

LESSON 28
“The Word Is In Christ Unto Salvation”
Alma 32-35

OVERVIEW:

Alma teaches the humble Zoramites to exercise faith and give place in their hearts for the word of God. Alma teaches the people to nourish the word of God in their hearts. Alma cites prophets’ testimonies of Jesus Christ and exhorts the people to plant the word of God in their hearts. Amulek testifies of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. He commands the people to pray and exercise faith unto repentance.

SCRIPTURES:

THE BOOK OF ALMA
THE SON OF ALMA
CHAPTER 32

Alma teaches the poor whose afflictions had humbled them—Faith is a hope in that which is not seen which is true—Alma testifies that angels minister to men, women, and children—Alma compares the word unto a seed—It must be planted and nourished—Then it grows into a tree from which the fruit of eternal life is picked. [About 74 B.C.]

1 AND it came to pass that they did go forth, and began to preach the word of God unto the people, entering into their synagogues, and into their houses; yea, and even they did preach the word in their streets.

2 And it came to pass that after much labor among them, they began to have success among the ^apoor class of people; for behold, they were cast out of the synagogues because of the coarseness of their apparel—

3 Therefore they were not permitted to enter into their synagogues to worship God, being esteemed as filthiness; therefore they were poor; yea, they were esteemed by their brethren as ^adross; (The scum thrown out in the smelting process.) therefore they were ^bpoor as to things of the world; and also they were poor in heart. (The term poor in heart means to be spiritually humble, to have a broken heart and a contrite spirit.)

4 Now, as Alma was teaching and speaking unto the people upon the hill ^aOnidah, there came a great ^bmultitude unto him, who were those of whom we have been speaking, of whom were ^cpoor in heart, because of their poverty as to the things of the world.

5 And they came unto Alma; and the one who was the foremost among them (This may have been a leader of a significant family) said unto him: Behold, ^awhat shall these my brethren do, for they are ^bdespised of all men because of their poverty, yea, and more especially by our priests; for they have ^ccast us out of our synagogues which we have labored abundantly to build with our own hands; and they have cast us out because of our exceeding poverty; and we have ^dno place to worship our God; and behold, ^ewhat shall we do?

6 And now when Alma heard this, he turned him about, his face immediately towards him, and he beheld with great joy; for he beheld that their ^aafflictions had truly ^bhumbled (Humility means “down to the earth.” Hugh Nibley Teachings of the Book of Mormon, 2:441.) them, and that they were in a ^cpreparation to hear the word. (It has been wisely observed that a blessing is anything that brings us nearer to God. Thus our afflictions often become our greatest blessings. It is in our extremities that most often we meet God, not in our comfort. Thus any time conditions come to pass – even what at the time might be construed as tragic or unfortunate conditions – that lead us toward the truth or contribute to our eventual well-being, we have indeed been blessed. DCBM, 3:234)

7 Therefore he did say no more to the other multitude; but he stretched forth his hand, and cried unto those whom he beheld, who were truly penitent, and said unto them:

8 I behold that ye are ^alowly in heart; and if so, blessed are ye.

9 Behold thy brother hath said, What shall we do?—for we are cast out of our synagogues, that we cannot worship our God.

10 Behold I say unto you, do ye suppose that ye ^acannot worship God save it be in your synagogues only? (Bruce R. McConkie: Deity is worshipped in prayer, song, sermon and testimony; by the making of covenants, offering of sacrifices, performance of ordinances, and the participation in religious rituals and ceremonies; he is worshipped by man's act of believing divine truths, by his being converted to them in their fullness; he may be worshipped in thought, word, and deed. But the most perfect of all worship comes from those who first believe the gospel, who then participate in its outward forms, and who finally keep the standards of personal righteousness that appertain to it. Mormon Doctrine, p. 849. We also worship Christ the Lord through emulation, through imitation, through seeking to be like him: through serving others and growing in spiritual graces until that perfect day when we are endowed by him with the fullness of the glory of the Father. DCBM, 3:225.)

11 And moreover, I would ask, do ye suppose that ye must not worship God only ^aonce in a week? (We need to have our own personal religious observance every day.)

12 I say unto you, it is well that ye are cast out of your synagogues, that ye may be humble, and that ye may learn ^awisdom; for it is necessary that ye should learn wisdom; for it is because that ye are cast out, that ye are despised of your brethren because of your exceeding ^bpoverty, (Hugh Nibley: They couldn't go in because they didn't observe the dress standards. The dress standards were very strict. Teachings of the Book of Mormon, 2:440) that ye are brought to a lowliness of heart; for ye are necessarily brought to be humble. (God will have a humble people. We can either be humble by choice, or have it forced upon us.)

13 And now, because ye are compelled to be humble blessed are ye; for a man sometimes, if he is compelled to be humble, seeketh ^arepentance; and now surely, whosoever repenteth shall find mercy; and he that findeth mercy and ^bendureth to the end the same shall be saved.

14 And now, as I said unto you, that because ye were compelled to be ^ahumble ye were blessed, do ye not suppose that they are more blessed who truly humble themselves because of the word?

15 Yea, he that truly humbleth himself, and repenteth of his sins, and endureth to the end, the same shall be blessed—yea, much more blessed than they who are compelled to be humble because of their exceeding poverty.

16 Therefore, blessed are they who ^ahumble themselves without being ^bcompelled to be humble; or rather, in other words, blessed is he that believeth in the word of God, and is baptized without ^cstubbornness of heart, (There are no blessings to be had in resisting the impressions of the Spirit. Surveys among converts to the Church indicate that the great majority of them knew the message of the Restoration to be true upon first hearing it. It is also generally true that those who respond most readily to the message of the missionaries continue after baptism to grow in the things of the Spirit more rapidly, and sink their spiritual roots deeper, than those who confused intellect and independence of thought with stubbornness of heart. DCBM, 3: 225) yea, without being brought to know the word, or even compelled to know, before they will believe.

17 Yea, there are many who do say: If thou wilt show unto us a ^asign from heaven, then we shall know of a surety; then we shall believe. (“In the great revelation on signs, the Lord says, ‘He that seeketh signs shall see signs, but not unto salvation.’ (D&C 63:7.) President Spencer W. Kimball explained: ‘Certainly we should not be interested in signs. Signs are available and anyone, I believe, can have signs who wants them. I believe if one wants revelations enough to crave them beyond the rightness of it, that eventually he will get his revelations—but they may not come from God. I am sure that there can be many spectacular things performed, because the devil is very responsive. He is listening and he is eager to do it. And so he gives strange experiences.’ ...Manifestly, the performance of miracles and the

appearance of signs and wonders are not evidences that those who do these things are servants of God or teachers of truth. 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*, p. 86.) The sign seekers, the God tempters, presume to put the Almighty on trial by challenging him to prove his own existence. In their pride, the Korihors of this world set up the preconditions under which they may condescend to believe. But it is all a sham; their insistence on signs is not meant to foster faith but to justify doubt. And the seed of faith will never grow in the soil of doubt. Where there is a will to doubt, a heavenly sign or evidence will be ignored, rejected, or rationalized away. The Lord told young Joseph Smith: “Behold, if they will not believe my words, they would not believe you, my servant Joseph, if it were possible that you should show them all these things which I have committed unto you.” The rational mind will always reject what the hardened heart is unprepared to accept. That is why signs without faith are a barrier against, not a path to, God. Rodney Turner, *Studies in the Scriptures*, 8:21.)

18 Now I ask, is this faith? Behold, I say unto you, Nay; for if a man knoweth a thing he hath no cause to ^abelieve, for he knoweth it. (Talking of mortality.)

19 And now, how much ^amore ^bcursed is he that ^cknoweth the ^dwill of God and doeth it not, than he that only believeth, or only hath cause to believe, and falleth into ^etransgression? (Just as a wise parent keeps medicine or tools out of a child’s reach, so does God withhold divine knowledge from the ill-prepared. In his wisdom and mercy, he has ordained that faith must precede certitude so that, in the very process of exercising faith, the individual develops the spiritual maturity needed to possess divine knowledge in righteousness. Thus capacitated, such knowledge magnifies rather than diminishes one’s relationship to God. For example, the Lord promised the brother of Jared that if he developed sufficient faith he could be shown all things, for he could no longer be kept without the veil. Christ was bound by his own promise; he could not deny the brother of Jared the knowledge his faith had prepared him to receive. This is an eternal principle. Hence the Prophet Joseph Smith’s remark: “God hath not revealed anything to Joseph, but what He will make known unto the Twelve, and even the least Saint may know all things as fast as he is able to bear them.” TPJS, p. 149, Rodney Turner, *Studies in the Scriptures*, 8:22.)

20 Now of this thing ye must judge. Behold, I say unto you, that it is on the one hand even as it is on the other; and it shall be unto every man according to his work.

21 And now as I said concerning faith—^afaith is not to have a perfect knowledge of things (Faith and perfect knowledge are not incompatible, else how would God, whose knowledge is perfect, possess the attribute of faith? Alma is defining faith from the viewpoint of mortality, not the vantage point of the eternities. In the Lecture on Faith, Joseph Smith spoke on faith in its unlimited sense. Faith is the principle by which Jehovah works, and through which he exercises power over all temporal as well as eternal things. Take this principle or attribute – for it is an attribute – from the Deity, and he would cease to exist. LOF, 1:16. Among exalted beings, Faith, then is the first great governing principle which has power, dominion, and authority over all things; by it they exist, by it they are upheld, by it they are changed, or by it they remain, agreeable to the will of God. Without it there is no power, and without power there could be no creation nor existence! LOF, 1:24. In the eternal sense, because faith is the power of God himself, it embraces within its fold a knowledge of all things. This measure of faith, the faith by which the worlds are and were created and which sustains and upholds all things, is found only among resurrected persons. It is the faith of saved beings. But mortals are in the process, through faith, of gaining eternal salvation. Their faith is based on a knowledge of the truth, within the meaning of Alma’s statement that faith is not to have a perfect knowledge of things, but that men have faith when they hope for things which are not seen, which are true. In this sense faith is both preceded and supplanted by knowledge and when any person gains a perfect knowledge on any given matter, then, as pertaining to that thing, he has faith no longer; or rather, his faith is dormant, it has been supplanted by pure knowledge. Bruce R. McConkie, *New Witness*, p. 209-210. DCBM, 3:227. 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. Few men possess it. 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 a 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. Boyd K. Packer, *What is Faith?* P. 42-43.); therefore if ye have faith ye^b hope for things which are^c not seen, which are true. (Orson Pratt: "There is a great difference between faith and knowledge. I am told that there is such a country as China on the eastern borders of Asia; but I never have been there; I never have seen that country; I cannot say, most positively, that such a country exists, only on the testimony of others I am informed that such is the case. I believe that testimony, but it is not a perfect knowledge to my own mind, obtained by my own experience. And so in regard to ten thousand other facts or events. We are in many, indeed in almost all, instances required to believe without a knowledge." (*Journal of Discourses*, vol. 16, p. 209) As faith is not knowledge, but the means to knowledge, so faith is not hope, but the basis of hope. Faith and hope are inseparable; one does not exist without the other. Faith in the redemptive power of Christ produces the hope of everlasting life. Rodney Turner, *Studies in the Scriptures*, 8:24. There is another facet to faith which is often misunderstood. Faith is not the power of positive thinking. One does not have faith simply because he is positive or optimistic. Faith is based on the truth, the truth as God knows it, the truth as a manifestation of the will and pleasure of the Lord. We do need to be positive, for there is no virtue in being long-faced and dreary. But faith is another matter entirely. If a priesthood bearer is called upon to heal a dying man, for example, he does not command the sick one to rise from his bed of affliction in the name of faith, when that faith is no more than wishful thinking or hope that the man will live. Working by faith is not the mere speaking of a few well-chosen words. Anyone with the power of speech could have commanded the rotting corpse of Lazarus to come forth, but only one whose power was greater than death could bring life again to the brother of Mary and Martha. Nor is working by faith merely a mental desire, however strong, that some eventuality shall occur. There may be those whose mental powers and thought processes are greater than any of the saints, but only persons who are in tune with the Infinite can exercise the spiritual forces and powers that come from him. Bruce R. McConkie, *New Witness*, p. 191.)

22 And now, behold, I say unto you, and I would that ye should remember, that God is^a merciful unto all who believe on his name; therefore he desireth, in the first place, that ye should believe, yea, even on his word. (Belief is a synonym for faith.)

23 And now, he imparteth his word by angels unto men, yea, ^anot only men but women also. (President Joseph F. Smith said, "When messengers are sent to minister to the inhabitants of this earth, they are not strangers, but from the ranks of our kindred, friends, and fellow-beings and fellow-servants. The ancient prophets who died were those who came to visit their fellow creatures upon the earth. . . . In like manner our fathers and mothers, brothers, sisters and friends who have passed away from this earth, having been faithful, and worthy to enjoy these rights and privileges, may have a mission given them to visit their relatives and friends upon the earth again, bringing from the divine Presence messages of love, of warning, or reproof and instruction, to those whom they had learned to love in the flesh." (Bruce D. Hafen, *The Believing Heart*, p. 101)) Now this is not all; little^b children do have words given unto them many times, which^c confound the wise and the learned.

24 And now, my beloved brethren, as ye have desired to know of me what ye shall do because ye are

afflicted and cast out—now I do not desire that ye should suppose that I mean to judge you only according to that which is true—

25 For I do not mean that ye all of you have been compelled to humble yourselves; for I verily believe that there are some among you who ^awould humble themselves, let them be in whatsoever circumstances they might.

26 Now, as I said concerning faith—that it was not a perfect knowledge—even so it is with my words. Ye cannot know of their surety at first, (An understanding of the principles of salvation does not come in an instant. The things of God are of deep import and time and experience and careful and ponderous and solemn thoughts can only find them out. TPJS, p. 137) unto perfection, any more than faith is a perfect knowledge.

27 But behold, if ye will awake and arouse your faculties (Gordon B. Hinckley: “Far more of us need to awake and arouse our faculties to an awareness of the great everlasting truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Each of us can do a little better than we have been doing. We can be a little more kind. We can be a little more merciful. We can be a little more forgiving. We can put behind us our weaknesses of the past, and go forth with new energy and increased resolution to improve the world about us, in our homes, in our places of employment, in our social activities. We have work to do, you and I, so very much of it. Let us roll up our sleeves and get at it, with a new commitment, putting our trust in the Lord.” (Church News, 04/08/95)), even to an experiment upon my words (My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself. John 7:16-17), and exercise a particle of faith, yea, even if ye can no more than ^adesire to believe, let this desire work in you, even until ye believe in a manner that ye can give place for a portion of my words. (We consider that God has created man with a mind capable of instruction and a faculty which may be enlarged in proportion to the heed and diligence given to the light communicated from heaven to the intellect; and that the nearer man approaches perfection, the clearer are his views, and the greater his enjoyments, till he has overcome the evils of his life and lost every desire for sin; and like the ancients, arrives at that point of faith where he is wrapped in the power and glory of his Maker and is caught up to dwell with Him. But we consider that this is a station to which no man ever arrived in a moment; he must have been instructed in the government and laws of that kingdom by proper degrees, until his mind is capable in some measure of comprehending the propriety, justice, equality, and consistency of the same. TPJS, p. 51)

28 Now, we will compare the word unto a ^aseed. (Often in the Church, we refer to Alma 32 as being a great chapter on faith. This is not incorrect; but the seed Alma refers to is not faith, it is the word of God. Selected Writings of Gerald N. Lund, 119) Now, if ye give place, that a ^bseed may be planted in your ^cheart, behold, if it be a true seed, or a good seed, if ye do not cast it out by your ^dunbelief, that ye will resist the Spirit of the Lord, behold, it will begin to **swell** within your breasts; and when you feel these swelling motions (**truth is felt**), 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 ^funderstanding, yea, it beginneth to be **delicious** to me. (This is probably just a coincidence, but notice the four words used here: Swell, Enlarge, Enlighten, Delicious, spell the word SEED. Neal A. Maxwell: “Alma asked of this process, ‘O then, is not this real?’ He likens reality to light, ‘because it is discernible.’ Alma even employs the notion of taste. Little wonder an enlightened Joseph Smith on one occasion said of a doctrine and teaching, ‘This is *good* doctrine. It *tastes* good. I can *taste* the principles of eternal life, and *so can you*. . . . You say honey is sweet, and so do I. I can also *taste* the spirit of eternal life. I know it is *good*; and when I tell you of these things which were given to me by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, you are bound to receive them as sweet, and rejoice more and more.’ (Italics added.) Alma and Joseph preached the same thing as a result of their trying successfully the experiment of the gospel's goodness. (Alma 32:35.)” (Deposition of a Disciple, p. 65))

29 Now behold, would not this increase your faith? I say unto you, Yea; nevertheless it hath not grown up to a perfect knowledge. (We need not be so vain as to suppose that because we have a testimony,

because we have had spiritual experiences of one sort or another, we have a perfect or even an adequate knowledge of the gospel. DCBM, 3:236)

30 But behold, as the seed swelleth, and sprouteth, and beginneth to grow, then you must needs say that the seed is good; for behold it swelleth, and sprouteth, and beginneth to grow. And now, behold, will not this strengthen your faith? Yea, it will strengthen your faith: for ye will say I know that this is a good seed; for behold it sprouteth and beginneth to grow. (Those who accept the challenge to experiment upon the proposition that Jesus is the Christ do more than read and pray about him; they seek to do those things he has commanded us to do. They do his will. Then they come to know. Further, those who do the works of Christ began to receive the fruits of Christ and acquire the nature of Christ, since every good seed brings forth fruit after its own likeness. DCBM, 3:237)

31 And now, behold, are ye sure that this is a good seed? I say unto you, Yea; for every seed bringeth forth unto its own ^alikeness.

32 Therefore, if a seed groweth it is good, but if it groweth not, behold it is not good, therefore it is cast away.

33 And now, behold, because ye have tried the experiment, and planted the seed, and it swelleth and sprouteth, and beginneth to grow, ye must needs know that the seed is good.

34 And now, behold, is your ^aknowledge ^bperfect? Yea, your knowledge is perfect in that thing, and your ^cfaith is dormant; and this because you know, for ye know that the word hath swelled your souls, and ye also know that it hath sprouted up, that your understanding doth begin to be enlightened, and your ^dmind doth begin to expand. (While each successfully accomplished phase of the experiment is replaced with certitude or perfect knowledge of that phase, faith is still needed in carrying out each subsequent phase of the experiment. So initial faith produces initial knowledge, which, in turn, produces more faith, which then leads to even more knowledge, and so on until one's knowledge is perfect or complete pertaining to the entire experiment. Rodney Turner, Studies in the Scriptures, 8:23)

35 O then, is not this real? I say unto you, Yea, because it is ^alight; and whatsoever is light, is ^bgood, because it is discernible, therefore ye must know that it is good; and now behold, after ye have tasted this light is your knowledge perfect?

36 Behold I say unto you, Nay; neither must ye lay aside your faith, for ye have only exercised your faith to plant the seed that ye might try the experiment to know if the seed was good.

37 And behold, as the tree beginneth to grow, ye will say: Let us nourish it with great care, that it may get root, that it may grow up, and bring forth fruit unto us. And now behold, if ye nourish it with much care it will get root, and grow up, and bring forth fruit.

38 But if ye ^aneglect the tree, and take no thought for its nourishment, behold it will not get any root; and when the heat of the sun cometh and scorcheth it, because it hath no root it withers away, and ye pluck it up and cast it out.

39 Now, this is not because the seed was not good, neither is it because the fruit thereof would not be desirable; but it is because your ^aground is ^bbarren, and ye will not nourish the tree, therefore ye cannot have the fruit thereof.

40 And thus, if ye will not nourish the word, looking forward with an eye of faith to the fruit thereof, ye can never pluck of the fruit of the ^atree of life. (Jeffrey R. Holland: "In this brilliant discourse, 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, 'which is most precious, which is sweet above all that is sweet, and which is white above all that is white, yea, and pure above all that is pure; and ye shall feast upon [the gospel of Christ] even until ye are filled, that ye hunger not, neither shall ye thirst.' (v. 42) 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. In Alma 33, Alma quoted Zenos (source for the allegory of the olive tree) and Zenock on the role of Christ in rewarding

faith, then focused on the fully developed image of Christ as Tree of Life.” (*Christ and the New Covenant*, p. 170))

41 But if ye will nourish the word, yea, nourish the tree as it beginneth to grow, by your faith with great diligence, and with ^apatience, looking forward to the fruit thereof, it shall take root; and behold it shall be a tree ^bspringing up unto everlasting life.

42 And because of your ^adiligence and your faith and your patience with the word in nourishing it, that it may take root in you, behold, by and by ye shall pluck the ^bfruit thereof, which is most precious, which is sweet above all that is sweet, and which is white above all that is white, yea, and pure above all that is pure; and ye shall feast upon this fruit even until ye are filled, that ye hunger not, neither shall ye thirst. (This sounds like the same fruit found in 1 Nephi in Lehi’s dream of the iron rod.)

43 Then, my brethren, ye shall ^areap the ^brewards of your faith, and your diligence, and patience, and long-suffering, waiting for the tree to bring forth ^cfruit unto you.

CHAPTER 33

Zenos taught that men should pray and worship in all places, and that judgments are turned away because of the Son—Zenock taught that mercy is bestowed because of the Son—Moses had lifted up in the wilderness a type of the Son of God. [About 74 B.C.]

1 NOW after Alma had spoken these words, they sent forth unto him desiring to know whether they should believe in ^aone God, that they might obtain this fruit of which he had spoken, or ^bhow they should plant the ^cseed, or the word of which he had spoken, which he said must be planted in their hearts; or in what manner they should begin to exercise their faith.

2 And Alma said unto them: Behold, ye have said that ye ^acould not ^bworship your God because ye are cast out of your synagogues. But behold, I say unto you, if ye suppose that ye cannot worship God, ye do greatly err, and ye ought to search the ^cscriptures; if ye suppose that they have taught you this, ye do not understand them.

3 Do ye remember to have read what ^aZenos, the prophet of old, has said concerning prayer or ^bworship?

4 For he said: Thou art merciful, O God, for thou hast heard my prayer, even when I was ^ain the wilderness; yea, thou wast merciful when I prayed concerning those who were mine ^benemies, and thou didst turn them to me. (His enemies became friends.)

5 Yea, O God, and thou wast merciful unto me when I did cry unto thee in my ^afield; when I did cry unto thee in my prayer, and thou didst hear me.

6 And again, O God, when I did turn to my house thou didst hear me in my prayer.

7 And when I did turn unto my ^acloset, O Lord, and prayed unto thee, thou didst hear me.

8 Yea, thou art merciful unto thy children when they cry unto thee, to be heard of thee and not of men, and thou ^awilt hear them.

9 Yea, O God, thou hast been merciful unto me, and heard my cries in the midst of thy congregations.

10 Yea, and thou hast also heard me when I have been ^acast out and have been despised by mine enemies; yea, thou didst hear my cries, and wast angry with mine enemies, and thou didst ^bvisit them in thine anger with speedy destruction.

11 And thou didst hear me because of mine afflictions and my ^asincerity; and it is because of thy Son (Bruce R. McConkie: “Statements by the seers of Old Testament times, which have been preserved for us, that God should have a Son are few and far between... Actually the Book of Mormon tells us more about the usage of the name the Son of God by Old Testament prophets than does that volume of Holy Writ itself. Nephi the son of Helaman, as he sought diligently to prepare his people for the coming of their Messiah, told them that both Moses and Abraham bore record ‘that the Son of God should come’; that ‘many before the days of Abraham’ so certified; that ‘all the holy prophets’ from Abraham to Moses did likewise; and that ‘since the days of Abraham there have been many prophets that have testified of

these things,' including Zenos, Zenock, Ezias, Isaiah, and Jeremiah, all of whom labored among Old Testament peoples. The same witness, he said, had been born by 'almost all of our fathers' among the Nephites. (Hel. 8:13-23.) Alma, with the brass plates of Laban as his source, quoted these words from a prayer of Zenos: (quotes Alma 33:3-16). Fragmentary as our records are, it is nonetheless clear that all of the prophets of Old Testament times knew and taught that the promised Messiah would be the Son of God." (*The Promised Messiah*, p. 144)) that thou hast been thus merciful unto me, therefore I will cry unto thee in all mine ^bafflictions, for in thee is my joy; for thou hast turned thy judgments away from me, ^cbecause of thy Son.

12 And now Alma said unto them: Do ye ^abelieve those scriptures which have been written by them of old?

13 Behold, if ye do, ye must believe what ^aZenos said; for, behold he said: Thou hast turned away thy judgments because of thy Son.

14 Now behold, my brethren, I would ask if ye have read the scriptures? If ye have, how can ye ^adisbelieve on the Son of God?

15 For it is ^anot written that Zenos alone spake of these things, but ^bZenock also spake of these things—

16 For behold, he said: Thou art angry, O Lord, with this people, because they ^awill not understand thy mercies which thou hast bestowed upon them because of thy Son.

17 And now, my brethren, ye see that a second prophet of old has testified of the Son of God, and because the people would not understand his words they ^astoned him to death.

18 But behold, this is not all; these are not the only ones who have spoken concerning the Son of God.

19 Behold, he was spoken of by ^aMoses; yea, and behold a ^btype was ^craised up in the wilderness, that whosoever would look upon it might live. And many did look and live. (*The brazen serpent. Numbers 21:5-9: 5 And the people ^aspake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for *there is* no bread, neither *is there any* water; and our soul loatheth this light bread. 6 And the LORD sent ^afiery ^bserpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died. 7 ¶ Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, We have ^asinned, for we have spoken against the LORD, and against thee; pray unto the LORD, that he take away the serpents from us. And Moses ^bprayed for the people. 8 And the LORD said unto Moses, ^aMake thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall ^blive. 9 And Moses made a ^aserpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived.)*

20 But few understood the meaning of those things, and this because of the hardness of their hearts. But there were many who were so hardened that they would not look, therefore they perished. Now the reason they would not look is because they did not believe that it would ^aheal them.

21 O my brethren, if ye could be healed by merely casting about your eyes that ye might be healed, would ye not behold quickly, or would ye rather harden your hearts in ^aunbelief, and be ^bslothful, that ye would not cast about your eyes, that ye might perish?

22 If so, wo shall come upon you; but if not so, then cast about your eyes and ^abegin to believe in the Son of God, that he will come to redeem his people, and that he shall suffer and die to ^batone for their sins; and that he shall ^crise again from the dead, which shall bring to pass the ^dresurrection, that all men shall stand before him, to be ^ejudged at the last and judgment day, according to their ^fworks.

23 And now, my brethren, I desire that ye shall ^aplant this word in your hearts, and as it beginneth to swell even so nourish it by your faith. And behold, it will become a tree, ^bspringing up in you unto ^ceverlasting life. And then may God grant unto you that your ^dburdens may be light, through the joy of his Son. And even all this can ye do if ye ^ewill. Amen.

CHAPTER 34

Amulek testifies that the word is in Christ unto salvation—Unless an atonement is made, all mankind must perish—The whole law of Moses points toward the sacrifice of the Son of God—The eternal plan of redemption is based on faith and repentance—Pray for temporal and spiritual blessings—This life is the time for men to prepare to meet God—Work out your salvation with fear and trembling. [About 74 B.C.]

1 AND now it came to pass that after Alma had spoken these words unto them he sat down upon the ground, and ^aAmulek arose and began to teach them, saying: (The law of witnesses.)

2 My brethren, I think that it is impossible that ye should be ignorant of the things which have been spoken concerning the coming of Christ, who is taught by us to be the Son of God; yea, I know that ^athese things were taught unto you bountifully before your dissension from among us.

3 And as ye have desired of my beloved brother that he should make known unto you ^awhat ye should do, because of your afflictions; and he hath spoken somewhat unto you to prepare your minds; yea, and he hath exhorted you unto faith and to patience—

4 Yea, even that ye would have so much faith as even to ^aplant the word in your hearts, that ye may try the experiment of its goodness.

5 And we have beheld that the great question (The great question is: What think ye of Christ? Neal A. Maxwell: “My friends and neighbors, brothers and sisters all, the most important question in human history is one which will not go away. It echoes down the corridors of time. And “Jesus asked them...What think ye of Christ?” (Matt 22:42) Sooner or later, this is the vital question for all mortals, including you, my friends. And a failure to answer this question is an answer.” (Investigator Fireside, Jan. 5, 1984) “...the Book of Mormon provides resounding and great answers to what Amulek designated as ‘the great question’; namely, is there really a redeeming Christ? (Alma 34:5-6) The Book of Mormon with clarity and with evidence says, ‘Yes! Yes! Yes!’ Moreover, in its recurring theme, the book even declares that ‘all things which have been given of God from the beginning of the world, unto man, are the typifying of [Christ]’ (2 Ne 11:4). How striking its answers are, considering all that God might have chosen to tell us! He, before whom all things—past, present, and future—are continually, has chosen to tell us about the ‘gospel’—the transcending ‘good news,’ the resplendent answers to ‘the great question.’” (“The Book of Mormon: A Great Answer to ‘The Great Question’”, p. 1)) which is in your minds is whether the word be in the Son of God, or whether there shall be ^ano Christ.

6 And ye also beheld that my brother has proved unto you, in many instances, that the ^aword is in Christ unto salvation.

7 My brother has called upon the words of ^aZenos, that redemption cometh through the Son of God, and also upon the words of ^bZenock; and also he has appealed unto ^cMoses, to prove that these things are true. (Alma and Amulek are providing a “double double” witness. They show three ancient prophets, and the two of them. Each set meets the requisite number, and in addition, the ancient and the present form another double set of witnesses. In this conception of witnesses, Alma and Amulek are presenting what they understand to be an iron-clad witness of the coming of Christ. Brant Gardner.)

8 And now, behold, I will ^atestify unto you of myself that these things are true. Behold, I say unto you, that I do know that Christ shall come among the children of men, to take upon him the ^btransgressions of his people, and that he shall ^catone for the sins of the world; for the Lord God hath spoken it.

9 For it is expedient that an ^aatonement should be made (Had there been no atonement, no amount of goodness, no amount of caring and concern, no amount of human strength could have made up the difference. We are forever indebted to him who bought us with his blood. DCBM, 3:246); for according to the great ^bplan of the Eternal God there must be an atonement made, or else all mankind must unavoidably perish; yea, all are hardened; yea, all are ^cfallen and are lost, and must perish except it be through the atonement which it is expedient should be made. (It is not the whole soul – spirit and flesh – that is corrupt and “an enemy to God,” but only the person’s fallen mortal nature – a nature inherited

through Adam's necessary transgression. Through the atonement of Christ, this initially corrupt nature may be overcome, sanctified, and glorified. Therefore, humanity's condemnation is not that as mortals they were born carnal, sensual and devilish, but that they choose to remain so when given the opportunity to repent and overcome that condition. Rodney Turner, *Studies in the Scriptures*, 8:31)

10 For it is expedient that there should be a great and last ^asacrifice; (J. Rueben Clark, Jr.: Under the new covenant that came in with Christ, the sinner must offer the sacrifice out of his own life, not by offering the blood of some other creature; he must give up his sins, he must repent, he himself must make the sacrifice and that sacrifice was calculated to reach out into the life of the sinner in the future so that he would become a better and changed man...Every sinner so repenting, every sinner so sorrowing for the past by an abandonment of the practices of the past, moves into a new world where, with proper covenants, he thrusts away out of his life the wrongs of his past. *Meaning of the Peace of Which the Angels Speak*, p. 15.) yea, not a ^bsacrifice of man, neither of beast, neither of any manner of fowl; for it shall not be a human sacrifice; but it must be an ^cinfinite and ^deternal ^esacrifice. (Bruce R. McConkie: "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....Now our Lord's jurisdiction and power extend far beyond the limits of this one small earth on which we dwell. He is under the Father, the creator of worlds without number (Moses 1:33). And through the power of his atonement the inhabitants of these worlds, the revelation says, 'are begotten sons and daughters unto God' (DC 76:24), which means that the atonement of Christ, being literally and truly infinite, applies to an infinite number of earths." (*Mormon Doctrine*, pp. 64-5) Russell M. Nelson: "His Atonement is infinite—without an end. It was also infinite in that all humankind would be saved from never-ending death (see 2 Ne 9:7; 25:16; Alma 34:10,12,14). 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 Heb 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 DC 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." (*Ensign*, Nov. 1996, p. 35 as taken from *Latter-day Commentary on the Book of Mormon* compiled by K. Douglas Bassett, p. 114) Christ's atonement was great and last in terms of its spiritual significance, its impact, its timelessness and eternal and everlasting relevance, not necessarily in terms of its chronology, John the Baptist, as a part of his prayer of ordination upon the heads of Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery, explained that the Aaronic Priesthood "shall never be taken again from the earth, until the sons of Levi do offer again an offering unto the Lord in righteousness." According to Oliver Cowdery, the Baptist said: "Upon you my fellow-servants, in the name of Messiah, I confer this Priesthood and this authority, which shall remain upon earth, **that** the sons of Levi may yet offer an offering unto the Lord in righteousness. Likewise, a modern revelation speaks of the sons of Moses and the sons of Aaron offering an acceptable sacrifice in the temple to be erected in Independence, Jackson County, Missouri. Joseph Smith taught: The offering of sacrifice has ever been connected and forms a part of the duties of the Priesthood. It began with the Priesthood, and will be continued until after the coming of Christ...These sacrifices, as well as every ordinance belonging to the Priesthood, will, when the Temple of the Lord shall be built, and the sons of Levi be purified, be fully restored and attended to in all their powers, ramifications, and blessings. This ever did and ever will exist when the powers of the Melchizedek Priesthood are sufficiently manifest; else how can the restitution of all things spoken of by the Holy Prophets be brought to pass? It is not to be understood that the law of Moses will be established again with all its rites and variety of ceremonies; this has never been spoken of by the prophets; but those things which existed prior to Moses' day, namely, sacrifice, will be continued. It may be asked by some, what necessity for sacrifice, since the Great Sacrifice was offered? In answer to which, if repentance, baptism, and faith existed prior to the days of Christ, what necessity for them since that

time? It may be that such a sacrifice, as a part of the restitution of all things, will be instituted one final time to point toward the great and last sacrifice of Jesus the Lamb. Bruce R. McConkie, *Mortal Messiah*, 1:128. DCBM, 3:249-250.)

11 Now there is not any man that can sacrifice his own blood which will atone for the sins of another. Now, if a man murdereth, behold will our law, which is ^ajust, take the life of his brother? I say unto you, Nay.

12 But the law requireth the ^alife of him who hath ^bmurdered; therefore there can be nothing which is short of an infinite atonement which will suffice for the sins of the world.

13 Therefore, it is expedient that there should be a great and last sacrifice, and then shall there be, or it is expedient there should be, a ^astop to the shedding of ^bblood; (Bruce R. McConkie: “When the Lamb of God, in Gethsemane and at Golgotha, worked out the infinite and eternal atonement and permitted himself to be slain for the sins of the world, it was intended that the sacrificial ordinances prefiguring that most transcendent of all events should cease. No one has set forth why this was destined to be with the clarity and plainness found in the words of the prophet Amulek...“Appearing in resurrected glory to his Nephite kinsmen, our Lord affirmed the end of the old order and announced the beginning of the new one. ‘By me redemption cometh,’ he said, ‘and in me is the law of Moses fulfilled. . . . And ye shall offer up unto me no more the shedding of blood.’ It is the Lord Jesus who is the Lord Jehovah who is speaking, which means that the sacrifices of old were offered to Christ. ‘Yea, your sacrifices and your burnt offerings shall be done away, for I will accept none of your sacrifices and your burnt offerings. And ye shall offer for a sacrifice unto me a broken heart and a contrite spirit.’ (3 Ne. 9:17-20.)” (*The Mortal Messiah*, p. 127) J. Reuben Clark, Jr.: “Under the new covenant that came in with Christ, the sinner must offer the sacrifice out of his own life, not by offering the blood of some other creature; he must give up his sins, he must repent, he himself must...become a better and changed man.” (*Church News*, 12/24/60, p. 15)) then shall the ^claw of Moses be fulfilled; yea, it shall be all fulfilled, every jot and tittle, and none shall have passed away.

14 And behold, this is the whole ^ameaning of the ^blaw, (Jeffrey R. Holland: “Unlike the Israelites in the Old World, the faithful Nephites of the New World found it easier to recognize the return of the higher gospel and thereby let go of the ancient law of Moses. For one thing, they seemed to grasp more readily that Christ had not destroyed the law but fulfilled it—given it breadth, dimension, meaning, and reality, just as a prophecy is spoken of as being ‘fulfilled.’” (*Christ and the New Covenant*, p. 155)) every whit ^cpointing to that great and last ^dsacrifice; and that great and last ^esacrifice will be the Son of God, yea, ^finfinite and eternal.

15 And thus he shall bring ^asalvation to all those who shall believe on his name; this being the intent of this last sacrifice, to bring about the bowels of mercy, which overpowereth justice, and bringeth about means unto men that they may have faith unto repentance.

16 And thus ^amercy can satisfy the demands of ^bjustice, (“Life, like a computer, has default settings, conditions that will automatically apply unless we take positive action to avoid them. Thus, if we refuse to make Christ our Lord by taking positive steps to enter into his covenant, then Satan becomes our lord by default. Christ by choice or Satan by default—there are no other options. “Christ ‘shall bring salvation to all those who shall believe on his name; this being the intent of this last sacrifice, to bring about the bowels of mercy, which overpowereth justice, and bringeth about means unto men that they may have faith unto repentance. And thus mercy can satisfy the demands of justice, and encircles them in the arms of safety.’ (Alma 34:15-16.) The choice before us is mercy or justice. Either choice can be accommodated, and either choice is compatible with the nature and plan of God, but, as in the choice between the Lord and Satan, there are no third alternatives. Again, life has default settings, and they are set for justice. We can choose the mercy that is offered through the gospel covenant, but if we refuse that mercy, we will receive justice. Now here is an odd thing about the nature of mercy: by definition, mercy can only be mercy if we don’t deserve it. For if we deserve something, then it becomes a matter of justice that we receive it. So it ceases to be a matter of mercy. Thus, in this sense at least, to give or to

receive mercy is always somewhat unfair. But one of the great beauties of the gospel, some of the best news of all, is that Jesus Christ does not mind this unfairness. He is willing to suffer unfairly and compensate justice himself out of his own person in order to extend mercy to weaker beings like us. This willingness on his part to pay more than his fair share and to carry more than his fair load in order to grant mercy to others constitutes the grace of Christ.” (Stephen R. Robinson, *Believing Christ*, p. 60)) and encircles them in the arms of safety, while he that exercises no faith unto repentance is exposed to the whole law of the demands of ^cjustice; (Justice may be satisfied in two ways. 1) keeping the law perfectly, or 2) suffering the effects of the broken law. Christ satisfied the demands of justice in both of these ways; he kept the law perfectly for himself and suffered in the Garden of Gethsemane and on the cross for and in behalf of those of us who repent. Those who refuse to repent are exposed to the whole law of the demands of justice, that is they must face without divine aid the consequences of wilfull sin. They therefore lost the opportunity for that rehabilitative redemption which can only come through Christ’s enabling power. Bruce Hafen said: I once wondered if those who refuse to repent but who then satisfy the law of justice by paying for their own sins are then worthy to enter the celestial kingdom. The answer is no. The entrance requirements for celestial life are simply higher than merely satisfying the law of justice. For that reason, paying for our sins will not bear the same fruit as repenting of our sins. Justice is a law of balance and order and it must be satisfied, either through our payment or his. But if we decline the Savior’s invitation to let him carry our sins, and then satisfy justice by ourselves, we will not yet have experienced the complete rehabilitation that can occur through a combination of divine assistance and genuine repentance. Working together, those forces have the power permanently to change our hearts and our lives, preparing us for celestial life. *The Broken Heart*, p. 7-8. DCBM, 3:251-252.) therefore only unto him that has faith unto repentance is brought about the great and eternal ^dplan of ^eredemption.

17 Therefore may God grant unto you, my brethren, that ye may begin to exercise your ^afaith unto repentance, that ye begin to ^bcall upon his holy name, that he would have mercy upon you;

18 Yea, cry unto him for mercy; for he is ^amighty to save.

19 Yea, humble yourselves, and continue in ^aprayer unto him.

20 Cry unto him when ye are in your ^afields, yea, over all your flocks.

21 ^aCry unto him in your houses, yea, over all your household, both morning, mid-day, and evening.

22 Yea, cry unto him against the power of your ^aenemies.

23 Yea, ^acry unto him against the ^bdevil, who is an enemy to all ^crighteousness. (We should always be praying for strength to overcome the temptations of the adversary.)

24 Cry unto him over the crops of your fields, that ye may prosper in them.

25 Cry over the flocks of your fields, that they may increase.

26 But this is not all; ye must ^apour out your souls in your ^bclosets, and your secret places, (Elder Francis M. Gibbons: "Satan and his followers, who have been cast out of God's presence and are dead to His spirit, are excluded from those who, by the spirit of prophecy and revelation, may know the thoughts and the intents of our hearts. So, in his wisdom and mercy, God has provided a channel of communication between him and his children on earth that Satan, our common enemy, cannot invade. This is the channel of secret prayer. The significance of this to the Latter-day Saint is profound, for by this means we are able to communicate with our Heavenly Father in secrecy, confident that the adversary cannot intrude." (Joseph B. Wirthlin, *Finding Peace in Our Lives*, p. 163)) and in your wilderness.

27 Yea, and when you do not cry unto the Lord, let your ^ahearts be ^bfull, drawn out in prayer unto him continually (Let the solemnities of eternity rest upon your minds. D&C 43:34) for your ^cwelfare, and also for the welfare of ^dthose who are around you. (Joseph Fielding Smith: “(quoting Alma 34) I think that is very excellent doctrine, and I read it to impress upon your minds the season of prayer. The season of prayer is in the morning before the family separates. A good time for prayer is when you assemble at the table before you partake of the morning meal, and let the members of the family take turn in the

praying. That is the season of prayer. The season of prayer for the merchant is in the morning when he goes to his place of business and before he begins his day's work, over his merchandise. The time of prayer for the shepherd, is when he is out with his flocks watching over them. The time for the farmer to pray is when he goes with his plow into the field, when he goes to sow his grain, and when he goes to gather his harvest. And if a man will pray as he is commanded to do in this passage of scripture which I have read, then he more than likely will be found in all things righteously keeping the commandments of the Lord. He will not be found scheming to take advantage of his neighbor in some trade or bargain, but in all things dealing justly, because he has prayed in the morning and has in his heart the spirit of prayer throughout the day, that the Lord will bless him in the increase of his goods, of his fields, of his flocks, or whatever it may be he is engaged in. So that is the season of prayer.” (Conference Report, Oct. 1919, p. 143))

28 And now behold, my beloved brethren, I say unto you, do not suppose that this is all; for after ye have done all these things, if ye ^aturn away the ^bneedy, and the ^cnaked, and visit not the sick and afflicted, and ^dimpart of your substance, if ye have, to those who stand in need—I say unto you, if ye do not any of these things, behold, your ^eprayer is ^fvain, and availeth you nothing, and ye are as ^ghypocrites who do deny the faith. (Elder S. Dilworth Young: “The revelations given to Joseph Smith on this subject are numerous and were among the early ones. To care for the poor is one of the first and early obligations. To help the needy and those who mourn follows close behind. All of us have some time, but those who are not given great responsibility in the organizations have more time to seek out the poor, needy, and helpless. And this help is badly needed. All about us are those in need of encouragement, assistance, and help—help of a kind we can all give, not money, but time and attention and personal encouragement, especially to those who must bear great responsibility for loved ones and who cannot pass it to others for the simple reason there are no others to whom to pass it. . . . Those with no ward assignments have more time to pursue this great work of the salvation of souls. Let us not sit back jealous of those giving attention to the stake, the ward, the auxiliaries, but seek our salvation where the Lord appointed us, among those who, weak in spirit, weak in body, or weak in desire, need to be encouraged, need to be raised up in the kingdom of God on this earth.” (*Ensign*, Dec. 1971, p. 66))

29 Therefore, if ye do not remember to be ^acharitable, ye are as dross, which the refiners do cast out, (it being of no worth) and is trodden under foot of men.

30 And now, my brethren, I would that, after ye have ^areceived so many witnesses, seeing that the holy scriptures testify of these things, ye come forth and bring ^bfruit unto repentance.

31 Yea, I would that ye would come forth and ^aharden not your hearts any longer; for behold, now is the time and the ^bday of your ^csalvation; and therefore, if ye will repent (In the final analysis, people have but two choices: to be saved in the kingdom of God or to be damned in the kingdom of the devil; there is no third alternative. Whatever the choice, it will be made this side of eternity before the last judgment. Rodney Turner, *Studies in the Scriptures*, 8:34) and ^dharden not your hearts, immediately shall the great plan of redemption be brought about unto you. (“Those who truly desire repentance and willingly turn to the Lord, forsaking their sins, find that the Savior *Immediately* effects the plan of redemption in their behalf. It would seem only fair that years of unrepentant sin would necessitate years of repentance and sorrow in order to eradicate the same; however, this is not the case. Great revolutionary changes can be effected *immediately* through deep, heart-felt repentance. (See Alma 15:3-11; 22:1-23; 36:11-20.) This repentance can bring forgiveness, complete forgiveness. Amulek was speaking in 74 B.C., over a hundred years before Jesus would actually make the atoning sacrifice. But the people who lived before Christ did not have to wait for the time of his coming to have the Atonement become effective. It could be applied *immediately* if they exercised faith and repentance.” (*Book of Mormon Student Manual*, 1981, p. 303))

32 For behold, this ^alife is the time for men to ^bprepare to meet God (Hartman Rector, Jr.: “It may be very difficult to gain forgiveness for these kinds of sins. President Brigham Young said it is a hundred times easier to repent here on the earth than it is in the spirit world. By the same token, if we go there in

the right condition, it is a hundred times easier to learn in the spirit world than it is here in this life. So we should do what we can do best where we are. Now is the best time to repent; then will be the best time to learn.” (*Conference Report*, Oct. 1970, p. 74) Melvin J. Ballard: “This life is the time to repent. That is why I presume it will take a thousand years after the first resurrection until the last group will be prepared to come forth. It will take them a thousand years to do what it would have taken but three-score and ten to accomplish in this life.” (Spencer W. Kimball, *The Miracle of Forgiveness*, p. 10)); yea, behold the day of ^cthis life (“This life” means “this probationary state” and “that eternal world” is the post-resurrection, not the spirit, world. Rodney Turner, *Studies in the Scriptures*, 8:35) is the day for men to perform their ^dlabors. (James E. Talmage: We know not fully on what terms repentance will be obtainable in the hereafter; but to suppose that the soul who has willfully rejected the opportunity of repentance in this life will find it easy to repent there is contrary to reason. To procrastinate the day of repentance is to deliverately place ourselves in the power of the adversary. *Articles of Faith*, 115)

33 And now, as I said unto you before, as ye have had so many ^awitnesses, therefore, I beseech of you that ye do not ^bprocrastinate the day of your ^crepentance (Ezra Taft Benson: “Some people intend to make a decision and then never get around to it... They intend to paint the barn, to fix the fence, to haul away that old machinery or remove that old shed, but the time of decision just never arrives. Some of us face a similar situation in our personal lives... We intend to pay a full tithing, to begin keeping the Word of Wisdom, to make our initial home teaching visits early in the month. However, without actual decision followed by implementation, the weeks and months go by and nothing is accomplished. We could drift into eternity on these kinds of good intentions. The Lord apparently sensed this weakness in His children, for He said: ‘Wherefore, if ye believe me, ye will labor while it is called today. (D&C 64:25)’” (*God, Family, Country*, p. 389.) Richard L. Evans: “It sometimes seems that we live as if we wonder when life is going to begin. It isn’t always clear just what we are waiting for, but some of us sometimes persist in waiting so long that life slips by—finding us still waiting for something that has been going on all the time. ... This is the life in which the work of this life is to be done. Today is as much a part of eternity as any day a thousand years ago or as will be any day a thousand years hence. This is it, whether we are thrilled or disappointed, busy or bored! This is life, and it is passing.” (*Improvement Era*, Jan. 1967, p. 65.)) 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 ^dnight of ^edarkness wherein there can be no labor performed. (Thanks to the merciful Redeemer, eternity – the night of darkness wherein there can be no labor performed – was seemingly held back, and the probationary “day of salvation” extended even to the second resurrection. This post mortal gospel dispensation enables those who repent after death to come forth from their prison of torment and despair and stand on the right hand of God – the hand of salvation. Thus the gates of hell do not prevail against Christ and his priesthood. The vast majority of mankind will pass through those gates and be saved in the “many mansions” comprising the immortal kingdom of God. But to forever reject Christ is to forfeit mercy. In that event, it is as though there had been no redemption made. Justice exercises total dominion, and mercy stands mute. Such is the fate of those children of perdition who, never repenting, are never redeemed. They are known as the filthy still who are sealed up to Satan and suffer the fullness of the second death. The rest of mankind – whatever their sins – will eventually repent: “And after they have paid the penalty of their transgressions, and are washed clean, shall receive a reward according to their works for they are heirs of salvation.” D&C 138:59. And so beginning with the Book of Mormon, God’s great plan of happiness for all of his children has been revealed, line upon line, in this, the dispensation of the fullness of times. Rodney Turner, *Studies in the Scriptures*, 8:35-36. If we are not careful, if we do not prepare properly, if we do not focus upon things that matter most, we shall eventually come, unprepared, face to face with death. While the sun shines we are expected to walk in the light and perform labors appropriate to the light, for sooner than we think we shall be called upon to pass through that veil which separates the embodied from the disembodied. The spirit world, called here the night of darkness, is a place wherein righteous works are to be continued, not begun. DCBM, 3:255. James E.

Faust: If the repentance of the wayward children does not happen in this life, is it still possible for the cords of the sealing to be strong enough for them yet to work out their repentance? In the Doctrine and Covenants we are told: “The dead who repent will be redeemed, through obedience to the ordinances of the house of God, And after they have paid the penalty of their transgressions, and are washed clean, shall receive a reward according to their work, for they are heirs of salvation. (D&C 138:58-59) Perhaps in this life we are not given to fully understand how enduring the sealing cords of righteous parents are to their children. CR, Apr. 2003, 68.)

34 Ye cannot say, when ye are brought to that awful ^acrisis, that I will repent, that I will return to my God. Nay, ye cannot say this; for that same spirit (That “same spirit” is one’s distilled, fundamental self, stripped of all the transitory, superficial baggage acquired in mortality. It is what the soul really is in its fixed, resurrected state, rather than what it appeared to be at any given moment in its fluid, probationary state. What it really is determines what it really desires. These desires, free of all mitigating entanglements, constitute the soul’s own self-judgment. Rodney Turner, *Studies in the Scriptures*, 8:35) which doth ^bpossess 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. (Hartman Rector, Jr.: “Sometimes we make excuses for ourselves, when we do what we should not do or fall short of what we should have done. We use such expressions as, ‘Oh! the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak.’ With such rationalizations we insinuate that it is completely our physical body’s fault that we sin. In my opinion, this is not true. I believe the physical body is a very strong part of us and is of great benefit to us. Among other reasons, it was given to us to help us overcome our addictions, bad habits, and evil desires. The body is very obedient; generally speaking, it will do exactly what the spirit tells it to do. So it is not the physical body that we are struggling with; it is the spirit we must bring into subjection. Sometimes we seem to get the idea that in the spirit world, we will be completely different individuals; we will suddenly undergo a miraculous change in our character when we die. But nothing could be further from the truth. We, our spirits, do not change at death; we are still the same. Amulek, a great Book of Mormon prophet, tells us plainly what the conditions in the spirit world will be.” (*Conference Report*, Oct. 1970, p. 73) Lowell Bennion had this same understanding of this passage: “How do we interpret this passage? Is there no opportunity whatever for repentance in life beyond the grave? Some people think so, and that may be right with regard to those who are spiritually dead. Taking this passage by itself, with no reference to other gospel fundamentals, we could easily conclude this. But let us remember that God is our Father—a loving, merciful Father—and that his work and glory is to redeem his children. He is not likely to give up easily nor quickly. Judging by the attitude of his Son, the Father would, we believe, never close the door to repentance for his children. Some, such as the sons of perdition, may sink so low that they lose the power to repent because they “die as to things pertaining unto righteousness.” (Alma 12:16.) Perhaps others who have procrastinated their repentance may find the faith and power to repent in the eternal world. This is our faith when we do work for our kindred dead, some of whom, no doubt, were first-rate sinners. We are not discrediting Amulek’s plea to repent now. It is the sensible thing to do, for happiness in this life as well as for our eternal welfare. And no one knows who will have the strength to repent hereafter. The whole gospel cannot be taught in one sermon. However, as we interpret a sermon we can and should do so in the context of the gospel as a whole.” (Lowell L. Bennion, *The Best of Lowell L. Bennion: Selected Writings 1928-1988*, edited by Eugene England [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1988], 207.) A man may receive the priesthood and all its privileges and blessings, but until he learns to overcome the flesh, his temper, his tongue, his disposition to indulge in the things God has forbidden, he cannot come into the celestial kingdom of God – he must overcome either in this life or in the life to come. But 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. It is my judgment that any man or woman can do more to conform to the laws of God in one year in this life than they could in ten years when they are dead. The spirit only can repent and change, and

then the battle has to go forward with the flesh afterwards. It is much easier to overcome and serve the Lord when both flesh and spirit are combined as one. This is the time when men are more pliable and susceptible. We will find when we are dead every desire, every feeling will be greatly intensified. When clay is pliable, it is much easier to change than when it gets hard and sets. This life is the time to repent. That is why I presume it will take a thousand years after the first resurrection until the last group will be prepared to come forth. It will take them a thousand years to do what it would have taken but three score and ten to accomplish in this life. You remember the vision of the redemption of the dead as given to the Church through the late President Joseph F. Smith. President Smith saw the spirits of the righteous dead before the resurrection and the language is the same as one of the Prophet Joseph's revelations – that they, the righteous dead, looked upon the absence of their spirits from their bodies as a bondage. I grant you that the righteous dead will be at peace, but I tell you that when we go out of this life, leave this body, we will desire to do many things that we cannot do at all without the body. We will be seriously handicapped, and we will long for the body, we will pray for that early reunion with our bodies. We will know then what advantage it is to have a body... The point I have in mind is that we are sentencing ourselves to long periods of bondage, separating our spirits from our bodies, or we are shortening that period, according to the way in which we overcome and master ourselves. Melvin J. Ballard, *The Three Degrees of Glory*, p. 11-13. There are no murderers and liars and whoremongers in the telestial kingdom, only repentant murderers, liars, and whoremongers. DCBM, 3:257.)

35 For behold, if ye have procrastinated the day of your repentance even until death, behold, ye have become ^asubjected to the spirit of the devil, and he doth ^bseal you his; therefore, the Spirit of the Lord hath withdrawn from you, and hath no place in you, and the devil hath all power over you; and this is the final state of the wicked. (Telestial persons shall eventually repent of their sins, and thus being subject to Satan is not exactly their final state; they shall inherit a kingdom of glory. This verse seems to apply more directly to the sons of perdition, those who have lost all desire and disposition to repent, who have gone beyond the point of no return, who shall be resurrected but to a kingdom of no glory. Such is their final state. DCBM, 3:257. Joseph Fielding Smith: Now I have read to you the scripture (Alma 34:30-35). I believe it is the word of God "with the bark on it," where the prophet of the Lord declared unto apostates and those who have heard the gospel that if they did not repent and come into the Church now, in this day of repentance, but continued to procrastinate their repentance unto the end, that the night would come when no work could be done for them, and their souls would be lost. I think that is pretty good scripture. I do not know how the Lord could do otherwise in justice. *Doctrines of Salvation*, 2:189. Suppose, then, that a man is evil in his heart – wholly given up to wickedness, and in that condition dies, his spirit will enter into the spirit world intent upon evil. On the other hand, if we are striving with all the powers and faculties God has given us to improve upon our talents, to prepare ourselves to dwell in eternal life... With what disposition will our spirits enter their next state? They will be still striving to do the things of God, only in a much greater degree – learning, increasing, growing in grace and in the knowledge of the truth. If we are faithful to our religion, when we go into the spirit world, the fallen spirits – Lucifer and the third part of the heavenly hosts that came with him and the spirits of wicked men who have dwelt upon this earth, the whole of them combined will have no influence over our spirits. Is not that an advantage? Yes. All the rest of the children of men are more or less subject to them, and they are subject to them as they were while here in the flesh. *Discourses of Brigham Young*, 379.)

36 And this I know, because the Lord hath said he dwelleth not in ^aunholy temples, but in the ^bhearts of the ^crighteous doth he dwell; yea, and he has also said that the righteous shall sit down in his kingdom, to go no more out; but their garments should be made white through the ^dblood of the Lamb.

37 And now, my beloved brethren, I desire that ye should remember these things, and that ye should ^awork out your salvation with fear before God (Heber C. Kimball: "Jesus says, 'Work out your salvation as it is my will to work within you.' Then, again, we are commanded to work out our salvation with fear and trembling. All that hinders us and prevents us progressing faster, and going on from one step to another even as it was with our Father, even the Father and God pertaining to this earth, is our lack of

confidence in the Almighty, and our slothfulness in the things of God. Joseph the Prophet said that our heavenly Father went on from one degree of knowledge to another until he obtained the knowledge that made him God. So also will it be with us, we shall have to advance from one degree of faith to another until we get that knowledge that will prepare us for exaltation in our Father's kingdom. But we must first prove ourselves in this state of probation, then we rise from step to step till we reach that position that is promised to the people of God.” (*Journal of Discourses*, vol. 9, p. 371)), and that ye should no more deny the coming of Christ;

38 That ye ^acontend no more against the Holy Ghost, but that ye receive it, and take upon you the ^bname of Christ; that ye humble yourselves even to the dust, and ^cworship God, in whatsoever place ye may be in, in spirit and in truth; and that ye live in ^dthanksgiving daily, for the many ^emercies and blessings which he doth bestow upon you.

39 Yea, and I also ^aexhort you, my brethren, that ye be ^bwatchful unto prayer continually, that ye may not be led away by the ^ctemptations of the devil, that he may not overpower you, that ye may not become his subjects at the last day; for behold, he rewardeth you ^dno good thing.

40 And now my beloved brethren, I would exhort you to have ^apatience, and that ye bear with all manner of ^bafflictions; that ye do not ^crevile against those who do cast you out because of your ^dexceeding poverty, lest ye become sinners like unto them;

41 But that ye have ^apatience, and bear with those ^bafflictions, with a firm hope that ye shall one day rest from all your afflictions.

CHAPTER 35

The preaching of the word destroys the craft of the Zoramites—They expel the converts, who then join the people of Ammon in Jershon—Alma sorrows because of the wickedness of the people. [About 74 B.C.]

1 NOW it came to pass that after Amulek had made an end of these words, they withdrew themselves from the multitude and came over into the land of ^aJershon.

2 Yea, and the rest of the brethren, after they had preached the word unto the ^aZoramites, also came over into the land of Jershon.

3 And it came to pass that after the more popular part of the Zoramites had consulted together concerning the words which had been preached unto them, they were angry because of the word, for it did destroy their ^acraft; therefore they would not hearken unto the words.

4 And they sent and gathered together throughout all the land all the people, and consulted with them concerning the words which had been spoken.

5 Now their rulers and their priests and their teachers did not let the people know concerning their desires; therefore they found out privily the minds of all the people. (Hugh Nibley: “But if all have free agency in the Book of Mormon, all do not have civil liberties. The Zoramites, as we have seen, had a thought-police, ‘therefore they found out privily the minds of all the people,’ and forthwith deported ‘those who were in favor of the words . . . spoken by Alma’” (*Since Cumorah*, p. 350))

6 And it came to pass that after they had found out the minds of all the people, those who were in favor of the words which had been spoken by Alma and his brethren were cast out of the land; and they were ^amany; and they came over also into the land of Jershon. (The good were cast out from the wicked.)

7 And it came to pass that Alma and his brethren did minister unto them.

8 Now the people of the Zoramites were angry with the ^apeople of Ammon who were in Jershon, and the ^bchief ruler of the Zoramites, being a very wicked man, sent over unto the people of Ammon desiring them that they should cast out of their land all those who came over from them into their land.

9 And he breathed out many threatenings against them. And now the people of Ammon did not fear their words; therefore they did not cast them out, but they did receive all the poor of the Zoramites that came

over unto them; and they did ^anourish them, and did clothe them, and did give unto them lands for their inheritance; and they did administer unto them according to their wants.

10 Now this did ^astir up the Zoramites to ^banger against the people of Ammon, and they began to mix with the Lamanites and to stir them up also to anger against them.

11 And thus the Zoramites and the Lamanites began to make preparations for war against the people of Ammon, and also against the Nephites.

12 And thus ended the ^{*}seventeenth year (74 BC) of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi.

13 And the people of Ammon departed out of the land of Jershon, and came over into the land of Melek, and gave place in the land of Jershon for the armies of the Nephites, that they might contend with the armies of the Lamanites and the armies of the Zoramites; and thus commenced a war betwixt the Lamanites and the Nephites, in the eighteenth year of the reign of the judges; and an ^aaccount shall be given of their wars hereafter.

14 And Alma, and Ammon, and their brethren, and also the ^atwo sons of Alma returned to the land of Zarahemla, after having been instruments in the hands of God of bringing ^bmany of the ^cZoramites to repentance; and as many as were brought to repentance were driven out of their land; but they have lands for their inheritance in the land of Jershon, and they have taken up arms to defend themselves, and their wives, and children, and their lands.

15 Now Alma, being ^agrieved for the iniquity of his people, yea for the wars, and the bloodsheds, and the contentions which were among them; and having been to declare the word, or sent to declare the word, among all the people in every city; and seeing that the hearts of the people began to wax hard, and that they began to be ^boffended because of the strictness of the word (Spencer W. Kimball: “We may get angry with parents, or a teacher, or the Bishop, and dwarf ourselves into nameless anonymity as we shrivel and shrink under the venom and poison of bitterness, little realizing the suffering of the hater, the latter cheats himself... To terminate activity in the Church just to spite leaders or to give vent to wounded feelings is to cheat ourselves.” (*Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, p. 242-3 as taken from *Latter-day Commentary on the Book of Mormon* compiled by K. Douglas Bassett, p. 318)), his heart was exceedingly sorrowful.

16 Therefore, he caused that his sons should be gathered together, that he might give unto them every one his ^acharge, separately, concerning the things pertaining unto righteousness. And we have an account of his commandments, which he gave unto them according to his own record. (This is a transition between this chapter and the next.)

* Verse 12 [74 B.C.].