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Lessons from the Life of Nephi III: Nephi Obtains the Records

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Abstract: A narrative of Nephi's life and lessons that may be learned from the life of Nephi. At times it is better to suffer wrongs than to demand one's rights, and the purposes of God will not be thwarted.

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LESSONS FROM THE LIFE OF NEPHI.

III.—Nephi obtains the Records.

TEXT:—I know that the Lord giveth no commandment unto the children of men save he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them.—*1. Nephi, III: 7.*

WHILE the little company were still resting in the valley of Lemuel, Lehi was commanded of the Lord to send his sons back to Jerusalem to obtain certain records that were in the possession of a man named Laban, who was of the same tribe as was Lehi,—that of Joseph. The records, which were engraven on plates of brass, being intimately associated with Lehi's ancestors, were highly necessary for the welfare of his descendants when they established themselves in a new home far from communication with any other people.

When the elder sons of Lehi were informed of the Lord's wishes, they entered many objections to returning to Jerusalem. They claimed to be afraid of Laban, who was a man of considerable influence, having much wealth and many servants at his command. It was not till Nephi had pled with them that they would consent to go. Though young, he had learnt an exceedingly valuable lesson,—that the Lord does not require His children to do impossible things, but that, when He gives them a command, He opens up the way for them to accomplish His requirements. Nephi felt at this time that if the Lord desired that they should have the records then in the possession of Laban, He would control cir-

cumstances in such a way that they could obtain them.

The young men accordingly returned to Jerusalem. When they reached the holy city, it was decided that Laman, being the eldest, should first go to Laban and endeavor to obtain the records. Laman had no faith in his mission and, being faithless, was unsuccessful. He was much abused by Laban for asking for the records, and returned to his brothers feeling very down-hearted. The young men then decided that they would endeavor to purchase the records from Laban, so they went to their father's house, and gathered up some of the valuables that they had left therein when they deserted their home for the journey in the wilderness. Taking these precious things to Laban, they offered them to him in exchange for the plates. He, seeing how great was the value of the property offered him, desired to get it without giving up the records in return. He therefore, with the aid of his servants, drove the young men from his house and sent his followers to slay them, but he did not permit them to carry away the valuables they had brought. These he kept for himself.

After this second unsuccessful effort, Laman and Lemuel were very angry, and they went so far as to beat their younger brethren, Sam and Nephi, with a rod. While doing so, an angel appeared before them and upbraided them for their evil conduct. This rebuke for a time quieted them, but the effects of this heavenly visitation were short lived. They soon be-

came as rebellious, quarrelsome, and cruel as before. The fact of these young men being so slightly affected by the visit of a heavenly messenger shows how little effect such visits have on the hearts of the majority of mankind,

not consent. He was determined that, by the help of the Lord, he would not go back without the records. Accordingly, he resolved to make the next attempt himself; so when night came, he walked towards the city, being follow-



NEPHI AND ZORAM WITH THE RECORDS.

and how false is the popular idea that if men could but see an angel they would be obedient to the laws of heaven, and live lives of righteousness ever after.

Laman and Lemuel were now very anxious to return to the wilderness, but Nephi would

ed at some distance by his brethren. They do not appear to have had the courage to enter the gates, but stood without the walls, while Nephi entered the city, not knowing exactly where he should go, or what he should do, being led by the Spirit of the Lord with-

in him. As he approached the house of Laban, he perceived a man lying on the ground in a drunken stupor. A little examination showed him that the man was Laban. The Spirit of the Lord directed Nephi to slay Laban, for he was a robber and, at heart, a murderer. He had robbed the sons of Lehi of the property they had taken to him in their effort to exchange it for the records, and had afterwards sought their lives. But though fully justified, Nephi shrank from taking the life of a fellow being. Never before had he shed human blood. But the Spirit of the Lord whispered to him it was better that one man should be slain than that a whole people should perish in ignorance. If Lehi's company and their descendants should go to the new land which would afterwards be their home without any account of the dealings of God with their forefathers, the mighty works He had done for their preservation, and the laws which He had given that they might please Him, they would gradually grow in darkness in all these respects, and by and by lose sight of their Creator, and become a wicked, degraded and unbelieving people.

Nerved by this monition, Nephi drew Laban's sword from its scabbard, and cut off his head. He then quickly disrobed the body and placed the dead man's armor on his own person. Thus attired, he entered the house of Laban, and, it being dark, it was not easy to recognize him. Assuming the voice of Laban, he called to a servant named Zoram, who had the keys of the treasury, and told him to bring the plates which he needed. Zoram, deceived by the voice and the armor of his master, quickly obeyed. Then Nephi commanded Zoram to follow him with the records to his brethren. This Zoram did, supposing that the brethren to whom Nephi alluded, were the elders of the Jews.

Nephi and Zoram took their course to the place where Nephi's brothers had secreted themselves. When the latter saw them coming they were greatly afraid, for they did not recognize their brother dressed in the armor of

Laban. They thought that he had been killed and that these men were coming to slay them also; so they fled before them. Nephi, perceiving the difficulty, called to them in his own voice. While this arrested their flight, on the other hand it alarmed Zoram. He would have returned in terror to Jerusalem and, no doubt, have spread the alarm, if Nephi had not caught hold of him, given him assurances of good will and made a covenant with him that if he would be faithful to Nephi and his brethren he should be a free man like unto them; for it appears that Zoram was a bond servant, most probably an Israelite who had fallen into debt, and, as provided by the law of Moses, was serving Laban till that debt was paid by his services. This covenant Zoram faithfully kept. He went down with the sons of Lehi into the wilderness, and he and his posterity were numbered with the people of Nephi ever afterward.

Our lesson today teaches this important truth—That whenever the Lord gives a command to men He always opens the way for its accomplishment to those who seek to obey Him in faith; in other words, God never asks His children to do impossibilities, as all things are possible with Him.

George Reynolds.

WORK FOR GIRLS.

Partial Service.

THERE is another branch of domestic service which could be taken up by girls whether they are residents of the city or the country. It is what I shall term partial service. I mean by this, the giving of only part of the time to working away from home.

Now, say some bright enterprising girl, wishes to earn something, has no other special talent or opportunity to earn money except in housework, and that through home circumstances she is unable to go out all day long. Then let her try this plan: Think of some sister who has a family, who has means to hire