



Oftimes our obedience to the commandments of God becomes the very armor that protects us from evil.

Obedience

The First Law of Heaven

BY WILLIAM D. OSWALD

Second Counselor in the Sunday School General Presidency

The early chapters of the Book of Mormon tell us that the Lord visited the prophet Lehi in “visions and in dreams” (1 Nephi 1:16), commanding him to leave Jerusalem and to take “nothing with him, save it were his family” (1 Nephi 2:4) and a few possessions and depart into the wilderness. Within a few pages we see a classic example of what happens to a family when some members desire to obey the commandments of the Lord while others rebel and disobey. As we “liken” (1 Nephi 19:23) these scriptures unto ourselves, and ponder the blessings that come to the obedient as opposed to the cursings that come to the disobedient, we ask, “What lessons might we learn as individuals and as families from these events?” Two lessons seem to stand out.

1. The Lord Will Prepare a Way If We Are Obedient

The scriptures teach that Lehi “was *obedient* unto the word of the Lord, wherefore he *did* as the Lord commanded him” (1 Nephi 2:3; emphasis added). This same character trait of obedience is seen also in Nephi’s response to his father’s request that he return to Jerusalem and go to the house of Laban to obtain important records. Nephi said, “I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded, for I know that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them” (1 Nephi 3:7).

If we compare Nephi’s response to that of Laman and Lemuel, we note that “Laman and Lemuel . . . did *murmur* against their father” (1 Nephi 2:12; emphasis added). As was the case with Lucifer when he rebelled against the

**Through obedience
Nephi successfully
brought back the
plates of Laban.**

Father in our premortal state, so also Laman and Lemuel's desire for power was greater than their willingness to follow and obey. Like the fallen son of the morning, Laman and Lemuel murmured in angry protestations—even after having seen an angel of the Lord! “How is it possible,” they asked, “that the Lord will deliver Laban into our hands?” (1 Nephi 3:31). At other times, no doubt, their murmurings were the silent “murmurings of [the] heart” (D&C 75:7).

2. Obedience Is the Armor That Will Protect Us from Evil

Ofttimes our obedience to the commandments of God becomes the very armor that protects us from evil (see Ephesians 6:11–17; D&C 27:15). An account from the life of President Harold B. Lee shows the “tender mercies” (1 Nephi 1:20) of the Lord to an obedient boy who would later become one of His latter-day prophets.

“I think maybe I was around ten or eleven years of age. I was with my father out on a farm away from our home, trying to spend the day busying myself until my father was ready to go home. Over the fence from our place were some tumbledown sheds that would attract a curious boy, and I was adventurous. I started to climb through the fence, and I heard a voice as clearly as you are hearing mine, calling me by name and saying, ‘Don’t go over there!’ I turned to look at my father to see if he [was] talking to me, but he was way up at the other end of the field. There was no person in sight.

I realized then, as a child, that there were persons beyond my sight, for I had definitely heard a voice.”¹

While serving as a mission president in a far-distant and sometimes dangerous land, I witnessed firsthand the protecting power of obedience in the lives of missionaries as described by President Boyd K. Packer. He taught that

obedience is the precondition attached to this protecting power.

“By following the rules,” said President Packer, “you will never make a serious mistake . . . either while you are on your mission or thereafter without being warned. You will never take the wrong road, you will never go around the wrong bend, or make the wrong decision *without your having been warned*. That pattern is the pattern of the Latter-day Saint. You were confirmed a member of the Church, and you had conferred upon you the gift of the Holy Ghost to be a guide and a companion to you.”²

Among the merciful blessings given by God to His Latter-day Saints is the commandment to pay heed to His living prophets. “I believe,” said President Gordon B. Hinckley, “that if we will walk in obedience to the commandments of God, . . . he will open a way even where there appears to be no way.”³ ■

NOTES

1. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Harold B. Lee* (Melchizedek Priesthood and Relief Society course of study, 2000), 47.
2. “Some Things Every Missionary Should Know,” new mission presidents’ seminar, Salt Lake City, June 26, 2002.
3. “If Ye Be Willing and Obedient,” *Ensign*, July 1995, 2.



**President Harold B. Lee
was obedient to the
Spirit when it warned
him as a child.**