disposition to do evil no more, but to do good continually. “We can strengthen our disposition to do good each time we make and keep covenants. Each time we participate in priesthood ordinances, the powers from on high reach downward and draw us nearer to the heavens. Those who partake of the sacrament and temple ordinances with pure hearts and who faithfully keep their covenants require no lengthy instructions regarding modest dress, the payment of generous fast offerings and tithing, observance of the Word of Wisdom, or keeping the Sabbath day holy. They need no stern reminders to share the gospel with others, to attend the temple frequently, to conduct family history research, or to do their home teaching or visiting teaching. Nor do they need nudges to visit the sick and to serve those in need. “These are the faithful Saints of the Most High who keep the sacred covenants they

have made in the house of the Lord, ‘having a determination to serve him to the end, and truly manifest by their works that they have received the Spirit of Christ unto the remission of their sins’ (D&C 20:37). Covenant keepers . . . live the law of consecration. Their time, talents, and financial resources all belong to the Lord. “Keeping their covenants has caused them to develop a disposition to do good continually” (“A Disposition to Do Good Continually,” *Ensign*, Aug. 2001, 14, 19).

“We should be personal peacemakers. We should live peacefully—as couples, families, and neighbors. We should live by the Golden Rule. . . . We should . . . expand our circle of love to embrace the whole human family. We should bring divine love and revealed doctrines of restored religion to our neighbors and friends. We should serve them according to our abilities and opportunities. We should keep our principles on a high level and stand for the right. We should continue to gather scattered Israel from the four corners of the earth and offer the ordinances and covenants that seal families together forever. These blessings we are to bring to people of all nations” (Nelson, “[Blessed Are the Peacemakers](#),” 41).

Of their later lives and ministry, Brian Best noted: “Therefore, Nephi, Lehi . . . were neither popular nor very successful in the long run in their efforts to save their society, although the power of the miracles that attended their ministry did result temporarily in great conversions among both the Nephites and the Lamanites. “In contrast to the shifting, unstable, materialistic ways of the people generally is the steadfastness and stability of these . . . prophets and the few who faithfully follow them. They seem to be a race apart—a different kind of being altogether than the other souls they walk among. They are spiritual men, sons of God; those who reject them are natural men, or enemies of God. Walking in obedience to divine law, these prophets participate more and more fully in the mysteries of God, ‘having many revelations daily’ ([Hel. 11:23](#)), while the foolish masses lose even the knowledge they once possessed, until, as Alma warned, they ‘know nothing concerning his mysteries; and . . . are taken captive by the devil, and led by his will down to destruction. Now this is what is meant by the chains of hell’ ([Alma 12:11](#)). In fact, so far did these people go in their rejection of the word of God that they were about to place themselves outside the saving power of either justice or mercy” (“[Nephi, Lehi, and Samuel the Lamanite](#),” 47).

“The Gadianton robbers are a specific instance of the larger set of events and concepts revolving around what the Book of Mormon calls secret combinations. These secret combinations show up in connection with the Jaredites, then they disappear. They reappear scant years prior to the arrival of the Savior in the New World, and then disappear for over two hundred years. Finally, they reappear to play a role in the final denouement of the Nephites. While the majority of the conflicts in the Book of Mormon occur with the Lamanites, the most destructive conflicts are those that come at the hands of the secret combinations, and specifically the Gadianton robbers” “The Lamanites might be the Nephites’ most common enemy, but the Gadianton robbers are the most dangerous. This combination of longevity, sporadic appearance, and ultimate danger, make the Gadianton robbers and secret combinations an important study in understanding the message of the Book of Mormon. The elucidation of this complex interaction of time, text, and meaning must necessarily center on both Mormon’s text and the ancient cultural environment of that text” (The Gadianton Robbers in Mormon’s Theological History,” Fair Mormon Conference).

Vs 24-25 –

In a recent article titled “Redeeming Our Time,” William J. Bennett, former U.S. secretary of education, notes: “Since 1960, the U.S. population has increased 41%; the gross domestic product has nearly tripled; and total social spending by all levels of government [has experienced] more than a fivefold increase. . . . During the same thirty-year period [1960–1990], there was a 560 percent increase in violent crime; more than a 400 percent increase in illegitimate births; a quadrupling in divorces; a tripling of the percentage of children living in single-parent homes; more than a 200 percent increase in the teen-age suicide rate; and a drop of 75 points in the average SAT scores of high school students. “Today, 30 percent of all births . . . are illegitimate. By the end of the decade, according to the most reliable projections, 40 percent of all American births . . . will occur out of wedlock” (Imprimis, Nov. 1995, 3). (M. Russell Ballard, *Ensign*, Dec. 1996, 57)

The article concludes with a statement from Alexander Solzhenitsyn:

“The West ... has been undergoing an erosion and [an] obscuring of high moral and ethical ideals. The spiritual axis of life has grown dim.” One need not, of course, read statistics to recognize a moral decay that seems to be going on all about us. It is evident in the easy breakup of marriages, in widespread infidelity, in the growth of youth gangs, in the increased use of drugs and the epidemic spread of AIDS, and in a growing disregard for the lives and property of others. It is seen in the defacement of private and public property with graffiti, which destroys beauty and is an insult to art. It is expressed in the language of the gutter, which is brought into our homes. The endless sex and violence on network TV, the trash of so many motion pictures, the magnified sensuality found in much of modern literature, the emphasis on sex education, a widespread breakdown of law and order—all are manifestations of this decay. (Gordon B. Hinckley, *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 59)

Dean L. Larsen observed a relationship between faithfulness to the Lord and prosperity: “When the lives of the people are in harmony with the Lord’s will, all of the essential factors that produce the blessings God deigns to give to his children seem to come into line. Love and harmony prevail. Even the weather, the climate, and the elements seem to respond. Peace and tranquility endure. Industry and progress mark the lives of the people... We have the Lord’s assurance that he will bless and prosper his people if they will keep his commandments and remember to look to him as the source of their blessings” (in *Conference Report*, Oct. 1992, 58–59; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1992, 41–42).

Vs 29 –

Many swords of ancient times had only one cutting edge. When someone decided to make a two-edged sword, the effectiveness of the weapon was increased tremendously. Now it could cut in any direction, no matter how the blow was struck. Thus, the likening of the word of God to the two-edged sword is a vivid simile. Just as a sharp sword can cut deep enough to sever limbs and destroy life, so the word of the Lord is powerful enough that it can bring destruction of the soul (spiritual death) to those who do not give heed to it (see Heb. 4:12; Rev. 1:16, 2:12,16). The word of God also has power to pierce the soul as a sword and penetrate to the inmost parts of man (3Ne 11:3; D&C 85:6). It can cut through error and falsehood with double-edged efficiency. (D&C Student Manual, 15)

President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994) taught that certain blessings come only through diligent scripture study: “Success in righteousness, the power to avoid deception and resist temptation, guidance in our daily lives, healing of the soul—these are but a few of the promises the Lord has given to those who will come to His word. Does the Lord promise and not fulfill? Surely if He tells us that these things will come to us if we lay hold upon His word, then the blessings can be ours. And if we do not, then the blessings may be lost. However diligent we may be in other areas, certain blessings are to be found only in the scriptures, only in coming to the word of the Lord and holding fast to it as we make our way through the mists of darkness to the tree of life”... There are few other efforts that will bring greater dividends to your calling. There are few other ways to gain greater inspiration as you serve. But that alone, as valuable as it is, is not enough. You must also bend your efforts and your activities to stimulating meaningful scripture study among the members of the Church. Often we spend great effort in trying to increase the activity levels in our stakes. We work diligently to raise the percentages of those attending sacrament meetings. We labor to get a higher percentage of our young men on missions. We strive to improve the numbers of those marrying in the temple. All of these are commendable efforts and important to the growth of the kingdom. But when individual members and families immerse themselves in the scriptures regularly and consistently, these other areas of activity will automatically come. Testimonies will increase. Commitment will be strengthened. Families will be fortified. Personal revelation will flow. (Ezra Taft Benson, “The Power of the Word,” *Ensign*, May 1986, 81)

Elder Neal A. Maxwell wrote of the characteristics that will be attained by staying on the strait and narrow path and becoming men and women of Christ: “Those already in the household of faith may be pardoned a tremble or two as they read the graphic description of the challenging journey facing the serious disciple—whom Helaman called ‘the man of Christ’ ([Hel. 3:29](#)).” “This is a brief attempt to describe just a few of the things the men and women of Christ will feel and see in the course of that adventurous journey.” “Regarding events in the world, ‘the man of Christ’ sees trends around him ‘about which it is difficult to speak, but

impossible to remain silent.’ Because he sees with ‘an eye of faith,’ he knows more than he can tell; but he need not always be fully articulate, for real Christianity is contagious. “He believes deeply in the Beatitudes, but also in those doctrines which tell him ‘who’ Jesus is. He does not divorce the Sermon on the Mount from the sermon at Capernaum with its hard teachings which caused many to walk ‘no more with’ Jesus ([John 6:66](#)). These latter doctrines are likewise a part of the bracing breeze of the scriptures which must be played upon the fevered brow of mankind. “He knows that ‘the gate of heaven is open unto all,’ but that the Man of Galilee will finally judge each of us on the basis of a rigorous celestial theology, instead of the popular ‘no-fault theology’ of this teletial world—for Jesus is the gatekeeper ‘and he employeth no servant there’ ([2 Ne. 9:41](#))” (“[Man of Christ](#),” 101).

Vs 30- Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained that Church members may become heirs to the blessings of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: “The covenant that the Lord first made with Abraham and reaffirmed with Isaac and Jacob is of transcendent significance. . . . “We are also children of the covenant. We have received, as did they of old, the holy priesthood and the everlasting gospel. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are our ancestors. We are of Israel. We have the right to receive the gospel, blessings of the priesthood, and eternal life. Nations of the earth will be blessed by our efforts and by the labors of our posterity. The literal seed of Abraham and those who are gathered into his family by adoption receive these promised blessings—predicated upon acceptance of the Lord and obedience to his commandments” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1995, 42–43; or [Ensign, May 1995, 33](#)).

Vs 33-36 –

There will come a time, however, in the history of the Saints when they will be tried with peace, prosperity, popularity and riches. (Daniel H. Wells, *JD*, 19:367)

The worst fear that I have about this people is that they will get rich in this country, forget God and his people, wax fat, and kick themselves out of the Church and go to hell. This people will stand mobbing, robbing, poverty, and all manner of persecution, and be true. But my greater fear for them is that they cannot stand wealth; and yet they have to be tried with riches, for they will become the richest people on this earth.’ (Preston Nibley, *Brigham Young: The Man and His Work*, 127 - 128.)

“Think of what pride has cost us in the past and what it is now costing us in our own lives, our families, and the Church. “Think of the repentance that could take place with lives changed, marriages preserved, and homes strengthened, if pride did not keep us from confessing our sins and forsaking them (see [D&C 58:43](#)). “Think of the many who are less-active members of the Church because they were offended and their pride will not allow them to forgive or fully sup at the Lord’s table. “Think of the tens of thousands of young men and couples who could be on missions except for the pride that keeps them from yielding their hearts unto God (see [Alma 10:6](#); [Helaman 3:34–35](#)). “Think how temple work would increase if the time spent in this godly service were more important than the many prideful pursuits that compete for our time” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1989, 6; or [Ensign, May 1989, 6](#)).

Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught that a paramount step in becoming completely faithful in the gospel is the avoidance or removal of pride: “How can you make the gospel of Jesus Christ not just an influence in your life but the controlling influence and, indeed, the very core of what you are? . . . “As a first step, you must lay aside any feeling of pride that is so common in the world today. By this I mean the attitude that rejects the authority of God to rule in our lives. . . . You hear it expressed today in phrases such as ‘Do your own thing’ or ‘Right and wrong depend on what I feel is right for me.’ That attitude is a rebellion against God” (in Conference Report, Apr. 2004, 9; or [Ensign, May 2004, 11](#)).

Vs 35 – President James E. Faust taught that such growth comes with the aid of the Holy Spirit fostering our inmost desires to conduct our lives as the Savior would have us live. During this process, we are sanctified: “Christlike conduct flows from the deepest wellsprings of the human heart and soul. It is guided by the Holy Spirit of the Lord, which is promised in gospel ordinances. Our greatest hope should be to enjoy the sanctification which comes from this divine guidance; our greatest fear should be to forfeit these blessings” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1998, 23; or [Ensign, May 1998, 20](#)).

Truly, the Holy Ghost is a sanctifier, and the extent to which men receive and enjoy the gift of the Holy Ghost is the extent to which they are sanctified. In the lives of most of us, sanctification is an ongoing process, and we obtain that glorious status by degrees as we overcome the world and become saints in deed as well as in name. (Bruce R. McConkie, NWA, 266)

Elder D. Todd Christofferson explained that sanctification is a step in the path of striving toward perfection: “Personal persistence in the path of obedience is something different than achieving perfection in mortality. Perfection is not, as some suppose, a prerequisite for justification and sanctification. It is just the opposite: justification (being pardoned) and sanctification (being purified) are the prerequisites for perfection. We only become perfect ‘in Christ’ (see Moro. 10:32), not independently of Him. Thus, what is required of us in order to obtain mercy in the day of judgment is simple diligence” (“Justification and Sanctification,” *Ensign*, June 2001, 24–25).

Elder Russell M. Nelson pointed out that such firmness in behavior and attitude is obtained individually: “Only as an individual can you develop a firm faith in God and a passion for personal prayer. Only as an individual can you keep the commandments of God. Only as an individual can you repent. Only as an individual can you qualify for the ordinances of salvation and exaltation” (in Conference Report, Oct. 2003, 47; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2003, 44).

Elder Neal A. Maxwell (1926–2004) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught “Ultimate consecration is the yielding up of oneself to God. Heart, soul, and mind were the encompassing words of Christ in describing the first commandment, which is constantly, not periodically, operative (see Matthew 22:37). If it is kept, then our performances will in turn be fully consecrated for the lasting welfare of our souls (see 2 Nephi 32:9). “Such totality involves the submissive converging of feelings, thoughts, words, and deeds” (in Conference Report, Apr. 2002, 41; or *Ensign*, May 2002, 36).

“To be humble is to recognize gratefully your dependence on the Lord—to understand that you have constant need for His support. Humility is an acknowledgment that your talents and abilities are gifts from God. It is not a sign of weakness, timidity, or fear; it is an indication that you know where your true strength lies. You can be both humble and fearless. You can be both humble and courageous. . . . “The Lord will strengthen you as you humble yourself before Him” (*True to the Faith: A Gospel Reference* [2004], 86).

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles: “Do not be afraid of scars that may come in defending the truth or fighting for the right, but beware scars that spiritually disfigure, that come to you in activities you should not have undertaken, that befall you in places where you should not have gone” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1998, 101; or [Ensign, Nov. 1998, 77](#)).