

CHAPTER 30

Alma 32–35

Introduction

Alma and his brethren preached the word of God to the Zoramites, who were in a state of apostasy. Because of their trials, a group of Zoramites were prepared to receive the word. Alma and Amulek's teachings concerning individual and institutional worship touch upon some of the most significant aspects of the gospel of Jesus Christ: the power of the Atonement, repentance, faith, the word of God, and the importance of prayer. In addition to their own testimonies, Alma and Amulek drew upon the testimonies and messages of three ancient prophets. The doctrine and principles contained herein constitute a powerful witness of Jesus Christ.

Commentary

Alma 32. Having Faith in the Word of God

- A central point of Alma 32 is that of having faith in the word of God. Alma observed that when the word of God is planted in the fertile soil of the heart, it will begin to swell and grow. Through experimenting upon the word, or nurturing it through obedience, the word of God will bring forth fruit that is most precious, sweet above all that is sweet, white above all that is white, and pure above all that is pure. Neglecting the word of God will result in no such fruit.

How do we nurture our faith in the word so that we may feast upon this fruit? President Joseph Fielding Smith (1876–1972) taught, “If we want to have a living, abiding faith, we must be active in the performance of every duty as members of this Church” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. [1954–56], 2:311).

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin (1917–2008) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles similarly taught: “Faith exists when absolute confidence in that which we cannot see combines with action that is in absolute conformity to the will of our Heavenly Father. Without all three—first, absolute confidence; second, action; and third, absolute conformity—without these three, all we have is a counterfeit, a weak and watered-down faith” (in Conference Report, Oct. 2002, 89; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2002, 83).

Alma 32–34. Tree of Life

- Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles emphasized the importance of studying Alma 32–34 as a coherent whole:

“In [the] brilliant discourse [of Alma 32], Alma moves the reader from a general commentary on faith in the seedlike word of God to a focused discourse on faith in Christ as the Word of God, grown to a fruit-bearing tree, a tree whose fruit is exactly that of Lehi’s earlier perception of Christ’s love. . . . Christ is the bread of life, the living water, the true vine. Christ is the seed, the tree, and the fruit of eternal life.

“But the profound and central Tree of Life imagery in this discourse is lost, or at least greatly diminished, if the reader does not follow it on into the next two chapters of the Book of Mormon” (*Christ and the New Covenant* [1997], 169).



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Alma 32:8–16. “Blessed Are They Who Humble Themselves”

- Alma perceived the readiness of the poor Zoramites to be taught the gospel. Their rejection by the wealthy Zoramites contributed to their state of humility.

Bishop Richard C. Edgley of the Presiding Bishopric taught that humility and submissiveness are virtues allowing one to access gospel blessings: “Many of us live or work in an environment where humility is often misunderstood and considered a weakness. Not many corporations or institutions include humility as a value statement or a desired characteristic of their management. Yet as we learn about the workings of God, the power

of a humble and submissive spirit becomes apparent. In the kingdom of God, greatness begins with humility and submissiveness. These companion virtues are the first critical steps to opening the doors to the blessings of God and the power of the priesthood. It matters not who we are or how lofty our credentials appear. Humility and submissiveness to the Lord, coupled with a grateful heart, are our strength and our hope” (in Conference Report, Oct. 2003, 104; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2003, 98).

- Humility is important enough in the eyes of the Lord that He sometimes helps us be humble. Alma 32:8–16 speaks of two ways to become humble. Verse 13 describes those who are “compelled to be humble”; verses 14 and 16 speak of others who humble themselves voluntarily “because of the word.”
- Elder Carlos E. Asay (1926–99) of the Seventy also described these two groups: “Most of us seem to have the ‘Nephite cycle’ as part of our character. There is a point when we are teachable; our humility enables us to grow and to ride the crest of spirituality. Then there are other times when we begin to feel self-sufficient and puffed up with pride. . . . How much better it would be if we kept in remembrance our God and our religion and broke the cycle by consistent worship and righteous living. How much better it would be if we were humbled by the word of the Lord and strong enough in spirit to remember our God in whatsoever circumstances we find ourselves” (*Family Pecan Trees: Planting a Legacy of Faith at Home* [1992], 193–94).

For more information and a diagram depicting the pride cycle, refer to “The Cycle of Righteousness and Wickedness” in the appendix (p. 414).

- President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994) described ways that we could humble ourselves and avoid the trials that sometimes accompany being compelled to be humble:

“We can choose to humble ourselves by conquering enmity toward our brothers and sisters, esteeming them as ourselves, and lifting them as high or higher than we are (see D&C 38:24; 81:5; 84:106).

“We can choose to humble ourselves by receiving counsel and chastisement (see Jacob 4:10; Helaman

15:3; D&C 63:55; 101:4–5; 108:1; 124:61, 84; 136:31; Proverbs 9:8).

“We can choose to humble ourselves by forgiving those who have offended us (see 3 Nephi 13:11, 14; D&C 64:10).

“We can choose to humble ourselves by rendering selfless service (see Mosiah 2:16–17).

“We can choose to humble ourselves by going on missions and preaching the word that can humble others (see Alma 4:19; 31:5; 48:20).

“We can choose to humble ourselves by getting to the temple more frequently.

“We can choose to humble ourselves by confessing and forsaking our sins and being born of God (see D&C 58:43; Mosiah 27:25–26; Alma 5:7–14, 49).

“We can choose to humble ourselves by loving God, submitting our will to His, and putting Him first in our lives (see 3 Nephi 11:11; 13:33; Moroni 10:32)” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1989, 6; or *Ensign*, May 1989, 6–7).

Alma 32:17–18. Faith Is Not Built upon Signs

- Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles spoke of the dangers accompanying the seeking of signs for faith:

“The showing of a sign can work to the condemnation of those who are brought to knowledge by that means. They miss the opportunity to develop faith, and they subject themselves to a more severe punishment for backsliding than those whose spiritual development is proceeding along the normal pathway of developing faith.

“There are other ‘condemnations’ to those who seek signs without first developing the faith God has required as a prerequisite.

“One condemnation is to be misled. God warned ancient Israel against following prophets who gave signs and wonders and then sought to lead them away to the worship of strange gods. (Deut. 13:1–3.) The Savior taught his apostles that in the last days ‘there shall also arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders, insomuch that, if

possible, they shall deceive the very elect, who are the elect according to the covenant.’ (JST Matt. 24:23; also see Matt. 24:24; Mark 13:22.) . . .

“. . . In our day, God does not use miracles or signs as a way of teaching or convincing the unbeliever. As a result, we should not ask for signs for this purpose, and we should be deeply suspicious of the so-called spiritual evidences of those who do” (*The Lord’s Way* [1991], 85–86).

Alma 32:21. Faith and Hope

- President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, helps us better understand the meaning of faith:

“Faith, to be faith, must center around something that is not known. Faith, to be faith, must go beyond that for which there is confirming evidence. Faith, to be faith, must go into the unknown. Faith, to be faith, must walk to the edge of the light, and then a few steps into the darkness. If everything has to be known, if everything has to be explained, if everything has to be certified, then there is no need for faith. Indeed, there is no room for it. . . .

“There are two kinds of faith. One of them functions ordinarily in the life of every soul. It is the kind of faith born by experience; it gives us certainty that a new day will dawn, that spring will come, that growth will take place. It is the kind of faith that relates us with confidence to that which is scheduled to happen. . . .

“There is another kind of faith, rare indeed. This is the kind of faith that *causes* things to happen. It is the kind of faith that is worthy and prepared and unyielding, and it calls forth things that otherwise would not be. It is the kind of faith that moves people. It is the kind of faith that sometimes moves things. . . . It comes by gradual growth. It is a marvelous, even a transcendent, power, a power as real and as invisible as electricity. Directed and channeled, it has great effect. . . .

“In a world filled with skepticism and doubt, the expression ‘seeing is believing’ promotes the attitude, ‘You show me, and I will believe.’ We want all of the proof and all of the evidence first. It seems hard to take things on faith.

“When will we learn that in spiritual things it works the other way about—that believing is seeing? Spiritual belief precedes spiritual knowledge. When we believe in things that are not seen but are nevertheless true, then we have faith” (“What Is Faith?” in *Faith* [1983], 42–43).

- Elder Neal A. Maxwell (1926–2004) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles described the relationship between hope, faith, and knowledge and explained how they exist in a profound and dynamic relationship: “Faith and hope are constantly interactive and may not always be precisely distinguished or sequenced. Though not perfect knowledge either, hope’s enlivened expectations are ‘with surety’ true (Ether 12:4; see also Romans 8:24; Hebrews 11:1; Alma 32:21)” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1994, 45; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 35).

ALMA 32:21–37

How did Alma differentiate between faith and knowledge?

Alma 32:23. Little Children Receive Inspiration

- The faith of little children often leads to divine insights. Elder Neal A. Maxwell described how their example can serve to instruct those who are older:

“Children often have the ‘thoughts and [the] intents of [their] hearts’ focused on the Master. Though not full of years, such children are full of faith! Too young for formal Church callings, they have been ‘called to serve’ as exemplifiers, doing especially well when blessed with ‘goodly parents’ (1 Ne. 1:1).

“Just as the scriptures assure, ‘little children do have words given unto them many times’ (Alma 32:23). For example, the resurrected Jesus revealed things to the Nephite children, who then taught adults and their parents ‘even greater’ things than Jesus had taught (3 Ne. 26:14).

“It has been a privilege to seal several adopted children to Nan and Dan Barker, now of Arizona. Some time ago Nate, then just over three, said: ‘Mommy, there is another

little girl who is supposed to come to our family. She has dark hair and dark eyes and lives a long way from here.’

“The wise mother asked, ‘How do you know this?’

“‘Jesus told me, upstairs.’

“The mother noted, ‘We don’t have an upstairs,’ but quickly sensed the significance of what had been communicated. After much travail and many prayers, the Barker family were in a sealing room in the Salt Lake Temple in the fall of 1995, where a little girl with dark hair and dark eyes, from Kazakhstan, was sealed to them for time and eternity. Inspired children still tell parents ‘great and marvelous things’ (3 Nephi 26:14)” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1996, 95–96; or *Ensign*, May 1996, 69–70).

Alma 32:27–37. Experimenting on the Word of God Brings Conversion

- Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught that a willingness to perform Alma’s experiment leads to conversion:

“We know that both members and nonmembers are more likely to be thoroughly converted to the gospel of Jesus Christ when they are willing to experiment upon the word (see Alma 32:27). This is an attitude of both mind and heart that includes a desire to know the truth and a willingness to act on that desire. For those investigating the Church, the experiment can be as simple as agreeing to read the Book of Mormon, to pray about it, and to earnestly seek to know if Joseph Smith was the Lord’s prophet.



“True conversion comes through the power of the Spirit. When the Spirit touches the heart, hearts are changed. When individuals, both members and investigators, feel the Spirit working with them, or when they see the evidence of the Lord’s love and mercy in their lives, they are edified and strengthened spiritually, and their faith in Him increases. These

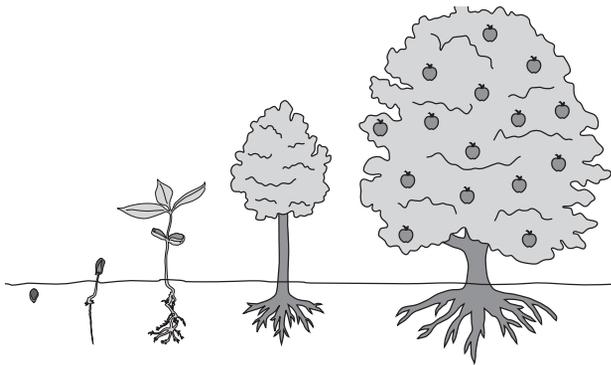
experiences with the Spirit follow naturally when a person is willing to experiment upon the word. This is how we come to *feel* the gospel is true” (in Conference Report, Oct. 2000, 97; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 75).

- At times the swelling motions, the enlarging of souls, the enlightening of understanding, and the beginning of delicious feelings from the Spirit spoken of in Alma 32:28 are difficult to verbally express. However, being hard to express does not discount the truthfulness of the feeling.

President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, shared an experience that describes the difficulty of verbal expression. He bore his testimony to an atheist that there is a God. The man said he could not *know* such a thing. President Packer compared his testimony and knowledge with knowing what salt tastes like (see commentary for Alma 30:15–16 on p. 214; see also “The Candle of the Lord,” *Ensign*, Jan. 1983, 51–52).

Alma 32:28–30. “Give Place, That a Seed May Be Planted” and Begin to Grow

- Increased faith in God’s word is one of the fruits that come from seeds of faith planted in the fertile ground of a soft heart. President James E. Faust (1920–2007) of the First Presidency described the necessary prerequisites for faith and knowledge to grow and mature: “We . . . need to prepare our own seedbeds of faith. To do this we need to plow the soil through daily humble prayer, asking for strength and forgiveness. We need to harrow the soil by overcoming our feelings of pride. We need to prepare the seedbed by keeping the commandments to the best of our ability. We need to be honest with the Lord in the payment of our tithing and our other offerings. We need to be worthy and able to call forth the great powers of the priesthood to bless ourselves, our families, and others for whom we have responsibility. There is no better place for the spiritual seeds of our faith to be nurtured than within the hallowed sanctuaries of our temples and in our homes” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1999, 61; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1999, 48).



- The planted seed of faith does not grow suddenly. President Boyd K. Packer explained the importance of patience while waiting for the seed to grow:

“My experience has been that a testimony does not burst upon us suddenly. Rather, it grows, as Alma said, from a seed of faith. . . .

“Do not be disappointed if you have read and reread and yet have not received a powerful witness. You may be somewhat like the disciples spoken of in the Book of Mormon who were filled with the power of God in great glory ‘and they knew it not’ (3 Nephi 9:20).

“Do the best you can. Think of this verse: ‘See that all these things are done in wisdom and order; for it is not requisite that a man should run faster than he has strength. And again, it is expedient that he should be diligent, that thereby he might win the prize; therefore, all things must be done in order’ (Mosiah 4:27)” (in Conference Report, Apr. 2005, 7; or *Ensign*, May 2005, 8).

Alma 32:28–35. “It Beginneth to Be Delicious to Me”

- Alma used the concept of taste to describe the growth of testimony. The Prophet Joseph Smith (1805–44) also used taste to teach about discernment of true doctrine: “This is *good* doctrine. It *tastes* good. I can *taste* the principles of eternal life, and *so can you*. . . . I know that when I tell you these words of eternal life as they are given to me, you *taste* them, and I know that you believe them. You say honey is sweet, and so do I. I can also *taste* the spirit of eternal life. I know that it is good; and when I tell you of these things which were given me by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, you are

bound to receive them as *sweet*, and rejoice more and more” (*History of the Church*, 6:312; italics added).

- Sister Janette Hales Beckham, former general Young Women president, spoke of the feelings associated with scripture reading: “Learning to discern the teachings of the Spirit is an important part of helping faith become a reality. My daughter Karen shared her experience. She said: ‘When I was just a little girl, I started reading the Book of Mormon for the first time. After many days of reading, I came one night to 1 Nephi 3:7. . . . I didn’t know this was a famous verse, but as I read that verse, I felt strongly impressed. I was impressed that Heavenly Father would help us keep His commandments, but the deep impression was really more of a feeling. I had seen my parents mark verses in their scriptures with red pencils. So I got up and searched through the house until I found a red pencil, and with a great sense of solemnity and importance, I marked that verse in my own Book of Mormon.’ Karen continued: ‘Over the years as I read the scriptures, that experience was repeated time and time again—reading a verse and feeling deeply impressed. In time I came to recognize that feeling as the Holy Ghost’” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1997, 104; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1997, 75).

Alma 32:35. “O Then, Is Not This Real?”

- As Alma spoke to the poor Zoramites, he asked them to discern the truth of his message for themselves. One person cannot learn a gospel principle for another. Elder Neal A. Maxwell explained that each of us can know the certainty of divine truths:

“Alma describes the growth of faith and how faith can actually become knowledge with the accompanying intellectual and emotional experiences of the believer. After the understanding of the believer has been enlarged and his mind has been expanded, Alma asks, ‘O then, is not this real?’ It is real, he says, because it is ‘discernible, therefore ye must know that it is good.’ (Alma 32:35.)

“The truth of each divine doctrine is actually discernible by us in a system of certification and confirmation that justifies our saying, ‘I know!’” (*Things As They Really Are* [1978], 10).

ALMA 32:33–43

In what ways do the teachings of Alma in this passage of scripture help you better understand Lehi's vision of the tree of life in 1 Nephi 8?

Alma 32:33–43. Nourish the Word

- Elder Bruce C. Hafen of the Seventy, using Alma's metaphor of cultivation, identified two aspects of nourishment that bring the blessings of the gospel into our lives: "We grow in two ways—removing negative weeds and cultivating positive flowers. The Savior's grace blesses both parts—if we do our part. First and repeatedly we must uproot the weeds of sin and bad choices. It isn't enough just to *mow* the weeds. Yank them out by the roots, repenting fully to satisfy the conditions of mercy. But being forgiven is only part of our growth. We are not just paying a debt. Our purpose is to become celestial beings. So once we've cleared our heartland, we must continually plant, weed, and nourish the seeds of divine qualities. And then as our sweat and discipline stretch us to meet His gifts, 'the flow'rs of grace appear' ["There Is Sunshine in My Soul Today," *Hymns*, no. 227], like hope and meekness. Even a tree of life can take root in this heart-garden, bearing fruit so sweet that it lightens all our burdens 'through the joy of his Son' [Alma 33:23]. And when the flower of charity blooms here, we will love others with the power of Christ's own love [see Moroni 7:48]" (in Conference Report, Apr. 2004, 100–101; or *Ensign*, May 2004, 97).

Alma 32:37–38, 42–43. Being a Disciple of Christ

- President Dieter F. Uchtdorf of the First Presidency taught members of the Church how to become a disciple of Christ:

"This is the peaceable way of the follower of Jesus Christ.

"Nevertheless, it is not a quick fix or an overnight cure.

"A friend of mine recently wrote to me, confiding that he was having a difficult time keeping his testimony strong and vibrant. He asked for counsel.

"I wrote back to him and lovingly suggested a few specific things he could do that would align his life more closely with the teachings of the restored gospel. To my surprise, I heard back from him only a week later. The essence of his letter was this: 'I tried what you suggested. It didn't work. What else have you got?'

"Brothers and sisters, we have to stay with it. We don't acquire eternal life in a sprint—this is a race of endurance. We have to apply and reapply the divine gospel principles. Day after day we need to make them part of our normal life.

"Too often we approach the gospel like a farmer who places a seed in the ground in the morning and expects corn on the cob by the afternoon. When Alma compared the word of God to a seed, he explained that the seed grows into a fruit-bearing tree gradually, as a result of our 'faith, and [our] diligence, and patience, and long-suffering' [Alma 32:43]. It's true that some blessings come right away: soon after we plant the seed in our hearts, it begins to swell and sprout and grow, and by this we know that the seed is good. From the very moment we set foot upon the pathway of discipleship, seen and unseen blessings from God begin to attend us.

"But we cannot receive the fulness of those blessings if we 'neglect the tree, and take no thought for its nourishment' [v. 38].

"Knowing that the seed is good is not enough. We must 'nourish it with great care, that it may get root' [v. 37]. Only then can we partake of the fruit that is 'sweet above all that is sweet, and . . . pure above all that is pure' and 'feast upon this fruit even until [we] are filled, that [we] hunger not, neither shall [we] thirst' [v. 42].

"Discipleship is a journey. We need the refining lessons of the journey to craft our character and purify our hearts. By patiently walking in the path of discipleship, we demonstrate to ourselves the measure of our faith and our willingness to accept God's will rather than ours.

"It is not enough merely to speak of Jesus Christ or proclaim that we are His disciples. It is not enough to surround ourselves with symbols of our religion. Discipleship is not a spectator sport. We cannot expect to experience the blessings of faith by standing inactive

on the sidelines any more than we can experience the benefits of health by sitting on a sofa watching sporting events on television and giving advice to the athletes. And yet for some, ‘spectator discipleship’ is a preferred if not a primary way of worshipping.

“Ours is not a secondhand religion. We cannot receive the blessings of the gospel merely by observing the good that others do. We need to get off the sidelines and practice what we preach. . . .

“. . . Now is the time to embrace the gospel of Jesus Christ, become His disciples, and walk in His way” (“The Way of the Disciple,” *Ensign*, May 2009, 76–77).

Alma 33:2–19. False Doctrines of the Zoramites

- Alma used the scriptures repeatedly to address the false doctrines taught by the Zoramites. He first dealt with the false notion that you can only pray on the Rameumptom. Using the scriptures he explained that they could pray and worship God anywhere; in their “wilderness,” in their “field,” in their “house,” and even in their “closet” (see Alma 33:2–11). Alma then addressed the fact that all the prophets have testified of the coming of a Christ (see Alma 33:14–22; see also Jacob 7:11).

Alma 33:3–11; 34:17–27, 39. Hearts Drawn Out in Prayer Continually

- President Henry B. Eyring of the First Presidency explained what it means to be in a continuous attitude of prayer:

“When God has commanded us to pray, He has used words like ‘pray unceasingly’ and ‘pray always’ and ‘mighty prayer.’

“Those commands do not require using many words. In fact, the Savior has told us that we need not multiply words when we pray. The diligence in prayer which God requires does not take flowery speech nor long hours of solitude. . . .

“Our hearts can be drawn out to God only when they are filled with love for Him and trust in His goodness” (in Conference Report, Oct. 2001, 17; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2001, 16).

Alma 33:19–23. A Type of Christ Was Raised in the Wilderness

- Because of the ancient Israelites’ murmuring in the wilderness, the Lord sent venomous serpents to humble the spiritually poisoned. Many people died, and the repentant people turned to their prophet and pled with him to ask the Lord to remove the serpents. God told Moses to make a serpent of brass and elevate it on a pole. The Lord promised that everyone who looked upon the raised serpent would be healed (see Numbers 21:4–9).

The brass serpent was a *type*. Elder Dallin H. Oaks explained that a *type* is “a likeness or reminder of something else” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1992, 51; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1992, 37).



Jesus Christ taught that the type raised up in the wilderness testified of Him: “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:14–15).

Because of their hard hearts and disbelief, many of the Israelites refused to take advantage of the simple manner of healing (see 1 Nephi 17:41). Alma invited everyone to “begin to believe in the Son of God, that he will come to redeem his people, and . . . atone for their sins” (Alma 33:22; see also Helaman 8:14–15). Alma promised that nourishing this testimony will lighten one’s burdens and lead to everlasting life (see Alma 33:23).

Alma 34:9–12. The Atonement of Jesus Christ Is Infinite and Eternal

- Elder Bruce R. McConkie (1915–85) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles defined the scope of the infinite and eternal sacrifice of the Lord: “When the prophets speak of an *infinite* atonement, they mean just that. Its effects cover all men, the earth itself and all forms of

life thereon, and reach out into the endless expanses of eternity” (*Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. [1966], 64; see also Moses 7:30).

- Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles enumerated some of the ways the Atonement of Jesus Christ is infinite:

“His Atonement is infinite—without an end [see 2 Nephi 9:7; 25:16; Alma 34:10, 12, 14]. It was also infinite in that all humankind would be saved from never-ending death. It was infinite in terms of His immense suffering. It was infinite in time, putting an end to the preceding prototype of animal sacrifice. It was infinite in scope—it was to be done once for all [see Hebrews 10:10]. And the mercy of the Atonement extends not only to an infinite number of people, but also to an infinite number of worlds created by Him [see D&C 76:24; Moses 1:33]. It was infinite beyond any human scale of measurement or mortal comprehension.

“Jesus was the only one who could offer such an infinite atonement, since He was born of a mortal mother and an immortal Father. Because of that unique birthright, Jesus was an infinite Being” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1996, 46; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 35).

Alma 34:14. “Every Whit Pointing to That Great and Last Sacrifice”

- Amulek declared that the whole meaning of the law of Moses was to point the people to the eventual “great and last sacrifice” of Jesus Christ in Gethsemane and Golgotha. The animal sacrifices, the feasts and festivals, and other daily rituals were full of numerous types and shadows, pointing the children of Israel to Christ. The sacrament similarly reminds us today of the atoning mission of Jesus Christ. Likewise, anciently Passover was a yearly reminder that the Lord brought Israel out of physical bondage in Egypt. Today Easter is a yearly reminder that through the Atonement and Resurrection of the Lord we can be redeemed out of spiritual bondage.



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Alma 34:14–17. “Faith unto Repentance”

- While serving as a member of the Seventy, Elder Robert E. Wells spoke of the faith required to bring changes in our lives sufficient to participate in the Atonement of Jesus Christ:

“Just how much faith do I need for the atonement of Christ to work for me? In other words, how much faith do I need to receive salvation? In the book of Alma . . . we find the answer. The prophet Amulek taught this simple but grand principle: ‘The Son of God, . . . bringeth about means unto men that they may have *faith unto repentance*’ (Alma 34:14–15; emphasis added).

“Please note those three words: *faith unto repentance*. That is the clue. Four times in three verses he uses that expression [see Alma 34:15–17]. . . .

“So the combination of faith in Christ plus *faith unto repentance* is vitally important. That concept is one of the greatest insights we have into the importance of simple, clear faith—faith sufficient to repent.

Apparently faith great enough to move mountains is not required; faith enough to speak in tongues or to heal the sick is not needed; all that we need is just enough faith to recognize that we have sinned and to repent of our sins, to feel remorse for them, and to desire to sin no more but to please Christ the Lord. Then the greatest miracle of all, the Atonement, whereby Christ rescues us from our deserved punishment, is in effect in our behalf” (“The Liahona Triad,” in Bruce A. Van Orden and Brent L. Top, eds., *Doctrines of the Book of Mormon: The 1991 Sperry Symposium* [1992], 6–7).

Alma 34:15–16. “Mercy Can Satisfy the Demands of Justice”

- There are two aspects of justice:
 1. Obedience to law results in blessings that bring joy (see D&C 130:20–21).
 2. Disobedience to law results in punishments that bring sorrow (see Alma 42:22).
- There are two ways to satisfy justice:
 1. Never violate the law.
 2. If you do violate the law, pay the penalty.

Problem: No flesh is justified by the law (see 2 Nephi 2:5); everyone has sinned (see Romans 3:23). Thus, a penalty must be paid.

- There are two effects of sin:
 1. By temporal law we are cut off—justice is violated (see Alma 42:14).
 2. By spiritual law we perish—“there cannot any unclean thing enter into the kingdom of God” (1 Nephi 15:34).

Jesus “offereth himself a sacrifice for sin, to answer the ends of the law” (2 Nephi 2:7).

- Christ initiated the law of mercy, but how?
 1. He kept the law perfectly and was without sin. He was justified by the law.
 2. In the Garden of Gethsemane and on the cross, He suffered and paid the price for the penalty as though He was guilty of every sin ever committed.
 3. He is our Advocate with the Father (see Alma 33:11; D&C 45:3–5).

Alma 34:32–34. “Do Not Procrastinate the Day of Your Repentance”

- Procrastination and indecision can impact our efforts to return to our Heavenly Father. President Joseph Fielding Smith taught, “Procrastination, as it may be applied to Gospel principles, is the thief of eternal life—which is life in the presence of the Father and the Son” (*The Way to Perfection* [1970], 202).

ALMA 34:32–34 

What circumstances did Amulek warn about that make repentance after this life difficult?

Alma 34:34–35. That Same Spirit Will Possess Us

- Amulek made it clear that we are, by our daily choices, ultimately giving ourselves over to the control or influence of either the Spirit of the Lord or the spirit of the devil. President Harold B. Lee (1899–1973) gave the following explanation of Alma 34:35: “To those who die in their wicked state, not having repented, the scriptures say the devil shall seal them as his own (see Alma 34:35), which means that until they have paid the uttermost farthing for what they have done, they shall not be redeemed from his grasp. When they shall have been subjected to the buffetings of Satan sufficient to have satisfied justice, then they shall be brought forth out of the grasp of Satan and shall be assigned to that place in our Father’s celestial, terrestrial, or telestial world merited by their life here upon this earth” (*The Teachings of Harold B. Lee*, ed. Clyde J. Williams [1996], 59).
- Elder Melvin J. Ballard (1873–1939) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles emphasized the importance of repenting during mortality:

“This life is the time in which men are to repent. Do not let any of us imagine that we can go down to the grave not having overcome the corruptions of the flesh and then lose in the grave all our sins and evil tendencies. They will be with us. They will be with the spirit when separated from the body.

“. . . [Mortality] is the time when men are more pliable and susceptible” (*The Three Degrees of Glory: A Discourse* [Sept. 22, 1922], 11–12).

Alma 35. The Nephite-Lamanite Wars Recorded in Alma 43–62

- Chronologically, Alma 43 follows Alma 35. “Alma, being grieved for the iniquity of his people, yea for the wars, and the bloodsheds,” gathered his sons “separately” to address “things pertaining unto righteousness” (Alma 35:15–16). Mormon specifically noted his interjection of Alma’s words to his sons Helaman, Shiblon, and Corianton—before returning to the “account of the wars between the Nephites and the Lamanites” (Alma 43:3; compare the dates at the bottom of the pages of Alma 35 and Alma 43).

Alma 35 explains the buildup that led to the Lamanite-Nephite war, comprising chapters 43–62. The conflict and eventual war may be summarized from Alma 35:

1. The “popular part of the Zoramites . . . were angry because of the word, for it did destroy their craft [priestcraft]” (v. 3).
2. The converted Zoramites, being “cast out of the land; and they were many” (v. 6), went and dwelt among the people of Jershon (people of Ammon). Here they were nourished, clothed, given lands for their inheritance, and had all of their wants satisfied (see v. 9). In their previous land they were looked upon as poor, filthy, and coarse (see Alma 32:2–3).
3. The kindness of the people of Jershon receiving the new converts infuriated the Zoramites (see Alma 35:8). The chief ruler of the Zoramites “breathed out many threatenings against them” (v. 9). “The people of Ammon did not fear” (v. 9), further angering the Zoramites and their ruler.
4. The unconverted Zoramites “began to mix with the Lamanites and to stir them up also to anger” against the people of Ammon, who were Lamanite converts (v. 10; see also Alma 43:6–7).

The events recorded in Alma 35 reveal how the lengthy Nephite-Lamanite wars recorded in Alma 43–62 began. Satan stirred the hearts of the Zoramites to anger (see 2 Nephi 28:20). In turn, they influenced the Lamanites and other Nephite dissenters to anger and to take up weapons of war against those who were good.

Points to Ponder

- In what ways might a person’s heart be “full, drawn out in prayer” continually to the Lord? (Alma 34:27).
- Why was Jesus Christ the only one who could make an infinite atonement?
- Why do people sometimes procrastinate repentance? What danger results from this delay?

Suggested Assignments

- Create a detailed outline of Alma’s teachings on the development of faith from Alma 32. Show how faith is nourished from hope to perfect knowledge and what role the word of God plays in this process.
- Using the instructions on prayer in Alma 33–34, identify specific ways that your prayers could become more productive.