

CHAPTER 35

Helaman 1–4

Introduction

Helaman 1–4 presents a stark contrast between the fruits of good and evil. We see the results of evil upon society as well as the individual. The personal growth and blessings obtained by Saints who remain faithful in challenging circumstances can provide us with courage to remain true to righteous principles during difficult times. We can contrast the discord brought by wickedness with the great peace and joy obtained by righteousness. Noting these contrasts provides motivation to chart a course based upon principles that will bring happiness and avoid the misery that comes from disobedience.

Commentary

Helaman 1:1–21. Contention Is Destructive

- The book of Helaman recounts a period of great wickedness among the Nephites. The Gadianton robbers thrived and the masses endured several cycles of wickedness and destructions followed by repentance only to return to wickedness. Many of these troubles could be attributed to “contention” that began in the first chapter of Helaman. While some people might consider “contention” to be a rather innocuous sin, the following General Authorities have commented on the dangers of contention.

President James E. Faust (1920–2007) of the First Presidency stated in forthright terms that the Spirit of the Lord cannot abide contention: “When there is contention, the Spirit of the Lord will depart, regardless of who is at fault” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1996, 57; or *Ensign*, May 1996, 41).

- Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin (1917–2008) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained that contention is purposely fostered by Satan to serve his own evil purposes: “The sins of corruption, dishonesty, strife, contention, and other evils in this world are not here by chance. They are evidences of the relentless campaign of Satan and those who follow him. He uses every tool and device available to him to deceive, confuse, and mislead” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1994, 100; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 76).

- In contrast to the destructive impact of contention, President Henry B. Eyring of the First Presidency

emphasized the unity of the spirit of peace: “Where people have that Spirit with them, we may expect harmony. The Spirit puts the testimony of truth in our hearts, which unifies those who share that testimony. The Spirit of God never generates contention (see 3 Nephi 11:29). It never generates the feelings of distinctions between people which lead to strife (see Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. [1939], 131). It leads to personal peace and a feeling of union with others. It unifies souls. A unified family, a unified Church, and a world at peace depend on unified souls” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1998, 86; or *Ensign*, May 1998, 67).

HELAMAN 1:27, 33

What contrast do you note between these verses in the way enemies were treated by opposing armies? What accounts for the difference?

Helaman 1–2. Evil Secret Works Can Destroy Societies

- Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained that the threat of secret combinations still exists in our day:

“The Book of Mormon teaches that secret combinations engaged in crime present a serious challenge, not just to individuals and families but to entire civilizations. Among today’s secret combinations are gangs, drug cartels, and organized crime families. The secret combinations of our day function much like the Gadianton robbers of the Book of Mormon times. They have secret signs and code words. They participate in secret rites and initiation ceremonies. Among their purposes are to ‘murder, and plunder, and steal, and commit whoredoms and all manner of wickedness, contrary to the laws of their country and also the laws of their God’ [Helaman 6:23].

“If we are not careful, today’s secret combinations can obtain power and influence just as quickly and just as completely as they did in Book of Mormon times. Do you remember the pattern? The secret combinations began among the ‘more wicked part’

of society, but eventually ‘seduced the more part of the righteous’ until the whole society was polluted [Helaman 6:38]. . . .

“The Book of Mormon teaches that the devil is the ‘author of all sin’ and the founder of these secret combinations [Helaman 6:30; see 2 Nephi 26:22]. He uses secret combinations, including gangs, ‘from generation to generation according as he can get hold upon the hearts of the children of men’ [Helaman 6:30]. His purpose is to destroy individuals, families, communities, and nations [see 2 Nephi 9:9]. To a degree, he was successful during Book of Mormon times. And he is having far too much success today. That’s why it is so important for us as priesthood holders to take a firm stand for truth and right by doing what we can to help keep our communities safe” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1997, 51–52; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1997, 38).

Helaman 1–2. Good People Can Help Thwart the Goals of Evil Organizations

- During the general conference following the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) referred to terrorist organizations determined to foster murder, tyranny, fear, and wicked control:

“Terrorist organizations . . . must be ferreted out and brought down.

“We of this Church know something of such groups. The Book of Mormon speaks of the Gadianton robbers, a vicious, oath-bound, and secret organization bent on evil and destruction. In their day they did all in their power, by whatever means available, to bring down the Church, to woo the people with sophistry, and to take control of the society. We see the same thing in the present situation.



“We are people of peace. We are followers of the Christ, who was and is the Prince of Peace. But there are times when we must stand up for right and decency, for

freedom and civilization, just as Moroni rallied his people in his day to the defense of their wives, their children, and the cause of liberty (see Alma 48:10)” (in Conference Report, Oct. 2001, 88; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2001, 72).

Helaman 3:20. “That Which Was Right in the Sight of God Continually”

- Although times were difficult and society was threatened by evil forces, Helaman’s example of steadfastness in doing the Lord’s will is a model for us to follow in the challenging latter days. Like Helaman, we can continually strive to “do what is right; let the consequence follow” (“Do What Is Right,” *Hymns*, no. 237). The key word is *continually*.

Elder Spencer J. Condie of the Seventy emphasized the importance of keeping our covenants as a way of developing consistency in doing good:

“Perhaps of all the evidence of true conversion and a remission of sins, this is the most significant: *the disposition to do evil no more, but to do good continually*. . . .

“We can strengthen our disposition to do good each time we make and keep covenants. Each time we participate in priesthood ordinances, the powers from on high reach downward and draw us nearer to the heavens. Those who partake of the sacrament and temple ordinances with pure hearts and who faithfully keep their covenants require no lengthy instructions regarding modest dress, the payment of generous fast offerings and tithing, observance of the Word of Wisdom, or keeping the Sabbath day holy. They need no stern reminders to share the gospel with others, to attend the temple frequently, to conduct family history research, or to do their home teaching or visiting teaching. Nor do they need nudges to visit the sick and to serve those in need.

“These are the faithful Saints of the Most High who keep the sacred covenants they have made in the house of the Lord, ‘having a determination to serve him to the end, and truly manifest by their works that they have received the Spirit of Christ unto the remission of their sins’ (D&C 20:37). Covenant keepers . . . live the law of consecration. Their time, talents, and financial resources all belong to the Lord.

“Keeping their covenants has caused them to develop a disposition to do good continually” (“A Disposition to Do Good Continually,” *Ensign*, Aug. 2001, 14, 19).

Helaman 3:24–25. Prosperity in Our Lives and in the Church

- While serving as a member of the Seventy, Elder Dean L. Larsen observed a relationship between faithfulness to the Lord and prosperity:

“When the lives of the people are in harmony with the Lord’s will, all of the essential factors that produce the blessings God deigns to give to his children seem to come into line. Love and harmony prevail. Even the weather, the climate, and the elements seem to respond. Peace and tranquility endure. Industry and progress mark the lives of the people. . . .

“. . . We have the Lord’s assurance that he will bless and prosper his people if they will keep his commandments and remember to look to him as the source of their blessings” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1992, 58–59; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1992, 41–42).

HELANMAN 3:24–26

What insights do we get from these verses about the meaning of “prosperity”? How does this differ from the prosperity the world has to offer?

Helaman 3:29–30. “Lay Hold upon the Word”

- President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994) taught that certain blessings come only through diligent scripture study: “Success in righteousness, the power to avoid deception and resist temptation, guidance in our daily lives, healing of the soul—these are but a few of the promises the Lord has given to those who will come to His word. Does the Lord promise and not fulfill? Surely if He tells us that these things will come to us if we lay hold upon His word,



then the blessings can be ours. And if we do not, then the blessings may be lost. However diligent we may be in other areas, certain blessings are to be found only in the scriptures, only in coming to the word of the Lord and holding fast to it as we make our way through the mists of darkness to the tree of life” (“The Power of the Word,” *Ensign*, May 1986, 82).

Helaman 3:30. “Sit Down with Abraham, and Isaac, and with Jacob”

- The phrase “to sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and with Jacob” means that the faithful will merit the association of these three great patriarchs and the reception of celestial-like rewards. According to Doctrine and Covenants 132:37, “Abraham . . . as Isaac also and Jacob . . . have entered into their exaltation, according to the promises, and sit upon thrones, and are not angels but are gods.”

Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained that Church members may become heirs to the blessings of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob:

“The covenant that the Lord first made with Abraham and reaffirmed with Isaac and Jacob is of transcendent significance. . . .

“We are also children of the covenant. We have received, as did they of old, the holy priesthood and the everlasting gospel. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are our ancestors. We are of Israel. We have the right to receive the gospel, blessings of the priesthood, and eternal life. Nations of the earth will be blessed by our efforts and by the labors of our posterity. The literal seed of Abraham and those who are gathered into his family by adoption receive these promised blessings—predicated upon acceptance of the Lord and obedience to his commandments” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1995, 42–43; or *Ensign*, May 1995, 33).

Helaman 3:33–34, 36; 4:12. The Effect of Pride on the Church

- Mormon was careful to point out that pride was not part of the Lord’s Church, but because of great riches, it began to enter into the hearts of some of the members of the Church (see Helaman 3:36), which had a detrimental effect on the Church in general.

President Ezra Taft Benson expressed thoughts in a similar vein:

“Think of what pride has cost us in the past and what it is now costing us in our own lives, our families, and the Church.

“Think of the repentance that could take place with lives changed, marriages preserved, and homes strengthened, if pride did not keep us from confessing our sins and forsaking them (see D&C 58:43).

“Think of the many who are less-active members of the Church because they were offended and their pride will not allow them to forgive or fully sup at the Lord’s table.

“Think of the tens of thousands of young men and couples who could be on missions except for the pride that keeps them from yielding their hearts unto God (see Alma 10:6; Helaman 3:34–35).

“Think how temple work would increase if the time spent in this godly service were more important than the many prideful pursuits that compete for our time” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1989, 6; or *Ensign*, May 1989, 6).

- For more information and a diagram depicting the pride cycle, refer to “The Cycle of Righteousness and Wickedness” in the appendix (p. 414).

- Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught that a paramount step in becoming completely faithful in the gospel is the avoidance or removal of pride:

“How can you make the gospel of Jesus Christ not just an influence in your life but the controlling influence and, indeed, the very core of what you are? . . .

“As a first step, you must lay aside any feeling of pride that is so common in the world today. By this I mean the attitude that rejects the authority of God to rule in our lives. . . . You hear it expressed today in phrases



© Busath.com

such as ‘Do your own thing’ or ‘Right and wrong depend on what I feel is right for me.’ That attitude is a rebellion against God” (in Conference Report, Apr. 2004, 9; or *Ensign*, May 2004, 11).

Helaman 3:35. Sanctification of the Heart

- *Sanctification* has been defined as “the process of becoming free from sin, pure, clean, and holy through the atonement of Jesus Christ (Moses 6:59–60)” (Guide to the Scriptures).

- Faithful Church members in Helaman’s day continued their spiritual growth, which resulted in “the sanctification of their hearts” (Helaman 3:35).

President James E. Faust taught that such growth comes with the aid of the Holy Spirit fostering our inmost desires to conduct our lives as the Savior would have us live. During this process, we are sanctified: “Christlike conduct flows from the deepest wellsprings of the human heart and soul. It is guided by the Holy Spirit of the Lord, which is promised in gospel ordinances. Our greatest hope should be to enjoy the sanctification which comes from this divine guidance; our greatest fear should be to forfeit these blessings” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1998, 23; or *Ensign*, May 1998, 20).

- The Saints of Helaman’s day continued in good works and became stronger in spiritual qualities, which in turn resulted in sanctification. Elder D. Todd Christofferson explained that sanctification is a step in the path of striving toward perfection: “Personal persistence in the path of obedience is something different than achieving perfection in mortality. Perfection is not, as some suppose, a prerequisite for justification and sanctification. It is just the opposite: justification (being pardoned) and sanctification (being purified) are the prerequisites for perfection. We only become perfect ‘in Christ’ (see Moro. 10:32), not independently of Him. Thus, what is required of us in order to obtain mercy in the day of judgment is simple diligence” (“Justification and Sanctification,” *Ensign*, June 2001, 24–25).

Helaman 3:35. They Did Wax Strong in Their Humility

- The development of humility is a strengthening factor that leads to greater faith and joy in the lives of faithful Church members then and now.

“To be humble is to recognize gratefully your dependence on the Lord—to understand that you



have constant need for His support. Humility is an acknowledgment that your talents and abilities are gifts from God. It is not a sign of weakness, timidity, or fear; it is an indication that you know where your true strength lies. You can be both humble and fearless. You can be both humble and courageous. . . .

“The Lord will strengthen you as you humble yourself before Him” (*True to the Faith: A Gospel Reference* [2004], 86).

Helaman 3:35. Firm in the Faith

- The strength of the Church lies in the firm convictions of individual members. Helaman 3:35 describes the lives of Church members who were firm in their faith and works.

Elder Russell M. Nelson pointed out that such firmness in behavior and attitude is obtained individually:

“Only as an individual can you develop a firm faith in God and a passion for personal prayer. Only as an individual can you keep the commandments of God. Only as an individual can you repent. Only as an individual can you qualify for the ordinances of salvation and exaltation” (in Conference Report, Oct. 2003, 47; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2003, 44).

Helaman 3:35. Yielding Our Hearts to God

- The phrase “yield our hearts” means to surrender or give our hearts to God. When one yields his or her

heart to God, he is surrendering his personal desires in exchange for the Lord’s desires. Elder Neal A. Maxwell (1926–2004) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught that yielding our hearts and souls to God is the highest form of consecration to the Lord:

“Ultimate consecration is the yielding up of oneself to God. *Heart, soul, and mind* were the encompassing words of Christ in describing the first commandment, which is constantly, not periodically, operative (see Matthew 22:37). If it is kept, then our performances will in turn be fully consecrated for the lasting welfare of our souls (see 2 Nephi 32:9).

“Such totality involves the submissive converging of feelings, thoughts, words, and deeds” (in Conference Report, Apr. 2002, 41; or *Ensign*, May 2002, 36).

HELANAN 4:11–13

List at least six of the serious sins the Church members in Nephi’s day committed that drew them away from the Lord’s protection.

Helaman 4:22–26. Sin Weakens People

- Elder M. Russell Ballard gave this warning: “You must be honest with yourself and remain true to the covenants you have made with God. Do not fall into the trap of thinking you can sin a little and it will not matter. Remember, ‘the Lord cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance’ (D&C 1:31). . . . Some youth foolishly rationalize that it is ‘no big deal’ to sin now because they can always repent later when they want to go to the temple or on a mission. Anyone who does that is breaking promises made to God both in the premortal life and in the waters of baptism. The idea of sinning a little is self-deception. Sin is sin! Sin weakens you spiritually, and it always places the sinner at eternal risk. Choosing to sin, even with the intent to repent, is simply turning away from God and violating covenants” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1993, 6; or *Ensign*, May 1993, 7).

Points to Ponder

- Mormon referred to “the man of Christ” (Helaman 3:29). What do you think characterizes a man of Christ? What are two or three goals you can set that would lead you toward becoming a man or woman of Christ? What do you need to do to achieve these goals?
- Helaman 3:35 lists benefits that come from being firm in the faith. Which of these blessings have you recently felt? What qualified you for these blessings?

Suggested Assignments

- Analyze yourself to determine where pride might be a problem in your life. Write down goals to overcome that pride.
- Under the title of “prosperity,” list as many blessings as you can think of that you have recently received from the Lord.