

Come Follow Me Podcast
Elo Viz production
Week 12
2 Nephi 31-33

Elder Faust shared this story in General Conference back in 2001:
“Some years ago Albert Peters told of the experience he and his companion had of a man being born again. One day they went to the hut of Atiati in the village of Sasina in Samoa. There they found an unshaven, unkempt, misshapen man lying on a bed. He asked them to come in and introduce themselves. He was pleased to know they were missionaries and wanted to hear their message. They presented the first discussion, bore witness to him, and then left. As they walked away, they discussed Atiati’s condition; he had had polio 22 years before that had left him without the use of his arms or legs, so how could he ever be baptized, being so completely disabled?

When they visited their new friend the next day, they were unprepared for the change in Atiati. He was bright and clean-shaven; even his bedding had been changed. “Today,” he said, “I begin to live again, because yesterday my prayers were answered and you [came] to me. ... I have waited for more than twenty years for someone to come and tell me that they have the true gospel of Christ.”

For several weeks the two missionaries taught this sincere, intelligent man the principles of the gospel, and he received a strong witness of the truth and the need for baptism. He asked them to fast with him so that he would have the strength to go down into the water and be baptized. The nearest baptismal font was eight miles away. So they carried him to their car, drove him to the chapel, and set him on a bench. Their district leader opened the service by bearing a strong testimony about the sacred ordinance of baptism. Then Elder Peters and his companion picked up Atiati and carried him to the font. As they did so, Atiati said, “Please, put me down.” They hesitated, and he said again, “Put me down.”

As they stood in some confusion, Atiati smiled and exclaimed: “This is the most important event in my life. I know without a doubt in my mind that this is the only way to eternal salvation. *I will not be carried to my salvation!*” So they lowered Atiati to the ground. After a huge effort, he managed to pull himself up. The man who had lain 20 years without moving was now standing. Slowly, one shaky step at a time, Atiati went down the steps and into the water, where the astonished missionary took

him by the hand and baptized him. He then asked to be carried from the font to the chapel, where he was confirmed a member of the Church.

Atiati continued to progress so that he gained the ability to walk only by a cane. He told Elder Peters that he knew that he would be able to walk on the morning of his baptism. He said, “Since faith can move a stubborn mountain, I had no doubt in my mind that it would mend these limbs of mine.” I believe we can say that Atiati was truly born again!”

<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/bofm/2-ne/31?lang=eng>

A lot of what we are going to study this week is about baptism both by water and fire. These are Nephi's final words and you can feel this conviction and testimony to his people about the importance of these sacred ordinances. I say “ordinances” because Joseph Smith taught: “You might as well baptize a bag of sand as a man, if not done in view of the remission of sins and getting of the Holy Ghost. Baptism by water is but half a baptism, and is good for nothing without the other half—that is, the baptism of the Holy Ghost.”

Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (1976), 314.

And even though most of us have been baptized and received the gift of the Holy Ghost this does not mean that we are saved or fulfilled our responsibility to be truly “Born again”.

In fact most don't understand what the Gift of the Holy Ghost that we receive after baptism by water really is. Please allow me to show you something very important in that sacred blessing:

After the laying on of hands and stating the persons name, the authorized priesthood holder when conferring the Gift of the Holy Ghost states that in the name of Jesus Christ and having authority from Him this individual is confirmed a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter day saints. And then they say these four very important words: “Receive the Holy Ghost”. At this point most believe that this is a command for the Holy Ghost to enter into the one being blessed and to remain with them for the rest of their lives. Here is the problem: No mortal man has ever or will ever have the authority to command God to do anything. When someone receives the Holy Ghost by this commission to receive the Holy Ghost it is an act of command to the individual and not to God.

What I mean by that is that during that blessing when the priesthood holder says the words “Receive the Holy Ghost” He is not talking to God but to the individual being blessed, that they are to open their hearts and receive the Holy Ghost into themselves and to stay worthy of his constant companionship.

Elder Bednar said it this way:

“The simplicity of this ordinance may cause us to overlook its significance. These four words—“Receive the Holy Ghost”—are not a passive pronouncement; rather, they constitute a priesthood injunction—an authoritative admonition to act and not simply to be acted upon (see [2 Nephi 2:26](#)). The Holy Ghost does not become operative in our lives merely because hands are placed upon our heads and those four important words are spoken. As we receive this ordinance, each of us accepts a sacred and ongoing responsibility to desire, to seek, to work, and to so live that we indeed “receive the Holy Ghost” and its attendant spiritual gifts.”

<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2010/10/receive-the-holy-ghost?lang=eng>

And it is important to understand that this is not the baptism by fire referred to in the scriptures. In fact the order of events is commonly mis-understood in the church, but Nephi gives us a clear explanation when he says:

“Wherefore, my beloved brethren, I know that if ye shall [follow](#) the Son, with full purpose of heart, acting no [hypocrisy](#) and no deception before God, but with real [intent](#), repenting of your sins, witnessing unto the Father that ye are [willing](#) to take upon you the [name](#) of Christ, by [baptism](#)—yea, by following your Lord and your Savior down into the water, according to his word, behold, then shall ye receive the Holy Ghost; yea, then cometh the [baptism of fire](#) and of the Holy Ghost; and then can ye speak with the [tongue](#) of angels, and shout praises unto the Holy One of Israel.”
(2 Nephi 31:13)

If you look at the transcript you can see all the “Thens” that are underlined, which emphasized the point that there is an order to these things:

First- We have to be willing to follow the Son with full purpose of heart, repenting, and be willing to take upon us His name.

Then: We follow Jesus down into the waters of baptism.

Then: We receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Then: Cometh the baptism of Fire

Then: We can speak with the tongue of angels.

In verse seventeen we see this same pattern as Nephi describes the process of a remission of sins. Listen carefully because it may be different from what you were taught in primary:

“Wherefore, do the things which I have told you I have seen that your Lord and your Redeemer should do; for, for this cause have they been shown unto me, that ye might know the gate by which ye should enter. For the gate by which ye should enter is

repentance and [baptism](#) by water; and then cometh a [remission](#) of your sins by fire and by the Holy Ghost. And then are ye in this [strait](#) and narrow [path](#) which leads to eternal life;" (2 Nephi 31:17-18)

Interesting isn't it? Most of our life we were taught that a remission of sins comes after baptized by immersion in the water. But here Nephi says that the remission of sins comes after the baptism by fire.

This could cause some confusion. Please let me try and explain this so we might more fully understand:

Baptism by immersion in the waters of baptism is the ordinance. We often refer to it as the baptismal covenant, This is the ordinance in which we covenant with God to take upon us His name and to always remember Him. And He in return promises us that He will send His Spirit, which is the Holy Ghost to be with us.

The receiving of the Holy Ghost is also an ordinance that confirms us a member of God's church and invites us to be worthy of His spirit now that we have made this covenant.

The baptism of fire is separate from these two. The best way I can think to describe this is that it is not an ordinance but a confirmation of the ordinance. What I mean by that is: the baptism of fire is not a one time event. It is something that we can experience all the time. Reflect on a moment when you know you felt the Spirit. What did it feel like? This feeling is different from guidance of the Spirit. We have times in our lives when we receive information or direction that we are supposed to do or say something. And there are other moments when we just feel the rush of the Spirit that confirms God's love for us. Does that make sense? Two completely different ways that we feel the Holy Ghost. One is direction and the other is confirmation. I often feel the rush or the confirmation spirit when I am listening to music. What I call my "Jesus Music" or when I am listening to a good Jeffery R Holland talk. It is this feeling that I would describe as a tingling that goes through my whole body. Some have described it as goose bumps. The scriptures often refer to it as a burning or a fire. I believe that we all experience it in slightly different ways. And it is something that we need to grow into recognizing. This feeling, or this experience is the baptism of fire. And there is a cleaning, or a washing that takes place during these moments, that is why it is important that we try and have them as often as possible. When we feel the baptism of fire, or the rush of the spirit, or the burning in our bosom, we are being purified by the Holy Ghost. Remember that God can not dwell in unholy temples. So if you are feeling the spirit then you are in that moment clean and forgiven. This does not mean we still don't have repenting to do, but it does mean that our hearts are turning to God and we are heading in the right direction.

Here are some scriptures that will expound on this doctrine:

Matthew 3:11 - "I [meaning John] I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and *with fire*:"

In 3rd Nephi 9:20 Jesus was in the Americas after His resurrection and he told the people: "And ye shall offer for a sacrifice unto me a broken heart and a contrite spirit. And whoso cometh unto me with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, him will I baptize with fire and with the Holy Ghost, even as the 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."

This happens too often I believe. When we have this feeling and we brush it off as something other than that sacred communion with God, where He reaches through His eternal realm, down through the eons of time and touches your heart in that moment of sacredness. This is His way of telling you... My Child, I see you, I know what you're going through, I am aware of your life, the good times and the bad. I'm here for you, and I love you.

"What greater witness can you have then from God?" (D&C 6:23)

I hope that this week, that whatever it is you do to bring that rush of the spirit into your life that you will find those moments to feel His love and bask in the warmth of His love.

In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, Amen.