

BM#11 "Press Forward With a Steadfastness in Christ"
2 Nephi 31-33

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I. Introduction

The qualities most desirable for a disciple of Christ to possess is to be "steadfast" in their faith.

Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L. Millet state,

"To be steadfast is to be fixed, firm, or unwavering. *Stead* comes from an Old English word meaning "place," as in homestead. It is where we sink our roots and make our home. Thus, to be steadfast in the faith is to be constant and consistent in living by faith. No word in the scriptures better describes spiritual maturity than does *steadfast*. (See also 2 Nephi 31:20; Helaman 15:8; 3 Nephi 6:14; Ether 12:4; D&C 84:61)." (*Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon, Vol.2*. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1988, [4th Printing, 162).

In combination with the quality of being "steadfast in the faith," is also to be "immoveable in righteousness."

Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L. Millet continue,

"To be immovable in righteousness is to be consistent when it comes to matters of values and faith and courage. To be immoveable is to have an allegiance to principles that is independent of circumstances and situation. It is to be firm in one's commitment to the truth, steady in one's loyalty to eternal verities." (*Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon, Vol.2*. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1988, [4th Printing, 162).

Steadfast "in one's commitment to the truth," and immovable in "one's loyalty to eternal verities," are qualities that Nephi exemplified throughout his life.

The Book of Mormon Gospel Doctrine Teacher's Manual states,

"Nephi stands as one of the most valiant of all the sons of God. Though he experienced family strife, warfare, and other trials, he loved the Lord with all his heart. He was full of faith, zeal, and integrity, and he never wavered in his obedience." (*Book of Mormon Gospel Doctrine Teacher's Manual*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1999, 47).

In Nephi's concluding remarks, he focuses upon four eternal truths. An understanding of these truths is essential if we are to qualify for eternal salvation. They are: (1) An understanding of the doctrine of Christ; (2) The importance of our pressing forward and enduring to the end; (3) The necessity of our feasting on the words of Christ and praying always; and, (4) Understanding that the words Nephi declared in the Book of Mormon are the words of Christ. If we accept Nephi's words, we would accept also Christ's words. If, however, we reject the words of the Book of Mormon, we do so at the peril of our eternal salvation. Understanding these truths will serve to strengthen us as we strive daily to keep our covenants and adhere to the teachings of the gospel.

II. 2 Nephi 31

2 Nephi 31:2

2 Wherefore, the things which I have written sufficeth me, save it be a few words which I must speak concerning the doctrine of Christ; wherefore I shall speak unto you plainly, according to the plainness of my prophesying.

Robert L. Millet states,

"Doctrines are teachings. The central, saving doctrine is that Jesus is the Christ, The Son of God, the Savior and Redeemer of humankind; that he lived, taught, healed, suffered, and died for our sins; and that he rose from the dead the third day with a glorious, immortal, resurrected body (1 Corinthians 15:1-4; D&C 76:40-42)...There is power in doctrine, power in the word (Alma 31:5): power to heal the wounded soul (Jacob 2:8), power to transform human behavior...[It is found in three separate sources:]

(1) 'within the four standard works or within official declaration or proclamations'; (2) 'taught or discussed in general conference or other official gatherings by general Church leaders today'; and, (3) 'found in the general handbook or approved curriculum of the Church today'. If it meets at least one of these criteria, we can feel secure in teaching it." (*LDS Beliefs: A Doctrinal Reference*. Compiled by Robert L. Millet, Camille Fronk Olson, Andrew C. Skinner, and Brent L. Top. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 2011, 164-165, numbers added).

Nephi now addresses the following principles of the doctrine and teachings of Christ. In order to gain salvation it is essential that we follow Christ's example. We do this by: (1) Our obedience to the First Principles of the Gospel [Faith in Christ, Repentance, Baptism, Receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost]; (2) Remaining on the strait and narrow path and enduring to the end; (3) Pressing forward in hope with a steadfastness in Christ, and a love of God and for all men, and, (4) Feasting on the words of Christ, as found in the Holy Scriptures and taught by his inspired servants. If we do so, we will receive eternal life.

2 Nephi 31:5-7

5 And now, if the Lamb of God, he being holy, should have need to be baptized by water, to fulfill all righteousness, O then, how must more need have we, being unholy, to be baptized, yea, even by water!

6 And now, I would ask of you, my beloved brethren, wherein the Lamb of God did fulfill all righteousness in being baptized by water?

7 Know ye not that he was holy? But notwithstanding he being holy, he 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.

Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L. Millet state,

"Nephi, to dramatize the importance of baptism, tell us that the Savior had to be baptized to 'fulfill all righteousness' (2 Nephi 31:5). This doctrine is both little understood and marvelously important. In the high spiritual sense there is no righteousness without willing submission to all the ordinances of salvation. No more perfect example

could be found than Christ himself. Christ, who was sinless, had to be baptized in order to be considered righteous. To be righteous, as the word is used in its highest spiritual sense, means far more than being sinless, pure, or merely good. Righteousness is not simply the absence of evil or impropriety; it is the active seeking of the mind and will of the Father and compliance with that will once it has been obtained." (*Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon, Vol. 1*. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1987, [11th Printing, 1999], 360-361).

We enter the waters of baptism in order to receive a remission of our sins. Christ was baptized as an example to all that baptism is our entrance through the gate leading to heaven. None are exempt. (See John 3:5).

2 Nephi 31:8

8 Wherefore, after he was baptized with water the Holy Ghost descended upon him in the form of a dove.

Joseph Smith states,

Speaking of John the Baptist, he "led the Son of God into the waters of baptism, and had the privilege of beholding the Holy Ghost descent in the form of a dove, or rather in the sign of the dove, in witness of that administration... The sign of the dove was instituted before the creation of the world, a witness for the Holy Ghost, and the devil cannot come in the sign of a dove. The Holy Ghost is a personage and is in the form of a personage. It does not confine itself to the *form* of the dove, but in *sign* of the dove. The Holy Ghost cannot be transformed into a dove, but the sign of a dove was given to John to signify the truth of the deed, as the dove is an emblem or token of truth and innocence." (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*. Compiled by Joseph Fielding Smith. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1976, [1977], 275-276).

The sign of the dove was given to John the Baptist as a witness, together with the witness by the Father, that He, whom John had baptized, was the Son of God. (See Matthew 3:17.)

Today, in the Church of Jesus Christ, following the candidate's baptism, hands are laid upon their head, and they are confirmed a member of the Church and then they

receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost had previously bore witness to the individual that the truths he/she were being taught were of God. However, the Holy Ghost did not remain or stay with him/her. Now, after their baptism, the bestowal of the gift of the Holy Ghost means that they can, based upon continued obedience, have the blessing of receiving *continued guidance and direction* from the Holy Ghost throughout their lives.

2 Nephi 31:9-10

9 And again, it showeth unto the children of men the straitness of the path, and the narrowness of the gate, by which they should enter, he having set the example before them.

10 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?

Bruce R. McConkie states,

The path is "*strait* because it is narrow and restricted, a course where full obedience to the full law is required. Straightness has reference to direction, straitness to width." (*Mormon Doctrine*. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966, [Second Edition, 1966], 769).

It is important to understand that both the path and the entrance through the gate are narrow. The meaning is that in order to transverse the path and pass through the gate successfully, one must follow the prerequisite requirements the Lord has established. In contrast, neither the path nor the gate is broad or wide. The meaning would be that the requirements would then not only be determined by each traveler, but also be extremely flexible.

2 Nephi 31:11, 13

11 And the Father said: Repent ye, repent ye, and be baptized in the name of my Beloved Son.

13 Wherefore, my beloved brethren, I know that if ye shall follow the Son, with full purpose of heart, acting no hypocrisy and no deception before God, but with real intent, repenting of your sins, witnessing unto the Father that ye are willing to take upon you

the name of Christ, by baptism--by following your Lord and your Savior down into the water, according to his word, behold, then shall ye receive the Holy Ghost; yea, then cometh the baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost; and then can ye speak with the tongue of angels, and shout praises unto the Holy One of Israel.

Our desire to follow the Son is followed by individual repentance from sin. These two steps precede our entrance into the waters of baptism. In baptism, our sins are washed away and we are prepared to receive the gift of the Holy Ghost and to experience the baptism of fire. As our sins are purged from us, we begin our new life clean and pure.

Bryan Richards states,

[Referring to the phrase "then ye can speak with the tongues of angels" explains] "what...is it that angels say. They shout praises unto the Holy One of Israel and they speak by the power of the Holy Ghost; wherefore, they speak the words of Christ (2 Ne.32:3). Therefore, to speak with the tongue of angels is not to speak in tongues (with rare Pentecostal exceptions, see Acts 2:1-6). It is to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Ghost..." (www.gospeldoctrine.com/contents/2Nephi31).

2 Nephi 31:19-20

19 And now, my believe brethren, after ye have gotten into this stait and narrow path, I would ask if all is done? Behold, I say unto you, Nay; for ye have not come thus far save it were by the word of Christ with unshaken faith in him, relying wholly upon the merits of him who is mighty to save.

20 Wherefore, ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men. Wherefore, if ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life.

To Nephi, enduring to the end means after one has entered into the ordinances and made sacred covenants, more follows. It involves continuing to be obedient to the words of Christ as found in the scriptures, and manifesting our faith and hope and love of God through our actions toward our fellowmen.

Neal A. Maxwell states,

"Hence we are not merely to exist to the end but are to persist in coping with what is occurring in the holy present. If we follow the example of 'the Son of the Living God,'" great things await us (see 2 Nephi 31:16)...

"Even yesterday's spiritual experience, however, does not guarantee us against tomorrow's relapse. Persistence thus matters greatly. More than a few, for instance, have had supernal, spiritual experiences only to fall away later; or, more often, merely to pull off to the side of the road, though intending only a brief rest stop.

"Hence the emphasis on enduring well to the end is wise, simply because we are at risk till the end!...Included in the enduring process is meeting the test of being constantly improved. Remodeling is costly and painful. But how can we realistically expect the arduous process of putting off the old man and putting on the new man to be otherwise?" (*If Thou Endure It Well*. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1996, 122-123).

2 Nephi 31:16, 21

16 And now, my beloved brethren, I know by this that unless a man shall endure to the end, in following the example of the Son of the living God, he cannot be saved.

21 And now, behold, my beloved brethren, this is the way; and there is none other way nor name given under heaven whereby man can be saved in the kingdom of God. And now, behold, this is the doctrine of Christ, and the only and true doctrine of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, which is one God, without end. Amen.

In Nephi's teaching of the principles of salvation, he gives a warning to those who do not endure. He wants us to understand that our compliance with these prerequisite ordinances is essential if we desire salvation.

Nephi also wants each of us to understand that the path to be followed and the gate through which we must pass, is both straight and narrow. It has been clearly marked by the example of Jesus Christ whom we are to follow. While there

may be many paths that lead to Rome, there is only one path that leads to salvation in the kingdom of God. It is only by our following the example of His Son and making and keeping the commandments God has set that we may then gain entrance into His kingdom.

III. 2 Nephi 32

2 Nephi 32:1, 3

1 And now, behold, my beloved brethren, I suppose that ye ponder somewhat in your hearts concerning that which ye should do after ye have entered in by the way. But, behold, why do ye ponder these things in your hearts?

3 Angels speak by the power of the Holy Ghost; wherefore, they speak the words of Christ. Wherefore, I said unto you, feast upon the words of Christ; for behold, the words of Christ will tell you all things what ye should do.

What does it mean "to feast upon the words of Christ?" The words of Christ are found in our scriptures as well as through the words of the modern day Prophets and Apostles. As we become familiar with the teachings of Christ and have strengthened our testimony, we are then prepared to bring souls unto Him. In the beginning, we are like those who "have need of milk, and not of strong meat" (Hebrews 5:12).

Hyrum Smith, Joseph's brother, after being baptized into the Church was desirous of immediately laboring in the kingdom. He received this caution from the Lord.

Doctrine and Covenants 11:16-17

16 Wait a little longer, until you shall have my word, my rock, my church, and my gospel, that you may know of a surety my doctrine.

17 And then, behold, according to your desires, yea, even according to your faith shall it be done unto you.

However, it is not only the convert who needs to daily feast upon the words of Christ in order to strengthen their testimony, it is every member of the Church.

Neal A. Maxwell states,

"We need to feast upon the words of Christ in the scriptures and as these words come to us from living prophets. Just nibbling occasionally will not do. (See 2 Nephi 31:20 and 32:3). Feasting means partaking with relish and delight and savoring-not gorging episodically in heedless hunger, but partaking gratefully, dining with delight, at a sumptuous spread carefully and lovingly prepared by prophet-chefs over the centuries. These words, plus the gift of the Holy Ghost, will tell us all things we should do. The scriptures, ancient and continuing, are the key of knowledge...Appreciation for and the acceptance of the scriptures and the words of the living prophets are much more important steps than many realize. The Lord has said, '...he that will not believe my words will not believe me-that I am' (Ether 4:12). To turn aside His teachings is to turn away from Him, and disdain for His doctrines is disdain for Him." (*Wherefore, Ye Must Press Forward*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1977, 28-29).

Neal A. Maxwell continues,

"Since feasting on the word of God has a 'more powerful effect upon the minds of the people than...anything else' (Alma 31:5), the more the word of God we have and act upon, the more we will press forward. Much spiritual energy is necessary for the marathon of discipleship." (*A Wonderful Flood of Light*. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1990, 11).

2 Nephi 32:4-5

4 Wherefore, now after I have spoken these words, if ye cannot understand them it will be because ye ask not, neither do ye knock; wherefore, ye are not brought into the light, but must perish in the dark.
5 For behold, again I say unto you that if ye will enter in by the way and receive the Holy Ghost, it will show unto you all things what ye should do.

Nephi is reminding each of us that if we desire to know the things of God, we must ask Him in faith. If we do so, in his own due time, He will enlighten us.

If we do not ask, with a sincere desire to know his will, we thereby choose to remain in darkness. You will recall the response of Laman and Lemuel when Nephi asked them,

"Have ye inquired of the Lord? (1 Nephi 15:8). They replied, "We have not: for the Lord maketh no such thing known unto us" (1 Nephi 15:9). On that occasion, he taught them how to receive an answer to their prayers.

1 Nephi 15:11

11 Do ye not remember the things which the Lord hath said?---If ye will not harden your hearts, and ask me in faith, believing that ye shall receive with diligence in keeping my commandments, surely these things shall be made known unto you.

Once again, Nephi is teaching us the simple process of how we obtain divine direction for our lives.

2 Nephi 32:8

8 And now, my beloved brethren, I perceive that ye ponder still in your hearts; and it grieveth me that I must speak concerning this thing. For if ye would hearken unto the Spirit which teacheth a man to pray ye would know that ye must pray; for the evil spirit teacheth not a man to pray, but teacheth him that he must not pray.

Nephi, by vision, knows that there will be those who will not heed his counsel to pray that they may receive divine direction. Instead, they will choose not to pray. It is the devil and those who serve him, who discourage us from offering our prayers to Our Heavenly Father. The devil knows very well the individual who does not pray for guidance and direction from heaven, will, as a result of their decision, become more susceptible to his promptings and temptations. Gradually, he will be able to bring them under his power. When we neglect our prayers, we take an important step in limiting our relationship with Christ. It is for this reason that Nephi is grieved, while Satan is delighted.

2 Nephi 32:9

9 But behold, I say unto you that ye must pray always, and not faint; that ye must not perform any thing unto the Lord save in the first place ye shall pray unto the Father in the name of Christ, that he will

consecrate thy performance unto thee, that thy performance may be for the welfare of thy soul.

Those who know firsthand the power of prayer in their lives, would not consider making an important decision without first seeking the Lord's guidance and direction. To do so would be to neglect receiving direction from the Lord in matters of importance to us. With his foresight and knowledge, He knows what will be in our best interest and of those we love, and he wants to assist us. He will not, however, interfere with our free agency. Therefore, to receive his guidance and direction, we must ask. For us to determine not to ask and to go it on our own, will likely have serious consequences for our lives.

"One individual was offered his dream promotion with the company, but it meant re-locating his family to another part of the country. Although both he and his wife were excited about this opportunity, he visited the temple to seek confirmation from the Lord as to whether he should accept it. During that visit to the temple, the Lord impressed upon him that he should turn down this promotion; that instead of moving across the country, he should raise his children near the extended family, with the cousins, aunts, uncles, and grandparents nearby. He respectfully declined the promotion.

"Six months later, he was offered an even better advancement opportunity. Having rejected the earlier offer, his boss told him that his refusal to accept this offer would mean that his future advancements would be limited. Having received the earlier direction from the Lord to remain near the extended family, and having been offered another opportunity outside the industry, he not only refused this second advancement, but also gave notice to his superiors that he would be leaving the company.

"After giving notice, however, the Lord indicated to him that the new opportunity for which he left his former company was not good, and that he should decline it as well. This left him unemployed and wondering what the Lord had in mind. With a young family, the following many months were very difficult financially and emotionally. Yet, he could not deny the hand of the Lord in these decisions.

"Eventually he received another job where he has been employed for the past nearly 30 years. He shared that it

had not been easy to decline the company's offer twice, but in the end, the blessings that had come to his family as a result of these decisions to follow the promptings of the Lord far outweighed the challenges they had experienced." (Used by permission. Copy in possession of Robert C. Van Sweden).

Bruce R. McConkie states,

"There is nothing in the gospel that is better designed to keep the attention of man centered on God, on righteousness, and on their duties than is prayer. Every thought, word, and act is influenced or governed by the nature and extent of one's communion through prayer with Deity. Over and over again the revelations command: Watch and pray always, lest ye enter into temptation. (Matt. 26:41; Mark 13:33; 14:38; Luke 21:36; 22:40, 46; D&C 10:5.) (*Mormon Doctrine*. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966, [Second Edition, 1966], 581-582).

IV. 2 Nephi 33

2 Nephi 33:1

1 And now I, Nephi, cannot write all the things which were taught among my people; neither am I mighty in writing, like unto speaking; for when a man speaketh by the power of the Holy Ghost the power of the Holy Ghost carrieth it unto the hearts of the children of men.

Nephi, in humility, acknowledges his weakness in writing, in contrast to his speaking ability. He need not apologize however. The power of the Holy Ghost is not only manifest when an individual is speaking by the voice of God, but also bears witness as one reads the word of God. In fact, the scriptures are of great worth, both ancient and modern, for they contain the words of the Holy Prophets as they were inspired by the Holy Ghost. The same Holy Ghost who inspired the Holy Prophets can also inspire us as we read their written words.

The essential qualities a sincere investigator of truth must possess is a earnest desire to learn the truth of the words that have been written. Next, have a heart that is humble and receptive to the whispering of the Spirit, and last, be willing to be conform their life to the truths

they receive thereby manifesting their faith. It is essential that the individual not disregard their experiment in response to preconceived doubts and disbelief.

Nephi 33:2

2 But behold, there are many that harden their hearts against the Holy Spirit, that it hath no place in them; wherefore, they cast many things away which are written and esteem them as things of naught.

Those who are unwilling to embark upon the spiritual journey to know the truths as revealed by God to his Holy Prophets will not be receptive when the witness of the Holy Ghost comes to them. By their refusal to read and to ask, they demonstrate their lack of sincere desire to know the truth. They conclude, some without even reading a word, that the words of the prophets have no relevance in their lives. They then discontinue their search for the truth. Many conclude that because God does not speak to them, there is no God. If there is no God, then they conclude, each individual must then survive on their own, according to their own abilities.

2 Nephi 33:3

3 But I, Nephi, have written what I have written, and I esteem it as of great worth, and especially unto my people. For I pray continually for them by day, and mine eyes water my pillow by night, because of them: and I cry unto my God in faith, and I know that he will hear my cry.

Nephi's witness regarding his written words, both for his people and for all who will read them, are that they are of great worth. He then tells us why we should value them.

2 Nephi 33:4-5

4 And I know that the Lord God will consecrate my prayers for the gain of my people. And the words which I have written in weakness will be made strong unto them; for it persuadeth them to do good; it maketh known unto them of their fathers; and it speaketh of Jesus, and persuadeth them to believe in him, and to endure to the end, which is life eternal.

5 And it speaketh harshly against sin, according to the plainness of the truth; wherefore, no man will be angry at the words which I have written save he shall be of the spirit of the devil.

Nephi provides five reasons as to why our reading his words as found in the Book of Mormon will be of great worth to us. (1) They persuades men to do good; (2) It teaches them about their forefathers who in faith came to this land; (3) They speak of Jesus Christ and encourage individuals to believe in him; (4) Encourages us to endure to the end in righteousness so that one may qualify to receive eternal life; and, (5) Speak against sin so that we may be prompted to repent before it is too late.

Nephi speaks of his charity for his own people (2 Nephi 33:7); the Jews (2 Nephi 33:8); and, the Gentiles (2 Nephi 33:9). He then states that he cannot have hope for them unless "they shall be reconciled unto Christ, and enter into the narrow gate, and walk in the strait path which leads to life, and continue in the path until the end of the day of [their] probation" (2 Nephi 33:9).

Nephi knows that there is no joy or happiness to be found outside of living the principles taught by Jesus Christ. When we choose to reconcile our lives with the commandments He has given, we will find the happiness and freedom from sin and bondage we are seeking. If we continue to be resolute in our rejection of Jesus Christ and his teachings, we will find we have instead become servants of the devil. The day will eventually come for each of us when we will realize we have forfeited our opportunity for true joy and happiness in exchange for the ultimate misery of Satan.

2 Nephi 33:10

10 And now, my beloved brethren, and also Jew, and all ye ends of the earth, hearken unto these words and believe in Christ; and if ye believe not in these words believe in Christ. And if ye shall believe in Christ ye will believe in these words, for they are the words of Christ, and he hath given them unto me; and they teach all men that they should do good.

Here Nephi declares his solemn testimony to his readers that the words he has written were those given him by

revelation from Jesus Christ. They are the words Christ himself would have written. They are given to us that we may be led to believe in Jesus Christ and to accept his teachings.

2 Nephi 33:11

11 And if they are not the words of Christ, judge ye— for Christ will show unto you, with power and great glory, that they are his words, at the last day: and you and I shall stand face to face before his bar; and ye shall know that I have been commanded of him to write these things, notwithstanding my weakness.

At the conclusion of our mortal life, we will be required to give an accounting of our life upon this earth. This accounting will include the choices we have made and our actions upon this earth. As we stand before the judgment bar, Nephi indicated he will be there for the purpose of offering his witness of the truthfulness of the words which he has written. His words and our choices will serve to bless or condemn us.

2 Nephi 33:12

12 And I pray the Father in the name of Christ that many of us, if not all, may be saved in his kingdom at that great and last day.

Nephi wants us to read his words and apply them in our lives to our everlasting benefit. When our day of judgment comes, we may then receive his blessing.

2 Nephi 33:14

14 And you that will not partake of the goodness of God, and respect the words of the Jews, and also my words, and the words which shall proceed forth out of the mouth of the Lamb of God, behold, I bid you an everlasting farewell, for these words shall condemn you at the last day.

Ezra Taft Benson states,

“Do eternal consequences rest upon our response to this book? Yes, either to our blessing or our condemnation. Every Latter-day Saint should make the study of this book a

lifetime pursuit. Otherwise he is placing his soul in jeopardy and neglecting that which could give spiritual and intellectual unity to his whole life. There is a difference between a convert [or long time member?] who is built on the rock of Christ through the Book of Mormon and stays hold of that iron rod, and one who is not." (*A Witness and a Warning*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1988, 7-8).

2 Nephi 33:15

15 For what I seal on earth, shall be brought against you at the judgment bar; for thus hath the Lord commanded me, and I must obey. Amen.

Russell M. Nelson states,

"Nephi was a multifaceted genius. Endowed with great physical stature, he was a prophet, teacher, ruler, colonizer, builder, craftsman, scholar, writer, poet, military leader, and father of nations. Nephi had a sincere desire to know the mysteries of God. He became a special witness and trusted prophet of the Lord.

"Nephi lived an adventurous life and faced numerous difficulties. Some of the challenges he faced included fleeing Jerusalem, building a ship, crossing the waters to the promised land, colonizing, withstanding persecution, fulfilling family and leadership responsibilities, and keeping records. Toward the end of his inspiring life Nephi wrote his concluding testimony and bore witness of the doctrine of Christ, the power of the Holy Ghost, and the truthfulness of the words he had written. Appropriately, his final testimony closed with the words that could be known as his signature: 'I must obey.'

"Few have spoken so profoundly in behalf of one generation to another. Indeed, Nephi's life and mission were destined to bless us and all people of our day." (*Heroes from the Book of Mormon*. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1995, [Seventh Printing, 1998], 15).

In our current Book of Mormon, the books of First Nephi to the conclusion of Omni [143 pages] contain an unabridged record written by Nephi. This record is known as the small plates of Nephi. Nephi's purpose for preparing these plates, under the direction of the Lord, was for the purpose of writing "the things of my soul, and many of the

scriptures which are engraven upon the plates of brass. For my soul delighteth in the scriptures, and my heart pondereth them, and writeth them for the learning and profit of my children. Behold, my soul delighteth in the things of the Lord" (2 Nephi 4:15-16). Later Nephi will state, "the Lord God said unto me: Make other plates [beside the plates that contain our history. 2 Nephi 4:14], and thou shalt engraven many things upon them which are good in my sight, for the profit of thy people...And I engraved that which was pleasing unto God..." (2 Nephi 5:30, 32). As these writings contain only those things which are "pleasing unto God," it is for this reason they have been preserved for us to read and study in our day.

V. Conclusions

This lesson focuses upon four eternal truths that are essential for us to understand if we desire to qualify for salvation. They are: (1) An understanding of the doctrine of Christ; (2) The importance of our pressing forward and enduring to the end; (3) The necessity of our feasting on the words of Christ and praying always; and, (4) An understanding that the words Nephi has declared in the Book of Mormon are the words of Christ. In the following three chapters these truths are addressed.

In 2 Nephi 31, we learn that doctrines are teachings. Robert L. Millet states, "The central saving doctrine is, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, the Savior and Redeemer of humankind; that he lived, taught, healed, and suffered, and died for our sins; and that he rose from the dead the third day with a glorious, immortal, resurrected body (1 Corinthians 15:1-4; D&C 76:40-42)." (*LDS Beliefs: A Doctrinal Reference*. Compiled by Robert L. Millet, Camille Fronk Olson, Andrew C. Skinner, and Brent L. Top. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 2011, 164).

Nephi teaches us that in order to gain salvation, it is essential we follow Christ's example. We do this by: (1) Our obedience to the First Principles of the Gospel [Faith in Christ, Repentance, Baptism, Receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost]; (2) Remaining on the strait and narrow path and enduring to the end; (3) Pressing forward in hope with a steadfastness in Christ, and a love of God and for all men, and, (4) Feasting on the words of Christ, as found in the Holy Scriptures and taught by his inspired servants. If we do so, we will receive eternal life.

Nephi addresses the importance of our being baptized and receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Joseph Fielding Smith and Robert L. Millet gave us the definition of righteousness, "it is the active seeking of the mind and will of the Father and compliance with that will once it has been obtained." (*Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon, Vol.1*. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1987, [11th Printing, 1999], 361).

It is this higher form of righteousness, as exemplified by Jesus Christ, that each of us are striving to obtain.

As we receive the necessary ordinances, and make and keep sacred covenants in the temple, it is then important that we endure to the end. To Nephi, enduring to the end means continuing to be obedient to the words of Christ as found in the scriptures, and manifesting our faith and hope and love of God through our actions toward our fellowmen.

In 2 Nephi 32, Nephi addresses the importance of "feasting upon the words of Christ" (2 Nephi 32:3). Our feasting involves reading the scriptures written by ancient and modern prophets as they were inspired by the Holy Ghost. It includes also reading the words of our modern day Prophets and Apostles. It is essential that we give their inspired words application in our daily lives.

As Nephi addressed the importance of prayer, we recalled his discussion with his brothers. Here he addressed the simple process of how they/we may receive divine direction in our lives.

1 Nephi 15:11

11 Do ye not remember the things which the Lord hath said?---If ye will not harden your hearts, and ask me in faith, believing that ye shall receive, with diligence in keeping my commandments, surely these things shall be made known unto you.

In 2 Nephi 33, we noted the three essential qualities a sincere investigator of the truth must possess as they seek to understand the word of God. They include: A sincere desire to learn the truth of the words they have read. Next, a heart that is humble and receptive to the

whispering of the Spirit, and last, a willingness to conform their life to the truths they have received thereby manifesting their faith. It is essential that the individual not discontinue their experiment either in response to their own or to others preconceived doubts and disbelief, but to press forward in their belief.

Nephi concludes with his testimony of the importance of the words he has written.

2 Nephi 33:10

10 And now, my beloved brethren, and also Jew, and all ye ends of the earth, hearken unto these words and believe in Christ; and if ye believe not in these words believe in Christ. And if ye shall believe in Christ ye will believe in these words, for they are the words of Christ, and he hath given them unto me; and they teach all men that they should do good.

The life of Nephi is one that each of us could strive to emulate. He is one of the great prophets of the Book of Mormon.

Our next lesson [BM#12], focuses upon the words of Jacob, Nephi's younger brother. He was given the responsibility of keeping the small plates of Nephi, following the death of his brother. Our lesson will focus upon Jacob's messages, found in Chapters 1-4, as he admonishes the people to "seek ye for the kingdom of God" (Jacob 2:18).