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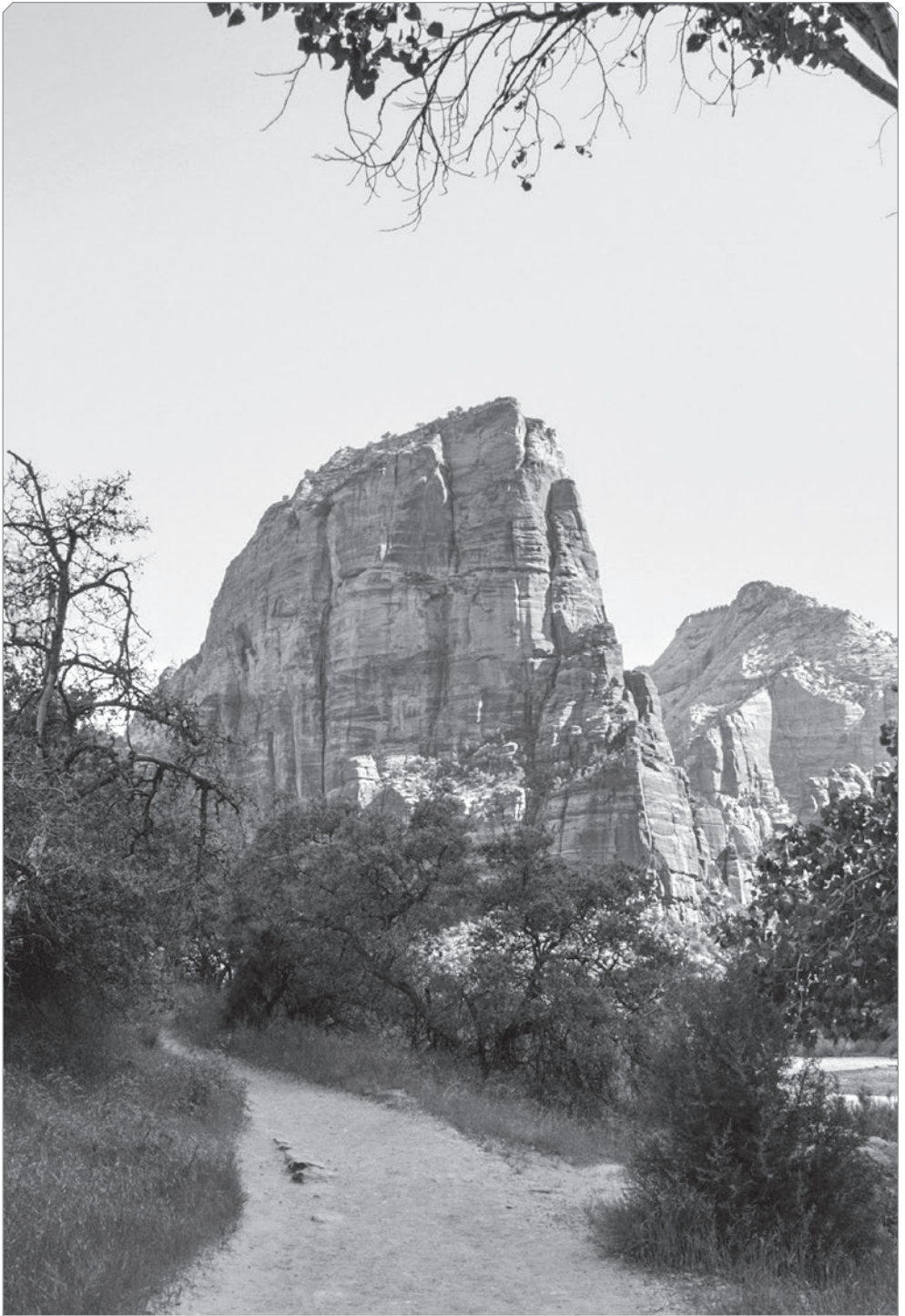
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A stunning view of Angels Landing in Zion National Park.

# “Cheer Up Your Hearts”: Jacob’s Message of Hope in Christ

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Can peace exist amidst adversity? Can patience endure uncertainty? Can optimism conquer bitter irony? Can joy transcend despair? Through “the spiritual endowment of hope,”<sup>1</sup> the answer to these questions is a resounding yes!

In the scriptures hope is described as “firm” (Alma 34:41), “lively” (1 Peter 1:3), “sure and steadfast” (Ether 12:4), and a source of “joy and peace” (Romans 15:13). As Elder Neal A. Maxwell observed, even when “proximate circumstances [are] shaken like a kaleidoscope,” the “longitudinal perspective” derived from hope calms the mind and steadies the heart.<sup>2</sup> In short, hope is an abiding spiritual assurance that everything will eventually work out for our good and gain, regardless of the situation.

A hope that weathers all the challenges of mortality and extends into eternity cannot be manufactured by mortals. Reading self-help books, striving for a “positive mental attitude,” wearing rose-colored glasses, or engaging in pathological optimism will not bring lasting hope. As taught in the Book of Mormon, hope is grounded in eternal truth (see Alma 32:21), centered in Jesus Christ (see Moroni 7:41), and cultivated by the Holy Ghost (see

Moroni 8:26). Moreover, as we develop an “unshaken faith” in Christ we can experience what Nephi called a “perfect brightness of hope” (2 Nephi 31:20).

A hope that inspires “confidence, optimism, enthusiasm, and patient perseverance”<sup>3</sup> flourishes as we identify, understand, feel the truth and importance of,<sup>4</sup> and then trust in specific attributes embodied in the Lord’s holy character. Significantly, in 2 Nephi 6–10, Jacob delivered a sermon that not only pointed his people to the coming of Christ but also articulated specific attributes of Christ that engender hope. In this paper we will explore Jacob’s connection between the character of Christ and hope. Specifically, we will examine how understanding and trusting Christ’s attributes of *mercy*, *integrity*, and *power* provide us compelling reasons to “cheer up [our] hearts” and live daily with hope (2 Nephi 10:23).

### The Context of Jacob’s Sermon

Reflecting on his life in the promised land, Jacob offered the following somber assessment: “Our lives passed away like as it were a dream, we being a lonesome and a solemn people, wanderers, cast out from Jerusalem, born in tribulation, in a wilderness, and hated of our brethren, which caused wars and contentions; wherefore, we did mourn out our days” (Jacob 7:26). Jacob’s poignant appraisal was certainly colored by his own personal experience. He was, after all, born during an arduous eight-year wilderness journey (see 1 Nephi 17:4; 18:7). In addition to the difficulties commensurate with life in the Arabian wilderness,<sup>5</sup> his childhood was marked by unmerited hardships<sup>6</sup> as he “suffered afflictions and much sorrow, because of the rudeness of [his] brethren” (2 Nephi 2:1).

The “rudeness” of Laman and Lemuel was vividly captured in their ocean voyage to the promised land. Jacob witnessed firsthand the ugliness of physical abuse as Laman and Lemuel bound Nephi with “cords” and then treated him with “much harshness.” This cruelty continued for days, during which time Jacob’s aging parents experienced sorrow “because of their children.” Witnessing his parents “upon their sickbeds” must have been a distressing experience for young Jacob (1 Nephi 18:11–19).

Life in the promised land was no utopia for the family, as divisions only intensified. The precarious condition of Lehi’s family was reflected in his final and foreboding counsel to his children (see 2 Nephi 1:13–29). Knowing the brewing animosity in Laman and Lemuel’s hearts, the Lord warned Nephi

to flee “with all those who would go with [him]” (2 Nephi 5:5). As a divided family, “wars and contentions” soon followed (see 2 Nephi 5:34).

Within this context Jacob is called and ordained to minister to the people of Nephi (see 2 Nephi 5:26; 6:2) and we encounter his first recorded sermon in the Book of Mormon (see 2 Nephi 6–10). Considering his background, we might expect something of a gloomy message. But Jacob is no pessimist. It is true he will address the “awful reality” and “consequences of sin” (2 Nephi 9:47–48), but that will not be the essence of his discourse. Carefully woven into the doctrine of this sermon is an unmistakable message of hope.

### **Jacob’s Reliance on Isaiah**

It is significant to remember that Jacob had at his disposal the plates of brass. From this record, he could have taught from the five books of Moses or the books of Jeremiah, Neum, Zenos, or Zenock (see 1 Nephi 5:11–14; 1 Nephi 19:10; Jacob 5; Alma 33:3, 13, 15). Instead, his brother and priesthood leader, Nephi, expressed a special desire for Jacob to draw upon the words of Isaiah (see 2 Nephi 6:4). While there may have been many reasons that Nephi invited Jacob to focus upon Isaiah, two reasons seem especially germane to the doctrine of hope.

First, Isaiah spoke extensively regarding the mission and destiny of the whole house of Israel, and since the Nephites were “of the house of Israel,” his words could be “likened unto [them]” (2 Nephi 6:5).<sup>7</sup> Second, since Nephi’s underlying intent was to “persuade” them to “remember the Lord their Redeemer” (1 Nephi 19:18; see also 1 Nephi 6:4), he intentionally focused on “that which was written by the prophet Isaiah” (1 Nephi 19:23).<sup>8</sup> When prophecies explaining the destiny of the house of Israel are combined with teachings regarding the mission of Jesus Christ, a framework to develop the doctrine of hope is established.<sup>9</sup>

### **Feelings of Separation**

After initially quoting an optimistic Isaiah prophecy regarding Israel’s latter-day destiny (see 2 Nephi 6:6–7), Jacob provided a somber historical reminder why such encouraging verses were so needed. To bring his people up to speed, Jacob declared that the inhabitants of Jerusalem had “been slain and carried away captive” (2 Nephi 6:8). He prophesied that upon their return to Jerusalem, they would perpetrate the ultimate atrocity in time and all eternity by scourging and crucifying the Holy One of Israel. In this hardened



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In times of difficulty, when dark clouds of discouragement prevail, we may think that God has deserted us.

and rebellious state they would be scattered, smitten, afflicted, and hated (see 2 Nephi 6:8–11).

Dispersed among Gentile nations, ancient Israel would feel forsaken and forgotten by the Lord (see Isaiah 49:14). The Nephites shared a similar feeling of isolation. Commenting on their frame of mind, Daniel Belnap observed, “The Nephites, like their Israelite counterparts, were in exile from their homelands, having been driven out not once, but twice, first from Jerusalem and second from the land of their first inheritance in the New World. . . . Clearly, the Nephites felt abandoned, lost, and without a homeland.”<sup>10</sup> So deep was this impression that centuries after Jacob, Alma described the Nephites as a lost branch from the “tree of Israel” that were “wanderers in a strange land” (Alma 26:36; see also Alma 13:23).

Likewise, especially in quiet moments, feelings of separation can linger in every human heart. We instinctively grasp that during this mortal journey we are “stranger[s] here.”<sup>11</sup> The “sense that we are pilgrims in a strange land,” wrote Terryl and Fiona Givens, “is one of the most universal themes in human culture.”<sup>12</sup> In times of difficulty, when the dark clouds of discouragement prevail, such feelings can be heightened and we may be tempted to conclude that God has deserted us. This is an incorrect conclusion. The Lord’s response is not only applicable to despondent ancient Israelites or forlorn Nephites;

it is a resolute reminder to all the children of God: “Yea, for thus saith the Lord: Have I put thee away, or have I cast thee off forever? For thus saith the Lord: Where is the bill of your mother’s divorcement? To whom have I put thee away, or to which of my creditors have I sold you? Yea, to whom have I sold you? Behold, for your iniquities have ye sold yourselves, and for your transgressions is your mother put away” (2 Nephi 7:1). In this text we learn that he had not left Israel, but through sin they had left him. He had not sold them to the creditors, but through their own actions they had sold themselves. He had not turned his back on them, but they had turned their backs on him. “Wherefore, when I came,” the Lord laments, “there was no man; when I called, yea, there was none to answer” (2 Nephi 7:2).

Before there can be true hope, we must let go of self-deception. Honesty must replace self-pity and there must be a frank recognition that feelings of separation are generally self-imposed. Speaking of such feelings, President Henry B. Eyring observed:

Many of us, in moments of personal anguish, feel that God is far from us. The pavilion that seems to intercept divine aid does not cover God but occasionally covers us. God is never hidden, yet sometimes we are, covered by a pavilion of motivations that draw us away from God and make Him seem distant and inaccessible. Our own desires, rather than a feeling of “Thy will be done,” create the feeling of a pavilion blocking God. God is not unable to see us or communicate with us, but we may be unwilling to listen or submit to His will and His time.<sup>13</sup>

Thus it is typically through pride and disobedience that we yield to the temptations of the devil and thereby experience spiritual separation from God (see 2 Nephi 9:27–39). Hope is nurtured in honest hearts. We each must admit and accept that God has not forsaken us, but through sin we have forsaken him (see Romans 3:23; 1 John 1:8; 1 Nephi 10:6).

### **Christ’s Mercy**

Facing reality is not for the fainthearted. Hard truths can cut “to the very center” of our souls (1 Nephi 16:2). For ancient Israel the hard truth was that they had been “scattered, and smitten, and hated” because they had “hardened their hearts and stiffened their necks against the Holy One of Israel” (2 Nephi 6:10–11). Jacob connected the plight of ancient Israel to a universal problem. In our lost and fallen condition we are all cut off from the presence of God for an endless duration. Severed from his presence by our own sinful

choices, our eternal destiny is “to remain with the father of lies, in misery” (2 Nephi 9:9).

While it is true that hope must be planted in the context of total honesty, it cannot be fostered in the arid reality of such cold, hard facts. Thankfully, such hard truths are not the only truths. Dramatically altering the depressing equation ensuring our eternal damnation is the liberating word, “nevertheless.” This anticipatory word allows us to see beyond the uncompromising, eternal demands of justice. Jacob wrote of ancient Israel, though “they shall be scattered, and smitten and hated; *nevertheless the Lord will be merciful*” (2 Nephi 6:11, emphasis added). Nevertheless! One simple word alters our eternal possibilities by pointing us in the direction of the Redeemer who is positioned to offer us mercy.

None of us merit mercy; we deserve justice.<sup>14</sup> Ancient Israel, for example, deserved to be scattered and smitten, but in spite of that, the Messiah promised to “recover them” and return them to their lands of inheritance (2 Nephi 6:11).<sup>15</sup> Seeing that future day, Jacob wrote, “It has been shown unto me that many of our children shall perish in unbelief, nevertheless, God will be merciful unto many” (2 Nephi 10:2).

Calling upon Isaiah, Jacob reminds us of the personal price Jesus Christ paid to offer us mercy. Foreshadowing what lay ahead for the Lord, we read, “I gave my back to the smiter, and my cheeks to them that plucked the hair. I hid not my face from shame and spitting” (2 Nephi 7:6). Providing doctrinal context on this event Jacob taught the transcendent truth that Jesus Christ would perform an “infinite atonement” so he could return us to our heavenly home (2 Nephi 9:7). It is this Atonement that brings efficacy to “the merciful plan of the great Creator” (2 Nephi 9:6). Without him there is no mercy; there is only the inflexible reality of justice that leaves us “subject” to the devil and thereby “shut out from the presence of our God” (2 Nephi 9:8–9).

Contemplating the generous, compassionate nature of God, we can “trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever” (Psalm 52:8). Understanding that God is “rich in mercy” (Ephesian 2:4), every disconsolate heart can have hope. This gift of mercy is water to every spiritually parched, drought-stricken soul. This hope is real and tangible because the Lord’s mercy is real and tangible. Because of Christ’s mercy, Jacob had hope for his posterity. Of them, he prophesied, “God will be merciful unto many; and our children shall be restored, that they may come to that which will give them the true knowledge of their Redeemer” (2 Nephi 10:2). Because of Christ’s Atonement, Jacob



had hope for all of humanity and consequently declared, “O the wisdom of God, his mercy and grace!” (2 Nephi 9:8).

Jacob’s witness regarding the mercy of God permeates this sermon. He boldly testified of “the goodness of God” (2 Nephi 9:10), the “deliverance of our God” (2 Nephi 9:11), “the greatness of the mercy of our God” (2 Nephi 9:19), and his “great . . . condescensions unto the children of men” that are made possible “because of his greatness, and his grace and mercy” (2 Nephi 9:53). Truly, there can be no hope without divine mercy!

### **Christ’s Integrity**

Throughout his sermon, Jacob connected the gift of God’s mercy to the promised blessings of the Abrahamic covenant. Due to his righteousness and immense spiritual stature (see Abraham 3:22–23), Abraham was chosen to be the father of the covenant people (see Genesis 15:1–6; 17:1–9). Accordingly, a central message of the scriptural record is that through Abraham’s seed all nations of the earth would be blessed. Abraham’s posterity constitutes the covenant people and the heirs of that covenant are the house of Israel.<sup>16</sup>

Through Abraham’s family the blessings of the priesthood would flow to all people (see Abraham 2:8–11). Seeking to bring emphasis to this message, Jacob carefully selected Isaiah’s prophecies, reminding Israel they ought to be looking “unto Abraham [their] father, and unto Sarah, she that bare you” (2 Nephi 8:1–2). In Isaiah’s poetic language, pulsating with covenant implications, he reminded Israel that God’s law had been written upon their hearts and that they were his people (see 2 Nephi 8:1–7, 16). Honoring his covenant obligations, “God pleadeth the cause for his people” (2 Nephi 8:22). Thus, even though Israel strayed, the “Lord God will fulfill his covenant which he has made unto his children.” They would be delivered and recovered from their scattered condition. Indeed, the Lord’s awareness of and willingness to honor his covenant obligations is the very reason Isaiah had recorded “these things” (2 Nephi 6:12).

Lest the covenant people misunderstand Isaiah’s message, Jacob stated, “I have read you these things that ye might know concerning the covenants of the Lord that he has covenanted with all the house of Israel.” In complete accord with the Abrahamic covenant, Jacob reminded his people that in a future day Israel will be “restored to the true church and fold of God,” receive the “lands of their inheritance, and shall be established in all their lands of promise” (2 Nephi 9:1–2).

Quoting the Lord, Jacob recorded that the covenants and corollary promises would be fulfilled (see 2 Nephi 10:15, 17). While it is true “the Lord God has led away from time to time” members of the house of Israel, “the Lord remembereth all them who have been broken off, wherefore,” Jacob tenderly reminded his people, saying, “he remembereth us also” (2 Nephi 10:22).

To know and trust that God remembers his promises and has the integrity to keep them is a key principle in the doctrine of hope. We can have a calm assurance that all gospel covenants and their respective promises are reliable. Our trust in God produces a sure hope that every inspired promise uttered in a priesthood blessing, every inspired promise made by an authorized servant of the Lord, every inspired promise made in a patriarchal blessing—in short, every promise sanctioned by the Holy Ghost—is to be trusted.

Surely, part of the mortal test is to see if we will retain hope in the promises of the Lord when we cannot see how they will be fulfilled. After all, it is one thing to rejoice in a promised blessing when it is given, and it is quite another thing to patiently wait for its fulfillment when the circumstances of life create seemingly insurmountable barriers to its realization.

Mortality is laced with confusing ironies, interspersed with unsettling paradoxes and occasioned by perplexing experiences that can test our trust in the Lord’s promised blessings. The test of trust may come to the righteous sister who longs for an eternal companion, only to find as the years turn into decades that an eternal companion has become as elusive as water in the Sahara desert. Personalized testing may come to the young man who was promised in his patriarchal blessing that as a missionary he would bring many souls to the waters of baptism, and yet, as his mission draws to a close, he has not participated in a single convert baptism. Trust in God’s promised blessings is surely strained when the yearning for a righteous posterity is indefinitely postponed by infertility.

Hope, born of unwavering trust in God’s promises, allows a disciple to transcend the ironies, paradoxes, and perplexities of mortality. Trust in God’s promises fosters hope, not because of what we know, but because *we know that he knows* (see D&C 38:1–3)!

Doubt and anxiety are fostered as we focus on what *we don’t know*. We do not know the future, we have a limited grasp of the past, and in the present, we see through a “glass darkly” (1 Corinthians 13:12). While we can conjure imaginative “what if” scenarios ad nauseam, this futile attempt to predict the future typically does nothing more than fuel unnecessary and unwanted

anxious feelings. In contrast, if we fully trust that *God knows* and *will keep his promises*, then we can wait for their fulfillment without the angst born of uncertainty. In Isaiah’s words, we “shall not be ashamed” as we wait on the Lord (2 Nephi 6:7; see also 6:13, 8:5).

Elder Maxwell articulated the relationship between trust and the anticipated fulfillment of promises as follows: “The issue for us is trusting God enough to trust also His timing. If we can truly believe He has our welfare at heart, may we not let His plans unfold as He thinks best? The same is true with the Second Coming and with all those matters wherein our faith needs to include faith in the Lord’s timing for us personally, not just in His overall plans and purposes.”<sup>17</sup> Reflecting on this quote, Elder Dallin H. Oaks wrote, “Indeed, we cannot have true faith in the Lord without also having complete trust in the Lord’s will and in the Lord’s timing.”<sup>18</sup>

### **Christ’s Power**

Knowing that God has not forsaken us, is merciful, and has the integrity to keep his promises is foundational to the doctrine of hope. These attributes clearly indicate that the Lord is willing to help and redeem us. But this knowledge alone is insufficient to produce a firm and unwavering hope. Something is missing.

Perhaps an analogy can demonstrate this point. Suppose a man is hiking Angels Landing in Zion National Park.<sup>19</sup> As the trail narrows to a few feet, he realizes that he is flanked on one side by a 1,200-foot sheer drop-off and on the other side by an 800-foot sheer drop-off. At this point he is overcome by the stunning view surrounding him. As if in a trance, he gazes off in the distance, soaking in the wonder of this breathtaking spot and takes one careless step. His foot slips on a loose rock and he stumbles and falls. He now finds himself perilously hanging off the edge of this cliff by his fingers. There are no footholds and he simply is not strong enough to pull himself up. He needs help and he needs it now!

Thankfully, he is not alone. His mother and older brother have been by his side the entire hike. His mother is a kind soul and is immediately willing to help. She is seventy-two years old and weighs 115 pounds; she is not known for upper body strength. She is willing but clearly unable to rescue her dangling son. On the other hand, his brother, who plays on the offensive line of a professional football team and can bench press 350 pounds, is also a kind soul and is willing to help. As the man looks at both willing individuals,



Alex Proimos, Wiki Commons

Imagine a hiker who stumbles and falls. He now finds himself perilously hanging off the edge of a cliff by his fingers.

who would he want help from? Who will inspire hope in his heart? Clearly it will be his brother, the one with a willing heart and large biceps. In relation to inspiring hope, willingness is necessary, but it is not sufficient. We need to know that he who is willing to help also has the power to get the job done.

In this sermon Jacob not only discusses the *willingness* of the Lord but also the *capability* of the Lord. Speaking of Jesus Christ, Jacob quoted Isaiah as follows, “Art thou not he that cut Rahab, and wounded the dragon? Art thou not he who hath dried the sea, the waters of the depths of the great deep; that hath made the depths of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass through?” (2 Nephi 8:9–10). Rahab, the sea, and the dragon were Old Testament symbols intended to evoke fear.

The sea was “a common symbol for chaos and death.” It was the “abode of the dead, . . . or the final prison of Satan and the demons.”<sup>20</sup> Rahab had a connotation similar to that of “leviathan the piercing serpent, even leviathan that crooked serpent, . . . the dragon of the sea” (Isaiah 27:1; see also Psalm 89:10).<sup>21</sup> This was a “legendary sea monster representing the forces of chaos that opposed the creator” (Isaiah 27:1, footnote c). Commenting on this ancient Near Eastern symbolism, Daniel Belnap wrote, “This narrative was to personify the precosmic ocean, characterizing it as a serpent or monster,

transforming the creation process into a battle between God, the creator, and chaos, the monster.”<sup>22</sup>

Drawing upon this fearful symbolism, Jacob addressed our two greatest enemies. One insurmountable enemy is “the grave,” which constitutes physical death (2 Nephi 9:11). Without divine help we all must “rot and crumble” and “rise no more” (2 Nephi 9:7). The other insurmountable enemy is “hell,” which constitutes “spiritual death” (2 Nephi 9:12). Our spiritual death entails being cut off from God’s presence (see Alma 42:14). Combined together, physical and spiritual death ensure that we are interminably “subject” to the devil, to “become devils, angels to a devil to be shut out from the presence of our God” (2 Nephi 9:9). What mere mortal has the ability to conquer the enemies of the grave and hell? None!

Yes, we need help. But we not only need someone who is *willing* to help, but also someone who is *capable* to conquer these overwhelming enemies. We need, as it were, a “divine warrior”<sup>23</sup> who can slay Rahab, dry up “the waters of the great deep,” and make a way for the “ransomed to pass over” (2 Nephi 8:10). Of such a being, Jacob declared, “O how great the goodness of our God, who prepareth a way for our escape from the grasp of this awful monster; yea, the monster of death and hell” (2 Nephi 9:10). Through Christ’s redeeming power, “hell must deliver up its captive spirits, and the grave must deliver up its captive bodies, and the bodies and the spirits of men will be restored one to the other; and it is by the power of the resurrection of the Holy One of Israel” (2 Nephi 9:12).<sup>24</sup>

Considering we have a *willing* and *capable* Savior, Jacob’s expression of testimony is stirring: “O the greatness of the mercy of our God, the Holy One of Israel! For he delivereth his saints from that awful monster the devil, and death, and hell, and that lake of fire and brimstone, which is endless torment” (2 Nephi 9:19).

### **The Character of Christ and the Fruits of Hope**

Our hope in Christ is fostered as we more fully comprehend the character of Christ. In part, this means understanding his character as the perfect embodiment of mercy, integrity, and power. Any one of these attributes, viewed in isolation, may be impressive, but when they are woven together into the tapestry of his complete character, they become inspiring. For example, an all-powerful Christ is simply terrifying if he is not also filled with mercy. A merciful Christ is less than inspiring if he is too weak to save us. Moreover, a

Christ who embodies power and mercy, but lacks total integrity may leave us anxious and wondering—will he keep his promises?

We can have hope in Christ because of our complete confidence in the character of Christ. For example, those who trust in Christ can wait on him (see 2 Nephi 6:7, 13; 8:5). The capacity to wait on the Lord is an outgrowth of hope. However, the fruits of hope extend beyond patience. Hope in Christ endows us with a capacity to be optimistic and buoyant in the face of all our mortal challenges. It is striking that throughout this sermon, Jacob, a man who was intimately acquainted with the vicissitudes of life, freely drew upon language indicative of hope. Quoting Isaiah, Jacob reminded his downhearted people that the “Lord shall comfort Zion” and in a future day, “joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving and the voice of melody (2 Nephi 8:3). Moreover, the Lord will redeem his people and they shall “come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy and holiness shall be upon their heads; and they shall obtain gladness and joy; sorrow and mourning shall fall away” (2 Nephi 8:11). In light of these prophetic utterances, Jacob implored his brethren, “Rejoice, and lift up your heads forever, because of the blessings which the Lord God shall bestow upon your children” (2 Nephi 9:3).

This hope extends far beyond Jacob’s posterity. All “saints of the Holy One of Israel” who have believed and followed him can be assured their “joy shall be full forever” (2 Nephi 9:18). The assurance that happiness awaits the faithful (see 2 Nephi 9:43) allows us to live today with hope.

When the promises of the Lord are put in the context of his perfect character, then faithful disciples can choose to live with hope every day. For this reason, Jacob makes the simple declarative statement: “Let your hearts rejoice” (2 Nephi 9:52). Please note that “let” in this sentence is a verb, indicating hope is a choice.

Jacob concluded his sermon with a hope-laden exhortation. Remember, his people are described as solemn, lonesome wanderers who were “hated of [their] brethren” (Jacob 7:26). To them, Jacob pleaded: “My beloved brethren, seeing that our merciful God has given us so great knowledge concerning these things, let us remember him, and lay aside our sins, and not hang down our heads, for we are not cast off.” And then, pointing them, and by extension all of us, to the Redeemer and the “power of [his] atonement,” he urged, “Therefore, cheer up your hearts” (2 Nephi 10:20, 23–25). **RE**



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Our hope in Christ becomes inspiring when we comprehend that he is the perfect embodiment of mercy, integrity, and power.

## Notes

1. Bruce C. Hafen, *The Broken Heart: Applying the Atonement to Life's Experiences* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1989), 183.
2. Neal A. Maxwell, "Plow in Hope," *Ensign*, April 2001, 59–61.
3. *Preach My Gospel* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2004), 117.
4. "Identifying, understanding, and feeling the the truth and importance of . . . gospel doctrines and principles" is part of the teaching pattern used by the Seminaries and Institutes of Religion "to instill the gospel" in the "minds and hearts" of both teachers and students. *Gospel Teaching and Learning: A Handbook for Teachers and Leaders in the Seminaries and Institute of Religion* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2012), 39.
5. Hugh Nibley, *An Approach to the Book of Mormon*, ed. John W. Welch (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1988), 225–43.
6. Allan D. Rau, "Every Experience Can Become a Redemptive Experience," *Religious Educator* 12, no. 1 (2011): 92–93.
7. For example, to these Nephites, who were separated and felt isolated from their homeland, Jacob commenced his sermon with an Isaiah prophecy radiating with optimism and promise (see 2 Nephi 6:6–7). The future for Israel was bright; the days ahead held the prospect of a gospel restoration and a gathering to the "lands of their inheritance" (2 Nephi 9:2). Israel need not despair but simply "wait" on the Lord (2 Nephi 6:13; 8:5).
8. With an unquenchable desire to point his posterity to the "source" of their salvation (2 Nephi 25:26), Nephi was drawn to Isaiah. Not only was Isaiah an eyewitness of Christ (see 2 Nephi 11:2–3), his writings held a special power, even above that of other scriptural texts, to "more fully persuade" people to believe "in the Lord their Redeemer" (1 Nephi 19:23). Because of their persuasive power to encourage belief in Christ, the writings of Isaiah garnered another unique power—the power to foster hope. Thus Nephi implored, "Hear ye the words of [Isaiah], which were written unto all the house of Israel, and liken them unto yourselves, *that ye may have hope*" (1 Nephi 19:24; emphasis added).
9. Richard Dilworth Rust suggested, "Nephi may have selected this sermon because it so thoroughly expounds on the implications of Isaiah's prophecies regarding the fulfilling of God's covenants with the house of Israel (1 Nephi 14:17). The sermon centers on the mission of Jesus Christ, identified as the person Isaiah frequently calls the Holy One of Israel, and testifies that the Messiah, the Holy One of Israel, is Jesus." *Feasting on the Word: The Literary Testimony of the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1997), 114.
10. Daniel L. Belnap, "We Are Not Cut Off," in *Living the Book of Mormon: Abiding by Its Precepts*, ed. Gaye Strathearn and Charles Swift (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2007), 115.
11. Eliza R. Snow, "O My Father," *Hymns* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1985), no. 292.
12. Terryl Givens and Fiona Givens, *The God Who Weeps* (Salt Lake City: Ensign Peak, 2012), 40.
13. Henry B. Eyring, "Where Is the Pavilion?," *Ensign*, October 2012, 72.
14. Mercy is an act of pure benevolence by him who "is a merciful God" (Deuteronomy 4:31). Since we do not merit mercy, we have no right to expect it. To Moses, the Lord said, "[I] will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy" (Exodus 33:19; see also D&C 64:10). In other words, mercy is given solely at the Lord's prerogative and is bestowed upon us due to his "everlasting kindness" (Isaiah 54:8). David's plea for forgiveness beautifully captured our true condition as we stand before



God: “Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions” (Psalm 51:1). Like David, King Benjamin understood the asymmetry of our relationship with God. Since we are “eternally indebted to [our] heavenly Father” (Mosiah 2:34), we stand before him as “beggars” (Mosiah 4:19). His mercy is bestowed upon us gratis. This gift, however, is not bestowed in a capricious or arbitrary manner. He is “plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon” his name (Psalm 86:5; see also Alma 32:22). Mercy is given “unto thousands of them that love [God] and keep [his] commandments” (Deuteronomy 5:10). Indeed, “the tender mercies of the Lord are over all those whom he hath chosen, because of their faith” (1 Nephi 1:20). While obedience may be a necessary condition to receive God’s blessings, these blessings could never be received “through [our] efforts alone. They are merciful gifts from a loving and compassionate Father.” *True to the Faith* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2004), 103.

15. While Israel was scattered because of wickedness, the wisdom of God is ever present that in their scattered condition, Israel would become a leavening influence to bring about the work of God throughout human history (see Jacob 5).

16. Bruce R. McConkie, *A New Witness for the Articles of Faith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1985), 503–9.

17. Neal A. Maxwell, quoted in Dallin H. Oaks, “Timing,” *Ensign*, October 2003, 12.

18. Oaks, “Timing,” 12.

19. <http://www.zionnational-park.com/zion-angels-landing-trail.htm>.

20. Alonzo L. Gaskill, *The Lost Language of Symbolism* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2003), 400.

21. Donald W. Parry, Jay A. Parry, and Tina M. Peterson, *Understanding Isaiah* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1998), 241, 453–54.

22. Daniel Belnap, “I Will Contend with Them That Contendeth with Thee: The Divine Warrior in Jacob’s Speech of 2 Nephi 6–10,” *Journal of the Book of Mormon and Restoration Scripture*, 7, no. 1 (2008): 23.

23. Belnap, “I Will Contend with Them,” 30–32.

24. Robert L. Millet wrote, “If Christ has not the power to save the body from death, then he surely has not the power to save the spirit from hell. If he did not break the bands of death in the resurrection, then our hope of deliverance from sin through the atonement is futile and unfounded.” Robert L. Millet, “Redemption through the Holy Messiah (2 Nephi 6–10),” in *Studies in Scripture*, vol. 7: *1 Nephi to Alma 29*, ed. Kent P. Jackson (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1987), 119.