

Alma 49-50:1-6

| How the Nephites were Fortified | How We Can Fortify |
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| The weaker fortifications were strengthened (see Alma 38:9). | We must strengthen the weak spots in our lives. |
| The Nephites prepared for the enemy in a manner never before known (see Alma 49:8). | We must prepare as never before to stand against the wiles of the devil. |
| The Nephites made their weaker cities into strongholds (see Alma 49:14). | If we come unto Christ, He can make weak things become strong to us (see Ether 12:27). |
| The Nephites were given power over their enemies (see Alma 49:23). | If we are faithful and trust the Lord, He will give us power over our enemies. |
| After some Nephite victories, they did not stop in their preparations (see Alma 50:1). | When we have successfully overcome a temptation or trial, we must not let our guard down, but continue to endure and watch and pray always to not be overcome (see Alma 13:28). |
| The Nephites built security towers so they could see the enemy afar off (see Alma 50:4). | As we rely on prophets who are modern watchmen on the tower and see afar off, we will be better prepared for the future. |

BYU Book of Mormon Student Manual, 2009, p. 254-255

Alma 50:6

2 Stronghold – a well-fortified place
Webster’s Dictionary

Alma 50:20-22, 26-35

Contention and Quarreling

3 Elder Russell M. Nelson said, “My concern is that contention is becoming accepted as a way of life. From what we see and hear in the media, the classroom, and the workplace, all are now infected to some degree with contention. . . . Well do I remember a friend who would routinely sow seeds of contention in church classes. His assaults would invariably be preceded by this predictable comment: ‘Let me play the role of devil’s advocate.’ Recently he passed away. One day he will stand before the Lord in judgment. Then, I wonder, will my friend’s predictable comment again be repeated?”

Even within the Church it is so easy to fall into a trap of contention when good, well-meaning people disagree over how a particular program should be administered. Many years ago George Q. Cannon addressed that challenge. “It is better to carry out a plan that is not so wise, if you are united on it. Speaking generally, a plan or a policy that may be inferior in some respects is more effective if men are united upon it than a better plan would be upon which they were divided.” This process hints at a celestial strategy within the Church based on the Lord’s program of unity. If the ancient covenant Nephites had learned this principle, the Lamanites might not have proven the overpowering adversary they turned out to be. Are we as a covenant

people free from contention? We need to look no further than our homes, neighborhoods, and wards, including our participation in Church-sponsored athletic competitions, for the answer.

K. Douglas Bassett, *4 Faces of Pride*, p. 22

- 4 There are times when criticism may be needed, but how it is rendered is more important than who receives it and when it is received. "Reproving betimes with sharpness, when moved upon by the Holy Ghost; and then showing forth afterwards an increase of love toward him whom thou has reprov'd, lest he esteem thee to be his enemy" (D&C 121:43). As we seek to correct with kindness rather than to criticize or contend, it would be well to remember the following observation of Elder James E. Faust: "I recently heard in a special place, 'Your criticism may be worse than the conduct you are trying to correct'" (in Conference Report, October 1987, p. 42). Brent Top, *Lord, I Would Follow Thee*, p. 75-76

- 5 "I am asking that we stop seeking out the storms," President Gordon B. Hinckley admonished, "and enjoy more fully the sunlight."

Criticism, faultfinding, evil speaking—these are the spirit of our day. . . . Everywhere is heard the snide remark, the sarcastic gibe, the cutting down of associates. Sadly, these are too often the essence of our day. . . . Everywhere is heard the snide remark, the sarcastic gibe, the cutting down of associates. Sadly, these are too often the essence of our conversation. In our homes, wives weep and children give up under the barrage of criticism leveled by husbands and fathers. Criticism is the forerunner of divorce, the cultivator of rebellion, sometimes a catalyst that leads to failure. In the Church it sows the seed of inactivity and finally apostasy.

. . . I am suggesting that as we go through life we "accentuate the positive." I am asking that we look a little deeper for the good, that we still voices of insult and sarcasm, that we more generously compliment virtue and effort. I am not asking that all criticism be silenced. Growth comes of correction. Strength comes of repentance. Wise is the man who can acknowledge mistakes pointed out by others and change his course.

What I am suggesting is that each of us turn from the negativism that so permeates our society and look for the remarkable good among those with whom we associate, that we speak of one another's virtues more than we speak of one another's faults, that optimism replace pessimism, that our faith exceed our fears. When I was a young man and was prone to speak critically, my father would say: "Cynics do not contribute, skeptics do not create, doubters do not achieve."

Looking at the dark side of things always leads to a spirit of pessimism which so often leads to defeat.

"The Continuing Pursuit of Truth," *Ensign*, April 1986, pp. 2-4

Alma 50: 20-22, 26-35

- 6 *Obedience brings Happiness*

As some things clearly worsen in the world, the true Saints will simply get better.
Neal A. Maxwell, *One More Strain of Praise* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1999], 18.

God will give us priceless, personal assurances through the Holy Ghost (see John 14:26; D&C 36:2). Whether in tranquil or turbulent times, our best source of comfort is the comforter....

Brothers and sisters, though living in a time of commotion, we can stand in holy places and not be moved (see D&C 45:32; 87:8). Though living in a time of violence, we can have that inner peace that passeth understanding (see Philippians 4:7).

Neal A. Maxwell, in Conference Report, Oct. 2002 [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1984], 12

7 God our Eternal Father will watch over this nation and all of the civilized world who look to Him. He has declared, "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord" (Ps 33:12). Our safety lies in repentance. Our strength comes of obedience to the commandments of God.

Gordon B. Hinckley, "The Times in Which We Live," *Ensign*, November 2001, p. 74