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You, Too, Have Freedom of Choice

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Abstract: President Heber J. Grant, hoping to help his wayward brother Brigham, prayed, then opened the Book of Mormon hoping for the answer to his brother's plight. The book fell open to Alma 36, a chapter of hope. When Brigham read the words of consolation and faith, his life was changed.

You, too, have freedom of choice

by Lucy Grant Cannon

EDITOR'S NOTE: A noted scientist said that democracy was that form of government which left every citizen free to do his best. Under the divine Plan of Salvation, each mortal has his freedom of choice. This freedom of choice, of deciding between good and evil, is inherent in mankind; it is a reminder of that great council in heaven and of what was determined there.

One mortal who exercised well his right of choice or *free agency*, in having chosen to give many years of devoted service to the Church, was Heber J. Grant, seventh president of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. To the theme of free agency, of making good use of opportunities, Lucy Grant Cannon, daughter of President Grant, has selected material from her father's writings and sermons.

IN looking over my father's sermons and talks, I found the theme which he used so often: "There is no joy in the world that equals the joy of knowing in your heart that God lives, that Jesus is the Christ, that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God, and that we as individuals are living the Gospel that will bring eternal exaltation to us and our loved ones." An interesting story on this theme is the conversion of my father's brother, Brigham F. Grant, as told in my father's own words:

"The Book of Mormon has a very warm place in my heart, because of one of its chapters.

"I had a wayward brother who took no interest in the Church until he was between 35 and 40 years of age. I received a letter from him telling that because of the failure of our placer mines where we had invested large sums of money—all we had and all we could borrow—he had been tempted, because he had ruined me financially, to kill himself.

"He went into the woods intending to take his life; but he got to thinking what a cowardly, dastardly thing it would be to kill himself and leave his wife and children destitute. So . . . he knelt down and prayed to God: 'O God, if there is a God.' He got up weeping for joy and wrote me that he had been convinced . . . that there is a God and a devil, one leading to life and the other to death.

"He threw the letter into his trunk. He wrote me letters every day for a week, each landing in his trunk. Finally he mailed one. When I got it, instead of writing him as the adversary had impressed him I would (the adversary had impressed him that I would write and tell him to be baptized), I wrote

him that some day you will know that the Gospel is true. 'Do not think that I want you to be baptized if you feel that you would be a hypocrite.'

"I went out and bought a Book of Mormon, returned to my office, and shut the door; then I told the Lord that I wanted to open the book to the chapter that would do that wayward and careless brother of mine the most good. And this is the chapter to which I opened, the thirty-sixth chapter of Alma.

"Anyone who knows the contents of the book, cannot find a chapter comparable to the thirty-sixth chapter of Alma, 'My son, give ear to my words; for I swear unto you, that inasmuch as ye shall keep the commandments of God ye shall prosper in the land. . . . For I do know that whosoever shall put their trust in God shall be supported in their trials, and their troubles, and their afflictions, and shall be lifted up at the last day.' (*Alma* 36:1, 3.)

"Alma knew no better than I know that those who put their trust in God shall be supported in all manner of afflictions and trials and tribulations. I was able to sit by the deathbed of my only living son and see him die without shedding a tear, and there was a most peaceful feeling in my heart when he passed away.

"I love that chapter. Why? Because when that wayward brother of mine read it, he wrote: 'Heber, I do not know that the Gospel is true. But I pledge the Lord that, if He ever gives me as He gave Alma of old a knowledge of the divinity of the Gospel, I will labor as Alma of old labored to bring souls to a knowledge of the truth.' And thank the Lord, he obtained that knowledge; and thank the Lord, he also kept that pledge."

"Dream, O Youth. Dream nobly and manfully, and your dreams shall be your prophets." This was a favorite theme of President Grant. On this subject, he had this to say to young people:

"If you have ambitions, dream of what you wish to accomplish, and then put your shoulder to the wheel and *work*. Faith without works is dead, so James tells us.

"Unto those of you who have *worthy* determinations, the Lord will open the way before you whereby you can accomplish the labor."

(For Course 29, lesson of August 11, "Road to Salvation"; for Course 27, lesson of August 11, "How Much Freedom?"; and for Course 15, lessons of July on Alma.)

Library File Reference: Grant, Heber J.