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Long Road of Corianton

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Abstract: Discusses Corianton's trip to Antionum to teach the gospel of Jesus Christ to the Zoramites.

Long Road of Corianton*

By Leland H. Monson

SO this was the road to Antionum. To Corianton, it looked the same as any other road — same deep dust, same long ruts. As he walked along leading two pack horses, he thought of many things; particularly he remembered the tears in his mother's eyes when she said good-by to him and again reminded him to be prayerful and obedient to the things his father had taught him. Then there was his home and hometown, which he was now leaving for the first time. He had managed to have a good time there all of his seventeen years.

His father, Alma, and his brother, Shiblon, walked behind him. Now and then he caught bits of their talk, but not enough to understand all they were saying. Words he could hear made him realize they were in a serious mood.

There were others in the party also: Ammon, Aaron, Omner, Amulek, and Zeezrom; but it was Alma who was directly responsible for them all.

Corianton knew he was most fortunate to be included in this party. When his father had first asked him to go, however, he had been reluctant. He could not see himself as a missionary. That was a calling for Shiblon, who had always been a good and kind person. Corianton loved Shiblon; and well Shiblon deserved to be loved, for it was always he who came to the rescue when Corianton was in mischief.

Alma, though he showed a high sense of loyalty and devotion to righteous principles now, understood the past misconduct of Corianton. He himself had tasted the bitter fruits of sin as a young man. Alma saw his son as a lad of seventeen, who knew all the answers, and who was proud of his intellectual ability — so proud that he frequently boasted of his wisdom.

Alma and Shiblon were discussing their hope that Corianton would make a good missionary. Corianton had been well schooled in the Gospel, and a good example had been set before him.

Corianton, however, had wondered how he could bring salvation to others when he lacked the power to rule the empire of himself. But he knew he had to be true to his calling for his father's sake, for Shiblon's sake and for his own sake.

The little party trudged along this highway, which looked like a river of dust going through the palms to the sea. They were all happy in the knowledge of this new undertaking, especially Corianton.

During the hot, dry days of the trek, Corianton grew stronger and stronger in his determination to make



As he started on his missionary journey, Corianton hoped to serve well; yet it was to be a long road before he learned to walk in the straight ways of Jesus, the greatest of missionaries.

good in this important responsibility. And by night, with the stars close, he dreamed of a new land, new experiences, new faces — the Zoramites in Antionum.

Arriving among the Zoramites, the young man took great interest in their form of worship. In contrast with the simplicity of his own religion, theirs was artificial, ornate and incredible. The Zoramites had built synagogues of cement. In the center of each synagogue, they had constructed a holy stand, which they called the Rameumptom. It reached an elevation high above the audience, and only one could occupy this holy stand at a time.

Corianton smiled as he saw a young Zoramite ascend the Rameumptom, stretch forth his hands toward heaven and cry in a monotonous, loud voice:

Holy God . . . we believe that thou hast elected us to be thy holy children; and also that thou hast made it known unto us that there shall be no Christ . . . and thou hast elected us that we shall be saved, whilst all around us are elected to be cast by thy wrath down to hell. (*Alma 31:16, 17.*)

*For Course 15, lesson of August 23, "Corianton"; and for Course 9, lesson of September 27, "Alma and His Sons."

To Corianton's surprise, each worshiper ascended the Rameumptom, made the same gesture and said the identical prayer. It was insincere, hollow and as empty as the clashing of cymbals. He was astonished that religious leaders could teach such doctrines and engage in such practices.

After witnessing this worship service, Alma with Corianton prayed for strength to perform a great work among these perverted people.

" . . . Give unto us, O Lord," he said, "power and wisdom that we may bring these, our brethren, again unto thee." (*Alma* 31:35.)

Then he put his hands on the head of each missionary and conferred on him the Holy Spirit, after which they separated themselves one from another and began preaching to the people.

The poor among the Zoramites listened to these missionaries. One of them, sincere and penitent, turned to Alma. "What shall we do? — for we are cast out of our synagogues, that we cannot worship our God." (*Alma* 32:9.) Alma knew it was because of their ragged apparel that they had been forbidden to enter the churches, which they had helped to build, so he stood erect and declared that true worship was not confined to sanctuaries, that they could pray to God in their houses and in their fields.

He soon planted the word of God in their hearts.

Now, if ye give place, that a seed may be planted in your heart, behold, if it be a true seed, or a good seed, . . . it will begin to swell within your breasts; and when you feel these swelling motions, ye will begin to say within yourselves — It must needs be that this is a good seed, or that the word is good, for it beginneth to enlarge my soul; yea, it beginneth to enlighten my understanding . . . (*Alma* 32:28.)

The Zoramites were impressed with the personal testimony of this inspired leader. They had faith in him and in his message. Lines of strength and hope had been chiseled in Alma's face by the years.

Joy filled Alma's heart as the Zoramites humbled themselves. But his happiness was short-lived. Soon he learned that Corianton had succumbed to temptation. The converted Zoramites, learning what had happened, questioned the worthwhileness of those principles which Alma had taught them. The waywardness of Corianton became a stumbling block to many of the converts.

Returning from the missionary journey to Antionum, Alma took Corianton to task, for he knew that a life

lived in conformity with the Gospel of Christ was the greatest missionary.

Crouched in his seat before his father, Corianton listened.

"Now this is what I have against thee," Alma was saying, "thou didst go on unto boasting in thy strength and thy wisdom." (*Alma* 39:2.)

Corianton straightened up. He sought to rationalize the matter, to justify his attitude.

Alma set his jaw and continued with his reproof:

And this is not all, my son. Thou didst do that which was grievous unto me; for thou didst forsake the ministry, and did go over into the land of Siron, among the borders of the Lamanites, after the harlot Isabel. (*Alma* 39:3.)

Corianton's face was hot with shame. Alma continued:

Yea, she did steal away the hearts of many; but this was no excuse for thee, my son. (*Alma* 39:4.)

Corianton's face flushed, and tears came into his eyes. He did not try to defend himself on this charge.

Know ye not, my son, that these things are an abomination in the sight of the Lord; yea, most abominable above all sins save it be the shedding of innocent blood or denying the Holy host? (*Alma* 39:5.)

Alma explained the Gospel to him and begged him to repent.

. . . Suffer not the devil to lead away your heart again after those wicked harlots. Behold, O my son, how great iniquity ye brought upon the Zoramites; for when they saw your conduct they would not believe in my words. (*Alma* 39:11.)

Hoping that he had reached the heart of his son, Alma left him to ponder over his mistakes.

Corianton took his father's words to heart; so much so that he went away by himself for a period of time. No one knew where he had gone, but after many long months, he appeared one day as suddenly as he had gone away. As Alma looked upon the face of his son, he smiled. There was great pride in his heart, for Corianton's face was etched with new lines — lines of courage, of strength and of goodness.

Corianton's heart swelled with gladness, but he also felt some sorrow. He wondered why it had taken him so long to see the real purpose of life. It had been a long road. But he would now walk it straight.¹

¹Monson, Leland H., "Long Road of the Prodigal," Reprinted from the *Church News* section of *The Deseret News*, Mar. 3, 1945.