

CHAPTER 55

Moroni 8–9

Introduction

In a day when many followers of Christ forsake righteousness to pursue the enticements of the world, what is expected of faithful Church members? President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994) explained: “In the final letter recorded in the Book of Mormon from Mormon to his son Moroni, he gave counsel that applies to our day. Both father and son were seeing a whole Christian civilization fall because its people would not serve the God of the land, even Jesus Christ. Mormon wrote, ‘And now, my beloved son, notwithstanding their hardness, let us labor diligently; for if we should cease to labor, we should be brought under condemnation; for we have a labor to perform whilst in this tabernacle of clay, that we may conquer the enemy of all righteousness, and rest our souls in the kingdom of God’ (Moroni 9:6). You and I have a similar labor to perform now—to conquer the enemy and rest our souls in the kingdom” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1987, 104; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1987, 85).

As the Book of Mormon nears its close, it proclaims the power of the Atonement and demonstrates Mormon’s faithfulness to the cause of righteousness, even while Nephites were falling rapidly into profound wickedness. Mormon’s letters to his son Moroni reveal the inevitable results of sin and how becoming “past feeling” leads to indescribable wickedness. Chapters 8–9 of Moroni offer valuable insight into the importance of living according to the first principles and ordinances of the gospel.

Commentary

Moroni 8:1–8. The Baptism of Little Children Prohibited

- Moroni 8 contains a letter Moroni received from his father, Mormon, that answers the question of whether little children need baptism. Note that the source for Mormon’s answers on this doctrinal question came to him directly by revelation from the Lord (see Moroni 8:7). The ordinance of baptism is “for the remission of sins” (D&C 49:13). But little children have no sins. In fact, they are not capable of committing sin, nor can Satan tempt them, as the Doctrine and Covenants explains:

“Little children are redeemed from the foundation of the world through mine Only Begotten;

“Wherefore, they cannot sin, for power is not given unto Satan to tempt little children, until they begin to become accountable before me” (D&C 29:46–47).

The Lord has set the age when accountability begins—at eight years old (see JST, Genesis 17:11; D&C 68:25). Those who baptize infants to remove original sin, or the curse of Adam, as some call it, do so without a correct understanding of God and His plan (see Moroni 8:8).



MORONI 8:3

How does this verse demonstrate a righteous father’s love for his son? How does this verse provide a model for Christ-centered relationships?

Moroni 8:8. “The Law of Circumcision Is Done Away”

- God declared to Abraham, “And I will establish a covenant of circumcision with thee, and it shall be my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generations; that thou mayest know for ever that children are not accountable before me until they are eight years old” (JST, Genesis 17:11). God further declared to Abraham that circumcision was “a token of the covenant betwixt me and you” (Genesis 17:11). The spirit of apostasy, however, led many people in ancient times to believe that circumcision was necessary to make male children holy.

The law of circumcision was not intended to last forever. The Savior’s words were revealed to Mormon: “The law of circumcision is done away in me” (Moroni 8:8). The Doctrine and Covenants explains why the law of circumcision was ended (see D&C 74:2–7).

Moroni 8:9–15. Baptizing Little Children “Is Solemn Mockery before God”

- Mormon strongly denounced the practice of infant baptism. He declared that it was “solemn mockery before God, that ye should baptize little children” (Moroni 8:9). The Prophet Joseph Smith (1805–44) taught that infant baptism denies the character of God and the saving power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ: “The doctrine of baptizing children, or sprinkling them, or they must welter in hell, is a doctrine not true, not supported in Holy Writ, and is not consistent with the character of God. All children are redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ, and the moment that children leave this world, they are taken to the bosom of Abraham” (*History of the Church*, 4:554).

Moroni 8:22–24. “They That Are without the Law”

- Many persons live and die and never know the law of Christ. Such persons will be taught the gospel in the spirit world. There they will have the opportunity to exercise faith and repent of their sins. Living proxies on the earth perform the needed ordinances in their behalf, and the blessings of salvation may be theirs.



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Those who are not capable of understanding the gospel are not considered accountable. They, like little children, are “alive in Christ” (Moroni 8:12; see also D&C 29:49–50).

President Joseph Fielding Smith (1876–1972) explained: “They are redeemed without baptism

and will go to the celestial kingdom of God, there, we believe, to have their faculties or other deficiencies restored according to the Father’s mercy and justice” (*Answers to Gospel Questions*, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith Jr., 5 vols. [1957–66], 3:21).

Moroni 8:25–26. “Meekness and Lowliness of Heart”

- Mormon described a connection between faith in Christ, repentance, baptism, the gift of the Holy Ghost,

and remission of sins. He taught that with remission of sins comes meekness and lowliness of heart, or humility.

Elder Francisco J. Viñas of the Seventy described some of the characteristics of someone meek and lowly in heart: “The person who obtains meekness and lowliness of heart and who enjoys the company of the Holy Ghost will have no desire to offend or hurt others, nor will he feel affected by any offenses received from others. He will treat his spouse and children with love and respect and will have good relationships with everyone he associates with. In occupying positions of leadership in the Church, he will apply the same principles as he does in the home, showing that there is no difference *between* the person he is when within the walls of his own home and the person he is in his relationship with the members of the Church” (in Conference Report, Apr. 2004, 40; or *Ensign*, May 2004, 39–40).

MORONI 8:26

How does the remission of sins lead to feeling the Holy Ghost? How can we better keep the Holy Ghost once we obtain it?

Moroni 8:28–29. “The Spirit Hath Ceased Striving with Them”

- Elder Bruce R. McConkie (1915–85) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained that men and women will lose the companionship of the Holy Ghost if they reject the light and knowledge of the gospel: “Many choose to walk in carnal paths and go contrary to the enticings of the Spirit. It is possible to sear one’s conscience to the point that the Spirit will withdraw its influence and men will no longer know or care about anything that is decent and edifying. ‘For my Spirit shall not always strive with man, saith the Lord of Hosts.’ (D&C 1:33.)” (*A New Witness for the Articles of Faith* [1985], 260).

Moroni 9:3–5. Anger

- Mormon wrote that the Nephites would “tremble and anger” (Moroni 9:4) against him when he spoke the word of God plainly to them. Such a response is

consistent with other scriptural examples of those who had hardened their hearts to principles of righteousness. The Jaredites rejected Ether and sought to kill him (see Ether 13:22). The inhabitants of Jerusalem sought Lehi's life (see 1 Nephi 1:19–20). The unrighteous in Ammonihah were so angry that they burned the believers and all of their scriptures (see Alma 14). This response to the word of God demonstrates an advanced state of wickedness that frequently precedes total destruction of cities or societies.

- Many people in our day believe they are victims of their own anger. Elder Lynn G. Robbins of the Seventy explained that we are able to choose whether to react with anger or not:

“A cunning part of his [Satan's] strategy is to dissociate anger from agency, making us believe that we are victims of an emotion that we cannot control. We hear, ‘I lost my temper.’ Losing one's temper is an interesting choice of words that has become a widely used idiom. To ‘lose something’ implies ‘not meaning to,’ ‘accidental,’ ‘involuntary,’ ‘not responsible’—careless perhaps but ‘not responsible.’

“‘He made me mad.’ This is another phrase we hear, also implying lack of control or agency. This is a myth that must be debunked. No one makes us mad. Others don't make us angry. There is no force involved. Becoming angry is a conscious choice, a decision; therefore, we can make the choice not to become angry. *We choose!*

To those who say, ‘But I can't help myself,’ author William Wilbanks responds, ‘Nonsense.’

“‘Aggression, . . . suppressing the anger, talking about it, screaming and yelling,’ are all learned strategies in dealing with anger. ‘We *choose* the one that has proved effective for us in the past. Ever notice how seldom we lose control when frustrated by our boss, but how often we do when annoyed by friends or family?’ (‘The New Obscenity,’ *Reader's Digest*, Dec. 1988, 24; italics added)” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1998, 105; or *Ensign*, May 1998, 80).

Moroni 9:5. The Loss of Love

- One of the tragic results of anger and wickedness is the loss of the Spirit. When this happens, the Book of Mormon clearly teaches that one loses the capacity to love others. This was the case among the wicked Nephites. This loss of love leads to such things as divorce, abuse, and abandonment, all of which are rampant problems in our day.

Elder David E. Sorensen of the Presidency of the Seventy explained how a loss of love can happen in our homes: “In much of today's popular culture, the virtues of forgiveness and kindness are belittled, while ridicule, anger, and harsh criticism are encouraged. If we are not careful, we can fall prey to these habits within our own homes and families and soon find ourselves criticizing our spouse, our children, our extended family members. Let us not hurt the ones we love the most by selfish criticism! In our families, small arguments and petty criticisms, if allowed to go unchecked, can poison relationships and escalate into estrangements, even abuse and divorce. Instead, . . . we must ‘make full haste’ to reduce arguments, eliminate ridicule, do away with criticism, and remove resentment and anger. We cannot afford to let such dangerous passions ruminate—not even one day” (in Conference Report, Apr. 2003, 10; or *Ensign*, May 2003, 11–12).



MORONI 9:6

What did Mormon say would result if he and Moroni ceased “to labor”? What does that teach us about persevering through difficulties?

Moroni 9:9. Chastity and Virtue Are “Dear and Precious Above All Things”

• Mormon commented that chastity and virtue are “most dear and precious above all things” (Moroni 9:9). President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) taught the importance of maintaining chastity:



“And now just a word on the most common and most difficult of all problems for you young men and young women to handle. It is the relationship that you have one with another. You are dealing

with the most powerful of human instincts. Only the will to live possibly exceeds it.

“The Lord has made us attractive one to another for a great purpose. But this very attraction becomes as a powder keg unless it is kept under control. It is beautiful when handled in the right way. It is deadly if it gets out of hand. . . .

“My dear young friends, in matters of sex you know what is right. You know when you are walking on dangerous ground, when it is so easy to stumble and slide into the pit of transgression. I plead with you to be careful, to stand safely back from the cliff of sin over which it is so easy to fall. Keep yourselves clean from the dark and disappointing evil of sexual transgression. Walk in the sunlight of that peace which comes from obedience to the commandments of the Lord.

“Now, if there be any who have stepped over the line, who may already have transgressed, is there any hope for you? Of course there is. Where there is true repentance, there will be forgiveness. That process begins with prayer. The Lord has said, ‘He who has repented of his sins, the same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more’ (D&C 58:42). Share your burden with your parents if you can. And by all means, confess to your bishop, who stands ready to help you” (“A Prophet’s Counsel and Prayer for Youth,” *New Era*, Jan. 2001, 12–13).

• If you have been the victim of sexual abuse, be assured that you have not transgressed the law of chastity. Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained:

“I solemnly testify that when another’s acts of violence, perversion, or incest hurt you terribly, against your will, you are not responsible and you must not feel guilty. You may be left scarred by abuse, but those scars need not be permanent. In the eternal plan, in the Lord’s timetable, those injuries can be made right as you do your part. . . .

“If you are now or have in the past been abused, seek help now. . . .

*“Talk to your bishop in confidence. His calling allows him to act as an instrument of the Lord in your behalf. He can provide a doctrinal foundation to guide you to recovery. An understanding and application of eternal law will provide the healing you require. He has the right to be inspired of the Lord in your behalf. He can use the priesthood to bless you” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1992, 44; or *Ensign*, May 1992, 32).*

Moroni 9:18–20. “Past Feeling”

• Mormon described to his son Moroni the pathetic spiritual state of their people. He reminded Moroni that they were “without principle, and past feeling” (Moroni 9:20). Elder Neal A. Maxwell (1926–2004) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained that failure to respond to the promptings of the Holy Spirit and failure to keep the commandments of God can lead us to this condition:

“Our capacity to feel controls our behavior in many ways, and by inaction when our feelings prompt us to do good, we deaden that capacity to feel. It was Jesus’ striking sensitivity to the needs of those about him that made it possible for him to respond in action.

“At the other end of the spiritual spectrum are individuals such as Nephi’s erring brothers; Nephi noted their increasing insensitivity to things spiritual: [God] hath spoken unto you in a still small voice, but ye were past feeling, that ye could not feel his words’ [1 Nephi 17:45].

“When we become too encrusted with error, our spiritual antennae wilt and we slip beyond mortal reach. This can happen to entire civilizations. In his lamentation to his son Moroni, Mormon notes the deterioration of the Nephite society. The symptoms include a wickedness so profound that Mormon’s people were described by him as being ‘past feeling’ [Moroni 9:20]. The Apostle Paul lamented the destructive lasciviousness of Church members in Ephesus because they had developed such insensitivity in their satiation that they were ‘past feeling’ [Ephesians 4:19]. A sex-saturated society cannot really feel the needs of its suffering members because, instead of developing the love that looks outward, it turns man selfishly inward. Imperviousness to the promptings of the still small voice of God will also mean that we have ears but cannot hear, not only the promptings of God, but also the pleas of men” (*A Time to Choose* [1972], 59–60).

- President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, warned us of a modern, growing trend that also leads to a loss of the Spirit:

“The world grows increasingly noisy. Clothing and grooming and conduct are looser and sloppier and more disheveled. Raucous music, with obscene lyrics blasted through amplifiers while lights flash psychedelic colors, characterizes the drug culture. Variations of these things are gaining wide acceptance and influence over our youth. . . .

“This trend to more noise, more excitement, more contention, less restraint, less dignity, less formality is not coincidental nor innocent nor harmless.

“The first order issued by a commander mounting a military invasion is the jamming of the channels of communication of those he intends to conquer.

“Irreverence suits the purposes of the adversary by obstructing the delicate channels of revelation in both mind and spirit” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1991, 28; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1991, 22).

Moroni 9:25. “The Hope of His Glory”

- Elder Neal A. Maxwell explained that the hope Mormon spoke of is connected with faith in the Lord Jesus Christ:

“Our everyday usage of the word *hope* includes how we ‘hope’ to arrive at a certain destination by a certain time. We ‘hope’ the world economy will improve. We ‘hope’ for the visit of a loved one. Such typify our sincere but proximate hopes.

“Life’s disappointments often represent the debris of our failed proximate hopes. Instead, however, I speak of the crucial need for ultimate hope.



“Ultimate hope is a different matter. It is tied to Jesus and the blessings of the great Atonement, blessings resulting in the universal Resurrection and the precious opportunity provided thereby for us to practice emancipating repentance, making possible what the scriptures call ‘a perfect brightness of hope’ (2 Nephi 31:20).

“Moroni confirmed: ‘What is it that ye shall hope for? Behold I say unto you that ye shall have hope through the atonement of Christ’ (Moroni 7:40–41; see also Alma 27:28). Real hope, therefore, is not associated with things mercurial, but rather with things immortal and eternal!” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1998, 77; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1998, 61).

Moroni 9:26. The Grace of God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ

- Mormon knew that Moroni faced overwhelming challenges due the wickedness of the Nephites. Nevertheless, Mormon also knew that Moroni could endure with the assistance of divine grace. *True to the Faith* explains that grace provides strength to persevere in the daily struggles of life:

“The word *grace*, as used in the scriptures, refers primarily to the divine help and strength we receive through the Atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ. . . .

“In addition to needing grace for your ultimate salvation, you need this enabling power every day of your life. As you draw near to your Heavenly Father in diligence, humility, and meekness, He will uplift and strengthen you through His grace” (*True to the Faith: A Gospel Reference* [2004], 77–78).

Points to Ponder

- What strong terms did Mormon use to denounce the practice of infant baptism? (see Moroni 8). Why do you think he felt so strongly?
- If the Lamanites and the Nephites were comparable in their wickedness, why were the Lamanites not destroyed as well? (see Moroni 8:27–29).
- What gradual steps mentioned by Mormon in chapters 8–9 led to the eventual depravity of the Nephites? How can we avoid apostasy and wickedness in our own lives?

Suggested Assignments

- Write a paragraph that explains the doctrinal reasons why infants do not need baptism (see Moroni 8:4–23).
- Prepare a talk or lesson on the theme “How we can endure righteously when wickedness surrounds us.” Use principles and doctrines from Moroni 8–9.