

Book of Mormon 28
The Word Is in Christ unto Salvation
(Alma 32-35)
By Lenet Hadley Read

(Here is inspirational background)

I. Alma shows how faith is obtained.

A. He shows that **Faith is not contrary to works, but is in itself a Work.** (Though not totally. The Lord gives many things to help us initiate and to develop faith. This is an undeniable point).

B. **Developing Faith is the first Work of all the works which we must endeavor to accomplish.**

1. Jesus would not have condemned men for their "little" faith otherwise. He is a just God.

2. How could He condemn men for lacking something if He is its total source?

C. **Gaining Faith** must begin with a desire to obtain it. Developing that desire allows the Spirit to plant a seed of it in our hearts, just as any other growing thing begins as a seed ("Exercise a particle of faith, yea, even if ye can no more than desire to believe" Alma 32:27).

D. We add to that Work by rejecting anything that would cause it to die.

1. "Do not cast it out by unbelief; resist not the Spirit of the Lord" (Alma 32:28).

E. We must take the positive steps of nourishing it.

1. We do so by studying the scriptures. "Now ... I would ask if ye have read the scriptures? if ye have how can ye disbelieve on the Son of God?" (Alma 33:14).

2. The scriptures show that all things point to salvation through Christ, including the Law.

a. "And this is the whole meaning of the law, every whit pointing to that great and last sacrifice and that great and last sacrifice will be the Son of God, yea, infinite and eternal. And thus he shall bring salvation to all those who shall believe on his name;"

3. We also nourish faith by prayer. "Exercise your faith unto repentance. Cry unto him ... for he is mighty to save" "... let your hearts be full, drawn out in prayer unto him continually for your [spiritual] welfare" (34:18, 27).

II. Further we must **Experiment on the word. That is, put each principle of the Gospel into action and try its worth.**

A. A great example was shared by Dr. Ray Smith, now a BYU music professor who experimented in faith as a student with keeping the Sabbath Day holy. He had been inspired by Dallin H. Oaks, then President of BYU, who shared his personal experiences regarding keeping the Sabbath holy."

Touched by this testimony, Dr. Smith made a commitment to follow his counsel and to "experiment on the word." He shared at a BYU devotional the results of his exercising faith.

He had Basic English on Monday mornings, and it always seemed that a composition was due then. While he did work hard to prepare, he often found himself still struggling the previous Saturday night. Of course, he was tempted to work on Sunday, but kept to his commitments. Instead, he would arise early Monday morning. He found several blessings as a result. Sometimes his ideas came forth much more easily then. So usually he was able to get his writing done in time. In some cases where he was not able to complete the assignment, something else usually happened: the teacher would give an extension because many students were not finished; or the teacher himself would be ill. His grades never suffered because of his commitment.

He also applied "experimenting on the word" in other ways related to the Sabbath.

As a musician he was receiving offers to perform professionally, usually close by. One day he received an offer to play in Boise for a well-known Orchestra. This offer was very difficult to resist. His rent was overdue by two months. He did not have enough money for food. But because the job was on Saturday and Sunday, he turned it down. It took a lot of faith on his part.

He did feel a spiritual witness that he had done the right thing, as comfort.

Before twenty-four (24) hours were up, he received another offer. It was for Friday and Saturday. It was close by, and he earned \$25 more than he would have by going to Boise.

[See "Depending on the Lord: Gospel Insights from a Musician" by C. Raymond Smith, BYU devotional address, 23 June 2009 for more examples.]

III. The Lord made it clear we must do more work to develop Faith. We must serve the needy.

A. "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 turn away the needy, and the naked, and visit not the sick and afflicted, and impart 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 prayer is vain, and availeth you nothing, and ye are as hypocrites who do deny the faith. ... ye are as dross, which the refiners do cast out, (it being of no worth) and it is trodden under foot of men" (Alma 34:28-29).

IV. Once we do all these things, we will begin to recognize the sweet fruit of faith.

A. First we will note that it "beginneth to enlarge my soul, it beginneth to enlighten my understanding, yea it beginneth to be delicious to me" (Alma 32: 28).

B. If we continue, in time, the fruit will mature and become *very* sweet. "And because of your diligence and your faith and your patience with the word in nourishing it,... behold by and by ye shall pluck the fruit 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" (Alma 32:42).

V. Alma also warned, **we must not procrastinate the day of our repentance.**

A. His teachings were given about 74 B.C. --- just before the time of Christ's First Coming. The destructions of the wicked of which He had warned, would be soon coming to pass.

VI. **In our day, we have been given similar warnings from Book of Mormon people.**

A. There are many in the scriptures, but here is a unique one:

B. L. Taylor Hansen, a scholar, gathered a collection of ancient legends from numerous tribes in the Americas which she published in *He Walked the Americas*. These legends all focused on their being visited by a great white personage who had wounded hands and feet, taught the people, healed them, and left twelve disciples to lead them after he left. He also gave them warnings:

The First warning was that there would be a wicked priesthood, called the "Sacrificers," who would gain control over them if they did not keep His Father's commandments. He called the time of their power: "**The Cycle of the Sacrificers.**"

The Second Warning was that in the very distant future, because of their sins and particularly the sin of human sacrifice, there would be bearded white men with long rods that killed from a distance who would come. They would take over all their lands. *He also told them precisely*

when this would occur. He said, “A strange star shall cross the heavens, and all the people ... shall remember tonight and the words of [Quetzecoatl]. To one another, they shall whisper: “I fear the time has come upon us. Woe unto the Sacrificers”” (p. 129).

He told them the precise year: “*The year is that of Te-Tec-Patl. When the dawn star, [Venus] crosses the sun for its thirteenth crossing, after the Fall of Tula, then will you know this Cycle [of the Sacrificers] has ended....*” (p. 129).

He told them what would happen: “... Three ships come like great birds flying. They land. Out come men in metal garments, carrying rods which speak with thunder and kill at a distance. These men are bearded and pale of feature.” (p. 129).

The legends tell this warning was fulfilled: “For centuries the people had watched the calendar pass around from circle to circle. From each inner circle to the next outer circle it went... Then came the year when He had told them to expect the Bearded Pale Ones ... The people were frightened. They had not forgotten. Finally a day came ... when the Bearded Ones were sighted. And of all days, it came on the Feast Day Sacred to the Prophet! Flashing across the Broad Land with obsidian mirrors came the fateful message: ‘The Bearded Pale Ones are landing. They are dressed in metal and carry rods which kill at a distance’” (p. 185).

The legends conclude: “Incidentally, [using] the Toltec Calendar Stone, Cortez arrived in the year Te-Tec-Pal as prophesied so long before in Tula by the Prophet” (p. 133). That year was the year that Venus crossed the sun in its 13th crossing.

The Third Warning: The prophet gave warning of even a more distant time. He warned that those white men who came to their lands bearing guns were interested only in gold and in weapons. He warned that the white men would continue to build more and more powerful weapons of destruction. “Ever more horrible are these weapons, until they reach for the one that is ultimate” (p. 167). “For five full Cycles of the Dawn Star, the rule of the warring strangers will go on to greater and greater orgies of destruction.... Know that the end will come in five full cycles ...” He prophesied that their dominion would only last for five cycles of Venus passing the Sun (p. 167-170). Then would come the Final Destruction (pp. 167-172).

Note: The Venus cycle is 100 years. The last crossing was June 5, 2012, which would have been the end of the 5th cycle from the time that the Spanish arrived in the Americas. So our time too is drawing close.

(Hansen gathered her collections of amazingly consistent legends from several sources, including Hubert H. Bancroft, *Five Volumes of Antiquities, Native Races, etc.*, D. Appleton Co., 1875, and from personal interviews.)

VI. Likely each of us need to go through the process of developing greater faith in some principle or principles of the Gospel: being honest, being meek, being virtuous, paying tithes and offerings, keeping the Sabbath day holy, attending our church meetings, partaking of the sacrament regularly and worthily, going to the temple regularly, etc.

A. **But if we follow the steps outlined by Alma, and as we experiment on the word of each Gospel principle, we can develop a firm testimony of each. Our reaching the promised, glorious fruit of The Tree of Life is assured, ultimately through our faith in the atonement of Jesus the Christ.** We will be prepared for that time of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. Even more, we will be prepared for that more glorious moment of meeting Him Face to Face.