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KnoWhy #367 - What Does it Really Mean to be Blessed For Keeping the Commandments?

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Abstract: When King Benjamin gave his final speech, he spoke to his people about the contrast between the troubles of those who had “fallen into transgression” (v. 40) and the blessings of those who “keep the commandments of God (v. 41). Although life won’t always be perfect, King Benjamin’s teachings show that “keeping the commandments will always bring happiness and blessings from the Lord.” He reminds us that through the Savior’s power, we can choose to “hold out faithful to the end” (v. 41), no matter what we experience in life.



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WHAT DOES IT REALLY MEAN TO BE BLESSED FOR KEEPING THE COMMANDMENTS?

“And moreover, I would desire that ye should consider on the blessed and happy state of those that keep the commandments of God. For behold, they are blessed in all things, both temporal and spiritual; and if they hold out faithful to the end they are received into heaven, that thereby they may dwell with God in a state of never-ending happiness. O remember, remember that these things are true; for the Lord God hath spoken it.” Mosiah 2:41

CONTENT AND CONTEXT

When King Benjamin gave his final speech, he spoke to his people at length about the dangers of sin (Mosiah 2:32–40). He then explained the contrast between the troubles of those who had “fallen into transgression” (v. 40) and the blessings of those who “keep the commandments of God (v. 41).¹ Although life won’t always be perfect, King Benjamin’s teachings show that “keeping the commandments will always bring happiness and blessings from the Lord.”² He reminds us that through the Savior’s power, we can choose to “hold out faithful to the end” (v. 41), no matter what we experience in life.

King Benjamin’s invitation to “consider on the blessed and happy state of those that keep the commandments of God” is similar to what one finds in Proverbs.³ In this book, those who keep the commandments are also described as “blessed” or “happy.” These scriptures explain some of the ways that people might be blessed and happy.⁴

For example, Proverbs 8:32, 35 states, “blessed are they that keep my ways... for whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord.” In this case, being blessed is connected to obtaining favor of the Lord.⁵ Proverbs 29:18 similarly states, “Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he.” In this verse, the word “vision” could also be translated as “revelation” implying that revelation constitutes a portion of the promised blessings for keeping the commandments.⁶

King Benjamin stated that those who keep the commandments will be “blessed in all things, both temporal and spiritual” (Mosiah 2:41). Yet, immediately after this glowing pronouncement, he clarified that only those who “hold out faithful to the end,” will be able to dwell with God in a “state of never-ending happiness” (v. 41). If being blessed in all things meant never having problems, there would be no question about whether a per-

son could “hold out faithful to the end.”⁷ This suggests that being blessed in all temporal and spiritual things does not mean that life will be perfect, but rather that God can bless us with happiness and other blessings, even when things are not going well.

This is supported by what immediately follows this statement.⁸ In Mosiah 3:1–9, Benjamin spoke about the coming of Christ, and stated that He would, “suffer temptations, and pain of body, hunger, thirst, and fatigue, even more than man can suffer, except it be unto death; for behold, blood cometh from every pore, so great shall be his anguish for the wickedness and the abominations of his people” (Mosiah 3:7).⁹ Even though Christ would keep the commandments better than anyone else ever had, He would still face greater pain than anyone else had ever known.¹⁰ This shows that being blessed by God does not mean having a perfect life.¹¹

DOCTRINE AND APPLICATION

Relying on the Savior, who suffered unimaginably despite His sinlessness, is what allows us to cope with the struggles of life. President Russell M. Nelson has taught that “Saints can be happy under every circumstance. We can feel joy even while having a bad day, a bad week, or even a bad year!” This is because “the joy we feel has little to do with the circumstances of our lives and everything to do with the focus of our lives.”¹²

As we faithfully focus on Christ, blessings and happiness immediately flow into our lives, not necessarily in absence of our mortal trials but in spite of them. Thus King Benjamin’s teaching to “hold out faithful to the end” does not simply mean to wait out the storms of life. It means to cheerfully and joyfully push through them. As expressed in Proverbs, this blessing of joy can be associated with revelation and divine favor. It flows into us through the power of the Holy Ghost, as we envision and experience the Savior’s infinite Atonement and as we place faith in both the immediate and eternal blessings that come from it.

Keeping the commandments always brings happiness and blessings from the Lord, but at times, we sometimes have to wait longer than we might like for these blessings. King Benjamin reminds us that after enduring faithfully to the end, we can receive happiness in the presence of God (Mosiah 2:41), and this time, it will be never-ending.¹³

Christ certainly received happiness and blessings from the Lord because He kept the commandments, but He also faced periods of crushing pain and grief. He can give us the courage to keep the commandments, regardless of the consequences we might face. His life reminds us what we can achieve. Because He was faithful to the end, He currently enjoys the glorious presence of God. The same is true for all of us.

Obeying God, knowing that He will eventually bless us, takes immense faith. However, as David A. Bednar put it,

Faith as the evidence of things not seen looks to the past and confirms our trust in God and our confidence in the truthfulness of things not seen. We stepped into the darkness with assurance and hope, and we received evidence and confirmation as the light in fact moved and provided the illumination we needed. The witness we obtained after the trial of our faith (see Ether 12:6) is evidence that enlarges and strengthens our assurance.¹⁴

FURTHER READING

President Russell M. Nelson, “Joy and Spiritual Survival,” *Ensign*, November 2016, 81–84, online at lds.org.

President Thomas S. Monson, “Keep the Commandments,” *Ensign*, November 2015, 83–85, online at lds.org.

David A. Bednar, “Seek Learning by Faith,” *Ensign*, September 2007, 61–68, online at lds.org.

NOTES

1. See John W. Welch, “Benjamin’s Speech: A Masterful Oration,” in *King Benjamin’s Speech: “That Ye May Learn Wisdom”* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1998), 83.
2. *Doctrinal Mastery: Core Document* (Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2016), 11, online at lds.org.
3. Referring to Proverbs would make sense, as Benjamin seems to have had scribal training, and proverbs were often used as part of this training. See Book of Mormon Central, “Why Is It Good to Seek Both Spiritual and Secular Learning? (1 Nephi 1:1),” *KnoWhy* 324 (June 9, 2017).
4. Since this was the beginning of Mosiah’s reign, it may also have been advice to his son on how to make his reign blessed and happy. Marilyn Arnold, “Benjamin, King,” in *Book of Mormon Reference Companion*, ed. Dennis L. Largey (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 2003), 91.
5. The idea of being “blessed” is also related to the setting, which is a coronation ritual. For the classic treatment of this topic, see Hugh Nibley, *Since Cumorah*, *The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley*, Volume 7 (Salt Lake City and Provo, UT: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1988), 247–251. For another treatment, see Stephen D. Ricks, “Kingship, Coronation, and Covenant in Mosiah 1–6,” in *King Benjamin’s Speech: “That Ye May Learn Wisdom”*, ed. John W. Welch and Stephen D. Ricks (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1998), 233–276.
6. *The Englishman’s Hebrew Concordance of the Old Testament: Coded with the Numbering System from Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, ed. George Wigram (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1980), s.v. ghah-zohn.
7. If anyone knew what it meant to hold out faithful to the end, it was King Benjamin, who lived a hard life of warfare and struggle, despite being a good king. See Stephen D. Ricks, “Benjamin,” in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 4 vols., ed. Daniel H. Ludlow (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1993), 1:99–100.
8. There was not a chapter break here in the 1830 edition, and it may be a good idea to skip the break when reading these chapters. See Brant A. Gardner, *Second Witness: Analytical and Contextual Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, 6 vols. (Salt Lake City, UT: Greg Kofford Books, 2007), 3:143.
9. For more on the intensity of this suffering, see Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L. Millet, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, 4 vols. (Salt Lake City, UT: Bookcraft, 1987–1992), 2:147.
10. Susan Easton Black, “King Benjamin: In the Service of Your God,” in *Mosiah, Salvation Only through Christ*, ed. Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate Jr., *The Book of Mormon Symposium Series*, Volume 5 (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1991), 42.
11. See Book of Mormon Central, “What Does it Mean to Prosper in the Land?” *KnoWhy* 116 (June 7, 2016).
12. President Russell M. Nelson, “Joy and Spiritual Survival,” *Ensign*, November 2016, 82, online at lds.org.
13. This blessing can come because of spiritual rebirth through Christ. See Rodney Turner, “The Great Conversion: Mosiah 1–6,” in *The Book of Mormon, Part 1: 1 Nephi to Alma 29*, ed. Kent P. Jackson, *Studies in Scripture: Volume 8* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1988), 205–229.
14. David A. Bednar, “Seek Learning by Faith,” *Ensign*, September 2007, 63, online at lds.org.