

July 22–28: Alma 32–35, “Plant this Word in Your Hearts”

Overview

Last week we discussed Alma's teaching to the Zoramites
Who were the Zoramites?

Alma 31:8-11

8 Now the Zoramites were dissenters from the Nephites; therefore they had had the word of God preached unto them.

9 But they had fallen into great errors, for they would not observe to keep the commandments of God, and his statutes, according to the law of Moses.

10 Neither would they observe the performances of the church, to continue in prayer and supplication to God daily, that they might not enter into temptation.

11 Yea, in fine, they did pervert the ways of the Lord in very many instances; therefore, for this cause, Alma and his brethren went into the land to preach the word unto them.

Once a week they met in their synagogues and those who desired to worship stood on a stand called the Rameuptom and offer a set prayer which stated that they were elected to be saved and were not bond down by a belief in Christ.

Today's lesson focuses on Alma and Almulek's opportunity to teach the poor and cast down Zoramites

Humility

Alma 32:4-6

4 Now, as Alma was teaching and speaking unto the people upon the hill Onidah, there came a great multitude unto him, who were those of whom we have been speaking, of whom were poor 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 said unto him: Behold, what shall these my brethren do, for they are despised of all men because of their poverty, yea, and more especially by our priests; for they have cast 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 no place to worship our God; and behold, what 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 afflictions had truly humbled them, and that they were in a preparation to hear the word.

What does it mean to be poor in heart?

You may want to explain that being “poor in heart” includes being humble, repentant, and ready to hear the word of God.

(Seminary Teacher Manual: Introduction to the Book of Mormon, Lesson

90, 2017)

Why are the poor more likely to be in a position to listen to the word of the Lord?

(poor in heart, because of their poverty
their afflictions had truly humbled them)

Alma 32:13-16

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 repentance; and now surely, whosoever repenteth shall find mercy; and he that findeth mercy and endureth to the end the same shall be saved.

14 And now, as I said unto you, that because ye were compelled to be humble 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 humble themselves without being compelled to be humble; or rather, in other words, blessed is he that believeth in the word of God, and is baptized without stubbornness of heart, yea, without being brought to know the word, or even compelled to know, before they will believe.

What do you think it means to be “humble... because of the word”?

(he that truly humbleth *himself*
blessed is he that believeth in the word... without stubbornness of heart)

Why do you think that someone who is humbled by the word is more blessed than someone who is compelled to be humble?

(*sometimes* if he is compelled to be humble, seeketh repentance)

Ezra Taft Benson

“God will have a humble people. Either we can choose to be humble or we can be compelled to be humble. Alma said, 'Blessed are they who humble themselves without being compelled to be humble' (Alma 32:16).

“Let us choose to be humble. We can choose to humble ourselves by conquering enmity toward our brothers and sisters, esteeming them as ourselves, and lifting them as high or higher than we are. We can choose to humble ourselves by receiving counsel and chastisement. We can choose to humble ourselves by forgiving those who have offended us. We can choose to humble ourselves by rendering selfless service. We can choose to humble ourselves by going on missions and preaching the word that can humble others. We can choose to humble ourselves by getting to the temple more

frequently. We can choose to humble ourselves by confessing and forsaking our sins and being born of God. We can choose to humble ourselves by loving God, submitting our will to His, and putting Him first in our lives.” (CR, April 1989)

Now Alma steps through how you can be one of those who are humbled by the word.

Faith

Alma gives us a definition of faith

Alma 32:21-22,27

21 And now as I said concerning faith—faith is not to have a perfect knowledge of things; therefore if ye have faith ye hope for things which are not seen, which are true.

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

27 But behold, if ye will awake and arouse your faculties, even to an experiment upon my words, and exercise a particle of faith, yea, even if ye can no more than desire 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.

What does Alma equate with “a particle of faith”?

(no more than desire to believe)

Neal A. Maxwell

“The Lord can commence His initial work with us while requiring surprisingly little from us.... Imagine, only 'a particle of faith' and 'no more than [a] desire to believe' are actually enough to begin!” (Men and Women of Christ, pg. 77-8)

Alma shares the example of Moses raising the brass serpent in the wilderness to emphasize that desire to believe is the first step

Alma 33:19-22

19 Behold, he was spoken of by Moses; yea, and behold a type was raised up in the wilderness, that whosoever would look upon it might live. And many did look and live.

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 heal 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 unbelief, and be slothful, 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 begin to believe in the Son of God, that he will come to redeem his people, and that he shall suffer and die to atone for their sins; and that he shall rise again from the dead, which shall bring to pass the resurrection, that all men shall stand before him, to be judged at the last and judgment day, according to their works.

In what way does this story demonstrate the great blessing available to us if we simple having a “desire to believe”?

(Now the reason they would not look is because they did not believe that it would heal them

cast about your eyes and begin to believe in the Son of God)

Testimony

When we nourish the word we develop and increase our testimony

Alma 32:28-30,34

28 Now, we will compare the word unto a seed. Now, if ye give place, that a seed may be planted in your heart, behold, if it be a true seed, or a good seed, if ye do not cast it out by your unbelief, 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, 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 understanding, yea, it beginneth to be delicious to me.

29 Now behold, would not this increase your faith? I say unto you, Yea; nevertheless it hath not grown up to a perfect knowledge.

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.

34 And now, behold, is your knowledge perfect? Yea, your knowledge is perfect in that thing, and your faith 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 mind doth begin to expand.

How do we come to know that the seed is good (word of God is true)?

Verse 34

you experience the word swelling your soul and your understanding expanded.

In verse 28 he likens it to taste, “it beginneth to be delicious to me”

Harold B. Lee

“The prophet Alma presents an excellent explanation of the progressive steps by which one proceeds in his search for truth from a desire to experiment upon the words of the Lord to the 'exercise [of] a particle of faith, yea, even... no more than [a] desire to believe, let this desire work in you, even until ye believe in a manner that ye can give place for a portion' of the words of the Lord; then by spiritual processes within one's own soul his knowledge and testimony is made 'perfect in that thing, and [his] faith is dormant' (Alma 32:27,34).

“As one reads this whole text, he finds clearly prescribed the way by which all may receive a testimony or 'knowledge by revelation' as defined above: first, desire; second, belief; third, faith; fourth, knowledge or testimony.” (Stand Ye In Holy Places, pg. 194)

Alma 32:35

35 O then, is not this real? I say unto you, Yea, because it is light; and whatsoever is light, is good, 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?

How do we know our testimony in Christ is “real”?

He tells us that we are basing our faith in something that is real, that is discernible – like experiencing something or tasting something – we know it's real

Neal A. Maxwell

“Alma describes the growth of faith and how faith can actually become knowledge with the accompanying intellectual and emotional experiences of the believer. After the understanding of the believer has been enlarged and his mind has been expanded, Alma asks, 'O then, is not this real?' It is real, he says, because it is 'discernible, therefore ye must know that it is good' (Alma 32:35).

“The truth of each divine doctrine is actually discernible by us in a system of certification and confirmation that justifies our saying, 'I know.’” (Things As They Really Are, pg. 10)

Oliver Cowdery is a good case study. He has a desire to believe in the Book of Mormon (DC 8:1-2), then comes to a knowledge (D&C 18:1-3)

D&C 81-2

[1] Oliver Cowdery, verily, verily, I say unto you, that assuredly as the Lord liveth, who is your God and your Redeemer, even so surely shall you receive a knowledge of whatsoever things you shall ask in faith, with an honest heart, believing that you shall receive a knowledge concerning the engravings of old records, which are ancient, which contain those parts of my scripture of which has been spoken by the manifestation of my Spirit.

[2] Yea, behold, I will tell you in your mind and in your heart, by the Holy Ghost, which shall come upon you and which shall dwell in your heart.

D&C 18:1-3

[1] Now, behold, because of the thing which you, my servant Oliver Cowdery, have desired to know of me, I give unto you these words:

[2] Behold, I have manifested unto you, by my Spirit in many instances, that the things which you have written are true; wherefore you know that they are true.

[3] And if you know that they are true, behold, I give unto you a commandment, that you rely upon the things which are written;

Gordon B. Hinckley

“There is a promise, given under inspiration from the Almighty, set forth in these beautiful words: ‘God shall give unto you knowledge by his Holy Spirit, yea, by the unspeakable gift of the Holy Ghost’ (D&C 121:26).

“The humanists who criticize the Lord's work... have not heard the voice of the Spirit. They have not heard it because they have not sought after it and prepared themselves to be worthy of it. Then, supposing that knowledge comes only of reasoning and of the workings of the mind, they deny that which comes by the power of the Holy Ghost.

“The things of God are understood by the Spirit of God. *That Spirit is real.* To those who have experienced its workings, *the knowledge so gained is as real as that which is acquired through the operation of the five senses.* I testify of this.” (“The Continuing Pursuit of Truth,” Ensign, April 1986)

We know that it is a good seed and it has begun to grow. We must continue to exercise faith so our testimonies will bear fruit

Alma 32:36-39

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 neglect 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.

What do you think Alma means when he tells us that we must “nourish it with great care”?

If we don't nourish our testimonies, what happens when “the heat of the sun cometh”?

(it withers away, and ye pluck it up and cast it out)

Dieter F. Uchtdorf

"When Alma compared the word of God to a seed, he explained that the seed grows into a fruit-bearing tree gradually, as a result of our ‘faith, and [our] diligence, and patience, and long-suffering.’ Knowing that the seed is good is not enough. We must ‘nourish it with great care, that it may get root.’ We cannot receive the fulness of those blessings if we ‘neglect the tree, and take no thought for its nourishment.’

“Discipleship is a journey. We need the refining lessons of the journey to craft our character and purify our hearts. By patiently walking in the path of discipleship, we demonstrate to ourselves the measure of our faith and our willingness to accept God’s will rather than ours.” (“The Way of the Disciple,” Ensign, May 2009)

Amulek teaches what we must do to “nourish [our testimonies] with great care”

Alma 34:17-27

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

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

19 Yea, humble yourselves, and continue in prayer unto him.

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

21 Cry 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 enemies.

23 Yea, cry unto him against the devil, who is an enemy to all righteousness.

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 pour out your souls in your closets, and your secret places, and in your wilderness.

27 Yea, and when you do not cry unto the Lord, let your hearts be full, drawn out in prayer unto him continually for your welfare, and also for the welfare of those who are around you.

Why do you think that Amulek emphasized the importance of prayer in strengthening our testimonies?

(that ye may begin to exercise your faith unto repentance, that ye begin to call upon his holy name)

Joseph F. Smith

“The prophets of the Book of Mormon have enjoined upon us that we should carry with us always the spirit of prayer in our hearts, morning, noon and night, and that we should pray for the blessings of the Lord upon our families, our farms, our flocks, our herds, our business, and everything that we possess in the world. Do not forget to pray. Don't suppose for a moment that you are as safe and secure in the favor of the Lord when you feel independent of Him as you will be if you feel your dependence upon Him all the day long.” (CR, April 1915)

There are great blessings in store for us if we continue to exercise faith and strengthen our testimonies

Alma 32:40-43

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 tree of life.

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 patience, looking forward to the fruit thereof, it shall take root; and behold it shall be a tree springing up unto everlasting life.

42 And because of your diligence 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 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.

43 Then, my brethren, ye shall reap the rewards of your faith, and your diligence, and patience, and long-suffering, waiting for the tree to bring forth fruit unto you.

While interpreting Lehi's dream, what did Nephi say that the tree and the fruit represented?

1 Nephi 11

[22] And I answered him, saying: Yea, it is the love of God, which sheddeth itself abroad in the hearts of the children of men; wherefore, it is the most desirable above all things.

[23] And he spake unto me, saying: Yea, and the most joyous to the soul.

Alma 33:23

23 And now, my brethren, I desire that ye shall plant 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, springing up in you unto everlasting life. And then may God grant unto you that your burdens may be light, through the joy of his Son. And even all this can ye do if ye will. Amen.

What is another blessing Alma promises us if we nourish the seed as it grows?

(then may God grant unto you that your burdens may be light)

Priestcraft

Alma 35:3

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 craft; therefore they would not hearken unto the words.

It says the Zoramites were angry because the word “did destroy their craft.”
What do you think Alma meant by that?

(recall their prayer on the Rameumptom)

The Zoramites cast out the people who believed Alma and Amulek. The people of Ammon received the Zoramites and nourished, clothed, and provided land for them. This made the Zoramites so angry that they prepared for war with the Lamanites against the Nephites.