

THE

WITNESS

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The Book of Mormon Foundation

*And they knew that
it was the day that the
Lord should be born.*

ISSUE 188 / 2024

THE
WITNESS

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(3 Nephi 1:22)

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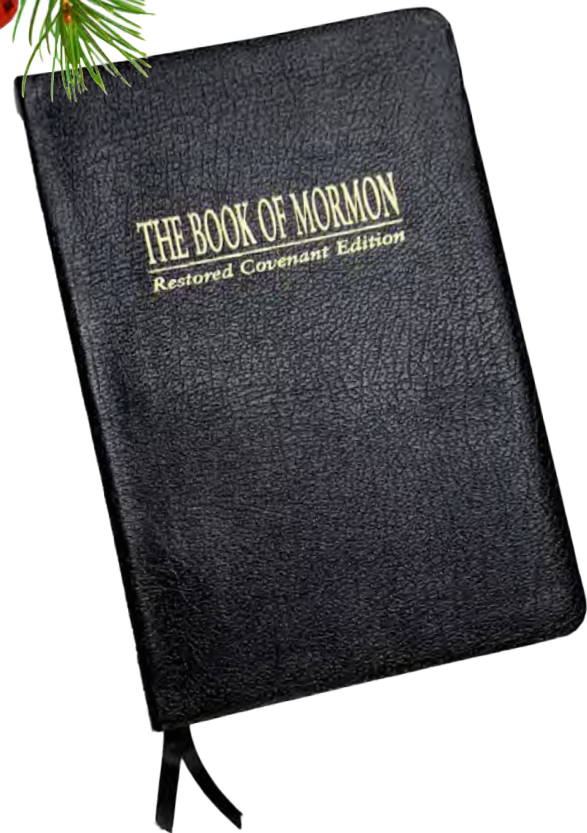
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W O R K



by Dale Gilmore

For the Night is Coming

Around 2:00 a.m. on September 16, 2004, Hurricane Ivan hit Pensacola, Florida with sustained winds of 125 miles per hour and gusts in excess of 140 mph. I sat on my patio as long as I could that night and listened to what sounded like a freight train going through my back yard. In the United States alone, Ivan spawned approximately 120 tornadoes, caused 54 deaths and produced over \$20 billion in damages. We could not leave our neighborhood for several days because large trees had fallen across the road. We lost eleven trees in our yard alone. Schools were closed over a month, and many businesses and homes were totally destroyed.

Ivan had reached hurricane strength 11 days earlier in the Atlantic Ocean while much closer to Africa than Pensacola. Daily, local and national weather reports gave information concerning the storm. These reports generally included projections (cones of probability) that always included the Pensacola area. Every day, more people would go to stores to **stock up** on needed supplies. Items such as plywood and water quickly became scarce. As Ivan approached, the situation became more serious and concerns grew. Many people evacuated the area. However, there were those who failed to prepare in any way, hoping the storm would eventually turn and go a different direction. Finally, at the last minute, some of those procrastinators ventured out to stores for supplies. By that time, the shelves were

bare. Some had driven in rain and wind gusts that made the roads extremely dangerous. Those poor souls had waited too long and many paid a high price for their inaction.

As I reflect on that fateful day, two thoughts come to mind. First, I think of the parable of the ten virgins, which tells us that half the virgins were not prepared for the wedding feast. In parables, women often represent the church; so a virgin would represent the true **pure church**. According to Matthew 25:1-12, half the churches—or half of its members—were not prepared. I gather from this parable, there may be those in the Restoration that will not be prepared when the days of preparation and probation are over. All ten virgins knew the Bridegroom was coming because they had gone out to meet Him. Some of them had simply made poor choices and were not ready for the event. Students often come to class on time, but they do not always have their homework completed. The students are where they should be, but they're not prepared—similar to five of the virgins.

My second thought in reflection on Hurricane Ivan is the destruction that occurred in this land when Christ was crucified on Calvary. 3 Nephi 4:10-14 tells of the tremendous destruction that took place at that time. Hurricane Ivan was a small wind gust compared to the death and destruction that took place on that fateful day in the land of the Americas. Latter day revelation tells us to:



ALL TEN VIRGINS KNEW THE BRIDEGROOM WAS COMING.

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

We are told that in our day the Gentiles will be lifted up in the pride of their eyes, and they will have built up many churches. They'll teach their own wisdom and learning for their own gain, and these churches will cause envyings, strifes and malices. (2 Nephi 11:90-92) Joseph Smith prayed to know which church to join. He was told not to join any of them because none were spiritually where they needed to be in order to feed the people. There were no churches that

were pleasing in the eyes of God. In the last days, the whole earth will be ripe with sin:

Prepare ye, prepare ye for that which is to come, for the Lord is nigh; and the anger of the Lord is kindled, and his sword is bathed in heaven, and it shall fall upon the inhabitants of the earth; and the arm of the Lord shall be revealed. (D&C 1:3b)

Later we're told:

Wherefore I the Lord, knowing the calamity which should come upon the inhabitants of the earth, called upon my servant Joseph Smith, Jr., and spake unto him from heaven, and gave him commandments, and also gave commandments to others, that they should proclaim these things unto the world. (D&C 1:4a)

But behold, in the last days, or in the days of the Gentiles; yea, behold all the nations of the Gentiles, and also the Jews, both those who shall come upon this land, and those who shall be upon other lands; yea, even upon all the lands of the earth; behold, they will be drunken with iniquity, and all manner of abominations. (2 Nephi 11:116)

We must respond to those truths, or we will be like the folks who went to Home Depot just hours before Hurricane Ivan hit. We will be caught unprepared, watching helplessly as destruction occurs all around us. The storm has not yet arrived, but signs of its coming are all around us. How will we respond? I would like to consider three questions for ongoing study. My purpose is not to present the only answers, but to stimulate your thinking and encourage you in your ongoing study. We are all in this together!

I often hear the Saints pray for our nation. We are seeking, in our own weak ways, to assist in the building of Zion. But many in our country are praying for the status quo to be maintained so they can continue to live the good life. Interestingly, human nature remains consistent throughout times and cultures. Many of the Nephites were seeking the same results in the AD 300s.

And it came to pass that when I, Mormon, saw their lamentations, and their mourning, and their sorrowing before the Lord, my heart did begin to rejoice within me, knowing the mercies and the long suffering of the Lord, therefore supposing that he would be merciful unto them, that they would again become a righteous people. But behold this my joy was vain, for their sorrowing was not unto repentance, because of the goodness of God, but it

- WHERE ARE WE NOW?
- WHAT ARE THE CIRCUMSTANCES SURROUNDING THE COMING OF THE STORM?
- WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE UPCOMING STORM?

was rather the sorrowing of the damned, because the Lord would not always suffer them to take happiness in sin. (Mormon 1:36-37)

God cannot bless this country if the prayers for assistance are for selfish reasons. An interesting scene takes place in Mormon 1:53-56. The Nephite army of 30,000 men encountered a Lamanite army of 50,000 men. **And it came to pass that we did stand before them with such firmness that they did flee from before us.** The Nephites pursued them and defeated them again. In spite of these victories, the Spirit of the Lord had withdrawn from the Nephites. **Nevertheless the strength of the Lord was not with us; yea, we were left to ourselves, that the Spirit of the Lord did not abide in us; therefore we had become weak, like unto our brethren.** The wicked sometimes win battles, but their joy is temporary. It is becoming more common in our country today to see wickedness prevail. Righteous people are cast as closed-minded and are even seen by some as a threat to our society.



The scriptures give many examples and promises that God will protect the righteous. God sometimes allows His people to serve under their enemies for a time in order to chastise and humble those He loves: the Israelites were dominated by the Egyptians, the northern tribes were conquered and carried into Assyria, Judah was carried into Babylon, and the Nephites were placed in bondage to the Lamanites. God was slow to hear their cries but, in His own

time and way, He delivered them. It all comes back to preparation—total and sincere preparation—not only for ourselves, but for our families and others.

Many of us try to keep God's work near the top of our list of priorities, but it's only when His work becomes the highest priority in our lives that we will be effective workers for the Kingdom; and His assurance of protection will be upon us. God wants our undivided devotion: **And it shall come to pass that they shall know that I am the Lord their God, and am a jealous God, visiting the iniquities of my people.** (Mosiah 7:34) If we share our allegiance to God with other gods such as worldly pleasures, worldly concerns and worldly pursuits, He will not bless us to the extent we need in order to fulfill our calling. It is interesting that in Mosiah 7:34, God is specifically speaking to His people.

One of the Ten Commandments tells us not to take the Lord's name in vain. As a boy, I was taught that I was not to say the Lord's name in a profane way. I still cringe when I hear others do this. But I believe there is an additional meaning to this commandment. When we are baptized into His church, we take upon ourselves His name. If we do not make a sincere effort to do His will and take responsibility for our stewardship in serving Him, then we have taken His name in vain. We have broken the covenant we made with Him.

WHAT ARE THE CIRCUMSTANCES SURROUNDING THE COMING OF THE STORM?

Based on scripture, other readings, current events and valued opinions of others, I believe the United States is in a downward spiral as sin increases, and may continue until God will no longer provide His protection. At some point, an event or series of events will occur that will leave our country vulnerable to an outside attack. There are a number of scenarios that could put us in a compromising position. One possibility is some form of civil conflict within our country. **And it shall come to pass, among the wicked, that every man that will not take his sword AGAINST HIS NEIGHBOR, must needs flee unto Zion for safety.** (D&C 45:13a) This verse doesn't speak of taking up arms against a foreign invader, but against one's neighbor. This could be a form of a plague or a pandemic. Of course, there could be

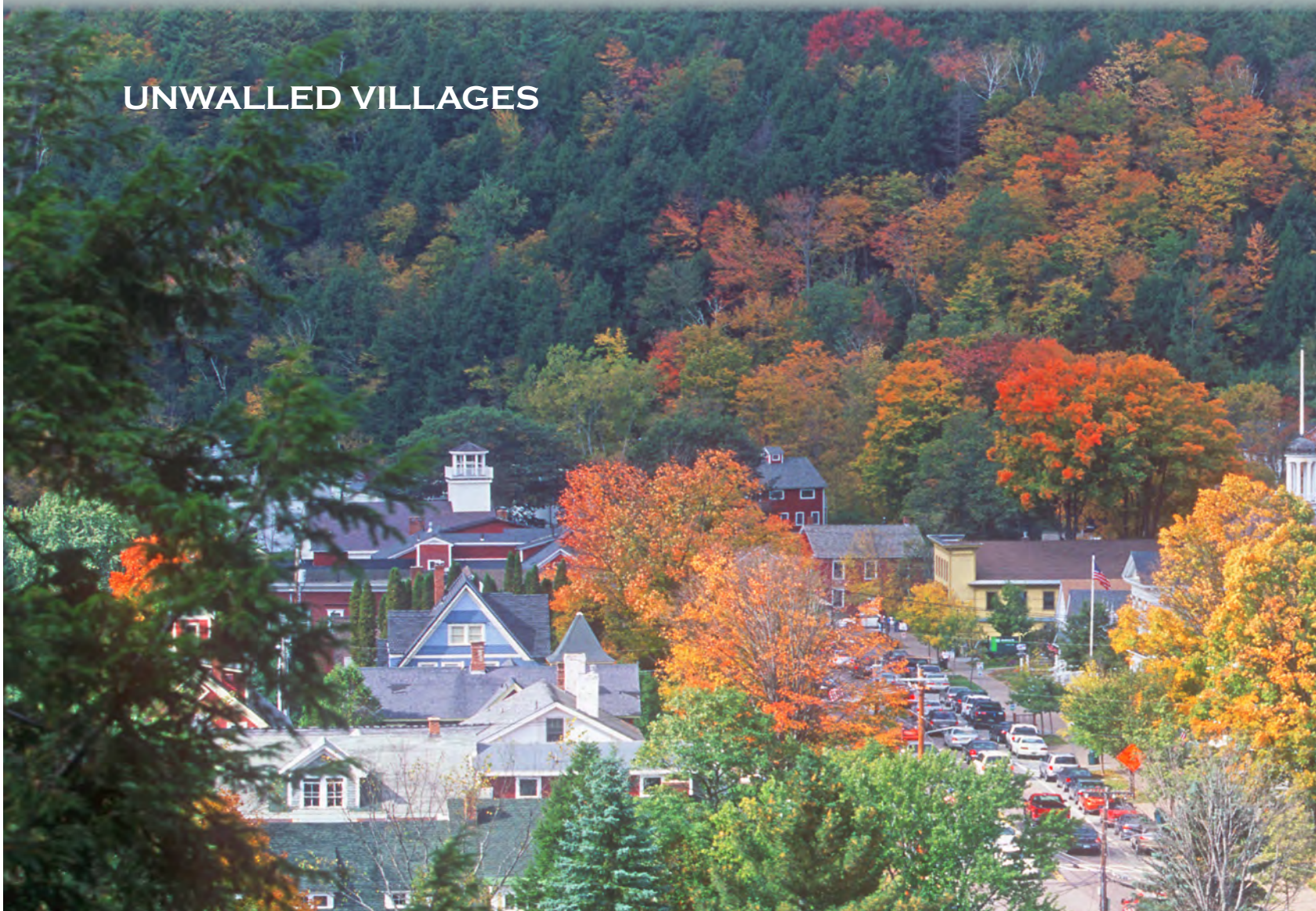
some combination of issues that could leave us in a vulnerable position, though we would be dwelling safely in relation to the outside world.

The scriptures indicate some issues or combination of issues could make us seem vulnerable to attack from outside our borders. The scriptures speak of an attack on Israel from a company of nations. Ezekiel 38 tells us of an evil thought that enters into the mind of a company of people listed in the beginning of that chapter:

Thus saith the Lord God; It shall also come to pass, that at the same time shall things come into thy mind, and thou shalt think an evil thought; And thou shalt say, I will go up to the land of unwalled villages; I will go to them that are at rest, that dwell safely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates.
(Ezekiel 38:10-11)

Later in Ezekiel 38:14, God tells Ezekiel to prophesy unto Gog: **In that day when my people of Israel dwelleth safely, shalt thou not know it?** It is not within the scope of this paper to argue that this land (the Americas) is the land of the people of Israel. However, after the division of the Israelites into the northern and southern kingdoms, Israel was used to address the northern ten tribes and Judah was used to address Judah and Levi and part of Benjamin. I would suggest that the current country of Israel is the Biblical people of Judah. Also, the scriptures indicate that last day events will involve all of the House of Israel. I believe Ezekiel 37:11 speaks of the last days when the **dry bones** of the **whole house of Israel** will return to life. I suggest this means we will have a knowledge of all the tribes and they will play a role in the end times. The last part of that chapter also seems to point to the last days when the stick of Judah and the stick of Joseph will become one stick, **and they shall be one**

UNWALLED VILLAGES



in mine hand. (Ezekiel 37:19) This is a somewhat moot point because any attack on the United States, England or the country of Israel would surely result in a response by all three nations.

As the country falls into greater levels of sin, God will lift those who sincerely seek Him to higher levels of righteousness. Without God's hedge of protection, our country could be overrun. Death and destruction would be default activities except in that place where God's righteous people have gathered. **And it shall be said among the wicked (domestic and/or foreign), Let us not go up to battle against Zion, for the inhabitants of Zion are terrible, wherefore we can not stand.** (D&C 45:13c) Zion will be inhabited by those who have made the degree of preparation that will allow them to dwell there. This country will eventually survive this onslaught through the intervention of God. Isaiah 13, Joel 2 and Ezekiel 38 tell of this intervention to save Israel and destroy the wicked. I believe this will

occur in the Day of the Lord. There are 48 verses of scripture that explain this cataclysmic event. The destruction on this day will be similar to the destruction in this land at the crucifixion of Christ, but will be of greater scope and intensity. **ONLY** those who are prepared will be able to withstand this day.

And it shall come to pass at the same time when Gog shall come against the land of Israel, saith the Lord God, that my fury shall come up in my face. For in my jealousy and in the fire of my wrath have I spoken, Surely in that day there shall be a great shaking in the land of Israel. (Ezekiel 38:18-19)

When that day arrives, it will be too late for preparation. The shelves at Home Depot will be



empty, and many will have to **weather the storm** without the guidance of a sufficient degree of the Holy Spirit.

The Book of Mormon describes the destruction that took place in this land at the time of the crucifixion of Jesus. Many were not prepared spiritually, and it was too late for them when the storm hit.

O that we had repented before this great and terrible day, and then would our brethren have been spared, and they would not have been burned in that great city Zarahemla. And in another place they were heard to cry and mourn, saying, O that we had repented before this great and terrible day, and had not killed and stoned the prophets, and cast them out.

(3 Nephi 4:23-24)

I encourage you to read the entire chapter prayerfully. There may have been some who were not killed in this devastation who proclaimed how lucky they were to have survived the day. However, no luck was involved in that day, nor will luck play a part in who survives the upcoming Day of the Lord. Jesus said to the people in this land who remained after the cataclysmic events, **O all ye that are spared, because ye were more righteous than they, will ye not now return unto me, and repent of your sins, and be converted, that I may heal you?** (3 Nephi 4:41)

The more righteous were spared at that time. And scripture indicates it will be the more righteous who will be allowed into Zion and will be spared from the destruction to come.

JUST WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS COMING STORM?

The prophet Ezekiel explains it in this way when he quotes God: **Thus will I magnify myself, and sanctify myself; and I will be known in the eyes of many nations, and they shall know that I am the Lord.** (Ezekiel 38:23) Later, God speaks specifically to the House of Israel:

Now will I...have mercy upon the whole house of Israel, and will be jealous for my holy name; Then shall they know that I am the Lord their God, which caused them to be led into captivity among the heathen; but I have gathered them unto their own land, and have left none of them anymore there. Neither will I hide my face anymore from them; for I have poured out my Spirit upon the house of Israel, saith the Lord God. (Ezekiel 39:25, 28-29)

This is a wonderful promise to the House of Israel! It is clear that this entire series of events—even our very existence—is about God. He wants all our thoughts, words and actions to be centered around Him. He knows it will not only be pleasing to Him when we reach that level of spirituality, but it will be beneficial to us. We were created to worship God!

Dear Saints, my scenario may not be exact and we don't know precisely when these things will take place. But please understand that a day of darkness is upon us. It is not a matter of **if**, but **when**. I pray that you will be prepared for these days. They will be a danger for all, but also a day of opportunity for those who are prepared and desire to serve God. Our ultimate goal should not be to simply survive the days ahead, but to be spiritually prepared for that day so that we might be the people God would have us be. Some of the spiritually prepared may not physically survive God's day of wrath. But through our preparation, and God's grace, we will all be victorious. I close with some of Moroni's final words:

And again I exhort you, that ye would come unto Christ, and lay hold upon every good gift. 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 for ever, 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. And now, I bid unto all, farewell. (Moroni 10:27, 28, 31)

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What does the Book of Mormon say about Grace, Works and Salvation?

by the 2024 Book of Mormon Interns
Shayla Hamblen, Brea Lewis, Molly Burk, Emma Gilmore,
Elyse Jordison, Phillip Hawley and Sam McLean

Introduction

The most important question that has been on the hearts and minds of Christians since the beginning of the Christian faith is, **Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?** (Luke 18:18) In other words, “How am I saved, when am I saved and how will I know it?”

During the 2024 Book of Mormon Internship, the interns chose to engage in a scripture research project to address these questions, primarily from the perspective of the Book of Mormon. The following article is the result of their study, which gives a summary of the Book of Mormon’s teachings on grace, works and salvation.

1. What does the Book of Mormon say about grace?

Grace is an important aspect of salvation. Therefore, it is not surprising the Book of Mormon speaks a lot about grace and why we need it. But first, we need to know what grace is. As defined in the 1828 Webster’s Dictionary, grace is **the free, unmerited love and favor of God.**

(<https://webstersdictionary1828.com/Dictionary/grace>)

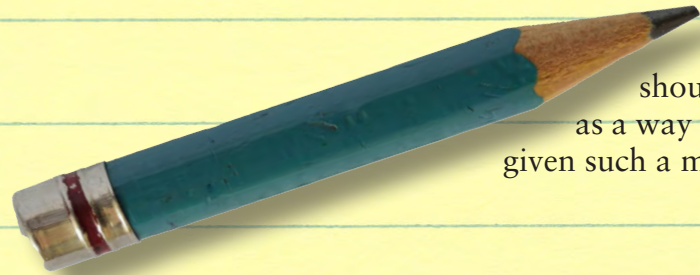
Nephi wrote, **Yea, my soul delighteth in his grace, and his justice, and power, and mercy, in the great and eternal plan of deliverance from death.** (2 Nephi 8:11) What an amazing gift God has given us! And what joy can be found in knowing that there is hope in Christ!

Why do we need grace? Nephi plainly says, **For we know that it is by grace that we are saved** (2 Nephi 11:44); and, **it is *only* in and through the grace of God that ye are saved.** (2 Nephi 7:42) From these verses, we can safely assume that without God’s grace we cannot be saved, for there is no way to acquire salvation by any other means; and that grace is a gift given to us.

Our Heavenly Father, who is all-loving and powerful, has given us this amazing gift of grace that is eternal, great and priceless. It is hard to even imagine the scope of all the mistakes and sins that grace covers. Grace is free and is a favor given from God. There is no way of repaying Him for this gift; but thankfully, we are not asked to repay Him. Instead, God told Moroni, **my grace is sufficient for all men that humble themselves before me; and have faith in me.** (Ether 5:28) If you will **deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and love God with all your might, mind, and strength, then is his grace sufficient for you.** (Moroni 10:29) These things are to be done, not as a means of repaying God or earning our salvation, but as a way of thanking Him for the sacrifice He gave in providing that grace for us.

How comforting a thought that, despite all our shortcomings and the sins we’ve committed, God’s grace will still cover us, and all men and women may be given grace. This is just another example of the fact that our God, the Lord Jehovah and Almighty Creator, is loving, kind and generous. He sent His Son to die so we may receive His grace and have salvation in Him. We are saved through grace, and by that grace we will have a desire to do the Lord’s work in our lives (Helaman 4:71).

Therefore, we should be continually aware of God’s grace in our lives. In response to that grace, we should do His work as a gift to Him for His sacrifice—not as a way to pay Him back, but in pure joy because we have been given such a miraculous path to salvation.



2 . What does the Book of Mormon say about works for salvation?

The Book of Mormon and the Bible have several scriptures that state that we will stand before God on the day of judgment and be judged by our works that we perform on earth in our temporal bodies.

For the day should come that they must be judged of their works, yea, even the works which were done by the temporal body in their days of probation. (1 Nephi 4:52) Nephi goes on to say that if they should die in their wickedness, they must be cast off from the kingdom of God, because the kingdom of God is not filthy, and there cannot any unclean thing enter into the kingdom of God.

Therefore, the wicked will be cast into **that awful hell**, the place prepared for the devil. (1 Nephi 4:50-64)

Abinadi taught that judgment belongs to God. All people shall be **judged of him according to their works, whether they be good or whether they be evil**. Good works will result in a **resurrection of endless life**, and evil works will result in a **resurrection of endless damnation**. (Mosiah 8:83-84) Mosiah described in detail the consequences of evil works that we are in control of here on earth; and if we are found guilty before the Lord, we will **shrink from the presence of the Lord into a state of misery and endless torment**. (Mosiah 1:124-130) Because of the perfection of God, no filthiness can stand before Him or remain in His presence.

We are also commanded to read His word and to know what it says. In 2 Timothy 3:15-17, Paul says we should be well versed in **the holy scriptures**, which are given to us for doctrine and instruction, so that we may be **perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works**. But if we don't know what God's words say, how can we ultimately do the fullness of God's will? This agrees with God's words to Nephi, **For out of the books which shall be written, I will judge the world, every man according to his works, according to that which is written**. (2 Nephi 12:66) If we continue to grow in our knowledge of the scriptures, we will learn that we are commanded to be like Christ in word and in deed.

But it is not enough just to do **works** according to God's laws in the Bible and the Book of Mormon. If we do not have our hearts and intentions behind the actions we do, the works mean nothing. Alma says that if a person's intentions (desires) have been evil, they will receive evil for their reward. On the other hand, **if their works were good in this life and the desires of their hearts were good, they will be restored to good**. (Alma 19:66-71)

God's laws are established, and all people will be restored according to their intentions, or the desires of their hearts. In James 2:17-25, we read that **faith without works is dead**; and Paul wrote, **For we walk by faith, not by sight and we labor that...we may be accepted of him**. According to every person's labor, we are judged and receive a **reward of the deeds done in the body**. (2 Corinthians 5:7-10) We must have both the faith and the right intentions behind our actions to be properly judged of the works we perform. If a man goes out and preaches the gospel to the nations but does not have the intention to bring others unto Christ—he only does these things for gain and the riches of this world—then all his works will be in vain and will count as nothing before God on the day of judgment.

King Benjamin spoke to his people who had taken upon them the name of Christ, and his words apply to Christians in every age:



There is no other name given, whereby salvation cometh, therefore, I would that ye should take upon you the name of Christ, all you that have entered into the covenant with God, that ye should be **obedient unto the end of your lives.** (Mosiah 3:11)

Therefore, I would that ye should be steadfast and immovable, **always abounding in good works,** that Christ, the Lord God Omnipotent, may seal you his, that you may be brought to heaven, that ye may have everlasting salvation and eternal life, through the wisdom, and power, and justice, and mercy of him, who created all things, in heaven and in earth, who is God above all. Amen. (Mosiah 3:21)

3 . Does our grace run out?

When Jesus died for us on the cross, He took our place and made payment for our sin. Through His sacrifice, we receive His grace. We know that all men receive His grace if they are humble: **and my grace is sufficient for all men that humble themselves before me.** (Ether 5:28)

However, the Book of Mormon is full of examples where God's grace ceases to reside with the people. This can be seen in the destruction of the Nephites when they were in open rebellion against God. Mormon saw that **the day of grace was past with them.** (Mormon 1:40) The Amlicites were also in open rebellion against God, which caused them to be cursed with the same cursing as the Lamanites. They cut themselves off from the Lord, and the Spirit ceased to strive with them. (Alma 1:104-120; Ether 1:41) God gave them opportunity to avoid the curse, through His grace and mercy: **except they repent of their wickedness and turn to me, that I may have mercy upon them.** (Alma 1:113) But God no longer had grace for them, because they knew the truth and what was good, and they chose to turn away from it.

Mosiah talks about the wages of sin, which is death. As a brief summary, if we know the truth and choose to not obey it, we withdraw ourselves from the Spirit of the Lord and come out in open rebellion against God. By so doing, we become an enemy to righteousness, and God cannot dwell with us, because we become an unholy temple. (Mosiah 1:79-82) The Nephites and Amlicites both knew what they were doing when they turned from the Lord, which should remind us of the following:

For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they had known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. (2 Peter 2:21)

After ye have repented of your sins, and witnessed unto the Father that ye are willing to keep my commandments, by the baptism of water, and have received the baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost, and can speak with a new tongue, yea, even with the tongue of angels, and after this, should deny me, it would have been better for you, that ye had not known me. (2 Nephi 13:18)

Thus, it does appear that our grace can run out, but only if we come out in open rebellion against the Lord. It won't be counted against us if we don't know what we are doing is wrong, or if we repent of sin and turn from it. Nephi said, **For we know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do.** (2 Nephi 11:44) God's grace will always be with us if we continually strive to do our best, and honor Him, and keep His commands. **And remember after ye are reconciled unto God, that it is only in and through the grace of God that ye are saved.** (2 Nephi 7:42)



If we do openly rebel against Him, we need to repent right away, before it is too late. Our God is very gracious and patient, and He will forgive us when we return to Him. But there is a limit to His patience if we persist in actively denying Him and refuse the saving work of His grace.



4 . What does the Book of Mormon say about salvation?

In 2 Nephi, Lehi is speaking to his sons and pronouncing blessings upon them. As Lehi speaks to his son Jacob, he also shares the plan of salvation. In 2 Nephi 1:63-128, Lehi explains that we can only receive salvation through Jesus, and that the way for us to be saved has been prepared since the beginning of time. Lehi points out that for us to be saved, we must come with a **broken heart and a contrite spirit**. We have the choice between choosing **liberty and eternal life**, or choosing **captivity and death**. (2 Nephi 1:72, 120) Through our agency, we are free to make that choice. God has given us this time of probation on earth to choose liberty and eternal life and to repent of those things that keep us from receiving His great gift.

Wherefore, redemption cometh in and through the holy Messiah: for he is full of grace and truth. Behold, he offereth himself a sacrifice for sin, to answer the ends of the law, unto all those who have a **broken heart and a contrite spirit**; and unto none else can the ends of the law be answered. Wherefore, how great the importance to **make these things known** unto the inhabitants of the earth, that they may know that there is no flesh that can dwell in the presence of God, save it be through the merits, and mercy, and grace of the holy Messiah, who layeth down his life according to the flesh, and taketh it again by the power of the Spirit. (2 Nephi 1:71-74)

In these verses, we are shown that without Jesus, we cannot dwell with God when we die; but if we come to Him with a broken heart and contrite spirit, we can receive redemption through the sacrifice that Jesus made. Even before Jesus was born in Bethlehem, the prophets of the Book of Mormon foretold His coming and how He would save us from our sins.

And moreover, I say unto you, that there shall be no other name given, nor any other way nor means whereby salvation can come unto the children of men, only in and through the name of Christ, the Lord Omnipotent. (Mosiah 1:116)

Once we have accepted this gift of salvation, what should we do next?

Hath he commanded any that they should not partake of his salvation? Behold, I say unto you, Nay; but he hath given it free for all men; and he hath commanded his people that they should **persuade all men to repentance**. (2 Nephi 11:102-103)

God welcomes us all to partake of His salvation, and then we are called to share this good news with the world. Earlier in the same chapter, Nephi writes,

And we talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, we prophesy of Christ, and we write according to our prophecies, **that our children may know** to what source they may look for a remission of their sins. (2 Nephi 11:48)

How will others know about the gift of salvation if we don't share it with them? We must go forth boldly, as we declare the good news to all those who God puts in our path!

5 . What does the Book of Mormon say about baptism?

In 2 Nephi 13:7-17, the importance of baptism and instructions about baptism are explained very plainly. **Jesus showeth unto the children of men, that according to the flesh, he humbleth himself before the Father, and witnesseth unto the Father that he would be obedient unto him in keeping his commandments.** (2 Nephi 13:9) This verse tells us that Jesus showed us the specific steps we need to take to grow closer to God—Jesus humbled himself before God to show that He was willing to obey God’s commandments. **And he said unto the children of men, Follow thou me. Wherefore, my beloved brethren, can we follow Jesus, save we shall be willing to keep the commandments of the Father?** (2 Nephi 13:12-13) Jesus’ command to **follow thou me** reminds us that, unless we are willing to keep the commandments of God and follow the example He set before us, we cannot follow Jesus. Mormon 3:33 also mentions baptism as a means for believers to be **following the example of our Savior.**

Baptism by water gives us the opportunity to humble ourselves before God and witness to Him that we are willing to take upon us His name and keep His commandments. Moroni tells us plainly why baptism is a necessary action and what it brings:

And the first-fruits of repentance is baptism;
And baptism cometh by faith, unto the fulfilling of the commandments;
And the fulfilling the commandments bringeth remission of sins;
And the remission of sins bringeth meekness, and lowliness of heart;
And because of meekness and lowliness of heart, cometh the visitation of the Holy Ghost,
Which Comforter filleth with hope and perfect love,
Which love endureth by diligence unto prayer
Until the end shall come, when all the saints shall dwell with God.
(Moroni 8:29)

When we are truly repentant, we will humble ourselves before the Lord. We will desire to show Him how dedicated we are to Him. Baptism provides us the opportunity to show God how willing we are to do this. Through our faith in Christ, we are baptized. And because of our real intent in following God’s commandment to do this, our sins are taken away.

After baptism, we are able to receive the Holy Ghost, which fills us with hope and perfect love. As long as we are diligent in prayer and seeking God, the Holy Ghost will stay with us and help us endure to the end so that we may dwell with God. It is important to remember that it is not the act of being immersed in water that takes away your sin; rather, it is the act of humbling yourself before God and having a real intent in your heart to submit yourself to Him. As long as we are genuine in coming to God and are seeking to serve Him, God will do the rest.

And whoso cometh unto me with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, him will I baptize with fire and with the Holy Ghost, even as the Lamanites, because of their faith in me, at the time of their conversion, were baptized with fire and with the Holy Ghost, and they knew it not. (3 Nephi 4:50)

6 . Are you secure in your salvation?

“Are you saved?” is one of the most common questions in the Christian world. Security in one’s salvation is infinitely important. Because the Book of Mormon has a lot to say about good works, this can cause many Book of Mormon believers to question or doubt their salvation.



But we have sinned; we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags. (Isaiah 64:6)
They are all gone aside, they are together become filthy; thou canst behold none of them that are doing good, no, not one. (Psalm 14:3)



We know that we are commanded to be perfect (Matthew 5:48), and we believe Nephi's sentiment that **the Lord giveth no commandments 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 1:65) How, then, could we who are evil and fallen hope to be saved, when we cannot possibly fulfill this requirement of perfection?

The answer for each Christian lies in the personal recognition of two facts.

- We must understand the sacrifice Jesus made for us. **For God so loved the world, that he gave his Only Begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.** (John 3:16-17) God's plan is not to condemn, but to save through the gift of His Son.
- We must trust God and His plan. When we truly understand the sacrifice that Jesus made, we are compelled to follow God and do what He asks. Jesus said, **If ye love me, keep my commandments.** (John 14:15) This includes being baptized and becoming transformed by the Holy Spirit.

But if he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and putteth off the natural man, and becometh a saint, through the atonement of Christ, the Lord, and becometh as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father. (Mosiah 1:120)

But the only way we could ever fulfill God's requirement of perfection is through Jesus Christ, by placing our trust in His sacrifice and His grace. Christ's sacrifice is the way that was prepared for us to accomplish the perfection that He commanded.



Wherefore, redemption cometh in and through the holy Messiah: for he is full of grace and truth. Behold, he offereth himself a sacrifice for sin, to answer the ends of the law, unto all those who have a broken heart and a contrite spirit; and unto none else can the ends of the law be answered. Wherefore, how great the importance to make these things known unto the inhabitants of the earth, that they may know that there is no flesh that can dwell in the presence of God, save it be through the merits, and mercy, and grace of the holy Messiah, Who layeth down his life according to the flesh, and taketh it again by the power of the Spirit. (2 Nephi 1:71-74)

If you find yourself asking whether or not you will be saved when you leave this earth, remember that God has your best interest at heart. Can you be sure of your salvation? A sheep who is led by a shepherd doesn't always know where the path may lead. Can the sheep be certain that there is a barn at the end of the pathway to keep him safe from wolves? No, the sheep simply has to trust that the shepherd

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will protect him. Like the sheep, you must follow God and trust that He cares about you. The more you get to know God, the more you will realize that He wants you to be saved, and the more you will trust Him and His promises.

Jesus said, **My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.**

(John 10:27-28) Being secure in your salvation comes through trusting God and His Holy Spirit. Paul wrote, **The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God; And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.** (Romans 8:16-17) We must trust that when we do His will, nothing can harm us:

Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him; I will set him on high, because he hath known my name. He shall call upon me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honor him. With long life will I satisfy him, and show him my salvation.

(Psalm 91:14-16)

Conclusion

The Book of Mormon teaches the gospel in very plain terms: without Jesus Christ, it is impossible for us to dwell with God in heaven. Because of His grace, we can inherit eternal life and be saved. Grace is the free, unmerited love and favor of God. We do not deserve His grace, nor can we earn it, but God is gracious to offer His life freely for us. Ultimately, the decision is up to us. If we love God, we will desire to serve Him and to bring forth good works in our lives. When we stand before Christ at the judgment day, we will be judged by our works (not just our beliefs), whether they have been good or bad, clean or filthy. If we have chosen filthiness, we cannot inherit God's perfect kingdom. God has given us His word to teach us how to live a good life in obedience to Christ.

Part of our obedience to God includes repenting of our sins and being baptized, and following Christ's example as He obeyed the Father. It is not our actions that make us acceptable before God, but receiving His grace and yielding to His Spirit in meekness and humility. With this attitude, we could never turn away from God or rebel against His word. Yet, it is possible for us through our agency to refuse God and turn from Him. And if we do, He will still love us and call us to repentance. Ultimately, if we persist in rebellion against God, we refuse His grace that is freely given. We can have great assurance in our eternal salvation because of God's love and faithfulness, but we must continually trust God and His plan of salvation through Christ's sacrifice, so that our lives become perfected in Him through His grace.

The ultimate goal of the Book of Mormon is to help us decide which path we want to choose, and to make it clear that the gospel of Christ is the only path that leads to eternal life. Once we have found this joy in Christ, we should seek to persuade all people to repent and come unto Christ, so they also can receive forgiveness for their sins and have eternal life in God's kingdom.