

In the Space of Not Many Years

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Iti Las-ud ti Sumagmamano a Tawen

Ni Elder David A. Bednar
Ti Korum dagiti Sangapulo-ket-dua nga Apostol

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If we are not faithful and obedient, we can transform the God-given blessing of prosperity into a prideful curse that diverts and distracts us.

My beloved brothers and sisters, sitting on the stand today, I have watched this Conference Center fill up three times, for the first time since COVID. You are devoted disciples of Jesus Christ who are eager to learn. I commend you for your faithfulness. And I love you.

Ezra Taft Benson served as the President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints from November 1985 until May 1994. I was 33 years old when President Benson became the President of the Church and 42 when he passed away. And his teachings and testimony influenced me in profound and powerful ways.

One of the hallmarks of President Benson's ministry was his focus upon the purpose and importance of the Book of Mormon. He emphasized repeatedly that "the Book of Mormon is the keystone of our religion—the keystone of our testimony, the keystone of our doctrine, and the keystone in the witness of our Lord and Savior." He also often emphasized teachings and warnings about the sin of pride found in this latter-day testament of Jesus Christ.

A particular teaching by President Benson greatly impacted me and continues to influence my study of the Book of Mormon. He said:

"The Book of Mormon ... was written for

No ditayo napudno ken natulnog, mabalintayo a pagbalinen ti inted ti Dios a bendision ti kinarang-ay a napannakkel a lunod a mangsinga ken mangyadayo kadatayo.

Patpatgek a kakabsatko, a nakatugaw iti sango ita nga aldaw, nabuyak daytoy a Conference Center a napunno iti mamitlo, iti umuna a gundaway manipud pay idi COVID. Dakayo dagiti naanep a disipulo ni Jesucristo nga aggagar a makasursuro. Dayawenkayo iti kinapudnoyo. Ken patpatgenkayo.

Nagserbi ni Ezra Taft Benson kas Presidente ti Ti Simbaan ni Jesucristo dagiti Santo iti Ud-udina nga Aldaw manipud iti Nobiembre 1985 agingga iti Mayo 1994. Agtawenak idi iti 33 idi nagbalin ni Presidente Benson a Presidente ti Simbaan ken agtawenak iti 42 idi pimmusay isuna. Dagiti pannursuro ken pammaneknekna ti nangimpluensia kaniak iti nauneg ken nabileg a wagas.

Maysa kadagiti pakabigbigan ti panagministro ni Presidente Benson ket ti panangipamaysana iti panggep ken kinapateg ti Libro ni Mormon. Inulit-ulitna nga inyunay-unay a ti Libro ni Mormon "ti panuli a bato ti relihiontayo—ti panuli a bato ti pammaneknektayo, ti panuli a bato ti doktrinatayo, ken ti panuli a bato iti panagsaksi iti Apo ken Mangisalakantayo." Inyunay-unayna pay dagiti pannursuro ken pammallaag maipapan iti basol ti kinatangig a masarakan itoy maudi nga aldaw a tulag ni Jesucristo.

Maysa a partikular a pannursuro ni Presidente Benson ti nangaring unay kaniak ken agtultuloy a mangimpluensia iti panagadalko iti Libro ni Mormon. Kinunana:

"Naisurat ti Libro ni Mormon ... para iti al-

our day. The Nephites never had the book; neither did the Lamanites of ancient times. It was meant for us. Mormon wrote near the end of the Nephite civilization. Under the inspiration of God, who sees all things from the beginning, [Mormon] abridged centuries of records, choosing the stories, speeches, and events that would be most helpful to us.”

President Benson continued: “Each of the major writers of the Book of Mormon testified that he wrote for future generations. ... If they saw our day, and chose those things which would be of greatest worth to us, is not that how we should study the Book of Mormon? We should constantly ask ourselves, ‘Why did the Lord inspire Mormon ... to include [this account] in his record? What lesson can I learn from [this admonition] to help me live in this day and age?’”

President Benson’s statements help us to understand that the Book of Mormon is not primarily a historical record that looks to the past. Rather, this volume of scripture looks to the future and contains important principles, warnings, and lessons intended for the circumstances and challenges of our day. Hence, the Book of Mormon is a book about our future and the times in which we do now and will yet live.

I pray for the assistance of the Holy Ghost as we now consider relevant lessons for us today from the book of Helaman in the Book of Mormon.

The Nephites and the Lamanites

The record of Helaman and his sons describes a people who were anticipating the birth of Jesus Christ. The half century recounted in the scriptural record highlights the conversion and righteousness of the Lamanites and the wickedness, apostasy, and abominations of the Nephites.

A series of comparisons and contrasts between the Nephites and Lamanites from this ancient record are most instructive for us today.

dawtayo. Ti kaano man saan a naaddaan iti libro dagiti Nephite; uray dagiti Lamanite iti nagkaau-na a panawen. Nairanta daytoy a para kadatayo. Nagsurat ni Mormon idi dandanin agpatingga ti sibilisasion dagiti Nephite. Iti babaen ti pam-maregta ti Dios, a makakita iti amin a banag manipud idi punganay, inyababa ni [Mormon] ti sinigsiglo a kasuratan, a nangpilpili kadagiti estoria, bitla, ken paspasamak a kangrunaan a makatulong kadatayo.”

Intuloy ni President Benson: “Pinaneknekan ti tunggal maysa kadagiti kangrunaan a man-nurat ti Libro ni Mormon nga insuratna para kadagiti sumaruno a henerasion. ... No nakit-ada ti aldawtayo, ken napilida dagita a banag a kaindaklanan ti pategda kadatayo, saan kadi a kasta ti rumbeng a panagadaltayo iti Libro ni Mormon? Nasken a kanayon a saludsodentayo iti bagitayo, ‘Apay a pinaregta ti Apo ni Mormon ... a mangiraman [iti daytoy a salaysay] iti kasur-atanna? Ania ti masursurok [iti daytoy a balakad] a mangtulong kaniak nga agbiag iti daytoy nga aldaw ken panawen?’”

Dagiti balikas ni Presidente Benson ti mangtulong kadatayo a makaawat a ti Libro ni Mormon ket saan a kangrunaan a historikal a rekord a mangitampok iti napalabas. Ketdi, daytoy a napagtitipon a libro ti nasantuan a kasuratan ket maseknan iti masakbayan ken naglaon kadagiti napapateg a pagbatayan, pammallaag, ken adalen a nairanta kadagiti kasasaad ken karit iti panawentayo. Gapuna, ti Libro ni Mormon ket maipapan iti masakbayantayo ken kadagiti panawen a pagbibiyantayo ita ken iti masangua-nan a biag.

Ikararagko ti tulong ti Espiritu Santo bayat ti panangibilangtayo kadagiti mainaig nga adalen para kadatayo ita manipud iti libro ni Helaman iti Libro ni Mormon.

Dagiti Nephite ken dagiti Lamanite

Iladawan ti kasuratan ni Helaman ken dagiti annakna a lallaki dagiti tao a mangpadpadaan iti pannakayanak ni Jesucristo. Ti kagudua a siglo a naisalaysay iti nasantuan a kasuratan ket mangitampok iti pannakapasurot ken kinalinteg dagiti Lamanite ken ti kinadakes, ikakalilis iti kinapudno, ken makarimon nga aramid dagiti Nephite.

Dagiti panagidilig ken panagduma iti nagbaetan dagiti Nephite ken Lamanite itoy kadaan a kasuratan ket makaisuro unay kada-

“The Lamanites had become, the more part of them, a righteous people, insomuch that their righteousness did exceed that of the Nephites, because of their firmness and their steadiness in the faith.

“[And] there were many of the Nephites who had become hardened and impenitent and grossly wicked, insomuch that they did reject the word of God and all the preaching and prophesying which did come among them.”

“And thus we see that the Nephites did begin to dwindle in unbelief, and grow in wickedness and abominations, while the Lamanites began to grow exceedingly in the knowledge of their God; yea, they did begin to keep his statutes and commandments, and to walk in truth and uprightness before him.

“And thus we see that the Spirit of the Lord began to withdraw from the Nephites, because of the wickedness and the hardness of their hearts.

“And thus we see that the Lord began to pour out his Spirit upon the Lamanites, because of their easiness and willingness to believe in his words.”

Perhaps the most stunning and sobering aspect of this decline into apostasy by the Nephites is the fact that “all these iniquities did come unto them in the space of not many years.”

The Nephites Turned Away from God

How could a once-righteous people become hardened and wicked in such a short period of time? How could people so quickly forget the God who had blessed them so abundantly?

In a powerful and profound way, the negative example of the Nephites is instructive for us today.

“Pride ... began to enter ... into the hearts of the people who professed to belong to the church of God ... because of their exceedingly great riches and their prosperity in the land.”

“[They] set [their] hearts upon the riches and the vain things of this world” “because of that pride which [they] ... suffered to enter [into their] hearts, which ... lifted [them] up beyond that which is good because of [their] exceedingly great riches!”

Ancient voices from the dust plead with us today to learn this everlasting lesson: prosperity,

tayo iti agdama.

“Nagbalin a nalinteg a tattao ti kaaduan kadagiti Lamanite, iti kasta nalab-awan ti kinalintegda ti kinalinteg dagiti Nephite, gapu iti kinatibker ken kinatalgedda iti pammati.

“[Ket] adu kadagiti Nephite ti nagbalin a nasukir ken saan nga agbabawi ken nakaro ti kinadakes, iti kasta linaksidda ti balikas ti Dios ken amin a panangasaba ken panagipadto a napasamak kadakuada.”

“Ket makitatayo a nangrugi a maaw-awan ti pammati dagiti Nephite, ket kimmario ti kinadakes ken kinarimonda, bayat a nangrugi nga immadu dagiti Lamanite iti pannakaammo iti Diosda; wen, rinugianda a tungpalen dagiti alagaden ken bilinna, ken magna iti kinapudno ken kinalinteg iti sangona.

“Ket ngarud makitatayo a nangrugi nga umadayo ti Espiritu ti Apo kadagiti Nephite, gapu iti kinadakes ken kinatangken ti puspusoda.

“Ket ngarud makitatayo a rinugian ti Apo nga ibukbok ti Espirituna kadagiti Lamanite, gapu iti kinalaka ken kinatulokda a mamati kadagiti balikasna.”

Nalabit ti nakaam-amak ken makapaupay unay nga aspeto daytoy in-inut a panagtallikud dagiti Nephite ket ti kinapudno a “dimteng kadakuada amin dagitoy a kinadakes iti las-ud ti sumagmamano a tawen.”

Timmallikud dagiti Nephite iti Dios

Kasano a nagbalin a nasukir ken nadangkes iti ababa a panawen ti sigud a nalinteg a tattao? Kasano a nalaka a nalipatan dagiti tao ti Dios a nangbendision kadakuada iti kasta unay?

Iti nabileg ken nauneg a wagas, makaisuro kadatayo ita ti negatibo a pagwadan dagiti Nephite.

“Ti kinatangig ... nangrugi a simrek ... kadagiti puso dagiti tattao nga agkunkuna a kamengda ti simbaan ti Dios ... gapu daytoy iti kasta unay ti kinabaknangda ken ti kinarang-ayda iti daga.”

“Italimudok[da]ti puspuso[da] kadagiti kinabaknang ken awan serserbina a banag ditoy lubong” “gapu iti dayta a panagpanakkelda ... a simrek [iti] puspusoda a ... nangitag-ay [kadakuada] iti labes dayta a kinasayaat gapu iti kasta unay a kinabaknang[da]!”

Ipakaasi kadatayo dagiti nagkauna a timek nga adalentayo daytoy agnanayon a leksion:

possessions, and ease constitute a potent mixture that can lead even the righteous to drink the spiritual poison of pride.

Allowing pride to enter into our hearts can cause us to mock that which is sacred; disbelieve in the spirit of prophecy and revelation; trample under our feet the commandments of God; deny the word of God; cast out, mock, and revile against the prophets; and forget the Lord our God and “not desire that the Lord [our] God, who hath created [us], should rule and reign over [us].”

Therefore, if we are not faithful and obedient, we can transform the God-given blessing of prosperity into a prideful curse that diverts and distracts us from eternal truths and vital spiritual priorities. We always must be on guard against a pride-induced and exaggerated sense of self-importance, a misguided evaluation of our own self-sufficiency, and seeking self instead of serving others.

As we pridefully focus upon ourselves, we also are afflicted with spiritual blindness and miss much, most, or perhaps all that is occurring within and around us. We cannot look to and focus upon Jesus Christ as the “mark” if we only see ourselves.

Such spiritual blindness also can cause us to turn out of the way of righteousness, fall away into forbidden paths, and become lost. As we blindly “turn unto [our] own ways” and follow destructive detours, we are inclined to lean upon our own understanding, boast in our own strength, and depend upon our own wisdom.

Samuel the Lamanite succinctly summarized the turning away from God by the Nephites: “Ye have sought all the days of your lives for that which ye could not obtain; and ye have sought for happiness in doing iniquity, which thing is contrary to the nature of that righteousness which is in our great and Eternal Head.”

The prophet Mormon observed, “The more part of the people [remained] in their pride and wickedness, and the lesser part [walked] more circumspectly before God.”

The Lamanites Turned to God

kinarang-ay, sanikua, ken kinanam-ayket nabilag a kombinasion a mangiturong uray dagiti nalinteg nga uminum iti naespirituan a sabidong ti kinatangig.

No ipalubostayo a sumrek ti kinatangig iti puspusotayo, mabalin a pakaigapuan ti panangyawtayo iti sagrado; di mamati iti espiritu ti padto ken paltiing; mangbaddek kadagiti bilin ti Dios; mangilibak kadagiti balikas ti Dios; mangpatalaw, manguyaw; ken manglais kadagiti propeta; ken manglipat iti Apo a Dios[tayo]; ken “saan a tarigagayan a ti Apo, ti nasken nga agpannuray ken agturay [kadatayo].”

Ngarud, no ditayo napudno ken natulnog, mabalintayo a pagbalinen ti inted ti Dios a bendision ti kinarang-ay a napannakkel a lunod a mangsinga ken mangyadayo kadatayo kadagiti agnanayon a kinapudno ken napateg a naespirituan a prioridad. Masapul a kanayon nga agnadtayo iti naipannakkel ken nalabes a panangipateg iti bagi, ti di umiso a panangtingiting iti bukodtayo a panagbiag, ken panagserbi nga umuna iti bagi imbes kadagiti dadduma.

Bayat ti sipapannakkel a panangipokustayo iti bagitayo, agsagabatayo met iti naespirituan a kinabulsek ket ditayo makita ti amin a mapaspasamak iti uneg ken aglawlawtayo. Ditayo mabalin a kumita ken mangipamaysa ken ni Jesucristo kas “tun-oyen” no ti bagbagitayo ti kitkitaentayo laeng.

Kasta a naespirituan a kinabulsek ket mabalin a pakaigapuan ti panangtallikudtayo iti dalan ti kinalinteg, matnag kadagiti maiparit a dana, ket mapukawtayo. No sikukuraptayo nga “agturong iti bukodtayo a dalan” ken surotan dagiti makadadael a pagliklikan, kayattayo ti agpannuray iti bukodtayo a pannakaawat, agpasindayag iti bukodtayo a pigsa, ken agpannuray iti bukodtayo a sirib.

Ababa a ginupgop ni Samuel a Lamanite ti panagtallikud dagiti Nephite iti Dios: “Gapu ta kinalikagumanyo iti amin a panagbiagyo para iti saanyo a magun-od; ket kinalikagumanyo ti kinaragsak babaen iti panagaramid iti nadangkes, banag a kontra iti kinalinteg nga adda iti naindakan ken Agnanayon nga Dadaulotayo.”

Napaliw ni propeta Mormon, “Nagtalinaed ti ad-adu a paset dagiti tao iti kinapalanguad ken kinadakesda, ket agbiag a siaannad ti basbas-sit a paset kadakuada iti sanguanan ti Dios.”

Nagturong dagiti Lamanite iti Dios

In the Book of Helaman, the increasing righteousness of the Lamanites provides a stark contrast to the rapid spiritual decline of the Nephites.

The Lamanites turned to God and were brought to a knowledge of the truth by believing the teachings in the holy scriptures and of prophets, exercising faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, repenting of their sins, and experiencing a mighty change of heart.

“Therefore, as many as have come to this, ye know of yourselves are firm and steadfast in the faith, and in the thing wherewith they have been made free.”

“Ye should behold that the more part of [the Lamanites] are in the path of their duty, and they do walk circumspectly before God, and they do observe to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgments. ...

“... They are striving with unwearied diligence that they may bring the remainder of their brethren to the knowledge of the truth.”

As a consequence, the “righteousness [of the Lamanites] did exceed that of the Nephites, because of their firmness and their steadiness in the faith.”

A Warning and a Promise

Moroni declared: “Behold, the Lord hath shown unto me great and marvelous things concerning that which must shortly come, at that day when these things shall come forth among you.

“Behold, I speak unto you as if ye were present, and yet ye are not. But behold, Jesus Christ hath shown you unto me, and I know your doing.”

Please remember that the Book of Mormon looks to the future and contains important principles, warnings, and lessons intended for me and you in the circumstances and challenges of our present day.

Apostasy can occur at two basic levels—institutional and individual. At the institutional level, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints will not be lost through apostasy or taken from the earth.

The Prophet Joseph Smith proclaimed: “The Standard of Truth has been erected; no unhallowed hand can stop the work from progressing ... ; the truth of God will go forth boldly, nobly,

Iti Libro ni Helaman, ti umad-adu a kinalinteg dagiti Lamanite ti mangipaay iti paggidiatan iti napardas a naespirituan a pannakadadael dagiti Nephite.

Nagturong dagiti Lamanite iti Dios ket naammuanda ti kinapudno babaen ti panamati-da kadagiti pannursuro iti scripture ken propeta, panangipakatda iti pammati ken Apo Jesucristo, panagbabawi iti basolda, ken ti panagbalbaliw ti pusoda.

“Ngarud, kas ti kaadu ti immay iti daytoy, ammoyo iti bagbagiyo a natibker ken napigsa ti pammatiyo, ken iti banag a nakaited iti way-awaya.”

“Makitayo a kaaduanna kadagiti [Lamanite] ti adda iti dalan ti pagrebbenganda ket magnada a siaannad iti sango ti Dios, ket sitatallugodda a mangtungpal kadagiti bilin ken dagiti lintegna ken dagiti panangukomna. ...”

“... Ikagkagumaanda nga awan iti pannakabannog a kinagaget tapno mayegda ti nabati a kakabsatda iti pannakaammo iti kinapudno.”

Kas resultana, “nagbalin a nalinteg a tattao ti kaaduan kadagiti Lamanite, iti kasta nalab-awan ti kinalintegda ti kinalinteg kadagiti Nephite, gapu iti kinatibker ken kinatalgedda iti pammati.”

Maysa a Pammallaag ken maysa a Kari

Impakdaar ni Moroni: “Adtoy, impakita kaniak ti Apo dagiti naindaklan ken nakaskasdaaw a banag maipapan kadagiti masapul nga umay iti di mabayag, iti dayta nga aldaw inton umay kadakayo dagitoy a banag.

“Adtoy, agsaritaak kadakayo a kasla addakayo, ngem awankayo met. Ngem adtoy, impakitana kadakayo ni Jesucristo kaniak, ket ammok ti aramidyo.”

Laglagipenyo koma a ti Libro ni Mormon ket maseknan iti masakbayan ken naglaon kadagiti napateg a pagbatayan, pammallaag, ken adalen a nairanta para kadatayo, kadagiti kasasaad ken karit iti agdama a panawentayo.

Mapasamak ti ikakalilis iti kinapudnio iti dua a kangrunaan a lebel—institusional ken individual. Iti institusional a lebel, Ti Simbaan ni Jesucristo dagiti Santo iti Ud-udina nga Aldaw saanto a mapukaw babaen ti ikakalilis iti kinapudno wenno maikkat iti daga.

Impakdaar ni Propeta Joseph Smith: “Awan ti namulitan nga ima a makapasardeng iti aramid iti panagprogreso; ... ti kinapudno ti Dios agtululoyto a situtured, sitatakneng, ken agmaymay-

and independent, till it has penetrated every continent, visited every clime, swept every country, and sounded in every ear, till the purposes of God shall be accomplished, and the Great Jehovah shall say the work is done.”

At the individual level, each of us must “beware of pride, lest [we] become as the Nephites of old.”

May I suggest that if you or I believe we are sufficiently strong and stalwart to avoid the arrogance of pride, then perhaps we already are suffering from this deadly spiritual disease. Simply stated, if you or I do not believe we could be afflicted with and by pride, then we are vulnerable and in spiritual danger. In the space of not many days, weeks, months, or years, we might forfeit our spiritual birthright for far less than a mess of pottage.

If, however, you or I believe we could be afflicted with and by pride, then we consistently will do the small and simple things that will protect and help us become “as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon [us].” “Blessed are they who humble themselves without being compelled to be humble.”

As we follow President Benson’s counsel and ask ourselves why the Lord inspired Mormon to include in his abridgment of the book of Helaman the accounts, admonitions, and warnings that he did, I promise we will discern the applicability of these teachings to the specific conditions of our individual lives and families today. As we study and ponder this inspired record, we will be blessed with eyes to see, ears to hear, minds to comprehend, and hearts to understand the lessons we should learn to “beware of pride, lest [we should] enter into temptation.”

I joyfully witness that God the Eternal Father is our Father. Jesus Christ is His Only Begotten and Beloved Son. He is our Savior. And I testify that as we walk in the meekness of the Lord’s Spirit, we will avoid and overcome pride and have peace in Him. I so witness in the sacred name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

sa, agingga a mastrekna ti tunggal kontinente, masarungkaranna ti tunggal lugar, pagilian, ken mapangngeganna ti tunggal lapayag agingga a maipatungpalto dagiti panggep ti Dios, ket kunaento ni Jehova a nalpasen ti aramid.”

Iti indibidual a lebel, nasken nga “agannad-tayo iti kinapalangguad, amangan ta agbalintayo a kas kadagiti nagkauna a Nephite.”

Isingasingko koma a no patientayo nga umdas ti pigsatayo ken natibkertayo a maliklikan ti kinatangig, nalabit agsagsagabatayon itoy makapapatay a naespirituan a sakit. Iti simple a pannao, no saantayo a mamati a mabalintay nga agsagaba babaen iti kinatangig, nalakatayo a madangran ken agpeggad iti naespirituan. Iti las-ud ti sumagmamano nga aldaw, lawas, bulan, wenno tawen, mabalin a mapukawtayo ti naespirituan a kalintegantayo kas inauna gapu iti maysa a makan.

No patientayo a mabalintay nga agsagaba babaen iti kinatangig, kanayon ngarud nga aramidentayo dagiti babassit ken simple a banaga mangsalaknib ken tumulong kadatayo nga “agbalin a kasla ubing, natulok, naemma, napakumbaba, naanus, napnuan ayat, siaayat nga agpasakup iti amin a makita ti Apo a rumbeng nga ipataw [kadatayo].” “Nagasat dagiti mangipakumbaba iti bagbagida a saan a napilit nga agpakumbaba.”

No surotentayo ti balakad ni Presidente Benson ken saludsoden iti bagitayo no apay a pinaregta ti Apo ken ni Mormon iti panangyababana iti Libro ni Helaman kadagiti salaysay, balakad, ken pammallaag nga inaramidna, ikarik a maawatantayo ti pannakayaplikar dagitoy a pannursuro kadagiti espesipiko a kasasaad ti biag ti tunggal maysa ken ti pamiliatayo ita. Bayat ti panagadal ken panangutobtayo itoy naipaltiing a rekord, mabendisionantayo kadagiti mata a makakita, lapayag a makanggeg, maluktan a panunot, ken puso a makaawatkadagiti sursurentayo tapno “annadantayo ti kinapalangguad, di la ket mamin-ano ta maikursongtayo iti sulisog.”

Siraragsak a paneknekak a ti Dios nga Agnanayon nga Ama ti Amatayo. Ni Jesucristo ti Bugbugtong ken Patpatgenna nga Anakna. Isu ti Mangisalakantayo. Ket paneknekak a no magnatayo iti kinapakumbaba ti Espiritu ti Apo, maliklikan ken maparmektayo ti kinatangig ken maaddaantayo iti kappia Kenkuana. Daytoy ti pammaneknekko iti sagrado a nagan ni Apo Jesucristo, amen.