

BOM 09 - 1 Nephi 8

Hello, my dear friends, it's good to be back with you again today. I hope you've had a very Merry and Happy Christmas and I wish you all a prosperous and successful new year in 2019. Over the years, one of the comments that I've heard frequently from brothers and sisters, is about their concern about them being alone on this path of asking, seeking and knocking; and that their spouse is not united with them in their journey. Some of the questions they've had is: Should I wait for them? Should I downplay my own earnest seekings and strivings for these things? Should I talk to them about what's happening to me? Should I encourage them? So, lots of questions and come up, and one of the things I feel strongly about is that you should not curb your progression seeking for these beautiful doctrines of the gospel of Jesus Christ for fear of leaving your spouse behind or waiting for them to catch up to you. A similar experience was found in the New Testament in 1 Corinthians 7:14, Paul said the following:

1 Corinthians 7:14

[14] For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy.

I've thought that, and I thought you are pursuing these holy truths, seeking to be sanctified and to be blessed with the greater portion of the word, can only be a blessing to your household, to your children, and to your spouse. Surely the closer that you become to the Lord Jesus Christ, the greater the improvement will be in your marital relationship and in your family environment. So, I would encourage you to move forward, being wise and having an understanding that your husband or wife, that is not with you at this time at the same place, is simply upon their own path and experiencing in a full measure their journey back to the father. If you'll understand that and look at it that way, then it will help you avoid any kind of contention or misunderstandings in your family. All of us are on our own path and enjoying the full experience of our mortal probationary estate. I'm reminded of John Pontius and when he was talking about some of these things said this:

“When you go to the airport and you get on an airplane as it takes off once it's airborne circles back over and you look down upon the airport, and you see all those people in those cars that are down there, and you ask, what's wrong with them why aren't they up here? Well there's nothing wrong with them. It's just that they're not in the plane yet.

And after all, at one time or another, all of us who are enjoying the greater portion of the word and having these revelations in exciting endowments given to us by the Lord, were at one time, in the airport ourselves. If we will contemplate this, it will help us get a better view and stay in balance. Also, as you seek for these things you're filled with more light. You become a beacon of light. Your spouse or those in your family, who are not yet where you're at in their progression, you can bless them with your light. It's light that makes all the difference in a person, in her understanding, and in their relationship with the Lord. He is the Lord of light. You can bless your spouse. It's you can bless your children, simply by your understanding of the gospel in the light you possess, will have an effect upon them. You can also bless them by pronouncing a blessing upon them, either in prayer or in private. You can simply approach our heavenly Father in the name of Jesus Christ and asked that light be bestowed and shed upon your

husband or wife or your children. You can also rebuke evil for in their behalf. You can pronounce a blessing upon them without them even being present. Simply, exercise your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and speak the words of blessing upon your husband or wife or your children or grandchildren. The Lord will acknowledge this, and that blessing will be realized. In this way you can intervene in their behalf and advocate their cause, so that they can receive light and life and begin to come to a greater knowledge and understanding of their Redeemer and Savior. Instead of waiting for them to progress along the path, why don't you take a proactive approach, and bless them in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Rebuke evil, cast it out, for and in their behalf, and watch the miracle as light flows into their life and they see and understand things they didn't prior to you taking a proactive approach. Try this and see what happens. As Paul said in 1 Corinthians and also in section 74, as Paul said, *the sanctification of one has a sanctifying effect upon the other in the marriage relationship*. It's a beautiful principle. I think we need to be more anxiously engaged in a good cause and bring to pass much righteousness. May the Lord bless you to try this. I have done it. I've seen others do it, and I know that it works.

Let's go to 1 Nephi 8 today and talk about Lehi's dream/vision of the tree of life. In a general conference address in April 1986, Elder Boyd K Packer said this,

"The vision of the tree of life is the central message of the Book of Mormon."
(Boyd K. Packer, General Conference, 1986,)

Now that's a significant statement, brothers and sisters. When you think about the whole Book of Mormon message, and that this vision of the tree of life embodies that central message, come unto Christ, then it behooves us to take a deeper look and seek for a greater understanding of this great vision that Lehi had. I think one of the traps that we fall into as we study this vision and perhaps other visions, in my opinion is, we become too embroiled in too caught up in the details of the vision and lose the overall beautiful message that the prophet in the Lord are trying to portray. You can see us get caught up in the details, if you will look at the various artists' attempts to paint this tree of life vision. I viewed a few of those before recording this podcast and the differences were wide and varied in their interpretation of the dream. There were certain central themes that were common throughout all of these artists work, but it became obvious to me that the interpretation of this dream, without seeing it for yourself, remains elusive and subject to personal interpretation. I don't know that that's even important to know exactly how the river of water was placed in relationship to the rod of iron, or how big the tree was or exactly how it appeared. What's more important is to find out what the Lord is trying to teach us about this beautiful experience that Lehi had. The dream actually starts in verse 2 where Lehi says:

1 Nephi 8:

[2] And it came to pass that while my father tarried in the wilderness he spake unto us, saying: Behold, I have dreamed a dream; or, in other words, I have seen a vision.

I find it interesting that Lehi draws no distinction here between a dream and a vision. Both are sacred means that the Lord uses to communicate with his children while in the telestial world. My experience with sacred dreams have come as I have been in that period of time just before awakening from sleep. It's kind of that quiet peaceful time between sleep and awakening, is

where dreams, for me, seem to take place more readily. In the 3rd verse you can see one of the purposes for the dream was to give Lehi a feeling for the future of his children.

[3] And behold, because of the thing which I have seen, (he said) I have reason to rejoice in the Lord because of Nephi and also of Sam; for I have reason to suppose that they, and also many of their seed, will be saved.

But, look at verse 4.

[4] But behold, Laman and Lemuel, I fear exceedingly because of you; for behold, methought I saw in my dream, a dark and dreary wilderness.

So, one of the purposes of Lehi receiving this dream probably comes as a result of him pondering upon the spirituality and the progression that his children are making; where they're at on their individual paths. There certainly been enough experiences up to this point to cause concern for Laman and Lemuel and to bring comfort and peace regarding Nephi and Sam. So, these sacred dreams can come as a result of our ponderings; a result of our experiences that we had during our waking hours where the Lord can bless us with peace and also give us a warning concerning those we love and have stewardship over. It is a means of him communicating with us; His will and giving us a greater understanding of things that we otherwise would not have. It's interesting that the first thing that Lehi realized in his dream is that he is in a dark and dreary wilderness. Later on, you're going to see that a guide, that comes to him in verse 5, leads him in verse 7 to a place called a dark and dreary waste. These are not the same places. Dark and dreary wilderness is a different place than in dark and dreary waste. In the wilderness you can have living things. You can have a life. Wilderness is simply a place that's wild. It's a place that if you're not aware and careful that your life can be in jeopardy. A waste is a place is devoid of life, devoid of any living thing. And so, he is led by a man in verse 5, who is dressed in a white robe, and asked him to follow him from the dark and dreary wilderness in verse 4 into a place, in verse 7, called back and dreary waste. Going from a place that is challenging but has life, and over a period of many hours into a place where there's no life; it just seems to be a descent from whatever light was there into a place for the lights diminished. And wherever the light is diminished life also diminishes for without light there is no life. One of the things we might ponder is: who is this man? We don't see that there is any real conversation that takes place between Lehi; we simply see that he's dressed in a white robe and that he bade Lehi follow him in verse 6, which he does. In verse 8 it says:

[8] And after I had traveled for the space of many hours in darkness, I began to pray unto the Lord that he would have mercy on me, according to the multitude of his tender mercies.

The words dark in verse 4, dark in verse 7, and darkness in verse 8, tell us that this is a place that is going to be very concerning to Lehi. So much so, that after many hours in verse 8, he breaks into prayer and asked the Lord to have mercy upon him according to the tender mercies of the Lord. He's in a place where he seeking to be delivered, a place devoid of light and therefore no life; truly a wasted place. I had the thought of this being a waste, is very much like our mortal experience if we don't come to a point where we find Christ and have his light illuminated. It's truly it's a wasted time for us without Jesus Christ in the mortal world.

Who is this man; this guide in the white robe? We assume that because he's in a white robe that he is a true messenger. There are some who feel, as they have read this, that this is a messenger who feigns to be from God but really is not a true messenger but counterfeit. There are others who feel that this messenger is John the Revelation, because at the end of Nephi's experience with his father's dream, his experience ends talking about John the Revelation. So, could this also be John the Revelation that begins the experience with Nephi and John the Revelation that is mentioned in the closing of Nephi's experience with the same vision. We don't know, but it's fun to think about. It's in asking questions like this. Some people say well that's just speculation, well I prefer to call it not speculation, I prefer to call it pondering. I prefer to call it pondering upon the word of God. This is what we are commanded to do all through the Book of Mormon is the pondering of these things in our heart. It's a part of the formula for finding out the truth of all things. So, I think that sometimes that we're told not to speculate, when in reality what we're really doing is simply exercising our mind and our spirit, pondering things. And I've learned from personal experience and in the process of doing that the Lord opens up the heavens and reveals things to me that I otherwise would not have known or understood. So, I encourage you to think about these things. Let your mind go out. Don't be in a rush to read the verses. Ask yourself the question – who is this man? What is the purpose of him guiding Lehi through this dark and dreary place? For what purpose? It's interesting that from this dark and dreary place, the next thing you're going to see is a tree that is the epitome of light. Look at the great opposites coming from a dark and dreary place and then the very next thing you see is this beautiful tree that is whiter than anything on earth and is literally the epitome of the heavenly light. Kind of reminds me of the Joseph Smith experience, again, that prior to seeing that great light which descended gradually until it fell upon him, wherein was the Father and the Son, prior to that experience he wrestled with abject darkness to the point where almost cost him his life. This seems to be a heavenly pattern that we can see here - from darkness into light. In verse 10 it says that this tree had a fruit that was desirable to make one happy.

[10] And it came to pass that I beheld a tree, whose fruit was desirable to make one happy.

I think of the great quote by the prophet Joseph Smith where and he said, “*Happiness is the object and design of our existence; and will be the end thereof if we pursue the path that leads to it.*” I want you to remember the word path, because we're going to see a path in this great vision of Lehi. “*And this path is virtue, uprightness, faithfulness, holiness, and keeping all the commandments of God.*” This is a great quote to tie into Lehi's vision of the tree of life. The fruit of this tree was designed to make one happy and the path that leads to happiness, in this vision, is called the straight and narrow path. And Joseph describes it as a path of virtue, uprightness, faithfulness, holiness, and keeping all the commandments of God. This leads towards the fruit of the tree which is designed to make one happy – the object of our very existence. Can I testify to you that the Father and the Son, and our Holy Mother and angelic beings are the most happy persons anywhere in the universe? Their happiness truly is the very foundation of their nature. Well, in verse 11, Lehi goes forth and partakes of the fruit.

[11] And it came to pass that I did go forth and partake of the fruit thereof; and I beheld that it was most sweet, above all that I ever before tasted. Yea, and I beheld that the fruit thereof was white, to exceed all the whiteness that I had ever seen.

Look how he describes it. *It was most sweet, above all that I ever before tasted. Yea, and I beheld that the fruit thereof was white, to exceed all the whiteness that I had ever seen.* Now I've learned over the years, as I've studied the Scriptures, to be open to allow certain words to trigger responses in me. So, when I read about this fruit being white, and exceeds all whiteness I had ever seen, I'm reminded of the scripture over in 3 Nephi 19 that uses those same words. Let's go over and look at it. In this chapter will read verse 25, but in this chapter here the disciples are being instructed on how to pray, mighty prayer, while in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. In verse 24 it says.

3 Nephi 19:24-25

[24] And it came to pass that when Jesus had thus prayed unto the Father, he came unto his disciples, and behold, they did still continue, without ceasing, to pray unto him; and they did not multiply many words, for it was given unto them what they should pray, and they were filled with desire.

Now look here's the part that I want to share with you that when I read about the fruit of the tree of life I see similar words in verse 25

[25] And it came to pass that Jesus blessed them as they did pray unto him; and his countenance did smile upon them, and the light of his countenance did shine upon them, and behold (here we go) they were as white as the countenance and also the garments of Jesus; and behold the whiteness thereof did exceed all the whiteness, yea, even there could be nothing upon earth so white as the whiteness thereof.

Could this be a key to us understanding the fruit of the tree of life that Lehi is now partaking of? Could we look at the verses before and after verse 25 and 3 Nephi 19 and received some knowledge concerning what this fruit of the tree of life is; which is designed to make us happy? We'll talk further about this when we get into 3 Nephi. All I want to show you is: is that it be open to move from one place to another, let the spirit guide you. Let words trigger responses and in doing that the spirit guides you from one place to another and opens up a greater understanding for us. Back to verse 12

1 Nephi 8:

[12] And as I partook of the fruit thereof it filled my soul with exceedingly great joy; wherefore, I began to be desirous that my family should partake of it also; for I knew that it was desirable above all other fruit.

You may want to ask yourself a question – why? Why was this fruit or what it represents most desirable above everything else in this world? I find it very intriguing, that it's only now as Lehi is partaking of the fruit of the tree and looking for his family to come and partake also, that only then does he begin to notice the other elements of this vision; the river of water; that iron rod; the straight and narrow path. None of these things did he see, or at least does he mention any of these things, and it appears that in verse 13,

[13] And as I cast my eyes round about, that perhaps I might discover my family also, (then) I beheld a river of water; and it ran along, and it was near the tree of which I was partaking the fruit.

Don't you find it interesting that Lehi is taking direct from a dark dreary place into a place of exceeding light; partakes of this precious fruit, which is white about everything that is white on this earth and more desirable than anything else on this earth, and only then does he start to notice the other elements of this dream. I find that intriguing. You know, brothers and sisters, as we study this dream and break it down, there only 3 places to be in this vision – number 1, is at the tree number; 2, is in the river; and number 3, is in the building. There are only 3 places to be and it's your choices that determines which one of these places you will be in. Only one of those places is advantageous to you in the world to come and that's at the tree. The other 2 put you at a serious disadvantage in your eternal progression. Now this river of water that Lehi sees here, at this time, because his mind is so caught up in other things, he doesn't notice that this is a river of filthy water. Verse 14 also mentions that it begins with the head or as it's called in another place the fountain. Now, I've been at springs. I've seen the Caesarea Philippi springs at Banias in Israel, which is one of the headwaters of the Jordan River. And I've seen water coming up out of the earth in a huge flow, thousands of gallons of minute, coming out of the earth. It appears like this river of water that Lehi sees in verse 14

[14] And I looked to behold from whence it came; and I saw the head thereof a little way off; and at the head thereof I beheld your mother Sariah, and Sam, and Nephi; and they stood as if they knew not whither they should go.

Every spring that I've seen in my life as it comes up out of the earth comes out in pristine condition; comes out beautifully clean and pure. It's only as it runs downhill that it becomes impure, polluted and as this dream says, filthy. Now Lehi and Nephi would be familiar with such things. These springs and Caesarea Philippi, Banias were flowing at this time. I'm sure that they probably seen those springs and knew how these huge flows of water could come up out of the earth and when it does it's pristine and clear. It's only one is exposed and begins to run downhill that it becomes polluted and in time filthy. Let's look at a couple of corresponding scriptures about this river of water. Let's go to 1 Nephi 12 and look at verse 16, This is Nephi receiving from an angel the interpretation of his father's dream. And in verse 16,

1 Nephi 12: 16

[16] And the angel spake unto me, saying: Behold the fountain of filthy water which thy father saw; yea, even the river of which he spake; and the depths thereof are the depths of hell.

Here is a reference to the water being filthy that flows down from the head thereof and pass the tree of life. Let's look at another Scripture is for the 1 Nephi 15 and look at verse 26 and 27. This verse tells us why Lehi didn't mention the uncleanness or filthiness of the river. It's Nephi in his vision of the same dream that sees that it's filthy, verse 26.

1 Nephi 15:26-28

[26] And they said unto me: What meaneth the river of water which our father saw?

This is Laman and Lemuel asking Nephi about the vision, verse 27.

[27] And I said unto them that the water which my father saw was filthiness; and so much was his mind swallowed up in other things that he beheld not the filthiness of the water.

And verse 28 is also interesting, it said,

[28] And I said unto them that it was an awful gulf, which separated the wicked from the tree of life, and also from the saints of God.

10 days ago, I have one of my children who has become seriously addicted to some deadly drugs come and spend 5 days with us here in our home, as Margie and I and other friends and beloved brothers and sisters worked to help him go through the withdrawal process. It was during this time that I got a glimpse into this awful gulf that separates the wicked from the tree of life. It's a gulf of misery and despair. After helping him go through these withdrawals, and I'm so pleased to say with gratitude in my heart to my Father and our beloved Savior, that he was successful in withdrawing from this drug addiction and is now on the pathway to recovery; it was during this time that his sweet sister sent me the following. I have asked her if I could quote her anonymously and she has given her permission. This touched me so deeply that I felt that I wanted to share it especially with this lesson on the tree of life.

She said, "For many years I taught swimming. As I was teaching the kids and they learned how to swim better and better, I always would talk to them about water safety. I would ask them, if you say your brother or sister in the water drowning what would you do? In my 20+ years of teaching swimming all the children said they would jump in and save their brother or sister. I would then explain to them that they did jump in after their brother and sister that the drowning person tries to climb up on top of you; then you are underwater and there on top of the water and you can't breathe, so you drown and then after you drowned they also drowned. Then you have 2 people drown. I would tell them the best thing they could do to save their sibling and themselves would be to go get an adult. I would continually talk to them each day about going to get an adult if someone is drowning. So, one night I had a dream. I dreamt that I was holding on to the iron rod; underneath my feet was the path leading to the tree of life. I looked to my left and I could see the tree of life. I was holding onto the rod so tightly because my feet were slipping all over the place. When I looked down at my feet, I see why I was slipping all over the place. I noticed that the path was next to the river of filthy water. I could see the water was splashing over the banks on to the path made out of cobblestone. The cobblestones were covered with a slimy mossy substance that was making my feet slip. The river of filthy waters had various types of debris floating down it – trees, trash, big rapids. It was very treacherous. I look across the river and could see the great and spacious building. As I look back into the river I saw my daughter, a heroin addict, struggling in the water to stay alive. The look on her face was total fear. Every fiber in my being wanted to jump in after her. I can't explain how torn I was inside by seeing her struggling like that. I was ready to risk my life to help her. I didn't know what to do. Then I was prompted to look to my right. As I looked to my right, I saw Jesus standing there. He just stared at me in my eyes and calmly said, 'I am your adult.' I knew then that he was the only one that could save her, that if I jumped in after, I would also be drowned. After thinking about the dream, I came to the realization that it's Jesus's job to save and it's my job to love."

As I wrote this sister and express my gratitude to her for being in tune with the spirit and sending this precious experience to us at the time when we were working with our own son who was a drug addict, she wrote back and said, I spent the day yesterday going among the homeless in my community with a picture of my daughter looking for her. Then she's said, "*How blessed you are to have your son in the home with you.*" I hope that this story shared with us at an important time will touch your spirit as it did ours. Verse 15

1 Nephi 8:

[15] And it came to pass that I beckoned unto them; (that is Sariah, Sam and Nephi) and I also did say unto them with a loud voice that they should come unto me, and partake of the fruit, which was desirable above all other fruit.

See you may want to ask yourself the question – why it's written here that he spoke to them with a loud voice? Why didn't just say that I called unto them to come and partake. It says specifically that I did say unto them with a loud voice. See these are the things you need to do if you're going to make the Book of Mormon become more alive to you. You need to stop and ask yourself questions. Why a loud voice? Is that because they were a long distance away from him and could only be heard with a loud voice? Were there other noises competing? Was the river of water making a lot of noise? At any rate, when you begin to search and seek and ask questions like this, take your time don't be a rush, then the Lord can reveal to you things that you otherwise would miss. Well, they do come to the tree and they do partake of it. He also sees Laman and Lemuel at a distance asked them to come, but they would not come in to him and partake of the fruit. That's in verse 18. Now only at this time, after his family has come, Sariah, Sam, and Nephi, and after Laman and Lemuel have refused to come; it's only at this time in verse 19 that he sees the rod of iron. Ask yourself the question, why is it that he sees the rod of iron now? The other thing about this tree of life; is it not only pertains to Lehi's family, this is also pertaining to you and I, individually, and to our families; and also, in a broader meaning can apply to nations and societies of people. That's the beautiful thing about these visions is that they find unique and specific application to many, many different circumstances. This is God's way. Now in verse 19 and 20 we see 2 of the main elements of this vision. We see the rod of iron.

[19] And I beheld a rod of iron, and it extended along the bank of the river, and led to the tree by which I stood.

[20] And I also beheld a strait and narrow path, which came along by the rod of iron, even to the tree by which I stood; and it also led by the head of the fountain, unto a large and spacious field, as if it had been a world.

Ask yourself the question – why this rod is made of iron? Why not some other metal? I looked up the word iron and found the following words to describe characteristics of iron; strict, exact, steadfast, unyielding, immovable, unrelenting, great strength. Taking the time to look at these different synonyms for the word iron gives additional light into why this rod was made of that substance - that metal. Also, we can look into the straight and narrow path. There is much said about. That let's go to Alma 7:19-20. Here some additional information about the straight and narrow paths. Verse 19.

Alma 7:19-20

*[19] For I perceive that ye are in the paths of righteousness; (Remember, we said that righteousness means doing what's right) I perceive that ye are in the path (There is your key) which leads to the kingdom of God; yea, I perceive that ye are making his paths **straight**.*

*[20] I perceive that it has been made known unto you, by the testimony of his word, that he cannot walk in crooked paths; neither doth he vary from that which he hath said; neither hath he a shadow of turning from the right to the left, or from that which is right to that which is wrong; (there he goes again the definition of righteousness) **therefore, his course is one eternal round.***

That gives you some valuable information concerning the straight and narrow path along which is found the rod of iron leading to the tree; to even have your feet upon this path shows that you have chosen right over wrong. Verse 21.

1 Nephi 8:

*[21] And I saw numberless concourses of people, many of whom were **pressing forward**, that they might obtain the path which led unto the tree by which I stood.*

Notice the word *pressing forward*; doesn't say *walking forward*. It says *pressing* which indicates resistance to coming in that direction. So, for anybody to seek to even put their feet upon this path of righteousness you can expect resistance and opposition. It just goes along with this program. Now notice that even though the rod has been introduced in verse 19, speaking of these numberless concourses of people in verse 21, and that seek to commence upon the path is no mention of them grasping or holding onto the iron rod. Remember the rod goes along the full length of the path. So, these people have started on the path but have not caught hold of the rod and as a result, verse 23, another element

[23] And it came to pass that there arose a mist of darkness; yea, even an exceedingly great mist of darkness, insomuch that they who had commenced in the path did lose their way, that they wandered off and were lost.

A mist of darkness; an exceeding mist of darkness arises over the path. Those who had commenced; that means begin in the path lost their way wandered off and were lost. Even at the very beginning before they get too far you're going to see numberless concourses of people who get to this point and commenced in the path, but the majority of them make it no farther because of the mists of darkness arise. And they wander off and are lost. Now is at this point in verse 21 that we begin to introduce 4 different groups of people. I'm also going to pull in the parable of the sower found in Matthew 13. We're back and forth between the Scriptures now, so if you'll get your Bible out and turned in Matthew 13 and right in verse 3 it says,

Matthew 13:3-4

*[3] And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, **Behold, a sower went forth to sow;***

[4] And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up:

The seeds represent people, God's children. These people in the parable of the sower are the numberless concourses of people in verse 21 who press forward in commencing the path in verse 22, but in verse 23 *a mist of darkness arises*, these are the fowls in the parable of the sower, and they lose their way those that commenced in the path of wander off and a lost – group number one.

Now those of us who been involved in missionary work for the church can readily see all of these groups in the tree of life vision and the parable of the sower in the contacts, in the various people that we met and invited to investigate the church. There are some that when they first hear the message get real excited, but then the cares of the world, the honors of man, the ridicule and persecution etc., that companies their own self-doubts and fears, the traditions of their fathers. I remember in Germany all we did was knock on doors in Germany. And most the time all I would hear when we open the door we would hear, we wouldn't even get a word out, and the person would say, "*Ich habe keine Zeit*"; which means, *I don't have any time*; and sometimes slam the door. And in other times quietly shut it in our face. If we were able to begin a discussion on the doorstep to even have some kind of dialogue it would be very long once they found out who we were that they would say, "*I'm a Catholic. My father was a Catholic. His father was a Catholic and I will always be – live and die - a Catholic. Thank you*", and then shut the door. Even if they had felt something as they stood on the doorstep; even if they felt a little glimmer of hope; a little bit of light; something; the traditions of their fathers; the fowls; and the mists of darkness stop their progress and end it there. And what they could have had a now reject and lose. Group Number 2 in 1 Nephi 8 starts in verse 24

1 Nephi 8:

[24] And it came to pass that I beheld others pressing forward, and they came forth and caught hold of the end of the rod of iron; and they did press forward through the mist of darkness, clinging to the rod of iron, even until they did come forth and partake of the fruit of the tree.

And it came to pass that I beheld others pressing forward and they came forth and caught hold of the end of the rod of iron and see if you are in a hurry to read this you and ask yourself the question: why did they catch hold of that at the end? And why not somewhere in the middle? Or the first 3rd or the 2nd two thirds why? The end? You'll notice also, brothers and sisters, that all who catch hold of the rod make it to the tree. The only ones that don't make it to the tree are those who never catch hold of the rod of iron. Very interesting. Said, *they did press forward through the mist of darkness*, that make it through that barrier, *clinging to the rod of iron, even until they did come forth and partake of the fruit of the tree*. Well, these people make it to the tree, but notice in verse 25

[25] And after they had partaken of the fruit of the tree they did cast their eyes about as if they were ashamed.

Another verse and I want to go back to that I skipped. Go back to Matthew 13 describing the first group. Go back and look at verses 18 and 19 for greater understanding of the first group, who commands in the path but never touched the rod. And the mists of darkness and the fowls come and take them away. Notice in verse 19 is says,

Matthew 13:19

[19] When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, (there's a key) then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side.

These are people who receive a seed sown in their heart but lack of understanding. Does that mean that the seed was placed there initially but is not nurtured enough as Alma talks about in 32, to where it begins to swell and expand? Do they cast it out because of their unbelief? All these are questions that we can ask and then compare with our personal experiences with people we've known that fit into these 4 categories. Perhaps even ourselves, at one time or another, have been in one of these 4 groups. Let's go back to 1 Nephi 8, we're in verse 24. We're talking about a group of people who grasp the end of the iron rod and clinging to it. There's your word *clinging to it*. This word *clinging* is only used this once in all of the Book of Mormon. Take a look at the word *caught hold of* and the word *clinging*. Again, if you look at some comparable words you'll find that *caught hold of* means to get suddenly, momentarily or quickly. And that *clinging* means to *stay near* or *remain close*. Little different than what we think of, when we use these words. The bottom line is: if you only *catch and cling* you will be lost.

As I read the words ashamed in these verses my mind is taken to hymn number 29, verse 7 of *A Poor Wayfaring Man of Grief*.

*Then in a moment to my view
The stranger started from disguise.
The tokens in his hands I knew;
The Savior stood before mine eyes.
He spake, and my poor name he named,
"Of me thou hast not been ashamed.
These deeds shall thy memorial be;
Fear not, thou didst them unto me."*

As these people look around and were ashamed Lehi, says,

1 Nephi 8:

[26] And I also cast my eyes round about, and beheld, on the otherside of the river of water, a great and spacious building; and it stood as it were in the air, high above the earth.

I find it interesting that the tree has roots; has a foundation; is firmly implanted in mother Earth. This grade and spacious building has no foundation; it has no roots. These are things that I ponder as I read these words. Verse 27.

[27] And it was filled with people, both old and young, both male and female; and their manner of dress was exceedingly fine; and they were in the attitude of mocking and pointing their fingers towards those who had come at and were partaking of the fruit.

[28] And after they had tasted of the fruit they were ashamed, because of those that were scoffing at them; and they fell away into forbidden paths and were lost.

See that's your clingers. They make it to the tree. They partake of the fruit. Let's see if we can find a comparison with one of the groups in the parable of the sower to give us additional light. Matthew 13:5-6.

Matthew 13:5-6

[5] Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth:

[6] And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away.

Now for the interpretation of this group in the parable of the sower. We go over the page to verses 20 and 21.

Matthew 13:20-21

[20] But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it;

Could that be the partaking of the fruit? Could that be of experiencing that joy and happiness? And yet in verse 21.

[21] Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.

Does that fit in with the 2nd group, the *clingers*, is that we see in Lehi's dream? It appears to me that there are some close parallels. What does it mean to have no root; and to endure for a while; but when persecution or tribulation arise, or in Lehi's dream the attitude of mocking and pointing their fingers is too much for these people. They become ashamed because of those scoffing and fall away. How can you partake of the tree of life and experience that great joy and happiness and then fall away and become ashamed? I pondered that and wondered about that. May I share with you some things that I believe the Lord has taught me. Why is it that those who profess to have a very sacred experience fall away from the church and some even are excommunicated? I have noted this phenomenon also had wondered myself. As I was pondering this the Lord gave me some very powerful teaching and led me through the line of reasoning accompanied by specific scriptures which help me understand these occurrences. While driving back from our weekly temple visit, Margie and I were discussing this, and the following Scripture came into my mind.

Mosiah 3:19

[19] For the natural man is an enemy of God, and has been from the fall of Adam, and will be, forever and ever, unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and putteth off the natural man becomes a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord, and become as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord see fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father.

It quickly became clear that the question in mind had to do somehow with submission, but exactly what that had to do with the sanctified falling away was not yet clear. The Lord then had

me focus on the word *inflict* and explain the difference between the words *afflict* and *inflict*. The word *inflict* is, more often than not, used to describe wounding someone – as to inflict a wound. Therefore, this submission needs to take place when you are being wounded. People who have sacred experiences in the telestial world are almost always persecuted and tormented as they share these sacred experiences when instructed by the Lord. All of a sudden, the picture began to become clearer and I could see that great spiritual experiences and gifts given to men and women as they journey upward there becomes a test along this path and it is in the failure to pass this trial that they fail and find themselves wondering in strange roads.

1 Nephi 8:

[32] And it came to pass that many were drowned in the depths of the fountain; and many were lost from his view, wandering in strange roads.

This test of submission is necessary to become “A saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord.” At this point the person has 2 choices; to go to war for their cause, or to submit. This is the turning point for our brothers and sisters. Unless you have a deeper feeling for the divine nature of our Savior, you are likely to make the wrong choice. Consider this Scriptures,

1 Nephi 19:9

[9] And the world, because of their iniquity, shall judge him to be a thing of naught; wherefore they scourged him, and he suffereth it; and they smite him, and he suffereth it. Yea, they spit upon him, and he suffereth it, because of his loving kindness and his long-suffering towards the children of men.

No one who has walked this earth was more innocent of accusation; had a more just cause than the Lord Jesus Christ. The words “*and he suffereth it*” give us insight into his ability to submit. He marks the path and shows the way, and every point defines to light and life and endless day where God full presence shine. What a perfect testing this is. You are tempted to go to war for your just cause, to defend your innocence and to justify the righteousness of your course. Just, innocent, and righteousness are the testing words to see if you can follow your master into the depths of the bitter cup and submit. D&C 20:32-34 gives us this counsel and warning.

D&C 20:32-34

[32] But there is a possibility that man may fall from grace and depart from the living God;

[33] Therefore let the church take heed and pray always, lest they fall into temptation;

This part right here, brothers and sisters.

[34] Yea, and even let those who are sanctified take heed also.

May our Father in heaven and his blessed Son endow us with their divine nature to the degree that we can always remain in the state of grace having a broken heart and a contrite spirit. Therein, lays safety and peace. That was a great instruction to me it answered the question is how it’s possible for even persons who had sublime experiences with the Lord and with the heavenly realm; how it is that they can fall away and become lost. Back to 1 Nephi 8:29.

1 Nephi 8:

[29] And now I, Nephi, do not speak all the words of my father.

Those are included within the book of Lehi. Verse 30.

[30] But, to be short in writing, behold, he saw other multitudes pressing forward; (this is group number 3) ***and they came and caught hold of the end of the rod of iron; and they did press their way forward,*** (here's your key) ***continually holding...***

Now that has reference back up to the word clinging. Holding – we have a picture in our mind that clinging is continually holding but here we are given the difference between clinging and continually holding; continually holding they do not loosen their grasp. They do not let loose at all. *Clinging* in opposite to *continually holding* seems to indicate that it was casual; that there were times when they loosen their grip; or even let go of the rod. I know that doesn't fit into what we see with clinging. But remember that the words that ties in the *clinging* is to *stay near* and *remain close*. This 3rd group.

[30]... continually holding fast to the rod of iron, until they came forth and fell down and partook of the fruit of the tree.

I find it interesting that this group when they get to the tree, in comparison to the first group, this group falls down and partake of the fruit of the tree. The first group that makes it to the tree don't fall down. There is something lacking in this first group. There's something in their nature that is flawed. Even though they make it there and they partake of the fruit and enjoy some of the joy and happiness there's a fatal flaw within them. This falling down at the tree seems to show some great humility; seems to show a feeling that we could not have made it here without you in every way. Could it be that the first group's fatal flaw is they got to the tree and didn't give gratitude for the Lord for arriving at this sacred place? Could it be that they felt they did it on their own? This is always a fatal flaw in the natural man, I can do this by my own. Supported by the philosophy of the world which says, whatever the mind of man can conceive and believe, it can achieve; and puts all success within man's mind, exclusive of outward heavenly help. I believe that this is the flaw. It is a lack of gratitude. It is a feeling that they've done this and obtained the fruit by themselves. At any rate, it's not enough to sustain them in the heat of the day, in the mockery and ridicule of the world. Remember the 2 great priesthood disqualifiers that are mentioned in section 121 in the Doctrine and Covenants.

D&C 121:35-37

[35] Because their hearts are set so much upon the things of this world, and aspire to the honors of men, that they do not learn this one lesson—

[36] That the rights of the priesthood are inseparably connected with the powers of heaven, and that the powers of heaven cannot be controlled nor handled only upon the principles of righteousness.

[37] That they may be conferred upon us, it is true; but when we undertake to cover our sins, or to gratify our pride, our vain ambition, or to exercise control or dominion or compulsion upon the souls of the children of men, in any degree of unrighteousness, behold, the heavens withdraw

themselves; the Spirit of the Lord is grieved; and when it is withdrawn, Amen to the priesthood or the authority of that man.

Amen to the priesthood of those men and the progression of those women who set their hearts upon the things of the world and seek for the owners of men. I have found at this point in my life that gratitude is the great key that keeps us in a state of grace. Humility, meekness, holiness of heart, having a broken heart and a contrite spirit, gratitude is the great key. Gratitude opens the flow of the Holy Spirit; bestows the full companionship of the Holy Ghost and puts us in a state of constant flow of personal revelation. I keep thinking of what the Lord says in D&C 59:21.

D&C 59:21

[21] And in nothing doth man offend God, or against none is his wrath kindled, save those who confess **not** his hand in **all** things, and obey **not** his **commandments**.

The sin of gratitude, verily, is the mother of all unbelief. This 3rd group, in Matthew chapter 13 and in the parable of the sower, is found in verse 8.

Matthew 13:8-9

[8] But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold.

[9] Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.

And over the page to verse 23 also speaking of this group.

Matthew 13:23

[23] But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and **understandeth** it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.

Back to first Nephi 8 verse 31 the 4th group.

1 Nephi 8:

[31] And he also saw other multitudes feeling their way towards that great and spacious building.

[32] And it came to pass that many were drowned in the depths of the fountain; and many were lost from his view, wandering in strange roads.

[33] And great was the multitude that did enter into that strange building. And after they did enter into that building they did point the finger of scorn at me and those that were partaking of the fruit also;...

And this is a triple underliner here. This is the key to surviving the ridicule, scorn and persecution of this world.

[33]... **but we heeded them not.**

[34] These are the words of my father: **For as many as heeded them, had fallen away.**

One of the reasons that those who are ashamed, because of those who are in the attitude of marking their pointing their fingers at them they fell away and into forbidden paths or lost, is that they entered into a deadly exchange. They give up light for darkness and peace for turmoil. There is a time when you just do not engage in dialogue. There is a time when instructed by the spirit; when silence is the wiser way. By contending, and trying to intimidate, always lose the spirit and end up perishing in the battle.

Well, my brothers and sisters, I pray that this will be helpful to you. I pray that you will catch hold of the end of the rod of iron and hold fast to it, expressing gratitude all along the way, walking the straight and narrow path, alongside that treacherous river through the mists of darkness, holding fast continually to the rod until you fall down at the tree of life, who is the Lord Jesus Christ, and partake of His fruits which are the blessings of his atoning sacrifice to change your very nature and make you godly.

In closing today's lesson, may I share with you an experience that I had on October 7 at 4:45 A.M.

"This morning while conversing with the Lord I sought to enter into that sacred place of stillness my own personal holy of holies. The Lord blessed me after a short while to enter in. What followed next was spectacular. I was able to stay in this place for over 1 ½ hours. It was one wave after another, with little time between, in being bathed in light, truth and their love to an extent that I have never experienced before. Time had no relevance and I was completely unaware of anything else in the world except the holy environment I was abiding in. Time and again I praise the Lord for what was happening. I didn't see anything. It was all feeling and experience. Everything that I've ever heard, seen, and touched up to this time was eclipsed with his holy experience. I don't have the words to describe it. I now know what is meant when the Scripture talks about things that are unspeakable. It's not that they cannot be spoken; it's that there are no words to describe it. There were times when my breath was taken. I felt as though I was being lifted up and out of my body. The light, knowledge, and love were such that I know that if this experience is not metered by the Lord it can damage and perhaps destroy your physical being. It can only be experienced in this world by degrees and that carefully by the Savior. Each experience is designed to prepare you for the next by enabling and empowering you physically to withstand this sacred encounter. I had no idea and I don't have the words. Thank you, Father, and Lord Jesus for introducing me to this marvelous dimension. During this encounter the words 'most desirable above all things' came into my mind. I knew that this phrase came from the Book of Mormon and thought that it had something to do with Lehi's tree of life vision. I searched and found these verses: first Nephi 11: 21 through 23.

1 Nephi 11:21-23

[21] And the angel said unto me: Behold the Lamb of God, yea, even the Son of the Eternal Father! Knowest thou the meaning of the tree which thy father saw?

[22] And I answered him, saying: Yea, it is the love of God, which sheddeth itself abroad in the hearts of the children of men; wherefore, it is the most desirable above all things.

[23] And he spake unto me, saying: Yea, and the most joyous to the soul.

*I was taught to this marvelous experience that when we enter into this place of stillness we can partake of the fruit of the tree of life. The tree is the Lord Jesus Christ, and the fruit of the tree is partaking of the fullness of his atoning sacrifice. It is the most desirable of all things and the more joyous to the soul. I was reminded that **all** of the many heavenly manifestations that we can receive are secondary to partaking of the fruit of the tree of life. I learned something else while in this state. I was taught that is completely up to me as to the duration of time that I could remain there. This is the Lord sacred place within each of us and we encounter him there, however, it is totally up to each of us how long we stay. I was explaining this to a friend and he asked, "Who would want to leave?" I told him that the Lord carefully administers the transforming, transitioning and exchanging power of his atonement in our lives because done without that careful measuring it could damage us. Perhaps the fullness of his love in this world could even destroy us. Who could think that God's love could be destructive? I'm so grateful for what the Lord has shown me, and I praise His name all the day long. Please Lord; help me to remain as a little child. Let me place my trust in the continually that the gates of hell never prevail against me. While pondering this phrase, Lord taught me that this hell spoken of is the fallen Telestial a world in which we live. The Gates are the veils, traditions, lies, and false precepts of this world. They prevail against us as long as we remain in the fallen state and never access the redeemed terrestrial world. They cease to prevail against us when we rend the veil and access the heavenly realm.*

God bless us all, I pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

References:

1 Corinthians 7:14

1 Nephi 8

John Pontius

Boyd K. Packer, General Conference, 1986

3 Nephi 19:24-25

1 Nephi 12: 16

1 Nephi 15:26-28

Private Letter to Mike Stroud

Alma 7:19-20

Matthew 13:3-4

Matthew 13:19

LDS Hymnal, #29, verse 7, A Poor Wayfaring Man of Grief

Matthew 13:5-6

Matthew 13:20-21

Mosiah 3:19

1 Nephi 19:9

D&C 20:32-34

D&C 121:35-37

D&C 59:21

Matthew 13:8-9

Matthew 13:23

1 Nephi 11:21-23