

Book of Mormon Study – Ether 12-15

Online zoom Sunday School, 29 Nov 2020

(goto.jayball.name/bofm)

Faith and Hope

Ether 12:4-9

*Wherefore, whoso believeth in God might with surety **hope for a better world**, yea, even a place at the right hand of God, **which hope cometh of faith**, maketh an anchor to the souls of men, which would make them sure and steadfast, always abounding in good works, being led to glorify God. And it came to pass that Ether did prophesy great and marvelous things unto the people, which they did not believe, because they saw them not. And now, I, Moroni, would speak somewhat concerning these things; I would show unto the world that **faith is things which are hoped for and not seen**; wherefore, dispute not because ye see not, for ye receive no witness until after the trial of your faith. For it was by faith that Christ showed himself unto our fathers, after he had risen from the dead; and he showed not himself unto them until after they had faith in him; wherefore, it must needs be that some had faith in him, for he showed himself not unto the world. But because of the faith of men he has shown himself unto the world, and glorified the name of the Father, and prepared a way that thereby others **might be partakers of the heavenly gift**, that they might **hope for those things which they have not seen**. Wherefore, ye may also **have hope, and be partakers of the gift, if ye will but have faith**.*

Faith is things hoped for but not seen. How does this definition relate to how the word is used later in verse 32?

For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it. (Rom 8:24-25)

See also our earlier discussion on Alma 32:21.

Ether 12:10-12

Behold it was by faith that they of old were called after the holy order of God. Wherefore, by faith was the law of Moses given. But in the gift of his Son hath God prepared a more excellent way; and it is by faith that it hath been fulfilled. For if there be no faith among the children of men God can do no miracle among them; wherefore, he showed not himself until after their faith.

The day of salvation appears tenuously, almost as gossamer as a spider web, and if you don't lay hold of it, it is lost. Then generations can come and go while singing hymns to the pride of their ancestry and the greatness of their religion, while they all go to hell. Because when the Lord sets His hand, He sets it

exactly the same way every time. It always requires faith to come aboard and requires faith to even see it is underway. The Lord does not work except by faith.

Ether 12:26

And when I had said this, the Lord spake unto me, saying: Fools mock, but they shall mourn; and my grace is sufficient for the meek, that they shall take no advantage of your weakness;

See our discussion of this verse from our lesson on Nov 1st, on Morm 2:15.

Ether 12:27

And if men come unto me I will show unto them their weakness. I give unto men weakness that they may be humble; and my grace is sufficient for all men that humble themselves before me; for if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them.

Everything that we have been put through and every challenge that we have been given and every weakness that we possess, have all been given to us in a studied way to bring us, hopefully, to our knees. To bring us, hopefully, to feel the chastening hand of God, so that we, in our day, in our circumstance, can look upon it all as a gift, because it surely is.

This verse is also a reminder that no man can be trusted, for all men are weak. Even Peter, the night of the Lord's trial, was a broken reed. If you put your weight on that, it would pierce your hand. That is what men are but not who our Lord is, for His course is straight. He does not even cast a shadow to the right or left, for His course is true.

This is one reason I felt drawn to pen a new verse to the primary song, Follow the Prophet and submitted it to the church:

*Jesus was the Word, creator of the earth
He is the Prince of Peace, Son of the virgin birth
In the garden and the cross He suffered for our sin
By faith, grace, and repentance, I can come to Him*

*Follow the Savior, Follow the Savior, Follow the Savior, don't go astray
Follow the Savior, Follow the Savior, Follow the Savior, He knows the way
(<http://jayball.name/291/the-missing-verse/>)*

Ether 12:28

Behold, I will show unto the Gentiles their weakness, and I will show unto them that faith, hope and charity bringeth unto me—the fountain of all righteousness.

Note the order, first faith, then hope, and finally, charity. Three degrees.

Ether 12:32

*And I also remember that thou hast said that thou hast prepared a house for man, yea, even among the mansions of thy Father, in which man might have ****a more excellent hope****; wherefore man must hope, or he cannot receive an inheritance in the place which thou hast prepared.*

Lesson on Alma 23-29, notes on Alma 28:11-12, we discussed hope used as it is here in this context as being the holy spirit of promise.

This verse includes this wonderful phrase on hope: "man must hope, or he cannot receive." What a delightful link between something within us, to something without. It is a link between our future inheritance, and a present expectation. It is a link between looking forward now, to a reality to come. We see the wonderful intangibility of a present day thought linked to what is to become concrete in the future.

"Hope," particularly as it is used here, is not well understood. We sometimes view it as a weak virtue; something of a wisp, a phantom. But in this context it is much more. It is a concrete assurance, based upon a promise or covenant.

"Hope" comes from knowing the Lord has promised a person something. As the Lord has assured us, He does not make and then break promises. When He promises something, He will deliver it. As He has said in D&C 1:38: "What I the Lord have spoken, I have spoken, and I excuse not myself; and though the heavens and the earth pass away, my word shall not pass away, but shall all be fulfilled." Anyone who receives a promise from Him has an absolute certainty. However, the promises of the Lord are invariably about the future, even if the immediate future. To Abraham, the promise of a son (Gen 18:10) preceded Isaac's birth by many years (Gen 21:1-2). To Joseph the promise of his brothers and father bowing to him (Gen 37:5-11) was given in a dream many years before he was actually sitting in power in Egypt (Gen 45:7-10). From the time of the promise to Moses that Israel would be delivered by his hand (Exo 8:10), to the time Israel was delivered out of Egypt (Exo 12:31), there were many months, trials, confrontations and difficulties. Between the promise given, and the realization of the promise, there was only "hope." It was "hope" linked to faith, but hope, nonetheless. This is the kind of "hope" spoken of here. It is not a vague notion, or whimsical possibility. It was trust and confidence springing from a promise given to a person by God. It is something far greater, more profound, more strongly felt, more firmly based than just expectancy from vague desire.

Ether 12:35

*Wherefore, I know by this thing which thou hast said, that if the Gentiles have not charity, because of our weakness, that thou wilt **prove** them, and take away their talent, yea, even that which they have received, and give unto them who shall have more abundantly.*

In the Book of Abraham (3:26), a pre-earth discussion occurs between God, Christ, and a council that included Satan. The discussion concerned creating this world and sending all of us here to "prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them[.] (The word "prove" is frequently used in LDS scripture in a similar context: 2 Nephi 11:3; D&C 98:12-14; 124:55; and 132:51.) What if we envision that "testing" as necessarily destructive? After all, we are all

going to die. If the process of “proving” involves establishing our limit by the circumstances we find ourselves in, our lives are a revelation to us of what we can do, what we really are, and how we respond to a process that will end, in this phase, with our descent into the grave.

The language in this verse has clear implication of Christ's parable of talents. We have no indication in the Book of Mormon that Moroni would have known anything about that parable. How would Moroni have been familiar with this parable?

Ether 12:39

And then shall ye know that I have seen Jesus, and that he hath talked with me face to face, and that he told me in plain humility, even as a man telleth another in mine own language, concerning these things;

How does Christ speak when he speaks with man?

The Lord's public execution was designed to humiliate Him. Onlookers were expected to have contempt for anyone executed that way. He foretold the world shall rejoice (John 16:20) at His disciples' sorrow.

In contrast, His triumphant resurrection was private. He appeared only to a few (and initially, only to women). He endured public shaming, reserving His greatest triumph to quiet privacy between confidants. Our Lord is meek, and although greater (see D&C 19:18) and more intelligent than us all (see Abraham 3:19), yet He condescends to speak with us in plain humility.

Ether 12:41

And now, I would commend you to seek this Jesus of whom the prophets and apostles have written, that the grace of God the Father, and also the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost, which beareth record of them, may be and abide in you forever. Amen.

This is a description of what Christ did before He became flesh to dwell among us. This is who He was before the world was. He went from grace to grace until He was “called the Son of God.” This is very important. Our Lord Jesus Christ advanced by degrees, from grace to grace, before He entered this world, long before He took upon Him mortal flesh here, He experienced a long period of development. He acquired through that development sufficient grace to be “called the Son of God.” And this is the prototype of the saved man!

This is what you must be or else not be saved (see LoF 7:9). These are the "first principles of the Gospel" (see King Follet discourse, TPJS pg 345) so that you can understand who it is that you worship, and how to worship Him. As long as you are here in this mortal venue, clothed in mere flesh, you have the great endowment and capacity to offer a sacrifice to God. You are in the ideal condition to develop the ability to exercise faith in Him. You couldn't do it if you were continuously living in His presence. You will not return to His presence until you first develop that faith. Therefore, you are in an ideal, even enviable, place here.

You will be amazed at the grace it is possible to acquire, if you will only do so while in this dark place. You are here to accomplish a great deal. This creation was designed as an opportunity to sharply

contrast good and evil. It is a testing or proving ground. That is exactly why you are here. This is a glorious opportunity. You wanted it. You shouted for joy at the idea of coming here to experience this veil of flesh. Therefore, you should rejoice again now, because salvation is free and offered to us all.

What is grace?

Grace is the free, unmerited love and favor of God. It is also enabling power. Many Christians focus on the first part of this definition while ignoring the second.

Grace is a gift, but the gift must be received. Only those willing to “receive” it merit grace (see D&C 88:28-35). It is “received” in the way the Lord ordained and in no other way. There is no space between faith in Christ and behavior evidencing that faith. There is no dichotomy between “grace” and “works” because it is by one’s conduct that he or she merits grace. Christ received grace by the things He did. The manner by which each person receives grace is through keeping His commandments (see D&C 93:18-20). Grace — or power to move closer to God — is also an increase of light. Light grows only as one moves closer to it. But man has choice, and he must elect to move closer to the light. If man receives the light from Him, he receives grace, and he becomes more like Him. He will be more gracious and patient with others. How was the Lord able to accomplish all He did? In Abraham 3:14-21 the Lord explains, I am the Lord thy God, I am more intelligent than they all. He was more intelligent because He grew from grace to grace until He understood all things — because He had been through all things, He had descended below all things, and He had risen above all things — therefore He comprehends all things. Comprehension of the “doctrine of Christ” is not based on the command of a vocabulary or mastery of an argument. It is based on gathering light. Light is gathered by heed (obedience) and diligence alone.

“We consider that God has created man with a mind capable of instruction, and a faculty which may be enlarged in proportion to the heed and diligence given to the light communicated from heaven to the intellect...” (TPJS, 51; DHC, 2:8; from “The Elders of the Church in Kirtland, to Their Brethren Abroad,” Jan. 22, 1834, published in Evening and Morning Star, Feb. 1834, 135.)

By following the light one has received already, one grows in light (see D&C 50:17-24). This process leads to the “perfect day” where the light has chased away all darkness. This is how all, like Christ, can grow from grace to grace until they also receive a fullness (see D&C 93:18-20). As man keeps the commandments, he gains light and truth. Experience will be his guide. It works. If anyone finds this odd or difficult to grasp, he just needs to keep the commandments, and he will find it becoming increasingly easy to understand. Man will get light and truth as he follows the process. Do it, and see it unfold. This is the way in which Christ grew from grace to grace. This is how He received the fullness. It is also the way man can get greater grace, greater light and truth. It is the way man will obtain the fullness of light and truth. Moroni first asked Christ to give the gentiles grace (see Ether 12:36-37), but Christ could not promise it. Therefore, Moroni asked that the gentiles seek for it; Moroni pled for the latter-day gentiles to seek grace. It is through grace one can obtain charity. It is through charity one can bless others.

Ether 13:13

And I was about to write more, but I am forbidden; but great and marvelous were the prophecies of Ether;

What is appropriate to be explained, and what is appropriate not to be explained? Why does the Book of Mormon draw lines and say, “At this point in the record, it’s not permitted for me to cover this—I was about to write this, but I’m forbidden from doing so”? Or Nephi saying, “I was about to give you the rest of this story, but the Lord said you can’t do that” (see 1 Nephi 14:24-25)?

There is a very good reason why information is withheld—there’s actually more than one, but there’s one that ought to be front and center: The more information that becomes available which instead ought to be held in sacred solitude, the more you equip the pretenders and the deceivers to improve their false act, the more equipment you hand to them with which to develop an illusion and a mirage that will deceive and take people from the Lord. But more importantly, when you get to the end of what the Lord was teaching to the Nephites, there is power in the government of God. When it got hijacked in the beginning, by the time you get down to the time of Noah, the Earth was so corrupted that Satan held a great chain over the Earth (see Moses 7:26). He had chained the earth and laughed at his accomplishment. How did he manage to get the whole Earth bound down into a great chain? He did so by imitating the government of Adam. He did so by binding together, in a false way, things that God would put together in a Godly way. Right now the struggle on this Earth is over the agency of man. Every facet—economic difficulties, governmental difficulties, business, religion, society, entertainment—it is all a struggle about destroying the agency of man. In order to prevent Zion, the adversary knows he has now but a little time. The only way to make sure that Zion does not accomplish the objective that God wants it to accomplish is by curtailing the ability of people to choose. Take away the right to say, the right to speak, the right to preach. Take away and categorize it as false or hateful or, if you can, criminalize the right to speak of Zion. If you can’t do that, then simply murder in order to prevent the agency of man. Men must/women must come willingly to the Lord. They have to voluntarily accept the invitation from Him. Compulsory means cannot be used. Everywhere you look right now, the struggle is over the agency of man. Some things are absolutely essential and needful, more than the mysteries of God.

Stick of Joseph footnote Ether 13:17

The Hebrew word for “earth” is *eretz* ארץ, which can mean “earth” or “land.” This verse refers only to Yeredites; thus, “land” fits the context better than “earth.”

Ether 13:21

And he should only live to see the fulfilling of the prophecies which had been spoken concerning another people receiving the land for their inheritance; and Coriantumr should receive a burial by them; and every soul should be destroyed save it were Coriantumr.

See Stick of Joseph footnote Mosiah 21:26:

Note that the discovery of Coriantumr shortly after the final destruction of the Yeredite nation may have taken place much earlier (perhaps around ~ 550), with only the report of that discovery being made during the days of Moshiah the 1st. (cf Omni 1:19-21)

Ether 14:12

And it came to pass that he fought with Lib, in which Lib did smite upon his arm that he was wounded;

Alma fought with Amlici (Alma 2:29-31). Other examples (Moroni contending with Zarahemna comes to mind in Alma 44). Leaders contending with leaders tends to be a practice among these peoples. "Yea, even Amalickiah did himself come down at the head of the Lamanites." (Alma 51:12). Unlike Gentiles who's leaders stand back and far away and send their troops out to contend. Was the tradition of leaders leading their armies into battle and leaders contending in the front hand to hand with the leader of the opposition a practice among israel? DSS War Scroll. David, Saul? What about Spartans, Alexander the great, etc? It was when David stayed home from the battle that he got in trouble.

Ether 14:25

*And thus we see that the Lord did visit them in the **fulness** of his wrath, and their wickedness and abominations had prepared a way for their everlasting destruction.*

What does it mean, *fulness of his wrath*?

*And now we can behold the decrees of God concerning this land, that it is a land of promise, and whatsoever nation shall possess it shall serve God or they shall be swept off when the **fulness of his wrath** shall come upon them. ... And the **fulness of his wrath** cometh upon them when they are ripened in iniquity. ... And it is not until the **fulness of iniquity** among the children of the land that they are swept off. ... And this cometh unto you, O ye gentiles, that ye may know the decrees of God, **that ye may repent and not continue in your iniquities until the fulness be come, that ye may not bring down the fulness of the wrath of God upon you as the inhabitants of the land hath hitherto done.** (Ether 2:9-12)*

*And thus the Lord did pour out his blessings upon this land, which was choice above all other lands; and he commanded that whoso should possess the land should possess it unto the Lord, **or they should be destroyed when they were ripened in iniquity; for upon such, saith the Lord: I will pour out the fulness of my wrath.*** (Ether 9:20)

*My heart hath been weighed down with sorrow from time to time, for I have feared, lest for the hardness of your hearts, the Lord your God should come out in the **fulness of his wrath upon you**, that ye be cut off and destroyed for ever, or that a cursing should come upon you for the space of many generations, and ye are visited by sword and by famine, and are hated, and are led according to the will and captivity of the Devil. (Lehi to Laman and Lemuel, 2 Ne 1:17-18)*

Compare this with the definition in context of what it means to *gain a fullness*.

Fullness: Completion of development. Each stage of experience has its own definition of what it means to gain a fullness. Fullness in the preexistence is not the same thing as a fullness in mortality. In turn, the fullness of mortality is not the same thing as the fullness that comes next. Each stage of development has conditions, limitations, and an agenda. Right now one is only accountable for seeking a fullness of what pertains to mortality. “We are not here to ‘get exalted.’ We are here to continue progression which began a long time before our current birth. At the moment, you are being ‘added upon’ by what you experience here (see Abraham 6:2). At some point, you will have received what you need in this sphere, and can move on to the next stage of development. When you have gained everything you need from this life, you will have received the ‘fullness’ from God. It is called the ‘fullness’ because it is all that can be obtained here. It is not possible, however, to inherit everything God ultimately offers while here.”

Jesus lived as the example, proving the pattern for redemption from the Fall as he progressed from grace to grace, until he received a fullness, or in other words, grew in light and truth until he was filled with truth and stands as the light of the world. And in this way He qualified to be called to become the Son of God, because He received not of the fullness at the first. And I, John, bear record that He received a fullness of the glory of the Father. And He received all power, both in heaven and on earth, and the glory of the Father was with Him, for he dwelt in Him.⁴ The Lord explained in the “Answer to Prayer for Covenant” that the fullness is to receive the truth of all things, and this too from me, in power, by my word and in very deed (see D&C 93:11-14).

[Stick of Joseph footnote Ether 15:11](#)

From the Hebrew root ram רם (Strong’s 7410), “to be high.” (See footnote to M’raman 3:1 [Mormon 6:2]).