

Comments on Alma 41

While the preceding chapter discussed the physical restoration of the individual (i.e., the resurrection, cf. 40:13-14), the text of this chapter deals with the spiritual restoration of the individual.

From the discussion in this chapter it is clear Corianton's view on the Doctrine of Restoration is it would take someone from their sinful state and put them into a righteous state. Now, it is plain for us to see why that is wrong given Alma's discussion, but it wouldn't be hard to see how Corianton could have come to such a conclusion with a little bit of sophistry.

For example, what if the Doctrine of Restoration restored people from the carnal condition of the post-Fall to the pre-Fall condition of Adam & Eve when resurrected? It isn't really fair that everyone post-Adam inherited a fallen state, so wouldn't it be fair to restore everyone to a pre-Fall state? Then Corianton's position seems more plausible. This is just one example, but any number of other possibilities exist when one shifts the focus of restoration off the individual's spirit to the restoration of something else.

The subject of this chapter parallels that of John 5. There, a crippled man is physically healed, but not spiritually healed, because of his lack of faith. Jesus uses that to discourse on the nature of the resurrection. All will be resurrected, but only those who believe on the Son of God will have eternal life. Those who reject Him, as they rejected His servant Moses, will be resurrected, but not have eternal life. This is what Alma is talking about. Being resurrected physically does not necessarily change a person spiritually.

1 AND now, my son, I have somewhat to say concerning the restoration of which has been spoken; for behold, some have wrested the scriptures, and have gone far astray because of this thing. And I perceive that thy mind has been worried also concerning this thing. But behold, I will explain it unto thee.

2 I say unto thee, my son, that the plan of restoration is requisite with the justice of God; for it is requisite that all things should be restored to their proper order. Behold, it is requisite and just, according to the power and resurrection of Christ, that the soul of man should be restored to its body, and that every part of the body should be restored to itself.

3 And it is requisite with the justice of God that men should be judged according to their works; and if their works were good in this life, and the desires of their hearts were good, that they should also, at the last day, be restored unto that which is good. 4 And if their works are evil they shall be restored unto them for evil. Therefore, all things shall be restored to their proper order, every thing to its natural frame--mortality raised to immortality, corruption to

incorruption--raised to endless happiness to inherit the kingdom of God, or to endless misery to inherit the kingdom of the devil, the one on one hand, the other on the other-- 5 The one raised to happiness according to his desires of happiness, or good according to his desires of good; and the other to evil according to his desires of evil; for as he has desired to do evil all the day long even so shall he have his reward of evil when the night cometh.

6 And so it is on the other hand. If he hath repented of his sins, and desired righteousness until the end of his days, even so he shall be rewarded unto righteousness. 7 These are they that are redeemed of the Lord; yea, these are they that are taken out, that are delivered from that endless night of darkness; and thus they stand or fall; for behold, they are their own judges, whether to do good or do evil. 8 Now, the decrees of God are unalterable; therefore, the way is prepared that whosoever will may walk therein and be saved.

v1-8 Alma expresses his concern over Corianton wresting the Scriptures and going astray (v. 1) so he explains to him that the Doctrine of Restoration is in line with the Justice of God in that every part of the spirit and body should be reunited (v. 2). Those who desired and did good things are restored to that good condition (v. 3) and are happy (v. 5a-b), and those who desired evil and did evil are restored to that evil condition (v. 4) to dwell in darkness (v. 5c-d).

Those who repent of their sins and seek after righteousness until the end are granted that righteousness (v. 6). These are the ones who are redeemed from their sins and delivered from darkness. Thus, men are their own judges based upon what they do, as their actions manifest what is in them (v. 7). Thus may a man be saved if he repents of his sins has a godly walk according to God's commands (v. 8).

v1 Alma is likely alluding to some of the former apostates he has had to deal with over the preceding years. For example, Nehor preached all would be saved because the Lord created all mankind and would redeem all of His creation (cf. 1:4).

v7 The idea of being judged here isn't one of the person merely becoming self-aware in the presence of God as a result of the resurrection, as is suggested in 11:43. Alma's point is what determines whether a person is good or evil is their works in mortality. If they do good works then they are good, and if they do evil works then they are evil. Thus, they are their own judges because their works manifest what they are. It is not an intellectual ascent. If the person accepted the Messiah and repented of their sins (v. 6), then the Messiah redeems them from their sins, and takes them out of the eternal punishment they would otherwise face.

9 And now behold, my son, do not risk one more offense against your God upon those points of doctrine, which ye have hitherto risked to commit sin. 10 Do not suppose, because it has been spoken concerning restoration, that ye shall be restored from sin to happiness. Behold, I say unto you, wickedness never was happiness.

11 And now, my son, all men that are in a state of nature, or I would say, in a carnal state, are in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity; they are without God in the world, and they have gone contrary to the nature of God; therefore, they are in a state contrary to the nature of happiness. 12 And now behold, is the meaning of the word restoration to take a thing of a natural state and place it in an unnatural state, or to place it in a state opposite to its nature? 13 O, my son, this is not the case; but the meaning of the word restoration is to bring back again evil for evil, or carnal for carnal, or devilish for devilish--good for that which is good; righteous for that which is righteous; just for that which is just; merciful for that which is merciful.

14 Therefore, my son, see that you are merciful unto your brethren; deal justly, judge righteously, and do good continually; and if ye do all these things then shall ye receive your reward; yea, ye shall have mercy restored unto you again; ye shall have justice restored unto you again; ye shall have a righteous judgment restored unto you again; and ye shall have good rewarded unto you again.

15 For that which ye do send out shall return unto you again, and be restored; therefore, the word restoration more fully condemneth the sinner, and justifieth him not at all.

v9-15 Alma now turns his attention from the general (v. 1-8) to the specific case of Corianton. Alma warns him off from twisting the Doctrine of Restoration to justify his sin (v. 9), as "restoration" does not mean to take someone wicked and sinful and change them to happy and righteous (v. 10). The condition of carnal men is contrary to the condition of God (v. 11), so carnal men will not be restored to the condition of God.

Alma then rhetorically questions Corianton on how it could be possible to "restore" something to a condition it is not in (v. 12). It cannot as that is not what "restoration" means, so evil goes for evil and good goes for good (v. 13).

Alma then admonishes Corianton to do good and be merciful because those things will be restored to him (v. 14). What a person sends out comes back to them in the form of Judgement upon their works. Thus, the Doctrine of Restoration doesn't make the sinner righteous at all, it does quite the opposite (v. 15).

v9 It seems likely Corianton has been rationalizing his situation over the errors he has committed, and not feeling a need to repent. The doctrine he was pursuing favored his situation.

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