

"HEAR YE HIM"

A Devotional Series For Radio

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The Sermon: WE DO NOT DOUBT THAT OUR MOTHERS KNEW

Scripture: Book of Mormon, Alma 24:70-77, with omissions. (NOTE: the people of Ammon had been miraculously converted, and because of their past record of wicked bloodshed, had taken a vow never to lift up their swords again. At the time of this scripture they were under the protection of the Nephites, who were in great danger and needed help, but who would not permit the people of Ammon to break their vow.)

But behold they (the Ammonites) had many sons who had not entered into a covenant that they would not take their weapons to war to defend themselves against their enemies; Therefore they did assemble themselves together ... as many as were able to take up arms And they entered into a covenant to fight for the liberty of the Nephites, yea, to protect the land unto the laying down of their lives Now behold, there were two thousand of these young men And they were all young men, and they were exceeding valiant for courage, and also for strength and activity; but behold, this was not all; they were men who were true at all times in whatsoever thing they were entrusted; Yea, they were men of truth and soberness, for they had been taught to keep the commandments of God, and to walk uprightly before him.

They had been taught by their mothers that if they did not doubt God would deliver them. And they rehearsed unto me the words of their mothers, saying, We do not doubt that our mothers knew.

Our sermon today is in the form of a story which because it covers a period of nearly thirty years and the doings of several nations, must be greatly condensed. The story begins with the miraculous conversion of the four sons of Mosiah. Because of the miraculous power of that conversion and the joy and satisfaction they found in their new life, these converts decided to make an attempt to convert the Lamanites. These were fierce, blood-thirsty, lazy, indolent people, addicted to war, murder, and plunder. They were a constant menace to their Nephite neighbors, and destroyers of the public peace, and the very idea of converting even one of them seemed on the face of things to be preposterous, but the Lord promised the young missionaries success if they would be diligent, patient, and faithful. The four brothers separated and went in different directions, and in spite of many hardships, persecutions, imprisonments, and privations, they did succeed in convincing many thousands of the fierce Lamanites of the need for a complete and sincere repentance from their sinful ways, and faith in the Savior who had been foretold by their prophets.

verted Lamanites, who began a calculated program of persecution and harrassment. The converts were faced with a real moral problem as well as a practical dilemma. Should they defend themselves by force of arms, or offer no resistance whatever to evil? Because they had already been guilty of many cruel, ruthless and unprovoked murders before their conversion, they feared to shed more blood, and made a vow never to take up the sword again even if it cost them their lives. Many did die rather than break this solemn vow, but things reached the place where they were threatened with total destruction. At this point they asked for and received sanctuary in the territory of the Nephites, who stood between them and their persecutors and defended them with force of arms, while the non-combatants did all they could to support the armies with food and supplies.

Over a period of many years the situation continued to grow worse. The Lamanite aggressors became more and more bold and ruthless. The Nephites were plagued by rebellion and wickedness among themselves, even in the face of external danger. Several battles were fought with great loss and slaughter on both sides. The people who had sworn never to fight again saw their brethren perishing, and

This of course only aroused deeper hatreds among the rebellious and uncon-

again saw their brethren perishing, and began to feel that perhaps the time had come to break their vow and take up arms to help the Nephites who were defending them. The Nephite leader, Helaman, advised them against breaking their sacred vow, but the sense of obligation meanwhile was beginning to be felt by the sons of those bound by the vow. Those sons had been born after the conversion of their fathers. They had now grown to young manhood. They were not bound by the vow of their fathers. Over two thousand of them volunteered to bind themselves by solemn covenant to fight in defense of their liberties. They rallied under the leadership of Helaman, who because of his affection for them, called them his sons.

Helaman says of them: "Now they never had fought, yet they did not fear death; and they did think more upon the liberty of their fathers than they did upon their lives; yea, they had been taught by their mothers that if they did not doubt, that God would deliver them. And they rehearsed unto me the words of their mothers, saying, "We do not doubt that our mothers knew."

These two thousand stripling soldiers joined themselves to the main army of the Nephites, and fought a decisive battle with the Lamanites, in which they played a valiant part. When the battle was over, Helaman numbered his men. Many of the two thousand had received serious wounds, but not one of them had been killed. "They had fought as if with the strength of God; yea, never were men known to have fought with such miraculous strength; And with such mighty power did they fall upon the Lamanites that they did frighten them, and for this cause did the Lamanites deliver themselves up as prisoners of war."

There are several things worthy of notice in this greatly abbreviated story. First is the quality of the conversion of the four sons of Mosiah, who because of this conversion undertook a seemingly hopeless missionary journey among the fierce, ruthless, murderous, and bloodthirsty hereditary enemies of their people. It was a miraculous experience, given by the power of God, which converted these four men, and that same miraculous power of God continued with them to work the conversion of the Lamanites.

The second point to note is the genuine and miraculous quality of the conversion of the Lamanites. Men who had once gained their livelihood by war and

plunder and murder were changed to men who would rather lose their own lives than to shed the blood of others, even in self-defense. The quality of their conversion is also attested as we read between the lines the evidence of godly instruction which the mothers among that converted group gave to their sons as they grew to manhood. The men and women who had once been lawless, fierce, murderous, and godless succeeded in rearing a generation of boys who were "strict to remember the Lord their God" to "observe to keep his statutes and his judgments and his commandments continually" -- boys who had strong faith in the promises of God through his prophets, who obeyed and performed every command of their military leader with exactness, who had the reputation of being men of truth and soberness.

It is not true that human nature can not be changed; it can, when God moves in. And that change can continue into succeeding generations, making them outstanding examples of faith, piety, godliness, and truth. In our story, the godly instruction of converted mothers produced a generation of young men with faith that could deliver them even from the deadly perils of battle -- boys who did not doubt that their mothers knew. Note that the faith of these stripling soldiers was the faith of their mothers -- the faith taught them by mothers -- and fathers -- who had been turned to righteousness from the very depths of sin and degradation.

Who can estimate the power of a mother? But let us not forget that mothers, too, need to supplement their power with the power of God, and to do their teaching in the fear of God. In our story there must undoubtedly have been wicked Lamanite mothers who taught their sons to hate, to kill, to plunder and steal and do all manner of violence. They produced a generation of godless, ruthless, bloodthirsty, savage warriors who were a menace to peace and safety and enemies of all godliness. But when some of these same mothers, perhaps, felt the power of God unto repentance and conversion, they changed their lives and their teachings so completely that they reared the two thousand stripling soldiers who have gone down in Book of Mormon history as the men who did not doubt that their mothers knew, and who therefore had such faith that they could not be defeated or killed in the war which they fought to defend their liberties against lawless and godless aggression.