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FOUNDATION FOR ANCIENT RESEARCH AND MORMON STUDIES

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# Faith, Hope, and Charity

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## Summary:

Larry Dahl explores some of the teachings of the Book of Mormon concerning faith, hope, and charity. He discusses the meanings of these words, their relationships to each other, how they are acquired, and what their fruits are. Faith, hope, and charity must be centered in Christ. The first principle of the gospel is not just faith, it is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. We must obtain not just hope, but a hope in Christ. Likewise, charity is not just love, it is the pure love of Christ.

Transcript  
Book of Mormon, Teachings

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# Faith, Hope, and Charity

Larry Dahl

Our opportunity today is to examine Book of Mormon teachings concerning faith, hope, and charity. Because of the nature of the material and the amount of it and the constraints we have of the clock I will be following a prepared text. But I have some overheads which will summarize the information and hopefully help us track what we are trying to say today.

As part of his final appeal to his future readers to come unto Christ and be perfected in him, Moroni testified, "Wherefore there must be faith and if there must be faith there must also be hope; and if there must be hope there must also be charity. And except ye have charity ye can in no wise be saved in the kingdom of God, neither can ye be saved in the kingdom of God if ye have not faith, and neither can ye if ye have no hope."

*Faith, hope, and charity* are familiar terms often spoken of together and nearly always in the same order. Paul indicates that the order has significance, charity being the last and also the greatest of the three. A perusal of church manuals and magazines shows that faith is discussed the most, charity next, and hope the least. In fact, it has been my experience that hope, which is as necessary to salvation as either faith or charity, is rarely discussed as a gospel principle. Furthermore, treatment of faith and charity is often limited to simply reading the words of Paul, or Alma, or Moroni without a careful analysis of what these apostles and prophets said or what their intended meaning was.

In an attempt to add to our understanding we will explore some of the teachings of the Book of Mormon concerning faith, hope, and charity; their meanings, their relationships to each other and how they are acquired, and what their fruits are. Before analyzing what the Book of Mormon says about each of the terms *faith, hope, and charity*, however, I would like to share with you what I have concluded concerning these terms and what their meaning is and what their relationship is to each other.

I believe that faith is confidence, trust, assurance in as yet unseen reality that leads us to behave or to act in certain ways. Hope, which comes of faith we'll find out, is really an intense desire or longing. To use a scriptural term, a hungering and thirsting after righteousness. But it is my feeling that that is more of a selfish thing, that's a hungering and thirsting after righteousness for me. I love the gospel. I love the blessings of the gospel for me. Charity is an extension of that, the same kinds of feelings only this time they are focused upon others. An intense desire that other people have the gospel. A hungering and a thirsting after righteousness for



someone else. With that in mind then, let's proceed to faith.

The word *faith* appears 260 times in the Book of Mormon. Except for perhaps a half-a-dozen instances, such as Alma 32, Alma 48, and Alma 57, the writers use the word without defining or describing it, apparently assuming the reader understands its meaning. The word *faith* is used in several contexts. At least 16 times it refers to one's belief system—the Church or the gospel. As for instance, "He had hoped to shake me from the faith," "This judge was after the order and faith of Nahor," or "A few of the Lamanites who were converted unto the true faith." At least 6 references deal with ones having strong faith. For example, Ammon rejoiced over the Lamanite Queen saying, "Blessed art thou because of thy exceeding faith. I say unto thee, woman, there has not been such great faith among all the people of the Nephites." And concerning the Nephite multitude to whom the Savior appeared after his resurrection, he told his disciples, "So great faith have I never seen among all the Jews."

In at least 19 instances the Book of Mormon peoples and the reader are encouraged or charged to acquire or exercise faith. At least 27 times the word refers to someone's spiritual status. For instance, the Lamanite converts known as the people of Ammon are described as being "firm in the faith of Christ." And Jarom records, "Our kings and our leaders were mighty men in the faith of the Lord." These are a few of the contexts in which the word *faith* appears in the Book of Mormon.

Most of the rest of the 260 references to faith testify to the fruits of faith, the great blessings that flow from acquiring, and retaining, and exercising it: faith brings the power of the Holy Ghost to reveal truths, to change hearts, to remit sins, and to sanctify. Only through faith can miracles take place. Through faith confining cords are broken, prison walls tumble, military victories are won, mountains move, ancient records come forth, and angels manifest themselves to men.

Exceeding faith allows some to see Christ and have all things revealed to them. Ultimately, the Savior claimeth all those who have faith in him, and they who have faith in him will cleave unto every good thing and he grants them eternal life. The list goes on and on. We are reminded several times that the Lord is able to do all things according to his will for the children of men if it so be that they exercise faith in him. It seems that the inspired writers of the Book of Mormon long for later readers to understand clearly that the fruits of faith are both precious and possible.

The Book of Mormon contains several passages about how one acquires faith. Consider the following in the order in which they appear. Alma recorded that the keeping of the law of Moses by certain converted Lamanites served to strengthen their faith in Christ. He also taught a group of Zoramites that faith comes and is increased by experimenting with the word of God, by planting the word in one's heart, then by nourishing it with diligence and patience. When his readers asked

how to do that Alma admonished them to search the scriptures and cry unto the Lord, through prayer, to soften their hearts, and to begin to believe in the Son of God. Amulek added his plea to those same Zoramites, "That ye may begin to exercise your faith unto repentance, that you begin to call upon His holy name." He also reminded them that such prayer is vain unless it is accompanied by active concern for others.

Growing in faith is tied to fasting and praying oft. Also, "You must repent, and cry unto the voice, even until ye shall have faith in Christ" (Helaman 5:41). Nephi, the son of Helaman, was similarly told that he would be made mighty in faith because of his unwearyingness in declaring the gospel, and in seeking the Lord's will instead of his own, and in keeping the commandments. The Lamanite prophet Samuel reminded the Nephites that coming to a knowledge of the truth and to a belief in the holy scriptures leads to faith. Mormon testified, "The Lord God prepareth the way, that the residue of men may have faith in Christ" (Moroni 7:32) by sending angels to minister unto the children of men, by declaring by his own mouth to prophets that Christ should come, by manifesting things in diverse ways unto the children of men, and by angels declaring the word of Christ unto chosen vessels, that they may bear testimony of him.

It seems clear from these verses that faith is a gift bestowed by God and that a person can, and indeed must, qualify himself or herself to receive that gift, by learning of Christ through studying the scriptures, listening to prophets, by having honest, humble and persistent prayer, by patiently obeying the commandments he or she has been given, and by fasting. Gaining faith is assured with such an approach.

Undoubtedly, it is much more important to know how to acquire faith and to experience its fruits than it is to be able to give a technical definition of it. However, many minds ache to understand clearly and to be able to explain principles precisely. What help then does the Book of Mormon give us in defining faith?

Alma 32 contains pertinent information. Three times Alma tells us what faith is not, and anybody who has lived very long knows that it is as important sometimes to know what something isn't as it is to know what it is. Alma says to us, "Faith is not to have a perfect knowledge, . . . for if a man knoweth a thing he has no cause to believe, for he knoweth it" (Alma 32:21, 18). As both evidence and explanation of this notion Alma gives the example of planting a seed and observing it sprout. When a person has actually experienced the sprouting, Alma says his knowledge is perfect, and his faith is dormant in that thing. The phrase *in that thing* is an important key, for Alma is quick to remind us that our knowledge is not perfect in all things but only in that thing—that is, that the seed is good. He adds, "Neither must ye lay aside your faith, for ye have only exercised your faith to plant the seed that ye may try the experiment to know if the seed was good" (Alma 32:36).

This explanation helps us to understand Ether 3:19 better, which says that

after the brother of Jared saw the finger of the Lord he had faith no longer, for he knew, nothing doubting. This does not mean that he no longer had need for faith and that he knew all things. But he did know specifically that Christ lived and had a spirit body. In that thing his knowledge was perfect and his faith was dormant. However, he still needed to have faith concerning a myriad of other things that he had not yet seen or experienced. Hence, whatever else faith is, faith has an element of anticipation of unseen reality. It is oriented toward the future.

What other elements does faith possess besides anticipation? The following three passages about the 2,000 stripling warriors are illuminating. First, after explaining that the Nephites were taught to defend themselves but never to be aggressors, the record says, "And this was their faith, that by so doing, God would prosper them in the land; or in other words, if they were faithful in keeping the commandments of God that he would prosper them in the land; yea, warn them to flee, or to prepare for war, according to their danger. And also, that God would make it known unto them whither they should go to defend themselves against their enemies, and by so doing, the Lord would deliver them" (Alma 48:15-16).

Then, concerning the fact that all survived a vicious battle, Helaman explains, "And now, their preservation was astonishing to our whole army, yea, that they should be spared while there was a thousand of our brethren who were slain. 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. Now, this was the faith of those of whom I have spoken; they are young and their minds are firm and they do put their trust in God continually" (Alma 57:26-27).

Finally, in response to fervent prayers for strength against their enemies the righteous Nephites received this welcome answer: "Yea, it came to pass that the Lord our God did visit us with assurances that he would deliver us; yea, insomuch that he did speak peace to our souls, and did grant unto us great faith, and did cause us that we should hope for our deliverance in him" (Alma 58:17).

The sense of the word *faith*, in these instances, is that of assurance, and trust, and lack of doubt, and confidence. Also, in every instance, doing or a sense of obeying is present. As for example the phrases, "and thus they went forth," "and they did obey and observe to perform every word of command with exactness," "and we did take courage and were fixed with a determination," "and thus we did go forth with all our might." Thus, the Book of Mormon teaches that faith is an assurance, a confidence, a trust in unseen reality that impels one to act.

What then of Alma 32:21 which says, "If ye have faith, ye hope for things which are not seen which are true?" Is this not a definition of faith? I suggest that it is more a statement of what follows faith than it is a definition of faith. For, if we define faith as hope then they are the same. But it is clear from many other passages

in the Book of Mormon that hope is something different from, even beyond, faith. If one views Alma 32:21, then, as a statement that hope follows faith, then the view is consistent with other passages which treat hope as distinct from faith.

Moving then to hope. The word *hope* is used 50 times in the Book of Mormon and it is used in two senses. First, the general sense, consistent with the common usage and meaning: a desire accompanied by expectation of fulfillment, or a certain wanting or longing for something that may be possible, or a kind of wishing and wondering. My daughter sometimes hopes that she will get a call and invite her to the ball, to the prom. That is the general sense of hope—I hope this, I hope that. But the second use of the word *hope* is a more strict use, a theological use, and it has reference to a state of mind, or heart, or spirit, that is necessary for salvation. A gift from God, given through the Holy Ghost.

Some examples of the general use of the word *hope* are found in Jacob and 3 Nephi. Jacob said that Sherem, the anti-Christ, “had hope to shake me from the faith,” and Giddianhi wrote to Lachoneus, “I hope that you will deliver up your lands and your possessions without the shedding of blood.” Likewise, by gathering into one body and having provisions for seven years, the Nephites “did hope to destroy the robbers from off the face of the land.” These examples speak of a different hope from the second type which one must have in order to be saved. The hope that cometh of faith and maketh an anchor to the soul. It makes those who have it sure and steadfast, always abounding in good works.

Now what does the Book of Mormon say about this saving hope, or the hope that is used in the second sense, the theological sense? Saving hope follows, comes from, and grows out of faith. As Moroni states, “Whoso believeth in God might with surety hope for a better world, yea, even a place at the right hand of God, which hope cometh of faith.” Also, in Ether, a few verses later, “Wherefore, ye may also have hope and be partakers of the gift, if ye will but have faith” (Ether 12:4, 9).

If we accept the fact that hope then follows, is generated by faith, how do we interpret Moroni 7:40-42? “And again, my beloved brethren, I would speak unto you concerning hope. How is it that ye can attain unto faith, save ye shall have hope?” Now a cursory reading of that would lead us to think that in order to have faith you have to have hope, right? That hope would come first. “And what is it that ye shall hope for? Behold I say unto you, ye shall have hope through the atonement of Christ and the power of his resurrection, to be raised unto life eternal, and this because of your faith in him, according to the promise. Wherefore, if a man have faith he must needs have hope: [now notice the next line] for without faith there cannot be any hope.” Now, folks which comes first? Ether and Moroni are telling us that hope comes of faith; now we get this passage.

A careful reading of that passage, I think, can give us an answer. However, a casual reading can lead to some confusion. Does verse 40 say that one must have hope before faith? What then does verse 42 mean, that states that without faith



there cannot be any hope? The intended meaning, I submit, is that if one exercises faith, hope will follow, must follow. Which hope is a sure and natural consequence of faith. The sense of verse 40 would then be, how is it that ye can attain unto faith, save ye shall then have hope? Now this may take a little bit of pondering and thinking, but I think it is consistent with everything that we find in the Book of Mormon and elsewhere: that gospel hope, saving hope, that which is necessary for salvation, comes as a result, or a consequence, of true faith in Christ. And it is a natural consequence and will follow faith.

If one takes such a view, Moroni 7:40-42 is consistent internally and also with other Book of Mormon passages that speak of the sequence relationship of faith and hope. Taking the sequential view that faith precedes hope does not deny that something must precede faith. And what is that? If it is not hope, what is it? Alma called it a "desire to believe" (Alma 32:27). Perhaps this could be thought of as a type of hope, at least relating to the general wishing and wondering. But it is not the saving hope that I believe Mormon and Moroni refer to in Moroni 7. Saving hope follows faith.

In addition to teaching that saving hope comes as a result of faith, the Book of Mormon supports the idea that saving hope is by definition is a desire or a longing, a hungering and thirsting after righteousness, coupled with an expectation of eventual fulfillment. Note how the Book of Mormon relates the state of the heart with spiritual rebirth, the longings and desires of the heart.

The prophet Ether explained that hope "maketh an anchor to the souls of men which would make them sure and steadfast, always abounding in good works, being led to glorify God" (Ether 12:4). And the Lamanite prophet Samuel taught that those who experience a change of heart are "firm and steadfast in the faith" (Helaman 15:8). If hope makes men steadfast and those who have experienced a change of heart are steadfast, can we not link hope with a change of heart? It is interesting to examine the Book of Mormon references to the convert's change of heart, in relation to the idea that hope consists of a desire for righteousness.

After hearing King Benjamin's great address his people testified, "We believe all the words which thou has spoken unto us; and also we know of their surety and truth, because of the spirit of the Lord Omnipotent, which has wrought a mighty change in us, or in our hearts, that we have no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually" (Mosiah 5:2). We learn from Mosiah 4 and 5 that this change of heart came as a result of their being spiritually begotten, including having their sins remitted, which brought them peace of conscience and great joy. The same testimony comes from King Lamoni and his people at their conversion: "And they did all declare unto the people the selfsame thing—that their hearts had been changed; that they had no more disposition to do evil" (Alma 19:33).

It is clear that such a change is required of all who are to inherit the Kingdom of God, for the voice of the Lord said to Alma at the time of his spiritual awakening,

"Marvel not that all mankind, yea, men and women, all nations, kindreds, tongues and people, must be born again; yea, born of God, changed from their carnal and fallen state to a state of righteousness, being redeemed of God, becoming his sons and daughters." Before his conversion Alma desired to destroy the Church of God. After his conversion he longed to build up the Church and to be with God and angels. It all seems to fit. Faith, including prayer, and repentance, and obedience, prepares a person to receive a spiritual rebirth, which brings a remission of sin and changes the heart so that it desires righteousness. This desire for righteousness is a primary ingredient of hope.

But there is more to hope than longing for righteousness. The Holy Ghost, who plays a major role in bringing about that desire, remains to fill the converted soul with staying power, a spiritual confidence, an assurance that his longings will be realized. Such confidence was reflected in King Benjamin's people when they said, "We . . . have great views of that which is to come; and were it expedient, we could prophesy of all things" (Mosiah 5:3). Similarly, Alma testified, "I know that he will raise me up at the last day, to dwell with him in glory . . . and I will praise him forever" (Alma 36:28).

Heaven would not be heaven if we did not want to be there, if our hearts and our very natures were not in complete harmony with the righteousness that is there. Imagine the incongruity of someone struggling, white knuckle-like, to keep what he regards as burdensome commandments in order to be saved in the Kingdom of God, and once there, to feel similarly burdened by the necessity of living those same principles for eternity. Just think about that for a minute. If the commandments are burdensome, then we say why do you keep them? I want to go to the Celestial Kingdom and keep them forever. Something has got to happen here, so that we long for righteousness and we're comfortable with gospel principles. I submit that is what hope is. Indeed, ye can in no wise be saved in the kingdom of God if ye have no hope.

Now to charity. Though spoken of explicitly the fewest number of times in the Book of Mormon, charity is defined and explained in the book more directly and clearly than either faith or hope. Nephi said simply, "Charity is love" (2 Nephi 26:30). Mormon, as quoted by Moroni, expanded this definition to, "Charity is the pure love of Christ" (Moroni 7:47). The verses that speak of charity indicate that if we are to be saved in the Kingdom of God we must experience charity in two dimensions, which I will call vertical and horizontal.

Vertical charity refers to the love Christ has for us, which love motivated the atonement. Moroni explained, "And again, I remember that thou hast said that thou hast loved the world, even unto the laying down of thy life for the world, that thou mightest take it again to prepare a place for the children of men. And now I know that this love which thou hast had for the children of men is charity; wherefore, except men shall have charity they cannot inherit that place which thou hast prepared in the mansions of thy Father" (Ether 12:33). Now, that is speaking of

Christ's love or charity for us. Without that there is no salvation. It is that love that motivated the atonement.

Horizontal charity, on the other hand, refers to the love that we must have for others. Nephi spoke of this dimension when he said, "I have charity for the Jew, . . . I also have charity for the gentiles." Mormon explained both dimensions of charity in these words, which you will recognize as very similar to Paul's description in his letter to the Corinthians, "Charity suffereth long and is kind; charity envieth not, . . . [and] is not puffed up, . . . seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, [I smile when I read that, because it does not mean that you don't get provoked, it just means that you don't get provoked easily. That can be a fine line; I'm grateful that's there!] thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity never faileth" (1 Corinthians 13:4-7).

When our hearts are filled with charity we love as Christ loved. His goals become our goals, his work becomes our work, and ultimately his glory becomes our glory, for we will become joint heirs with Christ "of all that my Father hath." With this thought in mind, and thinking of charity in relationship to hope, it might be said that hope is a hungering and thirsting after righteousness for one's self, and charity is essentially a hungering and thirsting after righteousness for others.

Not surprisingly, therefore, we find that Lehi, after tasting the fruit of the Tree of Life, immediately began to be desirous that his family should partake of it also, and that Nephi wrote, "I pray continually for [my people] by day and mine eyes water my pillow by night because of them" (2 Nephi 33:3). Enos, after experiencing the joy of hearing his own sins were remitted, "poured out his whole soul unto God" for the welfare of his friends, the Nephites. And when he had obtained a promise of blessings for them, he then prayed with many long strugglings for his enemies, the Lamanites. Following their conversion, Alma and the four sons of Mosiah "were desirous that salvation should be declared to every creature, for they could not bear that any human soul should perish, yea, even the very thoughts that any soul should endure endless torment did cause them to quake and tremble."

This same commitment to serve and bless others is shown by all the prophet-leaders of the Book of Mormon, and do you think of how strong that commitment was in Alma and those sons of Mosiah? They gave up the kingship, if you will, they gave up the comforts of Zarahemla, and went among their enemies for not two years or eighteen months, but for how many years? Fourteen! And suffered all kinds of interesting things. It was because of this great love they had, this hungering and thirsting, that others might enjoy the same blessings that had come to them, and for which their hearts longed.

Charity, like faith and hope before it, is bestowed by God upon those who prepare themselves to receive it. Mormon instructed members of the Church in his day, whom he described as "the peaceable followers of Christ . . . that have obtained



a sufficient hope by which ye can enter into the rest of the Lord," to "pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with his love, which he hath bestowed upon all who are true followers of his Son, Jesus Christ" (Moroni 7:3, 48). Mormon's plea, and his earlier explanation of the characteristics of charity, show that charity is an outgrowth of faith and hope and encompasses them both.

How appropriate it is, then, to speak of these three principles in the order given. Faith leads to hope and that develops into charity, charity being the greatest. Line upon line! It is noteworthy that there is a gradual unfolding in faith, hope, and charity. Alma instructed Zeezrom that men are given lesser or greater portions of the word, and they enlarge or diminish that portion according to the heed and diligence which they give unto it. Those who obey will receive more and more until they know the mysteries of God in full, and those who harden their hearts receive less and less until they know nothing of his mysteries. In this light the Book of Mormon phrases such as, *particle of faith*, or, *much faith*, or, *strong faith*, or, *exceeding faith*, and, *exceedingly great faith*, are clearer and more meaningful. Faith has levels.

Similarly, when we receive the baptism of fire that remits our sin and brings hope, we do not suddenly vault into full spiritual maturity. In Peter's words, we are newborn babes in need of milk, that we may grow thereby (cf. 1 Peter 2:2). In this connection it is intriguing to consider the implication of the Savior's statement that certain Lamanites, "because of their faith in me at the time of their conversion, were baptized with fire and with the Holy Ghost, and they knew it not" (3 Nephi 9:20). That is a puzzling statement. How could you go through that experience and not know it? Undoubtedly, they knew something had happened for they were "encircled about; yea, they were as if the midst of a flaming fire, . . . and they could speak forth marvelous words" (Helaman 5:44-45), but their understanding of what they were experiencing may have come later. The ability to explain what had happened, maybe, did not come at that moment, but that something had happened seemed obvious.

There is no guarantee that the change of heart involved here, which brings hope, will remain forever. Alma asks, "And now behold, I say unto you, my brethren, if ye have experienced a change of heart, and if ye have felt to sing the song of redeeming love, I would ask, can ye feel so now?" (Alma 5:26). We can lose the desire for righteousness. That desire comes from the companionship of the Holy Ghost, and when we become disobedient, or even casual, about the gospel, we will feel less and less of his power and, therefore, we will have less and less of a desire or longing for righteousness. On the other hand, awareness and obedience bring us more and more of the power of the Spirit, intensifying our desire for righteousness. Hence, we read of *sufficient hope*, *firm hope*, *a more excellent hope*, and *a perfect brightness of hope*.

I have not found specific evidence in the Book of Mormon that speaks of portions or levels of charity, however. As it is clear that there are levels of faith and

hope, I haven't been able to find any references that clearly speak of levels of charity. Obviously, vertical charity, Christ's love for us, is full, and perfect, and pure, and consistent. However, I suspect that horizontal charity, or our love for each other, functions on a continuum, as do faith and hope, and we have levels of that.

Faith, hope, and charity must be centered in Christ. The Savior said, "I will show unto them that faith, hope, and charity bringeth unto me—the fountain of all righteousness." The first principle of the gospel is not just faith, it is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Similarly, we must obtain not just hope, but a hope in Christ, a hope of his glory, and we should hope for our deliverance in him. Likewise, by simple definition, charity is not just love, it is the pure love of Christ.

To say that true faith, hope, and charity must be centered in Christ may seem to be an unnecessary statement of the obvious; however, as with all other gospel principles, faith, hope, and charity have their counterfeits. President Kimball has said, "Whatever thing a man sets his heart and trust in most is his God. And if his God doesn't also happen to be the true and living God of Israel, that man is laboring in idolatry. There are many causes in the world to which men give their allegiance. They trust or have faith in their chosen cause. They long for, hope for, the purposes of that cause to be fulfilled, and eagerly desire that others share their commitments and rewards, a form of charity. Many of these causes are commendable, but all are ultimately inadequate to provide permanent solutions to the problems in this world, and the salvation in the world to come. As the angel instructed King Benjamin, there shall be no other name given, nor any other way, nor means, whereby salvation can come unto the children of men, only in and through the name of Christ, the Lord Omnipotent."

Now think for a moment of some of the causes that people in this world turn to, which can become, in a sense, counterfeit faith, hope, and charity. I will site an example, a generalized example, and you can probably think of many others. We have those, both out of the Church and in the Church, whose faith, hope, and charity seem not to be centered so much in Christ as they are in a chosen field, or a chosen profession.

I'll take one of the occupational hazards that I live with—academia. Are there those whose faith, hope, and charity are centered there rather than in Christ? Who have great confidence and trust in a field of study, or in academia in general, and who have a hungering and a thirsting, if you will, after more knowledge and more information? They enjoy learning, they enjoy all of this, and they even have a form of charity, and are what we call in secular terms, very altruistic in sharing what they know with others, and trying to get others to learn. There is nothing wrong with all of that, unless it becomes a counterfeit, or substitute, for faith, hope, and charity that is centered in Christ.

Now you think of various causes, or disciplines, or focuses in people's lives and they have a substitute or a counterfeit kind of experience with faith, hope, and

charity that we have in the gospel of Jesus Christ. And that counterfeit faith, hope, and charity acts much the same way as motivational factors in a person's life. Now that is something that we could give some thought to.

May we all seek more diligently to come unto the Savior, the Lord Omnipotent, by understanding and applying these three great gospel principles of faith, hope, and charity, is my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

Now folks we have about ten minutes of time left and I would be willing to entertain comments, suggestions, questions about the topic that we are dealing with.

*Student comment:* As I listened to your comments on hope the thought occurred to me that hope, which is Christ-centered, is the hope for events which are righteous and beneficial to one's self. Hope based on unrighteous principles is the opposite. Hope comes in two flavors, as it were.

*Dahl:* It does. Interestingly we talk a lot about the word *hope*. What is the opposite of hope? Despair. What does the Book of Mormon say produces despair? Iniquity. The two flavors. Hope which is the saving hope, which is needed for salvation, comes through righteousness, through faith. Despair, which is its opposite, comes because of iniquity. I think that is something we shouldn't pass over. There are laws that pertain to these things. I am going to turn in a minute, since we have some time, to that scripture we are all familiar with, that has to do with this: "Wickedness never was happiness." Now notice, I am reading now from Moroni 10, "If ye have no hope ye must needs be in despair. And despair cometh because of iniquity" (Moroni 10:22). Now you just flip that coin; then the hope comes because of righteousness, of exercising faith in Christ, keeping the commandments, repentance, praying. It is as clear as a bell.

I want to go back to Alma, to that statement that we are all familiar with about "wickedness never was happiness" and share with you a comment given by Elder L. Tom Perry at BYU here in November, 1989. After quoting this verse, which says, "Do not suppose, because it has been spoken concerning restoration, that ye shall be restored from sin to happiness. Behold, I say unto you, wickedness never was happiness." Elder Perry said, "That is an absolute formula and your chances of reversing that are zero." That is just another way of saying the same thing. There are laws, eternal laws, in place long before we showed up on this world; in fact, we are told in the Doctrine and Covenants that they were in place, at least, before the foundations of this world upon which all blessings are predicated and when we obtain any blessing from God it is by obedience to that eternal, etc., etc. There are laws pertaining to happiness.

*Student comment:* Would you provide additional comments as to why there may not be levels of charity?

*Dahl:* I wish I could. I have puzzled over that. Like I say, I believe the vertical

charity, at least, Christ's love for us, is complete and total. My own experience tells me that the horizontal charity, though it is not spoken of directly—I think you could find, maybe, illustrations in the Book of Mormon. Though it is not spoken of directly as being at different levels—but my own experience tells me that I experience different levels of charity, at different times and with different people. Is that not your experience? It is like Elder J. Golden Kimball said, "I love the brethren, I love all the brethren, but I love some of them a damn site more than the rest." (Maybe that shouldn't have been on film, but considering the source it is probably all right!) I experience different levels of love for and concern for various people. I suspect that that is true in horizontal charity but not in vertical. But I can't provide any source material or much commentary. I haven't searched for examples of different levels but I am confident they could be found.

*Student Comment:* These attributes of charity that you described seem to be a daily, on-going, everyday experience with people in thinking.

*Dahl:* Consistency is the key word and a difficult one, but ultimately I submit to you that if we move through the faith, hope, and charity pattern I'm not so sure it is always static. I think we are kind of one step forward, one step back in our struggles to become consistent in the application of those. But, I think that once you have tasted, by the power of the Holy Ghost, genuine, Christ-like love for someone, you can never, thereafter, rest without it. There is always that divine discontent, if you will, where we are seeking for that fulfillment.

When you read experiences of those that have been in the presence of the Savior, a common element is, "I would give all that I have if I could just feel that again." That dimension of joy that comes from the Holy Ghost, the joy of the gospel, the joy of its potential, the joy of its reality—there is just nothing that compares to it. And that is why the happiest people I know are those who understand and live the gospel. The unhappiest people I know are those who understand but do not live the gospel. And the most frustrated people I know are those who understand but are trying to put one foot in both worlds, to bear the burden of the world and the gospel.

Thank you, folks, I appreciate your being here. The gospel is true. Faith, hope, and charity are true and real and we can experience them, if we will do those things that we are instructed to do. To that I bear witness to in Jesus' name.