

# Rock of Our Redeemer

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During our mission in Canada, my wife and I gave a “last instruction” to departing missionaries the day before they went home. Each of these young elders and sisters were heroes to us, and we wanted their transition home to be very, very successful. Our instruction was given with love and good fun. I particularly enjoyed instructing on dating and marriage.

One afternoon as I stood at the blackboard during a last instruction, the Spirit pressed Helaman 5:12 deeply into my mind. This scripture came from what could have been the Book of Mormon prophet Helaman’s “last instruction” to his sons prior to their departure for their magnificent mission to the Nephites and the Lamanites.

We all quoted the scripture together:

*And now, my sons, remember, remember that it is upon the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God, that ye must build your foundation; that when the devil shall send forth his mighty winds, yea, his shafts in the whirlwind, yea, when all his hail and his mighty storm shall beat upon you, it shall have no power over you to drag you down to the gulf of misery and endless wo, because of the rock upon which ye are built, which is a sure foundation, a foundation whereon if men build they cannot fall.*

What a magnificent verse of scripture. Think of it: Helaman promised us that if we build our foundation upon our Savior, we cannot fall, regardless of what Satan throws at us. What a powerful promise!

Our Savior gave the same promise in the Sermon on the Mount:

*Whoso heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them, I will liken . . . unto a wise man, who built his house upon a rock—*

*And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock.<sup>1</sup>*

I bet a lot of you Primary graduates are thinking of a song. Would you sing it with me—just the first two verses, with hand motions?

*The wise man built his house upon the rock,  
The wise man built his house upon the rock,  
The wise man built his house upon the rock,  
And the rains came tumbling down.*

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*Weatherford T. Clayton, a General Authority Seventy, delivered this devotional address on March 14, 2017.*

*The rains came down, and the floods came up,  
The rains came down, and the floods came up,  
The rains came down, and the floods came up,  
And the house on the rock stood still.*<sup>2</sup>

Thank you! Doesn't this simple song teach a powerful lesson?

Luke put it slightly differently:

*Whosoever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings,  
and doeth them . . .  
. . . is like a man which built an house, and digged  
deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the  
flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house,  
and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock.*<sup>3</sup>

When a person comes to Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ and hears Their words and lives by them, he is building his house upon the rock. And regardless of Satan's efforts to destroy it, this type of house won't fall. Why? Because it is built upon "the Rock."<sup>4</sup> We build our house upon our Savior and Redeemer, who is "[our] rock, and [our] fortress";<sup>5</sup> "[our] everlasting God, [our] rock and [our] salvation";<sup>6</sup> "the rock [from] whence ye are hewn";<sup>7</sup> "a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation";<sup>8</sup> "that spiritual Rock";<sup>9</sup> "the Rock of Heaven";<sup>10</sup> "the stone of Israel."<sup>11</sup> Our Savior has always been and, as we follow Him, can always be our Rock.

The apostle Paul's words can help us understand Helaman's metaphor. In Ephesians 2 Paul wrote that as members of Christ's Church we are

*of the household of God;*

*And are built upon the foundation of the apostles  
and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner  
stone;*

*In whom all the building fitly framed together  
groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord.*<sup>12</sup>

Just as Jesus Christ is the chief cornerstone of the Church, we should allow Him to become the chief cornerstone of our lives. We too must build our foundation on the teachings of the Savior and His apostles and prophets. And just as the

household of God grows "unto an holy temple in the Lord," we too can become more holy. What could be better than that?

Let's take a closer look at how Christ teaches us to do this. Christ said, "Whosoever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings, and doeth them, I will [liken unto a wise man]."<sup>13</sup> Here Christ invites us to come to Him, to follow Him, and to do as He does. Remember:

- "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."<sup>14</sup>
- "Come and follow me."<sup>15</sup>
- "Follow me, and listen to the counsel which I shall give unto you."<sup>16</sup>
- "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."<sup>17</sup>

How do we come to Him? We begin with faith in Christ, and central to true faith is action. When we have faith in Jesus Christ, we want to act according to that faith. The Book of Mormon prophet Moroni called this having "real intent."<sup>18</sup> For example, if we have faith in Christ, we come to church each Sunday. If we have faith in the Savior, we pay our tithes and offerings. If we have true faith in our Redeemer, we do something about it, because we have real intent. And every time we act according to our faith in Him, we follow Him by hearing and "doing" His words. As we act with faith in Him, the Lord confirms our faith by blessing us with peace, answers to prayer, direction, comfort, and joy. And thus our foundation becomes stronger, wider, and deeper.

As we act on His words, we are doing something called repenting. In the New Testament, repentance comes from the word *metanoéo*, from the words *metá* and *noeó*, meaning "to change one's mind or purpose."<sup>19</sup> Isn't that interesting?

Every time we turn more to Christ, we are repenting—we are following Him.<sup>20</sup> When we sincerely pray to the Father, in a very real sense we are repenting. When we read the scriptures and ponder them, we are repenting. As we make changes because of what we are learning about Christ and His gospel, we are repenting. When we do things that make us better, kinder, gentler,

more sensitive, more spiritual, more virtuous, and truer, we are repenting. Whenever we choose the better path, we are repenting. Though we all repent of things that are sinful in our lives, most of our repenting comes from hearing His words and doing them—from turning to Him. This builds our foundation, and we want that foundation to be as big and as wide and as deep and as sturdy as possible.

A friend of mine, Michael Koerber, discovered these principles when he was studying the gospel. Initially he didn't take the lessons too seriously. He said that he was stubborn and did not read the Book of Mormon. However, due to a singular spiritual experience he and his wife, Audrey, had with the missionaries, he realized that he had to make more than a casual commitment. He committed to read the Book of Mormon.

One morning while on vacation he was reading the Book of Mormon. He reported his experience in these words:

*I was reading in Alma somewhere. I remember having come to the end of my reading for that morning and coming to a very clear and undeniable realization of the truth of the Book of Mormon. It is indescribable. All I know is that it is as though every cell of my body rang out or sang out or shouted out, "This is it! This is true! Here it is! Look no further! You have the answer to your prayers!"*

*I remember getting up and walking over to my wife and saying to her, "We are joining this church."*

*Audrey then asked, "Why now? What changed?"*

*I answered, "I don't know. But I do know that this book is true. And if this book is true, then it was translated by a prophet of God. And if it was translated by a prophet of God, then I am joining this church."*

As we come unto the Savior by exercising faith in Him and repenting every day, we prepare ourselves to follow Christ by receiving ordinances. The first ordinance of heaven is to follow Christ into baptism. Baptism is how we manifest our faith to the Father. The Book of Mormon prophet Nephi taught us to

*follow the Son, with full purpose of heart, acting no hypocrisy and no deception before God, but with real intent, repenting of your sins, witnessing unto the Father that ye are willing to take upon you the name of Christ, by baptism—yea, by following your Lord and your Savior down into the water . . . , behold, then shall ye receive the Holy Ghost.<sup>21</sup>*

So we follow Christ by being baptized, which Elder David A. Bednar referred to as "a necessary initial cleansing of our soul from sin."<sup>22</sup> Baptism continues the process of establishing our lives on the foundation we are building upon the Rock.

After we are baptized, we receive our next ordinance: confirmation. This is when the Father gives us His great gift, the Holy Ghost, the third member of the Godhead. This is called the baptism of fire. Nephi taught that after the baptism of water comes

*the baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost; and then can ye speak with the tongue of angels, and shout praises unto the Holy One of Israel.<sup>23</sup>*

In his October 2007 general conference talk, Elder Bednar quoted President Marion G. Romney:

*The baptism of fire by the Holy Ghost "converts [us] from carnality to spirituality. It cleanses, heals, and purifies the soul. . . . Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, repentance, and water baptism are all preliminary and prerequisite to it, but [the baptism of fire] is the consummation. To receive [this baptism of fire] is to have one's garments washed in the atoning blood of Jesus Christ."<sup>24</sup>*

The blessings that come from baptism and confirmation are marvelous—so great that many people cannot wait to be confirmed in sacrament meeting after their baptism. Recently a wonderful sister who had been baptized the day before dressed and waited for an hour to be picked up for church, but no one came. She called her missionaries to ask them why. They didn't initially pick up but listened to her message and immediately called her back.

They said, “It’s 12:30 a.m. It’s midnight!”

And she responded, “Oh no!” And then she laughed really hard!

After receiving these first two ordinances, we have the privilege of living what Nephi called “after the manner of happiness”<sup>25</sup>—growing our faith, repenting each day, receiving the priesthood, studying the scriptures, praying with real intent, inviting others to come unto Christ, obtaining all the ordinances of the temple available to us, marrying and having a family, searching out our ancestors and performing ordinances for them, having many friends, and much, much more.

Each of these activities is associated with great blessings, not just for ourselves but for our families and our friends. These behaviors build and broaden our foundation. Think of our present-day apostles and their lives. Think of how substantial and formidable their foundations must be, built each day by repentance and righteous living.

As we stand upon the foundation we are building upon Christ and His apostles, we notice the influences of Satan around us. Nephi called these “the mists of darkness” or “the temptations of the devil” that “blindeth the eyes, and hardeneth the hearts of the children of men, and leadeth them away into broad roads, that they perish and are lost.”<sup>26</sup> But we have heavenly help and protection from his influences. Helaman’s promise is true, that when Satan shall send forth his whirlwind, hail, and mighty storm, they “shall have no power over you . . . because of the rock upon which ye are built, . . . a foundation whereon if men build they cannot fall.”<sup>27</sup>

One such person who stayed on his foundation was my wife’s great-great-grandfather William Geddes. He joined the Church at the tender age of fourteen after hearing the missionaries preaching on a street corner in Scotland in 1847. When his family learned of his baptism, they threw his few belongings out the door and refused to let him be part of the family. He learned to survive on the streets while working in the coal mines, and he continued to learn and grow in the gospel, building his foundation on the Savior.

A few years later his family allowed him to move back in, but only if he agreed to never speak

to them about his religion. He respected their wishes but continued his activity and growth in the gospel.

Sometime after returning to his family, William contracted cholera and became very ill. His condition worsened until he was near death. He begged his parents to let the Mormon missionaries come to give him a blessing. At first they refused, but they finally relented because they felt this was the last request of their dying son.

The elders came and administered to William. He was healed immediately and went out that night with the missionaries to preach the gospel! Because he stood on his foundation, he was able to face temptations and trials even at a very young age.

Brothers and sisters, we will all face challenges. The scripture doesn’t say “if” we will feel Satan’s storms but “when.” Look around you. They are here now. We see wars and rumors of wars; love of money and appearance; immorality; pornography; infidelity; drug, alcohol, and social media addiction; attacks on religious freedom; attacks on the nature of marriage; and even attacks on the Savior Himself.

Isaiah saw our day. He said, “Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness.”<sup>28</sup> We do not have to experience the evil or the darkness. We can join with the people of Alma and “stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places that [we] may be in.”<sup>29</sup>

When we stand upon our foundation with the Savior and His apostles, we can see much more clearly what is true and what is not. With the clear and magnificent light of our Savior, aided by the powerful influence of the Holy Ghost, we can detect the temptations of clever Satan in his efforts to weaken our faith. Remember that Paul warned us:

*For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.*<sup>30</sup>

Brothers and sisters, I need to speak soberly to you for a moment. Please listen carefully.

Should you ever choose to step off that wonderful foundation you are building upon the Rock, for whatever reason, be warned that the mists of darkness will almost immediately surround you. You will become vulnerable to “the fiery darts of the adversary.”<sup>31</sup> The first emotion you will probably feel is confusion. You will not see clearly and likely won’t be able to see where you have come from nor where you are going. Relationships with people who have loved and blessed you will change.

Can you feel Satan’s shafts in the whirlwind here? You may find yourself wanting to hide what you are doing from others who love you. You will likely find yourself growing irritated and angry more easily. You will probably find fault with others more frequently, even with those closest to you. You may become casual in keeping covenants and, with time, simply not keep them at all.

Can you feel Satan’s mighty storm? You will most likely find that you are just not as happy. With time, if you do not step back onto your foundation, you may forget the many, many marvelous things the Lord has given you and find yourself falling “away into forbidden paths and [becoming] lost.”<sup>32</sup>

I join the Book of Mormon prophet Jacob in saying to you:

*O . . . my beloved brethren [and sisters], repent ye, and enter in at the strait gate, and continue in the way which is narrow, until ye shall obtain eternal life.*

*O be wise; what can I say more?*<sup>33</sup>

Now, brothers and sisters, should this ever happen to you, repent and get back onto your foundation. Start building your house again. Regardless of where you find yourself off your foundation, you can come back. The Savior’s Atonement is real, and through Him we have power to resist any of Satan’s temptations and to be forgiven for our sins. As the Savior said:

*Behold, he who has repented of his sins, the same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more.*

*By this ye may know if a man repenteth of his sins— behold, he will confess them and forsake them.*<sup>34</sup>

Remember what Helaman promised his sons? He promised that Satan’s mighty winds, storms, hail, and whirlwinds “shall have no power over you . . . because of the rock upon which ye are built.”<sup>35</sup> This is a true promise.

Now let us examine who gave this promise and to whom he gave it. Helaman was a faithful father teaching his sons to prepare and empowering them as they went forth wearing the armor of God.<sup>36</sup> These teachings were given in a family.

Throughout the scriptures we read about fathers and mothers teaching their families. What does that mean to us? It means we aren’t building our foundations just for ourselves; we are building them for ourselves and our loved ones.

We who have come to know the goodness of God and His blessings must build a foundation big enough and broad enough and sturdy enough to bless our marriages and to raise our children on. We protect our children from the fiery darts of Satan by teaching them from their youth to build their foundations upon the Rock. We must help them find faith in Christ, repent, and obtain every ordinance. It is our privilege and responsibility “to teach and help raise a sin-resistant generation.”<sup>37</sup> What could be more important?

In 1869 my great-great-grandfather Edwin S. Graham wrote a letter to his children prior to traveling to Texas from Iowa. Having a strong Christian faith and knowing that he might not live to see them again, he gave them what could have been called his last instruction. He wrote:

*In the event . . . that I should not live to return to you, . . . I know that in [your] mother [you] will have all [the] affection and devotion that [you] could possibly have, as long as she might live. . . . Robby, you and Lizzie are so young that . . . [should you] forever be bereft of your father’s care, advice and instructions, . . . live in the fear of God, your Redeemer. Never wrong in any way your fellow man. In morals be ever particularly careful, prudent, [and] discreet. . . . Never lie. Never make a harsh promise. Master, always master, never let passion master you. . . .*

*In all things be true to yourselves and to others, with God’s blessing and protection. [May He] ever guide and direct you.*<sup>38</sup>

My great-great-grandfather was right: we must live in the fear—or respect—of God. Helaman was right: we must build our foundation on our Savior. If we do so, we cannot fall, regardless of what Satan does.

Let me repeat that: regardless of what Satan does, we cannot fall! Heavenly Father loves us so much that He prepared a perfect plan of salvation. In the center of that plan is the Atonement of Jesus Christ. If we choose to come unto Christ and receive His gospel, we can return home to live with our Father again and with our family and there together enjoy eternal life. His perfect plan is working.

I know that God lives and that Jesus is the Christ. I know that Thomas S. Monson is the prophet and that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the Savior’s Church. I testify that all these things are true. I testify that they are all central to the foundation that we are building upon the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### Notes

1. 3 Nephi 14:24–25.
2. “The Wise Man and the Foolish Man,” *Songbook*, 281.
3. Luke 6:47–48.
4. Deuteronomy 32:4.
5. Psalm 18:2.
6. 1 Nephi 15:15.
7. Isaiah 51:1.
8. Isaiah 28:16.
9. 1 Corinthians 10:4.
10. Moses 7:53.
11. D&C 50:44.
12. Ephesians 2:19–21.
13. Luke 6:47–49.
14. Matthew 11:28.
15. Matthew 19:21.
16. D&C 100:2.
17. Matthew 4:19.
18. Moroni 10:4.
19. From word number 3340, *metanoeo*, on page 1666 of the Greek Dictionary in Robert L. Thomas, *New American Standard Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible/Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek Dictionaries* (Nashville: Holman, 1981); see also *metanoeó*, “3340. metanoeó,” Bible Hub, [biblehub.com/greek/3340.htm](http://biblehub.com/greek/3340.htm); *metá*, “3326. meta,” Bible Hub, [biblehub.com/greek/3326.htm](http://biblehub.com/greek/3326.htm); and *noeó*, “3539. noeó,” Bible Hub, [biblehub.com/greek/3539.htm](http://biblehub.com/greek/3539.htm).
20. See Thomas S. Monson, “Choices,” *Ensign*, May 2016; see also Dale G. Renlund, “Repentance: A Joyful Choice,” *Ensign*, November 2016.
21. 2 Nephi 31:13.
22. David A. Bednar, “Always Retain a Remission of Your Sins,” *Ensign*, May 2016; emphasis in original.
23. 2 Nephi 31:13.
24. David A. Bednar, “Clean Hands and a Pure Heart,” *Ensign*, November 2007; quoting Marion G. Romney, *Learning for the Eternities*, comp. George J. Romney (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1977), 133.
25. 2 Nephi 5:27.
26. 1 Nephi 12:17.
27. Helaman 5:12.
28. Isaiah 5:20.
29. Mosiah 18:9.
30. Ephesians 6:12.
31. D&C 3:8.
32. 1 Nephi 8:28.
33. Jacob 6:11–12.
34. D&C 58:42–43.
35. Helaman 5:12.
36. See Ephesians 6:13.
37. Russell M. Nelson, “A Plea to My Sisters,” *Ensign*, November 2015.
38. Mary Ruth Millis, comp., *A Graham Chronicle: Records of the Craig and Graham Families of Graham and Including Kintners of Indiana, Hunts of Kentucky* (Dallas: Millis, 1977), 179.