

Comments on Alma 38

Shiblon appears to have been quite zealous (v. 2-4), but apparently with something of a problem with pride (v. 11) and arrogance (v. 12-14). Alma's comments to him are derivative of his comments to Helaman in ch. 36, but with careful editing. The verse parallel as follows:

<u>Ch. 38</u>	<u>Ch. 36</u>
1	1
4	2
5	3
6	4-5
7	6-9
8	10, 18

The material Alma selects to present to Shiblon focuses more bluntly on having a testimony of the Lord's deliverance of Shiblon (v. 4-5) and Alma's own spiritual rebirth and first-hand knowledge of Jesus Christ's saving power (v. 6-8). Why? Verse 9 informs us. Alma wants Shiblon to have the same kind of understanding of Christ's salvation that he has. So, Shiblon obviously hasn't received it yet. Shiblon hasn't humbled himself before the Lord yet, as has Alma, and therefore has not received a remission of sins and a powerful testimony of Christ, as has Alma. And v. 10-14 informs us as to why he hasn't.

Alma's intent is to encourage Shiblon to continue to be zealous in the Lord (v. 2-3), but to abandon his pride (v. 10-14) and experience the Lord's spiritual powers of deliverance (v. 6-9) as he has experienced His physical powers of deliverance (v. 4-5).

Alma's comments to Helaman would be longer as he was being selected to take over as high priest, and Shiblon was apparently called to be a teacher within the church (cf. v.10, 15).

1 MY son, give ear to my words, for I say unto you, even as I said unto Helaman, that inasmuch as ye shall keep the commandments of God ye shall prosper in the land; and inasmuch as ye will not keep the commandments of God ye shall be cut off from his presence. 2 And now, my son, I trust that I shall have great joy in you, because of your steadiness and your faithfulness unto God; for as you have commenced in your youth to look to the Lord your God, even so I hope that you will continue in keeping his commandments; for blessed is he that endureth to the end.

v1-2 Alma encourages Shiblon to keep the commandments so he will be blessed, because if he doesn't he will be cut off (v. 1). Alma has confidence in him because he is faithful and diligent this far, and hopes he will continue to be (v. 2).

3 I say unto you, my son, that I have had great joy in thee already, because of thy faithfulness and thy diligence, and thy patience and thy long-suffering among the people of the Zoramites. 4 For I know that thou wast in bonds; yea, and I also know that thou wast stoned for the word's sake; and thou didst bear all these things with patience because the Lord was with thee; and now thou knowest that the Lord did deliver thee. 5 And now my son, Shiblon, I would that ye should remember, that as much as ye shall put your trust in God even so much ye shall be delivered out of your trials, and your troubles, and your afflictions, and ye shall be lifted up at the last day.

v3-5 Alma is pleased with Shiblon's perseverance despite significant adversity in the ministry to the Zoramites (v. 3-4), and encourages him to continue to put his trust in God, so he will be delivered from death and hell (v. 5).

v4 The persecutions mentioned here of being in bonds and of being stoned while among the Zoramites is all we ever hear of any physical persecution aimed at the missionary party. No mention is made of anything like this in ch. 31-34.

6 Now, my son, I would not that ye should think that I know these things of myself, but it is the Spirit of God which is in me which maketh these things known unto me; for if I had not been born of God I should not have known these things. 7 But behold, the Lord in his great mercy sent his angel to declare unto me that I must stop the work of destruction among his people; yea, and I have seen an angel face to face, and he spake with me, and his voice was as thunder, and it shook the whole earth. 8 And it came to pass that I was three days and three nights in the most bitter pain and anguish of soul; and never, until I did cry out unto the Lord Jesus Christ for mercy, did I receive a remission of my sins. But behold, I did cry unto him and I did find peace to my soul. 9 And now, my son, I have told you this that ye may learn wisdom, that ye may learn of me that there is no other way or means whereby man can be saved, only in and through Christ. Behold, he is the life and the light of the world. Behold, he is the word of truth and righteousness.

v6-9 Alma bears testimony of his personal conversion story, and tells him his knowledge of the Atonement is because of his tribulations (v. 6-8) and because of this he knows there is no other way for salvation (v. 9).

10 And now, as ye have begun to teach the word even so I would that ye should continue to teach; and I would that ye would be diligent and temperate in all things. 11 See that ye are not lifted up unto pride; yea, see that ye do not boast in your own wisdom, nor of your much strength. 12 Use boldness, but not overbearance; and also see that ye bridle all your passions,

that ye may be filled with love; see that ye refrain from idleness. 13 Do not pray as the Zoramites do, for ye have seen that they pray to be heard of men, and to be praised for their wisdom. 14 Do not say: O God, I thank thee that we are better than our brethren; but rather say: O Lord, forgive my unworthiness, and remember my brethren in mercy--yea, acknowledge your unworthiness before God at all times. 15 And may the Lord bless your soul, and receive you at the last day into his kingdom, to sit down in peace. Now go, my son, and teach the word unto this people. Be sober. My son, farewell.

v10-14 Alma closes by encouraging Shiblon to continue in the ministry (v. 10), but to not be prideful (v. 11). Alma counsels him to overcome his personal flaws (v. 12). He warns him to not pray like the arrogant Zoramites, but to be humble and acknowledge his unworthiness (v. 13-14). Alma then closes by expressing his hope that the Lord will accept Shiblon as his own.

Being the sons of the high priest and former chief judge, it is not hard to see why they could fall into a trap of pride. Alma was certainly a well-known character among all the Nephites, and was probably well-off as a result of his former employment as the chief judge. So, his sons would have enjoyed considerable notoriety and status, and the perks of education that would go along with it.

Copyright © 2024 by S. Kurt Neumiller <kurt.neumiller@gmail.com>. All rights reserved. No part of this text may be reproduced in any form or by any means for commercial gain without the express written consent of the author. Digital or printed copies may be freely made and distributed for personal and public non-commercial use.