

August 19–25: Alma 53–63, "Preserved By His Marvelous Power"

Obedience

Mormon reminds us about the people of Ammon who have been protected by the Nephites because of the oath they took not to take up arms

Alma 53:10-12

10 And now behold, I have somewhat to say concerning the people of Ammon, who, in the beginning, were Lamanites; but by Ammon and his brethren, or rather by the power and word of God, they had been converted unto the Lord; and they had been brought down into the land of Zarahemla, and had ever since been protected by the Nephites.

11 And because of their oath they had been kept from taking up arms against their brethren; for they had taken an oath that they never would shed blood more; and according to their oath they would have perished; yea, they would have suffered themselves to have fallen into the hands of their brethren, had it not been for the pity and the exceeding love which Ammon and his brethren had had for them.

12 And for this cause they were brought down into the land of Zarahemla; and they ever had been protected by the Nephites.

But the afflictions and tribulations brought upon the Nephites by the attacks of the Lamanites caused the people of Ammon to consider taking up arms in the defense of their country

Alma 53:13-15

13 But it came to pass that when they saw the danger, and the many afflictions and tribulations which the Nephites bore for them, they were moved with compassion and were desirous to take up arms in the defence of their country.

14 But behold, as they were about to take their weapons of war, they were overpowered by the persuasions of Helaman and his brethren, for they were about to break the oath which they had made.

15 And Helaman feared lest by so doing they should lose their souls; therefore all those who had entered into this covenant were compelled to behold their brethren wade through their afflictions, in their dangerous circumstances at this time.

The People of Ammon were willing to die rather than break their oath – more than a thousand already had -

Why were the People of Ammon now considering breaking their oath by taking up arms?

(when they saw the danger, and the many afflictions and tribulations which the Nephites bore for them
in the defence of their country)

In our last lesson we discussed when and why people are justified in taking up arms against their enemies -

Do you think the people of Ammon were now justified in breaking they're oath and taking up arms?

Richard G. Scott

"The people of Ammon were at a critical moment of their spiritual lives. They had been true to their covenant never to take up arms. But they understood that fathers are responsible to provide protection to their families. That need seemed great enough to merit consideration of breaking their covenant.

"There wise priesthood leader, Helaman, knew that breaking a covenant with the Lord is never justified." (CR, Oct. 2013)

Why do you think Helaman was so opposed to people of Ammon taking up arms to support the Nephites?

(Helaman feared lest by so doing they should lose their souls)

D. Todd Christofferson

"What is the source of such moral and spiritual power, and how do we obtain it? The source is God. Our access to that power is through our covenants with Him. A covenant is an agreement between God and man, an accord whose terms are set by God. In these divine agreements, God binds Himself to sustain, sanctify, and exalt us in return for our commitment to serve Him and keep His commandments." (CR, April 2009)

But the sons of the people of Ammon were too young to fight in the wars that had compelled their fathers to make these covenants

Alma 53:16-19

16 But behold, it came to pass they had many sons, who had not entered into a covenant that they would not take their weapons of war to defend themselves against their enemies; therefore they did assemble themselves together at this time, as many as were able to take up arms, and they called themselves Nephites.

17 And they entered into a covenant to fight for the liberty of the Nephites, yea, to protect the land unto the laying down of their lives; yea, even they covenanted that they never would give up their liberty, but they would fight in all cases to protect the Nephites and themselves from bondage.

18 Now behold, there were two thousand of those young men, who entered into this covenant and took their weapons of war to defend their country.

19 And now behold, as they never had hitherto been a disadvantage to the Nephites, they became now at this period of time also a great support; for they took their weapons of war, and they would that Helaman should be their leader.

What evidence do we have that liberty was of the utmost importance to the people of Ammon?

(they entered into a covenant to fight for the liberty of the Nephites
they covenanted that they never would give up their liberty)

Previous chapters we've studied indicate that Helaman's role was to preach and strengthen the church. There is no indication of military experience or leadership
Why do you think they asked Helaman to be their leader?

He was a prophet. They could count on his directions to be the will of God

Harold B. Lee

"The power of Satan will increase; we see it in evidence on every hand....
Now the only safety we have as members of this church is to do exactly
what the Lord said to the Church in that day when the Church was
organized. We must learn to give heed to the words and commandments that
the Lord shall give through his prophet, as he receiveth them, walking in all
holiness before me;... as if from mine own mouth, in all patience and faith."
(CR, Oct. 1970)

Mormon describes the army of young men

Alma 53:20-22

20 And they were all young men, and they were exceedingly valiant for courage, and also for strength and activity; but behold, this was not all—they were men who were true at all times in whatsoever thing they were entrusted.

21 Yea, they were men of truth and soberness, for they had been taught to keep the commandments of God and to walk uprightly before him.

22 And now it came to pass that Helaman did march at the head of his two thousand stripling soldiers, to the support of the people in the borders of the land on the south by the west sea.

In what ways did they seem unlikely to be a strength to the Nephite army?

They were young, weak, inexperienced, and untrained

In what ways were they prepared to be a successful army?

Their hearts, mind, and commitment:
(exceedingly valiant for courage
true at all times in whatsoever thing they were entrusted
men of truth and soberness
walk uprightly before God)

Ruth B. Wright

"In a day of ever-changing values... I think about Helaman's stripling warriors. These young men, who were taught correct principles by their mothers, '... they were men who were true at all times in whatsoever thing they were entrusted.'

"Now, that means being true when you are tempted, being true when you don't want to be, being true when it means standing alone from the rest of the world. Remembering the example of these faithful young men strengthens me in my effort to be steadfast in obeying gospel principles."
(CR, Oct. 1990)

We learn about what happens to these 2000 young warriors from an epistle from Helaman to Moroni

In chapter 56 we have the story of how the Nephites used Helaman's 2,000 warriors to trick the Lamanites into leaving a city they had taken, and to chase after them, which they did for two days. Then, when the pursuit had seemingly stopped, the young warriors had a decision to make

Alma 56:42-48

42 But it came to pass that they did not pursue us far before they halted; and it was in the morning of the third day of the seventh month.

43 And now, whether they were overtaken by Antipus we knew not, but I said unto my men: Behold, we know not but they have halted for the purpose that we should come against them, that they might catch us in their snare;

44 Therefore what say ye, my sons, will ye go against them to battle?

45 And now I say unto you, my beloved brother Moroni, that never had I seen so great courage, nay, not amongst all the Nephites.

46 For as I had ever called them my sons (for they were all of them very young) even so they said unto me: Father, behold our God is with us, and he will not suffer that we should fall; then let us go forth; we would not slay our brethren if they would let us alone; therefore let us go, lest they should overpower the army of Antipus.

47 Now they never had fought, yet they did not fear death; and they did think more upon the liberty of their fathers than they did upon their lives; yea, they had been taught by their mothers, that if they did not doubt, God would deliver them.

48 And they rehearsed unto me the words of their mothers, saying: We do not doubt our mothers knew it.

What specifically, regarding this circumstance, did their mothers know?

(God would deliver them
our God is with us, and he will not suffer that we should fall
We do not doubt our mothers knew it)

How did the their mothers know that "God would deliver them"?

Maybe they followed this processes discussed later in today's lesson

Alma 58:11

Yea, and it came to pass that the Lord our God did visit us with assurances that he would deliver us; yea, insomuch that he did speak peace to our souls.

and did grant unto us great faith, and did cause us that we should hope for our deliverance in him.

Maybe their mothers received a promise similar to Mosiah when he prayed about the great danger that faced his sons

Mosiah 28:5-7

[5] And it came to pass that they did plead with their father many days that they might go up to the land of Nephi.

[6] And king Mosiah went and inquired of the Lord if he should let his sons go up among the Lamanites to preach the word.

[7] And the Lord said unto Mosiah: Let them go up, for many shall believe on heir words, and they shall have eternal life; and I will deliver thy sons out of the hands of the Lamanites.

What condition was placed on this blessing being fulfilled?

(did not doubt)

Spencer W. Kimball

"These Lamanite women... devoted themselves to their families, teaching them to pray and 'walk uprightly before the Lord.' When their young boys who had taken no oath were forced to protect their families, and came to battle as 'Helaman's sons' they were unconquerable. Their mothers had promised them that 'If they did not doubt, God would deliver them.' These [young men] went into battle as Joseph went into the grove, with unwavering faith, and they emerged from many bloody battles and 'not one soul of them did perish.'... Their faith was justified and they all lived to return to their sweet Lamanite mothers who praised God for the miracle....

"These faithful [young men] declared as they met the onslaught of the enemy: 'We do not doubt... our mothers knew it.' In all history is there a parallel? Can any be found since Adam, with such faith and fortitude as these [young men]?" (CR, April 1949)

What did they do that demonstrates that "they did not doubt"?

(never had I seen so great courage
they did not fear death
thought more upon the liberty of their fathers than they did upon their lives)

What does this tell us about how these mothers lived their life?

Neal A. Maxwell

"The reliance, of course, by these young men on their mothers is touching and profound, but the mothers first had to know 'it' in such a way that the young men, observing them closely and hearing them (as is always the case

with children observing parents), did 'not doubt' That their mothers knew that 'it' was true." (That My Family Should Partake, pg. 59)

Let's read the account of their first battle

Alma 56:51-56

51 For Antipus had fallen by the sword, and many of his leaders, because of their weariness, which was occasioned by the speed of their march—therefore the men of Antipus, being confused because of the fall of their leaders, began to give way before the Lamanites.

52 And it came to pass that the Lamanites took courage, and began to pursue them; and thus were the Lamanites pursuing them with great vigor when Helaman came upon their rear with his two thousand, and began to slay them exceedingly, insomuch that the whole army of the Lamanites halted and turned upon Helaman.

53 Now when the people of Antipus saw that the Lamanites had turned them about, they gathered together their men and came again upon the rear of the Lamanites.

54 And now it came to pass that we, the people of Nephi, the people of Antipus, and I with my two thousand, did surround the Lamanites, and did slay them; yea, insomuch that they were compelled to deliver up their weapons of war and also themselves as prisoners of war.

55 And now it came to pass that when they had surrendered themselves up unto us, behold, I numbered those young men who had fought with me, fearing lest there were many of them slain.

56 But behold, to my great joy, there had not one soul of them fallen to the earth; yea, and they had fought as if with the strength of God; yea, never were men known to have fought with such miraculous strength; and with such mighty power did they fall upon the Lamanites, that they did frighten them; and for this cause did the Lamanites deliver themselves up as prisoners of war.

How was this most unlikely fighting force able to accomplish the things that they had covenanted to do?

(they had fought as if with the strength of God; yea, never were men known to have fought with such miraculous strength)

The next battle:

Much of the Nephite army were needed to take the Lamanite prisoners to Zarahemla while the rest stayed to enforce the city. While the army was divided, a Lamanite army attacked the Nephites that had stayed.

The stripling warriors were part of the army that stayed

Alma 57:19-22

19 But behold, my little band of two thousand and sixty fought most desperately; yea, they were firm before the Lamanites, and did administer death unto all those who opposed them.

20 And as the remainder of our army were about to give way before the Lamanites, behold, those two thousand and sixty were firm and undaunted.

21 Yea, and they did obey and observe to perform every word of command with exactness; yea, and even according to their faith it was done unto them; and I did remember the words which they said unto me that their mothers had taught them.
22 And now behold, it was these my sons, and those men who had been selected to convey the prisoners, to whom we owe this great victory; for it was they who did beat the Lamanites; therefore they were driven back to the city of Manti.

What “word of command” did they “obey and observe with exactness”?

Instructions from Helaman, their commander

What do you think Helaman meant when he said, “even according to their faith it was done unto them”?

The faith that their mother’s knew that they would be delivered

(I did remember the words which they said unto me that their mothers had taught them)

Spencer W. Kimball

"To be a righteous woman during the winding-up scenes on this earth, before the Second Coming of our Savior, is an especially noble calling. The righteous woman's strength and influence today can be tenfold what it might be in more tranquil times. She has been placed here to help to enrich, to protect, and to guard the home which is society's basic and most noble institution. Other institutions in society may falter and even fail, but the righteous woman can help to save the home, which may be the last and only sanctuary some mortals know in the midst of storm and strife." ("Privileges and Responsibilities of Sisters," Ensign, Nov. 1978)

Alma 57:24-27

24 And it came to pass that after the Lamanites had fled, I immediately gave orders that my men who had been wounded should be taken from among the dead, and caused that their wounds should be dressed.

25 And it came to pass that there were two hundred, out of my two thousand and sixty, who had fainted because of the loss of blood; nevertheless, according to the goodness of God, and to our great astonishment, and also the joy of our whole army, there was not one soul of them who did perish; yea, and neither was there one soul among them who had not received many wounds.

26 And now, their preservation was astonishing to our whole army, yea, that they should be spared while there was a thousand of our brethren who were slain. And we do justly ascribe it to the miraculous power of God, because of their exceeding faith in that which they had been taught to believe—that there was a just God, and whosoever did not doubt, that they should be preserved by his marvelous power.

27 Now this was the faith of these of whom I have spoken; they are young, and their minds are firm, and they do put their trust in God continually.

What reason did Helaman give for God preserving the stripling warriors with His “miraculous power”?

(their exceeding faith in that which they had been taught to believe they do put their trust in God continually)

Two thousand other Nephites were killed. I’m sure that many of them “put their trust in God continually” -

Why do you think the stripling warriors were spared while other righteous men were not?

They tricked the Lamanites into leaving a captured city of Manti by making them think that Helaman's 2060 were attempting to cut off their supplies.

- They came out of Manti and chased the 2060 all day
- At night the Lamanites rested, but the 2060 doubled back and occupied the city of Manti with the larger Nephite army
- When the Lamanites returned to Manti they saw that the Nephites possessed it and retreated

Let's read how Helaman's army prepared for this military assignment

Alma 58:10-12

10 Therefore we did pour out our souls in prayer to God, that he would strengthen us and deliver us out of the hands of our enemies, yea, and also give us strength that we might retain our cities, and our lands, and our possessions, for the support of our people.

11 Yea, and it came to pass that the Lord our God did visit us with assurances that he would deliver us; yea, insomuch that he did speak peace to our souls, and did grant unto us great faith, and did cause us that we should hope for our deliverance in him.

12 And we did take courage with our small force which we had received, and were fixed with a determination to conquer our enemies, and to maintain our lands, and our possessions, and our wives, and our children, and the cause of our liberty.

What was the Lord's response to their prayers, covenants, and obedience?

(the Lord our God did visit us with assurances that he would deliver us; yea, insomuch that he did speak peace to our souls, and did grant unto us great faith, and did cause us that we should hope for our deliverance in him)

They were able to receive personal revelation

Now they knew for themselves and were not just relying on the faith that their mothers knew

Gene R. Cook

"Verse 11 probably provides one of the best descriptions of how the Lord responds to us, again through thoughts or feelings. He seems to do these four things:

1. He visits us with assurances that he will deliver us.
2. He speaks peace to our souls.
3. He grants us great faith.
4. He causes us that we should hope for our deliverance in him.

"What a tremendous way the Lord has of blessing us! He doesn't just solve our problems but he gives us assurance, peace, faith, and hope so that we will move forward to resolve our own problems under the direction of the Lord. Thus he makes us strong." (Raising Up a Family to the Lord, pg. 127-8)

David A. Bednar

"The stripling warriors in the Book of Mormon prayed earnestly that God would strengthen and deliver them out of the hands of their enemies. Interestingly, the answers to these prayers did not produce additional weapons or an increased number of troops. Instead, God granted these faithful warriors assurance that He would deliver them, peace to their souls, and great faith and hope for their deliverance in Him. Thus, the sons of Helaman did take courage, were fixed with a determination to conquer, and did go forth with all of their might against the Lamanites. Assurance, peace, faith, and hope initially might not seem like the blessings warriors in battle might want, but they were precisely the blessings these valiant young men needed to press forward and prevail physically and spiritually." (CR, Oct. 2013)

Alma 58:39-40

39 And those sons of the people of Ammon, of whom I have so highly spoken, are with me in the city of Manti; and the Lord has supported them, yea, and kept them from falling by the sword, insomuch that even one soul has not been slain.

40 But behold, they have received many wounds; nevertheless they stand fast in that liberty wherewith God has made them free; and they are strict to remember the Lord their God from day to day; yea, they do observe to keep his statutes, and his judgments, and his commandments continually; and their faith is strong in the prophecies concerning that which is to come.

Pres. Hinckley equated this physical battle with our spiritual battles

Gordon B. Hinckley

"[You are] out there as the sons of Helaman in a world that is full of destructive influences.... But if you put your trust in the Almighty and follow the teachings of this Church and cling to it notwithstanding your wounds, you will be preserved and blessed and magnified and made happy." (LDS Church News, Sept. 21, 1996)