

Book of Mormon 32
They Did Obey Every Word of Command with Exactness
(Alma 53-63)
By Lenet Hadley Read

(Here is inspirational background)

I. One of the most inspirational stories in the Book of Mormon is that of the 2,000 stripling warriors. And I know it is true.

A. There are living, wonderful examples today of young men and women who truly are like Helaman's army. The same moral courage is found in missionaries and in the military as well.

A. One example came from a young soldier whose sergeant was beginning a training session. He announced in a very intimidating way that he was going to begin with a "dirty joke." They were forewarned. Anyone who would be offended should leave now. One lone Latter-day Saint soldier stood and courageously walked out.

B. Another example came from a convert in France who was undergoing outdoor military training. It was an extremely cold and miserable day. The soldiers were offered hot coffee to warm up. The temptation was indeed very great. He had drunk coffee before joining the church so he had a taste for it. They were not offered anything else to drink. His hands in particular were extremely cold. Then he realized what he should do. He did take the coffee --- but he **plunged his freezing hands down into its warmth!**

II. **I can testify that the faith of a mother and a son's obeying with exactness can preserve life.**

A. When I spoke at the missionary farewell of my youngest son, David, in 1989, I had earnestly prayed and fasted to be guided. I was prompted to tell him that while I had packed his socks, ties and white shirts, I had also packed something he could not see, but which I wanted him always to remember was there. That was my faith in the power of the Lord to protect him. I reminded him of some of the faith promoting experiences of our family

Five months later in the Dominican Republic, December 21 was a happy day for David. He and his companion, another member, and a convert fresh out of the waters of baptism, were riding their bikes back from the baptism. They were traveling on a highway divided by a median with David and the church member trailing the others. Just before they reached a break in the median to turn left, a motorcycle carrying two men passed David. Oncoming traffic held up the motorcycle. David and his associate waited behind.

As traffic cleared, suddenly the man on the rear of the motorcycle turned. Even as he turned, there came over David a feeling of evil --- a feeling so powerful that even in his recollection it caused him to shudder. The man swung up his right arm, and at a distance of about five feet, shot directly at David, three times.

David was deafened by the roar of the gun and saw the flashes of light even before he felt the pain. He was knocked up and backwards off his bicycle for several feet, landing on his back with heels over his head. The motorcycle accelerated and was gone.

David was surprised at how conscious he was for he was sure he should not be living. As he examined himself he discovered he had been hit in the leg. He wasn't sure where else. His companion and others came to his aid, and he was taken to a clinic for medical assistance.

In the light of the clinic, it was discovered that one bullet had passed harmlessly through his pant leg. The second bullet had passed through his knee, but side wards. The wound was

amazingly clean. The bullet had gone straight through, hitting neither bone, artery nor tendon. Only the cartilage had suffered some damage. The wound was cleansed, one side left open to drain, and the other sewn up. While his leg was swollen and very painful for some time, eventually it healed. Today he walks without a limp. Now nearing 50, he still has not required knee surgery on that knee.

But most amazing, when the bullets that were fired were later retrieved, they were of a .45 automatic pistol, which should have blown his leg clear off.

Remember there were three shots, and three bullets. The medical attendants looked in amazement as they found two bullet holes in the upper left part of his shirt, two inches apart. But there was no wound. (He still has the shirt).

As the details of the story were unfolded there was continual and absolute reconfirmation that David's life could only have been preserved by powers beyond those of nature. I cannot assert for certain *how* his life was preserved. But I do know it was miraculously preserved, regardless of how the Lord did it. The miracle of the leg is enough to recognize the Lord's hand was over him.

III. Obedience with Exactness was an important part of this miracle.

A. David and his companion, just prior to the shooting, had determined they were going to **obey with exactness the commandments, the mission rules and guidance of the spirit.**

B. Interestingly, when my grandson, Christopher Read, was at the MTC before going to Guatemala, a General Authority sat beside him and others going there. **He told them to be strictly obedient. He said doing so would help protect them.**

IV. Prayer was also an essential part of this miracle.

A. **Just prior to the shooting, Elder Russell M. Ballard had requested in conference that the members pray fervently every day for the missionaries' safety and protection.**

B. My son Richard in particular had obeyed this request with diligence. After the shooting he realized that in almost every single prayer he had asked for special protection to be upon his brother. Never before had he asked that for his missionary brothers though he had prayed for their success. He said, "As these thoughts hit me, they lifted my soul. Through sobs of emotion... I knew the Lord was watching over David and I praised Him for His protecting hand."

V. Note **all these same elements were a part of the story of the Two thousand striping warriors.**

A. The faith of the mothers: "Now they never had fought, yet they did not fear death; ... yea they had been **taught by their mothers, that if they did not doubt, God would deliver them**" (Alma 56:47).

B. Their own faith and exacting obedience: "Yea, and **they did obey and observe to perform every word of command with exactness**; yea, and even according to their faith it was done unto them" (Alma 57:21).

"But behold, they have received many wounds; ...and they are strict to remember the Lord their God from day to day; yea, they do observe to keep his statutes, and his judgments, and his commandments continually; "(Alma 58:40).

C. Though wounded, they were spared death. "But behold, to my great joy, there had not one soul of them fallen to the earth" (Alma 56:56).

"And now, their preservation was astonishing to our whole army. ... And we do justly ascribe it to the miraculous power of God, because of their exceeding faith in that which they had been

taught to believe --- that there was a just god, and whosoever did not doubt, that they should be preserved by his marvelous power "(Alma 57:26).

D. Continual prayer for protection and of gratitude was also a daily part of their lives and of those associated with them.

"And behold, we are again delivered out of the hands of our enemies. And blessed is the name of our God; for behold it is he that has delivered us; yea, that has done this great thing for us" (Alma 57:35).

"And they did pray unto the Lord their God continually, insomuch that the Lord did bless them, according to his word, so that they did wax strong and prosper in the land." (Alma 62:51).

VI. So why are **not all** of the righteous always protected?

A. The Book of Mormon tells us why. At other times, speaking of other righteous who had been slain it says: "Nevertheless, we may console ourselves in this point, that they have died in the cause of their country and of their God, yea, and they are happy" (Alma 56:11).

"For [sometimes] the Lord suffereth the righteous to be slain that his justice and judgment may come upon the wicked; therefore ye need not suppose that the righteous are lost because they are slain; but behold, they do enter into the rest of the Lord their God" (Alma 60:13).

B. Though faith, prayer and exact obedience will most often bring about preservation and blessings in mortality, sometimes the Lord does require the offering of the life of the righteous. But these righteous are also preserved by God --- in Eternal Ways.

VII. I know from my own personal experience that the story of the stripling warriors is true. I know there is meaning in this story for our day --- for the thousands of youth who constantly stream into every part of the world and every kinds of danger to carry the Lord's message.

That meaning is also there for those who fight for the preservation of liberty in their own countries. All will be blessed if they exercise faith in the Lord, if they are strict in keeping all of God's commandments, and if prayer is exercised by them and by their loved ones.

Those who fall will be few, due to faith filled parents and obedient sons and daughters.

Those few who do fall in the cause of righteousness will be lifted up by God and inherit Eternal Life. They will know Joyous Rebirths.