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## Lesson XVIII. The Testimony of the Spirit

Editor(s): Mary Connelly Kimball

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**Abstract:** The mission of the Book of Mormon—The commission to the Lamanites—Exhortation to review the dealings of God with man—The testimony of the Spirit—The everlasting character of the spiritual gifts—God to show—The knowledge gained through the Spirit the only sure knowledge—Moroni's exhortation.

## LESSON XVIII.

## THE TESTIMONY OF THE SPIRIT.

The special mission of the Book of Mormon is to establish the truth of the word of God. In the preceding lesson it was pointed out that, while the Book of Mormon is interesting history, it is in reality more than history. Indeed, its historical significance is of minor importance. Not that the Church of Christ could not have been re-established without the Book of Mormon. But the Book of Mormon, itself the product of the operation of the active principle of continual revelation, testifies of the correctness and the truth of the plan of salvation. It bears record of Jesus, the Christ, the Redeemer of the world. It establishes the reality of the spiritual life, of spiritual experiences, and of the purposeful immortality of man. There could be no more valuable evidence adduced of the divine authority and the authenticity of the Old and New Testaments, and of the efficacy of the atonement of Jesus Christ, than the record contained in the Book of Mormon.

However, the question may very naturally arise, What is the value of the evidence? Is the testimony borne by the Book of Mormon to be credited? It is very difficult to prove spiritual things in a concrete way. One can not by mathematical demonstration prove the existence of God. But spiritual things are supported by a kind of evidence that is of far more value than a mathematical demonstration—the testimony of the spirit, the burning evidence that sears its testimony into the very soul and will not be denied, oppose as we may. With this kind of spiritual testimony no other sacred record is so strongly fortified as is the Book of Mormon.

First, let it be remembered, when contemplating the authority of the Book of Mormon, that this remarkable record is supported by a cloud of witnesses. Three men had the original plates shown to them by an angel of heaven. These same men heard the voice of God declaring that the translation made by the Prophet, Joseph Smith, is correct. Eight other men saw and handled the plates, shown to them by the Prophet. Of the existence of the original plates there can be no question. Since the publication of the Book of Mormon, hundreds of thousands have accepted it. Their testimony of its divine authenticity is as fervent as is that of the eleven favored men who saw and examined the plates. How have these many thousands learned to know the truth of the Book of Mormon? Have angels shown the plates to them? No. Has God, spoken audibly to them assuring them that the translation is correct? No. Have they personally handled the original plates and thus satisfied themselves of their actuality? No. How then have they gained their undying testimonies? Theirs is the testimony of the Spirit. Of them, it may be aptly said, "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."<sup>a</sup> They have gained their testimonies in the way recommended by the prophet, Moroni, himself. In this lesson it is purposed to review that recommendation, and so to learn how we may gain the testimony of the Spirit.

When the end of the Nephite nation was at hand, and the prophet was about to close his record, Moroni

<sup>a</sup>John 20:29.

addressed his final word of exhortation to his brethren, the Lamanites, and to his friends. Moroni would that all the world should have a testimony of the hand-dealings of God. But how to gain a testimony? Moroni explained.

First, Moroni explained how one may gain what may be called a general testimony. Said he, "When ye shall read these things, if it be wisdom in God that ye should read them, then ye would remember how merciful the Lord hath been unto the children of men, from the creation of Adam, even down until the time that ye shall receive these things, and ponder it in your hearts."<sup>b</sup>

Ponder it in your hearts! Who that has clear vision and unbiased judgment can ponder in his heart the intimate history of the nations and deny the overruling Divine Providence? Moroni was a man of wisdom. He knew that the strongest evidence of the brotherhood of man and of the fatherhood of God was to be derived from a study of the history of the children of men. And Moroni did not allow his recommendation to end with the time of his writing it. Confident that the history of the ages unborn would testify of God, as do those before his own time, Moroni exhorts those to whom his word shall come to "remember how merciful the Lord hath been to the children of men, from the creation of Adam, *even down until the time that ye shall receive these things.*" And Moroni was right. Though the world has passed through ages of tribulations, and again through ages of prosperity and brilliant advancement, since the time of Moroni, yet every age in its own characteristic way testifies of the mercies of God

to the children of men. Moroni was right. To gain a general testimony of God's mercies to men, there is no better way than to peruse the history of the world, and to ponder it well in one's heart.

But even though one may have gained a testimony of the existence of God and of His mercies to men, one may not have gained a testimony of the divine authenticity of the Book of Mormon. The clear-visioned prophet foresaw this condition, and provided counsel for it. "When ye shall receive these things [the records of the Nephites]," he writes, "I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, He will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost."<sup>c</sup>

This is the testimony of the Spirit. This is testimony that everyone who reads the Book of Mormon may have if he will—the manifestation of the power of the Holy Ghost as a witness to the Book of Mormon. But note that this testimony of great price is not thrown inconsiderably away. He who wants it must ask for it. First of all he must have a real desire to know whether or not the things recorded in the book are true. Then he must ask to know the truth. He must ask God, the eternal Father. He must ask in the name of Jesus Christ. But even then, the asking alone will not bring an answer. He who would gain a testimony of the divine truth of the Nephite record must ask with a sincere heart, and with real intent, having an abiding faith in the Son, the Redeemer of mankind. There may be no sham. There may be no doubt. There may be not purpose merely to

<sup>b</sup>Moro. 10:3.

<sup>c</sup>Moro. 10:4.

test the word. Sincerity and integrity of purpose, with faith, alone can bring the manifestation. Then, when one has asked "with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ," the power of the Holy Ghost will manifest the truth of the record in so sure a way, that, though all other knowledge fail, this knowledge can never fail. One who has learned to know the truth through the power of the Holy Ghost has a testimony that will endure under all conditions of prosperity or of adversity, so long as the holder of it keeps himself worthy of it. Sin alone can obscure the testimony of the Spirit. And it may be asserted fearlessly that if any who have really possessed the testimony of the Spirit, have forsaken the fold, it is because they have themselves offended the Spirit. Having gained, then, the testimony through sincerity, integrity and faith, one can retain it only through sincerity, integrity and faith. This doctrine of Moroni's is the same as that put forth by James, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed."<sup>d</sup>

To Moroni it seemed the most natural thing in the world, that one should gain a testimony through the operation of the Holy Ghost. "By the power of the Holy Ghost," declared he, "ye may know the truth of all things," and he exhorted his brethren not to deny the power of God. But the gaining of a testimony through the power of the Holy Ghost, presupposes the presence of the gifts of the Spirit. Moroni understood this perfectly. Anx-

ious for the welfare of his brethren, he explained the operation of the gifts of the Spirit, and exhorted his brethren that they "deny not the gifts of God." For "all these gifts of which I have spoken, which are spiritual, never will be done away, even as long as the world shall stand, only according to the unbelief of the children of men."<sup>e</sup> As long as there is faith and integrity of purpose, one may be blessed with the gifts of the Spirit. So long also, the Holy Ghost will manifest to earnest, God-fearing men the truth of the Book of Mormon. "God shall show unto you that that which I have written is true."<sup>f</sup>

Little more needs to be said. One may learn to know the truth in many ways. One may be told the truth by another and accept it because of the known integrity of that other. One may read the truth in a book and accept it because of the recognized authority of the author. One may investigate the truth oneself and accept it, because of the manifestation of the truth in the careful investigation. And one may learn the truth through the mysterious sixth sense, and accept it because of the insistent testimony of the still small voice. What one may be told by another, may be untrue in spite of his known integrity; for he may himself be mistaken. What one reads as truth in a book may be incorrect, for the author may himself be misled. Even that which one recognizes as truth in personal investigation may be false, for one may have made an error in the conditions of the investigation, or in the observation of the facts. But that which has come through the rare intelligence of the sixth sense, after one has diligently and consistently sought the truth

<sup>d</sup>James 1:5, 6.

<sup>e</sup>Moro. 10:5-29.

<sup>f</sup>Moro. 10:29.

"with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ," and "nothing wavering," cannot fail. It is the truth. The knowledge that one gains through the testimony of the Spirit, consistently and earnestly, will persist, when all other knowledge has passed away. There can therefore be penned no more fitting exhortation for us, at the close of our year's work, than that which Moroni engraved upon the last plate of his father's book.

"I would exhort you, that ye would come unto Christ, and lay hold upon every good gift, and touch not the evil gift, nor the unclean thing. And awake and arise from the dust, O Jerusalem; yea, and put on thy beautiful garments, O daughter of Zion, and strengthen thy stakes and enlarge thy borders forever, that thou mayest no more be confounded, that the covenants of the eternal Father, which he hath made unto thee, O house of Israel, may be fulfilled. Yea, come unto Christ, and be perfected in Him, and deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and love God with all your might, mind and strength, then is His grace sufficient for you, that by His grace ye may be perfect in Christ; and if by the grace of God ye are perfect in Christ, ye can in no wise deny the power of God."<sup>£</sup>

"AND GOD SHALL SHOW UNTO YOU, THAT THAT WHICH I HAVE WRITTEN IS TRUE."

#### OUTLINE.

The mission of the Book of Mormon—The commission to the Lamanites—Exhortation to review the dealings of God with man—The testimony of the Spirit—The everlasting character of the spiritual gifts—God to show—

<sup>£</sup>Moro. 10:30-33.

The knowledge gained through the Spirit the only sure knowledge—Moroni's exhortation.

#### QUESTIONS.

1. What is the special mission of the Book of Mormon?
2. Of what does the Book of Mormon bear record?
3. Why is it necessary to know whether or not the Book of Mormon is true?
4. What testimonies have been borne to the Book of Mormon?
5. How did those who have testified of the Book of Mormon gain their knowledge?
6. What did the Lord say to Thomas about his belief?
7. What directions did Moroni give for gaining a general testimony?
8. Review the chief dispensations in the history of the world, and show how each testifies of the mercies of God.
9. What directions did Moroni give for gaining a testimony of the Book of Mormon?
10. Analyze the directions carefully.
11. Why cannot Moroni's directions be of avail if one has in mind merely to test their virtue?
12. What did Moroni teach of the power of the Holy Ghost?
13. What is the relation between Moroni's directions for gaining a testimony and the operation of the gifts of the Spirit?
14. What alone can drive away the gifts of the Spirit?
15. In what various ways may one learn to know the truth?
16. Which of these ways is the most reliable?
17. What then is the real value of the testimony of the Spirit?
18. State in your own words the message of Moroni's closing exhortation.
19. State your own attitude towards the Book of Mormon.
20. Try to analyze that attitude and give your reasons for it.