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Characters and Teachings of The Book of Mormon: Lesson 28—Further Teachings of Alma and Amulek

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Abstract: The objective of this lesson is to show the great influence of prayer and repentance in changing the lives of people.



LESSON DEPARTMENT

Theology—Characters and Teachings of The Book of Mormon

Lesson 28—Further Teachings of Alma and Amulek

Elder Leland H. Monson

(Text: The Book of Mormon: Alma, chapters 29-35)

For Tuesday, January 4, 1955

Objective: To show the great influence of prayer and repentance in changing the lives of people.

Alma Rejoices

ALMA rejoiced over the success of his brethren and the fact that the sons of Mosiah and their companions had been able to touch the hearts of the Lamanites and bring many of them into the Church. Filled with love, he exclaimed:

O that I were an angel, and could have the wish of mine heart, that I might go forth and speak with the trump of God, with a voice to shake the earth, and cry repentance unto every people! (Alma 29:1).

When he saw repentant souls coming into the Church, his whole being was filled with joy and with a desire to continue in the service of the Master. The entire twenty-

ninth chapter beautifully expresses Alma's feelings, and might be read aloud in the class.

Rise of Korihor the Anti-Christ

During his period of rejoicing, Alma was confronted with a difficult problem. In the seventeenth year of the reign of the judges, Korihor, an Anti-Christ, came into Zarahemla and began to deny what the prophets had said concerning the coming of Christ.

The laws of the land were such that a man was entitled to freedom of speech and freedom of belief. For the scripture said, ". . . Choose ye this day, whom ye will serve" (Alma 30:8). If they did not believe in Christ, there was no law to punish them.

Korihor taught the people that no man knows anything concerning the future. Prophecies, he said, were only the foolish traditions of the fathers. He also said there would be no atonement made for the sins of mankind, and implied that none was necessary, for he taught that:

. . . every man fared in this life according to the management of the creature; therefore every man prospered according to his genius, and that every man conquered according to his strength; and whatsoever a man did was no crime (Alma 30:17).

Obviously, such doctrines were pernicious and led away the hearts of many. He won converts, and many men and women began to commit whoredoms.

Korihor went to the land of Jershon and preached to the people; ". . . they were more wise than many of the Nephites . . ." (Alma 30:20) for they bound him and carried him before their high priest, Ammon. Ammon had him carried out of the land of Jershon.

Korihor then went to the land of Gideon, where he was bound and delivered to the high priest and to the chief judge over that land. The high priest, Giddonah, reproved him, and asked why he taught that the Christ should not come.

Korihor told Giddonah that such teachings were designed to establish power and authority over the people and to keep them in ignorance. He further denied that Christ should come. When Giddonah and the chief judge saw his hard heart and his bravado in reviling against God, they refused to talk to him. They authorized the officers to bind him and take him to Zarahemla to Alma

and to the chief judge who was governor over all the land.

When Korihor appeared before Alma, he reviled the priests and teachers for leading the people astray, and complained that they profited from the labors of the people.

Alma denied that the priests and teachers lived upon the labors of the people and said, ". . . I have never received so much as even one senine for my labor . . ." (Alma 30:33).

To Alma's question, ". . . Believest thou that there is a God?" Korihor answered, "Nay" (Alma 30:37-38).

Alma then bore his personal testimony that God lives and that Jesus Christ should come and redeem mankind. He referred to the scriptures as containing evidence and bearing witness that there is a God, then he referred to the evidence of design in nature. He declared:

. . . even the earth, and all things that are upon the face of it, yea, and its motion, yea, and also all the planets which move in their regular form do witness that there is a Supreme Creator (Alma 30:44).

Korihor Becomes Dumb

After listening to the argument from Alma, Korihor still denied the existence of God and said he would not believe without a sign. Alma said:

. . . it is better that thy soul should be lost than that thou shouldst be the means of bringing many souls down to destruction, by thy lying and by thy flattering words (Alma 30:47).

Alma warned him that if he should deny God again, God would smite him dumb. Korihor persisted

in his denial and Alma said, “. . . in the name of God, ye shall be struck dumb . . .” (Alma 30:49), and from that moment Korihor could not speak.

Seeing what had happened, the chief judge wrote to Korihor, “. . . Art thou convinced of the power of God? . . .” (Alma 30:51) Korihor wrote in answer:

. . . I know that I am dumb, for I cannot speak; and I know that nothing save it were the power of God could bring this upon me; yea, and I also knew that there was a God (Alma 30:52).

Korihor besought Alma to pray to God that the curse might be taken from him, but Alma said if the curse were taken from him he would again lead away the hearts of the people. So Korihor “. . . was cast out, and went about from house to house begging for his food” (Alma 31:56). He went about among a group who had separated themselves from the Nephites known as the Zoramites. While going forth among them “. . . he was run upon and trodden down, even until he was dead” (Alma 30:59).

Alma Among the Zoramites

Having settled this trouble with Korihor, and learning that the Zoramites were perverting the ways of the Lord and bowing down to dumb idols, Alma’s heart “. . . again began to sicken because of the iniquity of the people” (Alma 31:1). He took a group of missionaries with him to go to the land of Antionum and seek to reclaim these apostate Zoramites. He took with him three of the four sons of Mosiah, Ammon, Aaron, and Omner; Amulek and Zeezrom, and two of his sons, Shib-

lon and Corianton. Alma feared that the Zoramites would enter into correspondence with the Lamanites, and he had found that preaching the word was more potent in getting people to do right than the sword or anything else.

Alma discovered a peculiar form of worship among these dissenting Nephites. In the center of their synagogue they had built a high stand, which they called a *Rameumptom*, or “holy stand.” One by one the people who desired to worship ascended this stand, stretched forth their hands towards heaven, and cried with a loud voice a common prayer. This prayer explicitly declared their belief that God had elected them to be his holy children, and that he had made it known to them that there should be no Christ.

Alma grieved because of this wicked and perverse people who idolized wealth and pride, and he prayed fervently that the missionaries might be endowed with power and wisdom enough to bring them to repentance:

Now it came to pass that when Alma had said these words, that he clapped his hands upon all them who were with him. And behold, as he clapped his hands upon them, they were filled with the Holy Spirit (Alma 31:36).

Then the missionaries separated themselves and went forth to preach the word of God unto the people again.

The missionaries entered into their synagogues and houses, they even preached the word in their streets, and the poor hearkened to the words of Alma. They said that the Zoramite priests had cast them out of their synagogues and implied

that they had no place to worship. Alma, realizing that their affliction had humbled them, began teaching them the wonderful discourse on faith. (See Alma, chapter 32.)

Alma's Discourse on Faith

Alma defined faith as:

. . . faith is not to have a perfect knowledge of things; therefore if ye have faith ye hope for things which are not seen, which are true (Alma 32:21).

He asked them to apply faith to the words which he gave them. He suggested that perhaps they could do no more at present than to desire to believe his words. He then compared the idea of developing faith in his words to a seed which is planted. He advised them that if the seed sown in their hearts germinated, enlarged the soul, and enlightened the understanding, then they would recognize it as good and desirable. He then asked the people to plant the word, that Christ should come and redeem the world, in their hearts, and when it would begin to germinate and to grow, to nourish it by their faith. Under such conditions, he told them, ". . . it will become a tree, springing up in you unto everlasting life . . ." (Alma 33:23). Alma also cited the words of Zenos, Zenoch, and Moses to prove that the people did not need to be in a synagogue to worship God and that prophets of old had foretold the mission of Christ.

Amulek Explains the Atonement

After Alma had taught them how to develop faith in the future appearance of Christ and in his atonement for the sins of mankind, Amulek arose and said that their great problem seemed to be

"whether the word be in the Son of God, or whether there shall be no Christ" (Alma 34:5). He called to their attention that Alma had referred to Zenos, Zenoch, and Moses in the scriptures as teaching the atonement of Christ. Amulek then said, ". . . I will testify unto you of myself that these things are true . . ." (Alma 34:8). He taught that:

. . . it is expedient that there should be a great and last sacrifice; yea, not a sacrifice of man, neither of beast, neither of any manner of fowl; for it shall not be a human sacrifice; but it must be an infinite and eternal sacrifice (Alma 34:10).

This infinite and eternal sacrifice would fulfill the law of Moses, and its ordinances would no longer be required. (See Alma 34:13.) Only those who repented and believed in the Son of God would receive a remission of sins. The intent of this last sacrifice was ". . . to bring about the bowels of mercy, which overpowereth justice, and bringeth about means unto men that they may have faith unto repentance" (Alma 34:15).

Amulek Cries Repentance

Recognizing this truth, Amulek asked the people to repent and to pray for things at all times—things regarded by man as both spiritual and temporal (Alma 34:18-27), always remembering that prayers were vain except the individual gave of his substance to the needy and the naked and visited the sick and the afflicted. Amulek exhorted the people to repent immediately, for, he said:

. . . now is the time and the day of your salvation . . . the day of this life is the day for men to perform their labors . . . therefore, I beseech of you that ye

do not procrastinate the day of your repentance until the end; for after this day of life, which is given us to prepare for eternity, behold, if we do not improve our time while in this life, then cometh the night of darkness wherein there can be no labor performed. Ye cannot say, when ye are brought to that awful crisis, that I will repent, that I will return to my God. Nay, ye cannot say this; for that same spirit which doth possess your bodies at the time that ye go out of this life, that same spirit will have power to possess your body in that eternal world (Alma 34:31-34).

Amulek admonished and pled with the people, before he left them, to work out their salvation with fear before God, to deny no more the coming of Christ, to contend no more against the Holy Ghost, to be humble, and to pray continually.

After finishing his address, Amulek returned to the land of Jershon where he met with the other missionaries. The Zoramites cast out of the land all those who had accepted the truth. These people also went to the land of Jershon, where the people of Ammon lived, and Alma and his brethren ministered unto them.

Alma and his brothers soon returned to Zarahemla, for they had

completed their missionary activities among the Zoramites. The Zoramites began to mix with the Lamanites and to stir them up to war against the people of Ammon and the Nephites. The people of Ammon left Jershon and came to the land of Melek so that the Nephite armies could move in; and war began in the eighteenth year of the judges.

The heart of Alma became exceedingly sorrowful because of the hardness of heart which was coming over many of the Nephites who began to be offended because of the strictness of the word he had preached among all the people in every city. Therefore, Alma caused his sons to come together so “. . . that he might give unto them every one his charge, separately, concerning the things pertaining unto righteousness . . .” (Alma 35:16).

Questions on the Lesson

1. Compare the growth of faith to planting a seed.
2. What did Amulek say about prayer? (Alma 34:18-27)
3. Why must we prepare in this life to meet God?

Bounty

Dorothy O. Rea

Autumn brings the fruit of vine and orchard;
 Eden's flavors are ripe upon the land.
 Apples, sweet as childhood dreams remembered,
 Hang at tiptoe reach above my hand.
 Clustered grapes wrapped in purple goodness,
 Gathered summer nectar while they grew.
 The crystal pears distilled deep within them
 Sugared drops of early morning dew.
 Golden peaches now turn flanneled cheeks
 To autumn sun, warm upon the bough.
 The bending tree, weary of her burden,
 Sings to us who listen—harvest now.