

Ether 12 — My Grace Is Sufficient — Moroni on Faith, and the Weak Things Made Strong

Ether 12: in the days of Coriantumr, the prophet Ether cries repentance unceasingly; and from his record Moroni breaks into the most sustained meditation on faith in the Book of Mormon. He defines faith as things which are hoped for and not seen, teaches that ye receive no witness until after the trial of your faith, and shows that every miracle in the record — Alma and Amulek's prison, the conversion of the Lamanites, the brother of Jared at the veil — came by faith. Then Moroni turns personal: he fears the Gentiles will mock the weakness of his writing, and the Lord answers with the chapter's great promise — my grace is sufficient... I give unto men weakness that they may be humble... if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong. The chapter closes with Moroni's first farewell and his testimony that he has seen Jesus face to face. It is the cornerstone of the Book of Mormon's doctrine of faith, hope, and charity, and of grace sufficient for the weak.

Ether 12 is one of the great doctrinal cornerstones of the Book of Mormon — the fullest meditation on faith in the entire record, and one of the most personal and moving chapters Moroni ever wrote. It begins with the prophet Ether crying repentance in the days of Coriantumr, *for he could not be restrained because of the Spirit of the Lord which was in him* (v. 2), preaching that *by faith all things are fulfilled* (v. 3). But almost immediately Moroni steps in — *now, I, Moroni, would speak somewhat concerning these things* (v. 6) — and the chapter becomes his own sermon on faith, the companion to Alma 32 and the Book of Mormon's nearest parallel to Hebrews 11. Moroni defines faith, surveys its mighty works across the whole record, and then turns startlingly personal: he confesses his fear that the Gentiles will *mock the weakness of his writing*, and the Lord answers with the chapter's immortal promise — *my grace is sufficient... I give unto men weakness that they may be humble... then will I make weak things become strong*. The chapter moves from a doctrine of faith to a doctrine of grace, from the miracles of the mighty to the comfort of the weak, and ends with Moroni's first farewell and his testimony that he has *seen Jesus... face to face*.

Hebrew Word Studies

emunah / *chesed-rav* / *chazaq* (אֱמוּנָה / חֶסֶד / חֲזָקָה) — **faith, faithfulness, steadiness, firmness / grace, lovingkindness, abundant mercy / to be strong, to strengthen, to make firm vv. 6–22, 26–27, 27, 37**. Three Hebrew words anchor the chapter. *Emunah* — faith — is the chapter's subject, and as in Alma 32 it carries far more than mental assent. From *aman* (to be firm, reliable — the root of *amen*), *emunah* is steadiness, faithfulness, the firm trust that holds toward the unseen. Moroni's definition — *things which are hoped for and not seen* (v. 6) — recovers exactly this: *emunah* is not seeing but the steady reaching toward what is true and unseen, and the law that *ye receive no witness until after the trial of your faith* is the law of *emunah* — the firm trust is proved by trial before it is confirmed by sight. *Chesed* — grace, lovingkindness — stands behind *my grace is sufficient* (vv. 26–27). *Chesed* is the great covenant word for God's steadfast, loyal love, the mercy that endures and supplies; and the Lord's promise that his *chesed* is *sufficient* (enough, complete) for the humble is the Hebrew Bible's *rav chesed* (abundant in lovingkindness, Ex. 34:6) applied to the weak — grace that does not merely forgive but transforms, making *weak things become strong*. *Chazaq* — to be strong, to strengthen — is behind *make weak things become strong* (v. 27) and *thou shalt be made strong* (v. 37). *Chazaq* is the word of God's command to Joshua, *be strong (chazaq) and of a good courage* (Josh. 1:6), and of the strengthening of weak hands and feeble knees (Isa. 35:3–4). The chapter's promise is that the Lord himself supplies the *chazaq* — the strength is not summoned from within the weak self but given by grace to the humble, so that the weak thing is *made* strong (the verb is causative: God does the strengthening). The chapter's three words trace the whole doctrine: *emunah* (faith) brings the weak to Christ, where his *chesed* (grace) supplies the *chazaq* (strength) that the weak could never produce alone — weakness humbled by faith, met by grace, made strong.

From the Chapter's Architecture

``cross-references Ex. 34:6 (the Lord abundant in goodness — *rav chesed, the grace* of vv. 26–27); Josh. 1:6–9 (be strong / *chazaq* — the strengthening of vv. 27, 37); Ps. 27:14 (wait on the Lord... he shall strengthen thine heart — v. 27); Isa. 35:3–4 (strengthen ye the weak hands... say to them that are of a fearful heart, *Be strong* — the weak made strong, v. 27); Isa. 40:29–31 (he giveth power to the faint... they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength — vv. 27, 37); Hab. 2:3–4 (the just shall live by his faith / *emunah*; the vision is for an appointed time, wait for it — the faith-then-witness of v. 6); Matt. 17:20 (faith as a grain of mustard seed removes mountains — the brother of Jared and mountain Zerin, v. 30); Mk. 9:23 (all things are possible to him that believeth — vv. 3–4); Jn. 20:29 (blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed — dispute not because ye see not, v. 6); 1 Cor. 1:27 (God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty — vv. 27, 37); 1 Cor. 13:13 (faith, hope, charity — the triad of v. 28); 2 Cor. 12:9–10 (my grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness... when I am weak, then am I strong — the verbatim parallel to vv. 26–27); Heb. 11:1–40 (faith defined as the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen, and the catalogue of the heroes of faith — the master parallel to vv. 6–22); Heb. 12:1 (so great a cloud of witnesses — the roll of faith, vv. 13–18); James 2:5 (God chose the poor rich in faith — vv. 27–28); Alma 32:21 (faith is not... a perfect knowledge... ye hope for things which are not seen, which are true — the companion definition to v. 6); Alma 14:26–28 (the prison of Alma and Amulek rent — the faith of v. 13); Hel. 5:43–49 (Nephi and Lehi and the change upon the Lamanites, baptized with fire — the faith of v. 14); Alma 17–26 (Ammon and his brethren's mighty miracle — the faith of v. 15); 3 Ne. 28:1–12 (the three disciples who should not taste death — the faith of v. 17); Ether 3:6–20 (the brother of Jared at the veil — the supreme faith of vv. 19–21); Moro. 7:33–48 (Mormon's expansion of faith, hope, and charity — the triad of v. 28); Moro. 10:4–5, 32–33 (faith, the witness after the trial, and being perfected in Christ — vv. 6, 27); D&C 88:67 (the body filled with light comprehends all things — the made-strong of v. 37); D&C 1:28 (inasmuch as they were humble they might be made strong — verbatim doctrine of v. 27). ``