

1 Disputation, debates, dissensions, arguments, controversies, quarrels, and strife or contention of any sort have no part in the gospel; they are of the devil. The gospel is one of peace, harmony, unity, and agreement.

*Mormon Doctrine*, pp. 160-161.

### **Helaman 4: 11-13**

#### *Great slaughter*

2 The “great slaughter” of the Nephites could have been averted, we are told by Mormon, had they remained faithful (see Mosiah 27:13; *Commentary* 2:306). Mormon attributes much of the wickedness and abominations of the nation to “those also who professed to belong to the church of God.” Because of their wickedness they had cut themselves off from the protection the Lord extends to the righteous (see D&C 35:14) and were left to their own strength. With no claim upon the promises of the Lord, they were smitten and driven until they “had lost possession of almost all of their lands.” It is significant that Mormon identifies specific things that comprised the wickedness and abominations of the Nephite Church members. This itemization is doctrinally important not merely as a historical account but also as a warning to the latter-day church.

1. Pride of their hearts because of their exceeding riches. It is significant that Mormon lists pride first on his list, because pride, which is enmity toward God and one’s fellowmen, is that which leads to all other transgressions. It is, as President Ezra Taft Benson declared, “the universal sin” which causes men to “let go of the iron rod.” Mormon identifies riches as the source of the pride of the Nephites. Riches, in and of themselves, did not create damning pride among the Nephites, but the enmity that results from the “love of money” (see 1 Timothy 6:10) is what leads to a disregard for God and others, resulting thereafter in self-indulgence and wickedness. It should be remembered, however, that there are other sources of pride as well. Whatever the source, pride is a “damning sin in the true sense of the word. It limits or stops progression” and “adversely affects all of our relationships.” (CR, April 1989. Pp. 3-7.)
2. *Oppression of the poor.* The proud rich look down upon those less fortunate and label them as lazy and unworthy. Their elevated sense of self-importance causes them to unrighteously judge, mock, withhold support from, and even persecute the less fortunate. Since pride is competitive in nature, the oppression of the poor by the proud rich becomes the object of the game. The Lord has repeatedly rebuked those who would pridefully withhold their means from the poor and persecute them with their haughty attitudes (see 2 Nephi 9:30; Mosiah 4:16-26; Alma 5:55; D&C 56:16-18).
3. *Making a mock of that which is sacred.* Since pride is a sin of elevating oneself above God and the will of God, it is no wonder that the proud mock the things of God. This mockery not only includes the making light of sacred doctrines, practices, and covenants (see 1 Nephi 19:7; Jacob 6:8) but also manifests itself in the mockery of other people, who are also “sacred things” in that they are literally sons and daughters of the Living God (see Alma 5:30, 54).

4. *Denying the spirit of prophecy and revelation.* The pride-induced denial of the spirit of prophecy and revelation may be very blatant and open, but often it comes in more subtle, disguised forms. Speaking of the proud, President Benson illustrated some of these means: “We pit our will against God’s. When we direct our pride toward God, it is done in the spirit of ‘my will and not thine be done.’ . . . The proud cannot accept the authority of God giving direction to their lives (see Helaman 12:6). They pit their perceptions of truth against God’s great knowledge, their abilities versus God’s priesthood power, their accomplishments against His mighty works. . . . The proud wish God would agree with them. They aren’t interested in changing their opinions to agree with God’s.” (CR, April 1989, p.4.)
5. *Murdering, plundering, lying, stealing, committing adultery.* “Selfishness is one of the more common faces of pride,” declared President Benson (CR, April 1989, p. 5). The selfish proud, with enmity toward their fellowmen, see nothing wrong with resorting to selfish means to fulfill their desires and attain their ends. Prideful selfishness inevitably leads to other transgressions against one’s fellowmen. Elder Neal A. Maxwell declared: “Selfishness is much more than an ordinary problem because it activates all the cardinal sins! It is the detonator in the breaking of the Ten Commandments.  
 “By focusing on oneself, it is naturally easier to bear false witness if it serves one’s purpose. It is easier to ignore one’s parents instead of honoring them. It is easier to steal, because what one wants prevails. It is easier to covet, since the selfish conclude that nothing should be denied them. It is easier to commit sexual sins, because to please oneself is the name of that deadly game in which others are often cruelly used. The Sabbath day is easily neglected, since one day soon becomes just like another. If selfish, it is easier to lie, because the truth is conveniently subordinated.  
 The selfish individual thus seeks to please not God, but himself. He will even break a covenant in order to fix an appetite, (CR, October 1990, p.15.)
6. *Rising up in great contentions.* The scriptures teach that another form of wickedness that results from pride is contention. “Only by pride cometh contention” (Proverbs 13:10; see also Proverbs 28:25). Contentions result from the prideful power struggle that comes from pitting ourselves—our possessions or our intellect—against others. The proud are easily offended, hold grudges, withhold forgiveness, and will not receive counsel or correction. All of these internal traits become a fertile seedbed for the external manifestation of contention. The Savior warned of the evil of contention (see 3 Nephi 11:28-29), because it repels the Spirit of the Lord and opens the door to other “fiery darts” of the adversary. “Contention does not usually begin as strife between countries,” Elder Russell M. Nelson declared. “More often, it starts with an individual, for we can contend within ourselves over simple matters of right and wrong. From there, contention can infect neighbors and nations like a spreading sore. . . . The work of the adversary may be likened to loading guns in opposition to the work of God. Salvos containing germs of contention are aimed and fired at strategic targets essential to that holy work. These vital targets

include—in addition to the individual—the family, leaders, of the Church, and divine doctrine.” (CR, April 1989, pp.85-86.)

7. *Boasting in their own strength.* A proud person puffs himself and his strength up as he puts down his dependence on the Lord. Pride inevitably leads to boasting, which inevitably leads to a loss of the strength of the Lord and causes the proud person to be left alone, relying solely on his own puny mortal strength (see D&C 3:4, 13). “One of the most common of all sins among worldly people,” Elder Marvin J. Ashton has taught, “is relying on and then boasting in the arm of flesh. This is a most serious evil. It is a sin born of pride, a sin that creates a frame of mind which keeps men from turning to the Lord and accepting his saving grace. When a man knowingly or unknowingly engages in self-exultation because of his riches, his political power, his worldly learning, his physical prowess, his business ability, or even his works of righteousness, he is not in tune with the Spirit of the Lord.... The many admonitions in the scriptures to avoid boasting send the message that we should realize the source of all our blessings. Everything is given by God. All talent, creativity, ability, insight, and strength comes from him. In our own strength we can do nothing.... When we seek the praise of man more than the praise of God, it will become easy to fall.” (CR April 1990, pp. 84-85.) Joseph Fielding McConkie & Robert L. Millet, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, Vol 3, pp. 346-348.

### **Helaman 4: 14-16**

#### 3 *Why teach Repentance?*

I met this gentleman at a special fireside... With tears in his eyes, and as he was holding my hands, he said, “Oh, Elder Kikuchi, I thank our Heavenly Father for this glorious gospel” and then he related the following story:

“One day eight years ago, on my way home from work, I was hit by a hit-and-run driver. For eleven days I was unconscious, and for two years I was in a hospital. When I was finally released from the hospital, my wife had left me and had taken the children with her. We had had a fine family life before the accident, but my life became a total wreck. I was lonesome and depressed, for I had lost my most precious possession—my family. I attempted suicide many times. My only living came from welfare. I was emotionally and physically exhausted; I had become a living vegetable. I couldn’t walk, so I would transport myself by rolling over on the floor and crawling on all fours.

“One evening I went to the hospital to see my doctor for the final results of a series of operations. He told me there was no hope for recovery. Though I had expected him to say so, it was still very shocking for me. All was lost. As I approached a railway bridge on my return from the doctor’s, I wept to see my own face in the wet reflection on the pavement. It was a pitiful sight.”

Brothers and sisters, just when he was about to jump in front of the oncoming train, he met one of your missionary sons...

Cottage meetings began immediately. In them, Mr. Sugiyama learned that the gospel is true, that Jesus Christ is our Savior, Joseph Smith was a prophet of God, and the true church of God has been restored in this last dispensation.

As usual, missionaries invited him to church; however, because he couldn't walk, he said he wouldn't be able to come. But on the morning of the Sabbath, he awoke early and bravely headed for the church. Though it was close, it took him nearly three hours to traverse the distance between his home and the closest station to the Yokohama chapel. The Yokohama chapel is situated high upon a hill. From the station to the church it took him almost an hour, although ordinarily it would take a person only five minutes. He would cling to the wall, then fall down, only to struggle again to his feet. He finally reached the chapel where the sacrament was in progress. The missionaries had never expected him to come to church. But Brother Sugiyama felt the pure love of God from the missionaries and members and felt himself drawn to it....

The morning following his baptism, he woke up bright and early. He stretched his legs out in preparation to roll over as usual. But this time, brothers and sisters, something was different. He felt strength in his legs, and his whole body surged with power. He sat up and gradually, eventually, stood on his feet. He hadn't stood in years without supports. He walked away that morning! He found that his body had been made whole....

Brother Sugiyama said, "Love hath made me whole, and I will go in peace in the Lord's way."

Elder Yoshihiko Kikuchi, "Send Missionaries from Every Nation," *Ensign*, November 1979, pp. 29-30.

#### **Helaman 4:22-26**

#### 4 *Sin Weakens People*

You must be honest with yourself and remain true to the covenants you have made with God. Do not fall into the trap of thinking you can sin a little and it will not matter. Remember, "the Lord cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance" (D&C 1:31).... Some youth foolishly rationalize that it is "no big deal" to sin now because they can always repent later when they want to go to the temple or on a mission. Anyone who does that is breaking promises made to God both in the premortal life and in the waters of baptism.

The idea of sinning a little is self-deception. Sin is sin! Sin weakens you spiritually, and it always places the sinner at eternal risk. Choosing to sin, even with the intent to repent, is simply turning away from God and violating covenants.

Russell M. Ballard, Conference Report, Apr. 1993, 6; or *Ensign*, May 1993, 7.

#### **Helaman 4: 24**

#### 5 *Spirit doth not dwell in unholy temples*

If we are not obedient to the laws, principles, and ordinances of the gospel, the Holy Ghost will withdraw. He cannot be with us if we are angry in our hearts, contentious with our companions, or critical of the Lord's anointed. He departs whenever we are rebellious, are immoral, dress or act immodestly, are unclean or profane in mind or body, are slothful in

priesthood callings and duties, or commit other sins, for “the Spirit of the Lord doth not dwell in unholy temples.”

Therefore we must continually repent, partake of the sacrament, be worthy of a temple recommend and serve the Lord with all our “heart, might, mind and strength” (D&C 4:2) Robert D. Hales, in Conference Report, Oct. 2003 [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2003], 32.

- 6 The prophets have repeatedly taught that “with transgression we...lose the Spirit of God and the Holy Ghost as our comforter (Henry D. Moyle, in Conference Report, April 1963, 46). Heber C. Kimball taught that if we “lightly esteem” the scriptures we “will lose the Spirit” (Journal of Discourses, 11:211). Brigham Young explained that “partaking of the sacrament” unworthily will cause us to “lose the Spirit of the Lord” (Journal of Discourses 9:220). Elder Hyrum M. Smith added that the Spirit of the Lord could be lost by “lapsing into indifference, into neglect of duty, into failure to pray...into the spirit of fault-finding.... One step leads to another, until by and by the Spirit is grieved and will no longer strive with us. We can go to the extent, in our sinning and neglect, that the Spirit of God will altogether withdraw from us” (Conference Report, October 1912, 58).  
Brian D. Garner, *Search These Things Diligently*, p. 238.

#### **Helaman 4: 26**

- 7 *Thus they become weak*

Joseph Fielding Smith: As a result of Adam’s children hearkening to the voice of Lucifer and following him, governments were established in the earth which were not under the direction of revelation. Nor did they hearken to the commandments of the Lord. Men arose and usurped the right to rule and reign. They ignored the mandates and the rights and privileges of him whose right it is to rule and reign, and as men spread upon the face of the earth they forgot God.

The result has been wickedness, strife, unrest, and contention, with all their attendant evils. And so we find the world today. The world is sick and has been sick during its mortal history, but today we are living in very troublous times. The hearts of men are failing them. Selfishness, unrighteousness, the desire to possess, to take advantage, and withal the fear that accompanies evil are found in the hearts of men.

*Doctrines of Salvation*, 3 vols., ed. Bruce R. McConkie [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1954-1956], 3:314.