

Gospel Doctrine Lesson 46: "By Faith All Things Are Fulfilled"

(Ether 7-15)

LESSON GOAL: To help us understand the importance of exercising faith, being humble, and heeding the counsel of the prophets.

1. Moroni explains the importance of faith.

Neal A. Maxwell: "Thus there ought to be expectations that in this laboratory of life **we will actually see each other in the process of being remodeled**, sometimes succeeding and sometimes failing. We will obviously be aware of others who are also in the 'furnace of affliction.' However, we will not always have a smooth, ready answer to the question, 'Why me?' 'Why now?' 'Why this?'—for as Moroni observed, 'Ye receive no witness until *after* the trial of your faith.' (Ether 12:6).

"As we see ourselves, and others, passing through fiery trials, the wisdom of Peter, who had his own share of fiery trials, is very useful: '**Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you.**' (1 Peter 4:12)" (*All These Things Shall Give Thee Experience*, 44).

James E. Faust: "Here is a great truth. In the pain, the agony, and the heroic endeavors of life, **we pass through a refiner's fire, and the insignificant and the unimportant in our lives can melt away like dross and make our faith bright, intact, and strong.** In this way the **divine image can be mirrored from the soul.** It is part of the purging toll exacted of some to become acquainted with God. In the agonies of life, we seem to listen better to the faint, godly whisperings of the Divine Shepherd.

"**Into every life there come the painful, despairing days of adversity and buffeting.** There seems to be a full measure of anguish, sorrow, and often heartbreak for everyone, including those who earnestly seek to do right and be faithful. The thorns that prick, that stick in the flesh, that hurt, often change lives, which seem robbed of significance and hope. This change comes about through a **refining process**, which often seems cruel and hard. In this way the soul can become like soft clay in the hands of the Master in building lives of faith, usefulness, beauty, and strength. For some, the refiner's fire causes a loss of belief and faith in God, but those with eternal perspective understand that such refining is part of the perfection process.... **The proving of one's faith goes before the witnessing**, for Moroni testified, 'Ye receive no witness until after the trial of your faith' (Ether 12:6). **This trial of faith can become a priceless experience.**" (*CR*, May 1979).

Bruce R. McConkie: "There is no provision in the law of faith that miracles will create faith. **Signs follow;** they do not precede. It is true that someone who has seen a sign may thereafter do the things which will enable him to gain faith, but it is not the miracle as such which begets the faith; it is **obedience** to that law upon which its receipt is predicated" (*DNTC*, 1:632).

Spencer W. Kimball: "In faith we plant the seed, and soon we see the miracle of the blossoming. **Men have often misunderstood and have reversed the process.** They would have the harvest before the planting, the reward before the service, the miracle before the faith. Even the most demanding labor unions would hardly ask the wages before the labor. But many of us would have the vigor without the observance of the health laws, prosperity through the opened windows of heaven without the payment of our tithes. We would have the close communion with our Father without fasting and praying; we would have rain in due season and peace in the land without observing the Sabbath and keeping the other commandments of the Lord. We would pluck the rose before planting the roots; we would harvest the grain before its planting and cultivating" (*Conference Report*, Oct. 1952, 47).

2. The Lord teaches Moroni that He gives us weakness that we may be humble.

Ether 12:27 doesn't say *weaknesses* in the plural. It says **WEAKNESS.** So God isn't saying "I gave you all your flaws; I gave you all these things wrong with you that you need to be depressed about." He is saying "**You are limited. You are weak. You are vulnerable. You aren't perfect and don't need to be. You need help. You need our help, and you need to help each other in your weakness. You need to be aware of your shortcomings to be humble, so you love and are gentle and don't judge and continue to learn.** And IF you do all these things, your weakness will be a strength"—in addition to other ways our weaknesses become strengths as we learn from them, empathy, wisdom, etc.

Henry B. Eyring: "One of the reasons why you will be tried is that **opposition is always part of being a faithful member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. You should expect that great difficulties will come to you in the pursuit of doing what the Lord would have you do.** But you should also feel that **these trials are a blessing**, because 'faith is things which are hoped for and not seen; wherefore, dispute not because ye see not, for ye receive no witness until after the trial of your faith.' (Ether 12:6.)

"I'd like to suggest something about how to receive through our trials the blessing that's promised in that scripture. Perhaps you're being tried right now, and you may feel like saying to me, 'Well, Brother Eyring, it's pretty tough right now. Do you mean this is going to go on over a lifetime?' And my answer is yes. It will be intermittent; there will be times when things go very badly, and there will be times when you think things are going wonderfully well. (If you'll remember my definition of a trial, you'll want to be careful about the times when things seem to be going well.) **But the trials will continue to come**" (*To Draw Closer to God*, 84).

Mark E. Petersen: "Is not our attitude toward these prophets an unerring reflection of our inner-most feeling toward God? I mean our real, basic allegiance when it is divested of all outward show and stripped of all pretensions. **Can we truly love the Lord and at the same time reject his servants? If we really do love God, then indeed we must and we will love and revere his anointed ones**" (*Conference Report*, Oct. 1981).

Catherine Thomas: "Peaceful societies never happen by accident. They result from steady devotion to **selflessness**:

- 1) they speak to **nurture** one another
- 2) they **take thought** on what causes **human beings to thrive**
- 3) they **act to develop each other**
- 4) they have **laid down their natural self-wills and have taken on the image of Christ**
- 5) they experience **loving sustained closeness**.

"It is **sobering how readily people trade inner peace for something less**. . . Before obvious signs of deterioration appear, people begin to think in terms, not of unity and mutual support, but of **separateness**.

In achieving separateness, people are left with **emptiness and alienation**. They fill the void with external things or power or self-gratification when the cause of their emptiness is their spiritual death; what they are hungry for is the love of Christ and relationships built on loving commitment. Their misery drives them to create more misery, and finally to destroy life.

Separation begins in such subtle ways. We unwittingly begin:

- 1) to look for **trouble**
- 2) to **pick** at this and **complain** at that
- 3) to **take offense** over a real or imagined slight
- 4) to get **angry** because people around us do not do what we want
- 5) to **grow cold or irritable**
- 6) to **retaliate** to get what we want
- 7) to **insist on being right at the expense of precious relationships**
- 8) to **reject others** who seem to lack love, failing to perfect love in ourselves
- 9) to disturb ourselves with **self-seeking**
- 10) **We are not still and at rest in the principles:**
 - a. of **tolerance and love**
 - b. of **overlooking**
 - c. of **letting go**
 - d. of **forgiving**
 - e. of **ceasing to expect anything**—except tolerance and kindness in ourselves

(*Studies in Scripture: Book of Mormon, Vol. 8*, Ed. Kent R. Jackson, 272-273)

3. Conclusion

Neal A. Maxwell: "Ether was born of a kingly line, but at one point his family was in captivity. Ether's father 'dwelt in captivity all his days.' (Ether 11:23) Someday when we have the fulness of such episodes, we may see clearly how **Ether's excellence arose out of adversity**.

"So far as we can tell, **Ether**, like Joseph in Egypt, **was not consumed by resentment or bitterness** as a result of his captivity. It is so easy for us to overlook how Ether might have been disabled by this early experience, but **he refused to let himself become emotionally crippled**. Yet here was someone born of a royal line who spent much of his time living and writing in a cave." (*Ensign*, Aug. 1978, "Three Jaredites")

Marion G. Romney: "The Lord sent many prophets to the Jaredites; **the prophets were rejected** and the Jaredite nation perished.... We today are at the crossroads of another cycle in the universal pattern, a cycle fraught with everlasting consequences. Whether it shall close in the light or in the shadow is for us to determine. The ominous signs are upon us, and the issues are crystal clear.

"**Our whole world is in confusion**. The wisdom of our wise men has proved inadequate to stay the rising crisis. With the means to unleash universal destruction in the hands of evil men, fear and apprehension ride with every breeze. In the past, situations similar to ours have generally terminated in destruction. **It would seem that the judgments of God are about to be once more poured out upon the nations**.

"The world situation being as it is, I feel impelled to emphasize the fact that, as already pointed out with respect to similar situations in the past, **the Lord saw this one coming**, and, in harmony with his universal pattern, **sounded the warning and prescribed the means of escape**. For although the pattern is universal so that the lesson may be clearly drawn from history, **the Lord always warns the people of a new dispensation through prophets raised up unto them in their own day**" (*Conference Report*, Apr. 1958, 128).