



Type: Book Chapter

Chapter XII

Author(s): George Q. Cannon

Source: *The Life of Nephi, the Son of Lehi*

Published: Salt Lake City; Juvenile Instructor Office, 1883

Pages: 58-63

Abstract: Nephi Practically the Leader—Commanded to Build a Ship—Directed to the Ore out of Which to make Tools—Makes a Bellows—Obtains Fire—Fault-finding and Ridicule of his Brethren—His Sadness and their Elation—They Grumble at and Reproach their Father and Him—He Reasons with Them—Enraged, They Attempt to Throw Him in the Sea—Nephi full of Power of God—They dare not Touch Him—They are Shaken Before Him—Fall down to Worship Him—Told by Nephi to Worship God—Nephi Shown by the Lord how he should work Timbers, etc.—Not Worked after the Manner taught by Men—Helped by his Brothers—Ship Finished—Laman and Others Acknowledge Nephi's Ability to Build a Ship—Mountains as Places of Worship

lives. This conception of their characters and motives—and especially so with respect to Nephi—he gave to all who accompanied him. It was indelibly fastened upon the mind of their descendants; and false and cruel as it was, it became the fixed and permanent tradition of their entire race. Though these traditions died out with the disappearance of the Nephites as an organized nationality, there being no longer any reason for keeping them alive, yet we have but to look at the Indians which we see around us, to behold the dreadful consequences of Laman's example, false traditions and life. The wild Indian, as we see him in our day, exactly personifies the life which Laman upwards of twenty-four centuries ago, chose for himself and descendants.

CHAPTER XII.

NEPHI PRACTICALLY THE LEADER—COMMANDED TO BUILD A SHIP—DIRECTED TO THE ORE OUT OF WHICH TO MAKE TOOLS—MAKES A BELLOWS—OBTAINS FIRE—FAULT-FINDING AND RIDICULE OF HIS BRETHREN—HIS SADNESS AND THEIR ELATION—THEY GRUMBLE AT AND REPROACH THEIR FATHER AND HIM—HE REASONS WITH THEM—ENRAGED, THEY ATTEMPT TO THROW HIM IN THE SEA—NEPHI FULL OF POWER OF GOD—THEY DARE NOT TOUCH HIM—THEY ARE SHAKEN BEFORE HIM—FALL DOWN TO WORSHIP HIM—TOLD BY NEPHI TO WORSHIP GOD—NEPHI SHOWN BY THE LORD HOW HE SHOULD WORK TIMBERS, ETC.—NOT WORKED AFTER THE MANNER TAUGHT BY MEN—HELPED BY HIS BROTHERS—SHIP FURNISHED—LAMAN AND OTHERS ACKNOWLEDGE NEPHI'S ABILITY TO BUILD A SHIP—MOUNTAINS AS PLACES OF WORSHIP.

AFTER the colony reached the land Bountiful it is noticeable that the practical leadership devolved upon Nephi, and it continued to be so from that time onward. He had grown strong in body—a stalwart, vigorous, energetic, untiring and undaunted man—but he had also grown in the knowledge and

gifts of the Lord. There seemed to be no bounds to his faith. He honored his father, Lehi, and still, doubtless, looked to him for counsel. But Lehi was growing in years and was probably not fitted to take upon him the burden of active labor.

They had now enjoyed a lengthened rest in this charming land; and the time had come for action. It was to Nephi the Lord revealed that which was next to be done. He commanded him to go up into the mountain. When he reached there he cried unto the Lord. The Lord said to him:

“Thou shalt construct a ship, after the manner which I shall show thee, that I may carry the people across the waters.”

This was indeed a formidable undertaking for a man with such an experience as he had. He probably knew but little or nothing about ships or their method of construction or the use of tools. But he manifested neither hesitation nor reluctance about undertaking the labor assigned him. He had no doubts of his ability to accomplish it. He knew, as he had expressed himself, that the Lord gave no commandment without preparing the way by which it should be fulfilled; and had He not told him that He would show him in what manner to build it? The Lord directed him to where he could find the ore out of which to make tools. Then Nephi made a bellows with which to blow the fire, out of the skins of beasts. Fire he obtained by striking two stones together. As we have already remarked, the Lord did not suffer them to make much fire as they traveled. He had promised to make their food sweet, so that they would not need to cook it. He had told them also that He would be their light in the wilderness and would prepare the way before them if they would keep His commandments, and they should be led towards the promised land. They were to know that it was by Him they were led. When they should arrive at the promised land, they were to know also that He had brought them out of Jerusalem and had delivered them from destruction.

Nephi had no sooner commenced his labors by obtaining ore out of rock and out of that making tools, and to make his preparations to build a ship, than his brethren began to find fault with and ridicule him. Why, said they, our brother is a

fool; he has an idea he can build a ship and also cross this ocean of waters! They neither believed he could build a ship nor that he was instructed of the Lord; and they declined to do any work of that kind. This unbelief and hardness of heart on their part caused Nephi to be very sorrowful. They noticed his sadness; but mistook the cause. They supposed it was because they had discouraged him and he had become convinced he could not build a ship. This idea elated them, and with an air of triumph they taunted him. We knew, said they, that you could not construct a ship; for we knew that you did not have sufficient judgment; you cannot accomplish so great a work. They reproached him with being like their father, in being led away by the foolish imaginations of his heart. They recited their imaginary grievances against Lehi for leading them out of Jerusalem and bringing upon them the suffering they and their wives had endured since leaving there. Warming up with their complaints, they said it would have been better for their wives to have died before they left Jerusalem than to have had such afflictions as they had borne. While they were suffering all these hardships in the desert they might, they said, have been happily enjoying themselves at their home in Jerusalem. As for the people of Jerusalem, notwithstanding their father's condemnation of them, they declared they knew them to be a righteous people; for they kept the statutes and judgments of the Lord, and all His commandments according to the law of Moses. But their father had led them away, because they had hearkened to him, and now here was Nephi, their brother, just like their father.

Nephi, according to his custom when they grumbled and found fault, commenced to reason with and teach them. He cited to them the history of the children of Israel under the leadership of Moses, what the Lord had done and the mighty works He had enabled Moses to do. He did not spare them in his rebukes. He said they were like the Jews, who had sought to take his father's life; they also had done the same thing, and they were murderers, he said, in their hearts, and they were like the Jews. Said he: "Ye are swift to do iniquity, but slow to remember the Lord your God." He told them they had seen an angel and he had spoken unto them.

They had heard the voice of the Lord from time to time; but they were past feeling; they were hard in their hearts. Nephi felt their conduct so acutely that he told them his soul was rent with anguish because of them; and he feared lest they should be cast off for ever. He was so full of the Spirit of the Lord while speaking to them that his frame had no strength.

The only effect his words and remonstrances appeared to have upon them was to enrage them. They went so far as to attempt to throw him into the depths of the sea; but as they advanced towards him for that purpose, he commanded them in the name of the Almighty God not to touch him; for he was so filled with the power of God, even unto the consuming of his flesh, that whoever should lay his hands upon him should wither even as a dried reed, and he should be as naught before the power of God, for God should smite him. He had so much power on this occasion that they dared not lay their hands upon him or even touch him with their fingers. They dared not do so either for many days. The Spirit of God was so powerful, and it wrought upon them in such a way, that they dared not do this, for fear they should wither before Nephi. In the meantime, Nephi had told them they must murmur no more against their father, and they must not withhold their labor from himself. The Lord had commanded him to build a ship. If he should command him to do all things, he could do them. Even if he should command him to say to that water, be thou earth; if he should say so, it would be done. If the Lord has such power and had wrought so many miracles among the children of men, how is it, he asked, that He could not instruct him how to build a ship? Nephi said many things unto them. The Lord told him to stretch forth his hand again to his brethren, and though they should not wither before him He would shock them, "and this will I do," said the Lord, "that they may know that I am the Lord their God." Nephi did so, and the Lord did shake them, as he had said he would do. This had a great effect upon them. They acknowledged that the Lord was with Nephi and that it was by the power of the Lord they had been shaken; and they fell down before him and were about to worship him; but he would not suffer them. He told them he was their younger brother;

they should worship the Lord their God, and honor their father and mother, that their days might be long in the land which the Lord, their God, should give them. Ready to kill him, as they were at one moment, at another they were ready to worship him. Strange inconsistency! But there is no consistency about people when they lose the Spirit of God. No man can tell what he himself will do when he is forsaken by that Spirit; and no one else can form any idea as to what vagaries such a person will indulge in, unless it is revealed to him.

Some manifestation of power was necessary at that time to subdue these rebellious spirits and bring them into line, so that they might assist in the work to be done. We presume that this occurrence made a great impression upon them, and that they did not shake off very quickly the remembrance of it; for we are told of no more outbreaks during the building of the ship. One might think that after such an extraordinary manifestation of power as they witnessed through Nephi it would forever cure them of indulging in such a spirit of rebellion and murder; but, as we shall see as we proceed, it did not. Their hearts became so impenetrable to all heavenly influences that the effect upon them of even such a display of power as they had witnessed and felt upon that occasion, was not very lasting. They had rejected the Spirit of the Lord, and had become the servants of that evil one, whom they were willing to obey; he had power over them and they were led and prompted by him. Respecting that evil one, the Savior has said, that he was a liar and a murderer from the beginning, and he leads all who yield to him to be as he is.

The Lord showed Nephi from time to time how he should work the timbers of the ship. They were timbers of curious workmanship, and his brothers helped in this labor. They were not worked after the manner which was learned by men, neither was the ship built after their style; but it was built by Nephi in the manner shown to him by the Lord. It would, of course, be well adapted for the service required of it. Even Laman and the rest who shared in his dissatisfaction had to acknowledge this; for when the ship was finished, and they saw how suitable it was and how fine the workmanship was,

they had to admit the truth of that which Nephi had told them, that the Lord could teach him how to build a ship; and they humbled themselves before the Lord. While engaged in this labor, Nephi went often to the mountain and prayed unto the Lord, and great things were shown unto him. It is worthy of remark that men of God frequently availed themselves of mountains as places of worship, to which they could go to pray and commune with Him. At such heights and to such men it seems as though the veil between heaven and earth becomes thinner and more easily pierced. The men who have written the most about God, and who have communicated His will to their fellows, have been men who communed with Him in solitary places. By withdrawing to the loneliness of the wilderness or to the mountain top, away from the haunts and tumult of men, they could there obtain the seclusion necessary for the concentration of faith by which they could draw near to and commune with Him undisturbed. Sublime and elevated thoughts are appropriate to such places. In the desert, in the wilderness, and upon mountain peaks, nature is witnessed in all its simple yet impressive majesty, and its solemn stillness is favorable to thanksgiving and prayer, and man is brought nearer to his Creator. The Savior Himself "went up into a mountain apart to pray," and brought His disciples, Peter, James and John "up into a high mountain apart," when He was transfigured and had His interview with Moses and Elias.