

Moroni 9 — May Christ Lift Thee Up — Mormon's Last Letter, and a Father's Charge to Endure

Moroni 9: Mormon's last preserved letter to his son Moroni, written near the end, amid the final horrors of the Nephite war. Mormon writes of a people past feeling, without order and without mercy, their atrocities exceeding even the Lamanites', delighting in everything save that which is good. He confesses he can no longer enforce his commands, fears the Spirit has ceased striving, and cannot even recommend his people to God. Yet the letter is not finally about the darkness. It is a father's charge to his son to keep laboring despite the hardness, never to let the horror weigh him down unto death, but to let Christ lift him up — to keep the sufferings of Christ, his mercy, and the hope of eternal life in mind forever. It is the most personal and tender of Mormon's writings, a father in a dying world telling his son how to survive it with his soul intact: be faithful in Christ, and let Christ lift thee up.

Moroni 9 is Mormon's last letter to his son, and it is the darkest and most tender chapter near the close of the Book of Mormon. Written amid the final collapse of the Nephites, it describes a people who have descended past every limit — *without order and without mercy* (v. 18), *past feeling* (v. 20), committing atrocities that *exceed* even the Lamanites' (v. 20), *delight[ing] in everything save that which is good* (v. 19). Mormon does not spare the horror, though he handles it with the restraint of a man who has seen too much: he names the depravity without lingering, and then deliberately turns away — *now, my son, I dwell no longer upon this horrible scene* (v. 20). For the letter is not finally about the darkness. It is a father's charge to his son to survive the darkness with his soul whole. Against a backdrop of unspeakable evil, Mormon tells Moroni how to endure: keep laboring even when it seems hopeless, do not let the horror crush you unto death, and *may Christ lift thee up* (v. 25). It is the most personal of Mormon's writings — a dying father in a dying world, teaching his son how to keep his faith and his heart in the midst of hell.

Hebrew Word Studies

'avodah / ein-margoa / nasa (עָבַד / — / אָשַׁן) — **labor, work, service (especially sacred service) / (no rest) past feeling, without feeling / to lift up, to bear, to carry** v. 6, v. 20, v. 25. Three Hebrew ideas frame the letter. 'Avodah — labor, work, service — is the charge of v. 6: *let us labor diligently... we have a labor to perform*. 'Avodah is the word for both ordinary work and sacred service (the temple worship is 'avodah); to labor for God, even in a lost cause, is 'avodah, holy service, and Mormon insists the 'avodah must continue *notwithstanding their hardness*, for its purpose is not the people's salvation but the laborer's own faithfulness — *that we may... rest our souls in the kingdom of God*. The opposite of 'avodah-rest is the condition of the people, *past feeling* (v. 20) — a phrase for which Hebrew would reach toward the seared, hardened heart that no longer perceives. To be *past feeling* is to have lost the conscience, the inner sense of right and wrong gone numb; it is the deepest corruption, the heart so hardened it cannot even register its own evil. Nasa — to lift up, to bear, to carry — is the letter's saving word: *may Christ lift thee up* (v. 25). Nasa is the verb of the Servant who *hath borne (nasa) our griefs* (Isa. 53:4), the lifting and bearing of burdens. Against the danger that the horror would *weigh thee down unto death*, Mormon prays that Christ would *nasa* — lift, bear up — his son; the same Christ who *nasa*-bore our griefs lifts the soul weighed down by the world's evil. The letter's three words hold its whole counsel: keep up the 'avodah (labor) though the people are *past feeling* (numb), and let Christ *nasa* (lift) you up rather than be crushed — labor, against numbness, lifted by Christ.

From the Chapter's Architecture

``cross-references Gen. 6:5–6, 11–12 (the earth filled with violence, every imagination evil — the depravity of vv. 18–20); Isa. 53:4 (he hath borne our griefs — the Christ who lifts up, v. 25); Ps. 3:3 (thou, O Lord... the lifter up of mine head — the lifting of v. 25); Ps. 27:13–14 (I had fainted, unless I had believed... wait on the Lord — against being weighed down unto death, v. 25); Ps. 55:22 (cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee — Christ bearing the weight, v. 25); Eph. 4:18–19 (the Gentiles past feeling... given... over unto lasciviousness — verbatim image of v. 20); 1 Tim. 4:2 (consciences seared with a hot iron — the past feeling of v. 20); Rom. 1:28–31 (God gave them over to a reprobate mind, without natural affection... implacable, unmerciful — without order and without mercy, v. 18); Gal. 6:9 (let us not be weary in well doing — the diligent labor of v. 6); 2 Cor. 4:8–9, 16–18 (we are troubled on every side, yet not distressed... we faint not... look... at the things which are not seen — the soul not weighed down, lifted by the eternal, v. 25); Heb. 12:3 (consider him... lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds — keeping Christ in mind against despair, v. 25); 1 Pet. 5:7 (casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you — Christ lifting up, v. 25); Mosiah 24:14–15 (the Lord makes burdens light, lifting the oppressed — the lift of v. 25); Mormon 5:1–2 (Mormon laboring without hope — the diligent labor despite hardness, v. 6); Mormon 2:13–14 (the sorrowing of the damned, the people who curse God — the people past feeling, v. 20); Ether 15:19 (the Spirit ceased striving, Satan in full power — the condition Mormon fears, v. 4); Moro. 7:47–48 (the pure love of Christ, prayed for to fill the soul — the Christ who lifts, v. 25); Moro. 8:27–30 (Mormon's earlier word of the pride and doom of the Nephites — continued at vv. 3, 22); D&C 121:7–8 (my son, peace be unto thy soul; thine adversity... shall be but a small moment... endure it well — the lift of Christ to a weighed-down soul, v. 25); D&C 122:7–9 (all these things shall give thee experience... the Son of Man hath descended below them all. Art thou greater than he? — Christ lifting the soul that has seen the worst, v. 25). ``