

BM#26 "Converted Unto The Lord" - Alma 23-29

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I. Introduction

We continue our focus on the missionary efforts of the four sons of Mosiah, and the brethren who came with them, among the Lamanites. It is astonishing to note the commitment the Lamanite converts make to the gospel once they embrace its teachings.

In these chapters we will see the effect their missionary efforts have upon the Lamanites. It is interesting to note that only one Amalekite joined the church, and none of the Amulonites. (see Alma 23:14.) Aaron first taught the gospel to the Amalekites and the Amulonites and their response to his teachings was "to mock him; and they would not hear the words which he spake" (Alma 21:10). Many of these individuals were of the order of Nehor. Nehor had been brought before Alma when he served as the Chief Judge. Nehor had taught priestcraft, which is "that men preach and set themselves up for a light unto the world, that they may get gain and the praise of the world, but seek not the welfare of Zion" (2 Nephi 26:29). He attempted to enforce the practice of priestcraft by the sword. Alma stated that if "priestcraft [were] to be enforced among the people it would prove their entire destruction" (Alma 1:12). This practice, along with the others teachings of Nehor, had contributed to the lack of missionary success among the Amalekites and the Amulonites. The Lamanites, however, were receptive and thousands joined the church.

All the groups of Lamanites who upon being converted to the gospel "laid down the weapons of their rebellion, yea, all their weapons of war" (Alma 23:7-13), and will became known as the Anti-Nephi-Lehites. (see Alma 23:17.) Upon their being converted to the gospel, they made a covenant to bury in the earth their weapons of war and never use them to

defend themselves against their enemies. This covenant, as we shall read in Alma, Chapter 24, was tested. The Lamanites, stirred up by the Amalekites and by the Amulonites (see Alma 24:1.), attacked the Anti-Nephi-Lehies. Rather than rise their swords against their brethren, they surrendered their lives in order for their oath to be preserved. In order for their lives to be permanently preserved, Ammon sought for, and they were granted, safety among the Nephites.

During Chapters 26 and 29, Ammon gloried in the success they experienced as he reflected upon their missionary service among the Lamanites.

Outline of Alma 23-29:

"Alma 23-24: Thousands of Lamanites are converted after being taught by the sons of Mosiah. The converted Lamanites call themselves the Anti-Nephi-Lehies. As a testimony to God that they will never again sin through the shedding of blood, the Anti-Nephi-Lehies bury their swords and refuse to take them up when an army of Lamanites attack.

"Alma 27-28: Ammon leads the Anti-Nephi-Lehies to seek safety among the Nephites. The Nephites give the Anti-Nephi-Lehies the land of Jershon and pledge to defend them against their enemies. The Lamanites come again to battle against the Nephites and are defeated.

"Alma 26, 29: Ammon glories in the Lord as he reviews the success he and his brethren have had in preaching to the Lamanites. Alma wishes that joy might come to all through repentance and the plan of redemption." (*Book of Mormon Gospel Doctrine Teacher's Manual*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1999, 116).

II. Alma 23

The conversion of King Lamoni's father proves to be a major factor in the success the four sons of Mosiah II, and their brethren, had among the Lamanites.

Alma 23:1

1 Behold, now it came to pass that the king of the Lamanites sent a proclamation among all his people, that they should not lay their hands on Ammon, or Aaron, or Omner, or Himni, nor either of their brethren (Muloki and Ammah. Alma 19:3) who should go forth preaching the word of God, in whatsoever place they should be, in any part of the land.

Not only were they protected from physical harm, but the king also sent a decree protecting them against harassment, imprisonment, and "that they should have free access to their houses, and also their temples, and their sanctuaries" (Alma 23:2).

Alma 23:3

3 And thus they might go forth and preach the word according to their desires, for the king had been converted unto the Lord, and all his household; therefore he sent his proclamation throughout the land unto his people, that the word of God might have no obstruction, but that it might go forth throughout all the land, that his people might be convinced concerning the wicked traditions of their fathers, and that they might be convinced that they were all brethren, and that they ought not to murder, nor to plunder, nor to steal, nor to commit adultery, nor to commit any manner of wickedness.

By issuing this proclamation, the King opened the door to preaching the gospel in his land. It also planted the seed that the "wicked traditions of their fathers" may be resolved and that the Nephites and Lamanites are truly brothers. He also emphasized the laws of social relations as previously outlined in the Ten Commandments given to Moses on Mount Sinai. Not only does adherence to the laws of the gospel bring an individual happiness now and eternally, it also embraces the qualities of citizenship that benefit the well-being of any nations citizens.

Alma 23:4-6

4 And now it came to pass that when the king had sent forth this proclamation, that Aaron and his brethren went forth from city to city, and from one house of

worship to another, establishing churches, and consecrating priests and teachers throughout the land among the Lamanites, to preach and to teach the word of God among them; and thus they began to have great success.

5 And thousands were brought to the knowledge of the Lord, yea, thousands were brought to believe in the traditions of the Nephites; and they were taught the records and prophecies which were handed down even to the present time.

6 And as sure as the Lord liveth, so sure as many as believed, or as many as were brought to the knowledge of the truth, through the preaching of Ammon and his brethren, according to the spirit of revelation and of prophecy, and the power of God working miracles in them--yea, I say unto you, as the Lord liveth, as many of the Lamanites as believed in their preaching, and were converted unto the Lord, never did fall away.

It is not sufficient to baptize an individual into the true church, as important as that is. We must also do our part to help them sink their roots deeply into the gospel soil so that when the winds and storms of adversity come, and come they will, they will not be uprooted. Each of us receive strength by daily prayer, immersing ourselves daily in the scriptures, worthily partaking of the sacrament weekly, following the counsel of our leaders, and freely rendering service to others. These five areas are a good beginning for all who seek to strengthen their testimony.

Alma 23:7

7 For they became a righteous people; they did lay down the weapons of their rebellion, that they did not fight against God any more, neither against any of their brethren.

Alma lists four lands including Ishmael, Middoni, Shilom, and Shemlon, and three cities, Nephi, Lemuel, and Shimnilon.

He then states,

Alma 23:13

13 And these are the names of the cities [and lands] of the Lamanites which were converted unto the Lord;

and these are they that laid down the weapons of their rebellion, yea, all their weapons of war; and they were all Lamanitie.

Patrick Kearon states,

"The Anti-Nephi-Lehies in the Book of Mormon laid down their weapons of war and buried them deep in the earth, covenanting never again to take up arms against their brethren. But they did more than that. 'They became a righteous people' because 'they did lay down the weapons of their *rebellion*, that they did not fight against God any more.' (Alma 23:7, emphasis added) Their conversion was so complete and so profound that they 'never did fall away.'

"But before their conversion, remember their state: they were living in what the scriptures call 'open rebellion against God.' (Mosiah 2:37; Alma 3:18) Their rebellious hearts sentenced them to live 'in a state contrary to the nature of happiness' because they had gone contrary to the nature of God' (Alma 41:11) When they laid down their weapons of *rebellion*, they qualified themselves for the Lord's healing and peace, and so can we. The Savior assures, 'if they harden not their hearts, and stiffen not their necks against me, they shall be converted, and *I will heal them.*' (D&C 112:13), emphasis added) You and I can accept His invitation to 'return and repent, and come unto me with full purpose of heart, and I shall heal [you]' (3 Ne. 18:32). (Come Unto Me with Full Purpose of Heart, and I Shall Heal You," in *Ensign*, November 2011, 51).

Alma 23:16-17

16 And now it came to pass that the king and those who were converted were desirous that they might have a name, that thereby they might be distinguished from their brethren; therefore the king consulted with Aaron and many of the priests, concerning their name that they should take upon them, that they might be distinguished.

17 And it came to pass that they called their names Anti-Nephi-Lehies; and they were called by this name and were no more called Lamanites.

Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L. Millet state,

"It is not clear exactly why they called themselves Anti-Nephi-Lehies. Viewing the word *anti* as meaning 'opposed to' or 'against,' perhaps their action symbolized a desire to dissolve barriers between Nephites and Lamanites and thus establish peace; their name could in this sense represent their opposition to a Nephite-Lamanite distinction. That is they wanted neither Nephites nor Lamanites, nor 'any manner of -ites' (4 Nephi 1:17).

"Another possibility suggests itself. *Webster's Dictionary* of 1828 indicates that the word *anti* means 'like' or 'mirror image of.' In that case *anti-Christ* would mean not just opposed to Christ, but also deceptively similar to Christ, and perhaps the name Anit-Nephi-Lehies would symbolize their desire to be as Nephi and Lehi of old, that is, that they might remember the goodness and faithfulness of their first Nephite prophet leaders (see Helaman 5:6)." (*Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, Vol.3. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1991, [3rd Printing, 1993], 165).

It appears that not all who were under the reign of King Lamoni's father or King Lamoni, entered into the oath not to take up their weapons against their enemies, or to take upon themselves the name of Anti-Nephi-Lehies. Only those who had been converted to the gospel.

Alma 24:1

1 And it came to pass that the Amalekites and Amulonites and the Lamanites who were in the land of Amulon, and also in the land of Helam, and who were in the land of Jerusalem, and in fine, in all the land round about, who had not been converted and had not taken upon them the name of Anti-Nephi-Lehi,...

Those who had been converted, had taken upon themselves the oath not to take up arms against their enemies and had taken upon themselves the name of Anti-Nephi-Lehies, became a blessed people.

Alma 23:18

18 And they began to be a very industrious people; yea, and they were friendly with the Nephites; therefore, they did open a correspondence with them, and the curse of God did no more follow them.

Bryan Richards states,

"The greatest curse on the Lamanites was that they had been cast from the presence of God according to the promise, 'Inasmuch as ye shall keep my commandment ye shall prosper in the land; but inasmuch as ye will not keep my commandments ye shall be cut off from my presence' (2 Ne. 1:20). Alma said, "Now I would that ye should remember, that inasmuch as the Lamanites have not kept the commandments of God, they have been cut off from the presence of the Lord. Now we see that the word of the Lord has been verified in these things, and the Lamanites have been cut off from his presence, from the beginning of their transgressions in the land" (Alma 9:14). (see also 2 Ne.5:20-25; 3 Ne.2:15.)

(www.gospeldoctrine.com/contents/Alma-23).

III. Alma 24

Those Lamanites who had not been converted to the gospel, and had not taken upon themselves the oath not to take up their weapons of war, or taken upon themselves the name of Anti-Nephi-Lehies, are "stirred up by the Amalekites and...Amulonites to anger against their brethren" (Alma 24:1).

Alma 24:2

2 And their hatred became exceedingly sore against them [their brethren], even insomuch that they began to rebel against their king, insomuch that they would not that he should be their king; therefore they took up arms against the people of Anti-Nephi-Lehi.

Previously they had lived in harmony under the reign of King Lamoni's father. Following his household embracing the gospel, and issuing the proclamation opening the door for the teaching of the gospel among the citizens of his reign, the forces of darkness rally their forces against the children of light.

Alma 24:3-4

3 Now the king conferred his kingdom upon his son and called his name Anti-Nephi-Lehi.

4 And the king died in that selsame year that the Lamanites began to make preparations for war against the people of God.

The king confers his kingdom upon his other son and on his deathbed confers upon him the name of Anti-Nephi-Lehi. The newly anointed king now arranges a council with his brother, Lamoni, Ammon, and his brethren in order to determine "what they should do to defend themselves against the Lamanites" (Alma 24:5).

Alma 24:6

6 Now there was not one soul among all the people who had been converted unto the Lord that would take up arms against their brethren; nay, they would not even make any preparations for war; yea, and also their king commanded them that they should not.

In Alma, Chapter 24, verses 7-15, the new king, Anti-Nephi-Lehi, reminds the people of the changes that they have made since their conversion to the gospel. These include:

(1) "Their hearts have been softened; (2) "Opened up a correspondence with the Nephites; (3) "Been convinced of their sins; (4) Have "repented of all our sins; (5) "Swords have become bright from blood; and, (6) "If stain our swords again they can no more be washed bright" (Alma 24:8-15).

Alma 24:16-18

16 And now, my brethren, if our brethren seek to destroy us, behold we will hide away our swords, yea, even we will bury them deep in the earth, that they may be kept bright, as a testimony that we have never used them, at the last day; and if our brethren destroy us, behold, we shall go to our God and shall be saved.

17 And now it came to pass that when the king had made an end of these sayings, and all the people were assembled together, they took their swords, and all the weapons which were used for the shedding of man's blood, and they did bury them up deep in the earth.

18 And this they did, it being in their view a testimony to God, and also to men, that they never would use weapons again for the shedding of man's blood; and this they did, vouching and covenanting

with God, that rather than shed the blood of their brethren they would give up their own lives;...

Spencer J. Condie states,

"Following Nephi's counsel to 'liken all scriptures unto us,' we can use the conversion of the Anti-Nephi-Lehies as a metaphor for our own lives. When we become truly converted, the testimony of our conversion may well be borne in our burying deep in the earth our sharp tongues in lieu of sharp swords. Our post-conversion sanitary landfill might also be used to discard our hot tempers, our evil speech patterns, our penchant for off-color jokes, our ethnic epithets, our greediness, unkindness, and lack of compassion." (*Your Agency: Handle With Care*. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966, 140).

Spencer W. Kimball adds,

"If you would look for valor, stamina, and steadfastness, recall the experiences of the converts of Ammon and his brethren. Here were red men degenerated, untrained, and primitive who accepted the gospel and quickly changed to sober, industrious, God-fearing people. The transition was soon made from skins and loin cloths to clothes of linen; from hunting and fishing, to agricultural work; from war and bloodshed, to peaceful pursuits; from paganism and idolatry to the worship of the Living God. They were called the Anti-Nephi-Lehies, and were so devout and sincere in their professions that they buried their weapons and declared unalterably against war." (*Conference Report*, April 1949, 109).

Alma 24:21-22

**21 Now when the people saw that they were coming against them they went out to meet them, and prostrated themselves before them to the earth, and began to call on the name of the Lord; and thus they were in this attitude when the Lamanites began to fall upon them, and began to slay them with the sword.
22 And thus without meeting any resistance, they did slay a thousand and five of them; and we know that they are blessed, for they have gone to dwell with their God.**

Bryan Richards states,

"The question is worth asking, 'Could I be as strong as these new converts?' 'Could I lay down, peacefully pray to God when an enraged army attacked and commenced slaughtering my friends and family?' 'Am I ready to die for the cause of truth?' These are the questions which we must ask ourselves. If we expect the Lord to bless us with the ultimate blessing, all that the Father has (D&C 84:38), we have to be willing to make the ultimate sacrifice--all that we have, even if it means laying our own lives on the altar of sacrifice." (www.gospeldoctrine.com/contents/Alma-24).

Today, the Lord is not asking ask us to sacrifice our lives. He is, however, asking us to give up all our sins, and to consecrate our time and means and talents to building the kingdom of God. Will we respond to his call?

Because of the oath and the determination of the people of Anti-Nephi-Lehies not to lift their hands to defend themselves against their brethren, it had an effect upon those who had attacked them.

Alma 24:25-27

25 And it came to pass that they [attackers] threw down their weapons of war, and they would not take them again, for they were stung for the murders which they had committed; and they came down even as their brethren, relying upon the mercies of those whose arms were lifted to slay them.

26 And it came to pass that the people of God were joined that day by more than the number who had been slain; and those who had been slain were righteous people, therefore we have no reason to doubt but what they were saved.

27 And there was not a wicked man slain among them; but there were more than a thousand brought to the knowledge of the truth; thus we see that the Lord worketh in many ways to the salvation of his people.

The ways of the Lord are amazing! As a result of the action of the Anti-Nephi-Lehies obeying the feelings of their hearts, and willingly sacrificing their lives to their enemies, more than a thousand of their attackers were brought to a knowledge of the truth. Upon their conversion to the gospel, they also entered into the covenant to not

take up their weapons of war. They, who initially had rejected the teaching of the word of God, through the actions of their brethren on the battlefield, they were converted to the gospel!

L. Tom Perry states,

"The message of this story is not that all members of the Church should conscientiously object to war. There is also a Book of Mormon story about Captain Moroni raising the 'title of liberty' as the leader of the true believers in Christ (see Alma 46:11-14). Moroni made impassioned speeches and wrote spirited letters to his Nephite brethren about protecting their liberty, lands, wives, children, and peace (see Alma 48:10). It was the Anti-Nephi-Lehies' unique history that caused them to make a unique covenant with the Lord that they felt an obligation to honor. When they honored their covenants they were blessed, and their brethren, the Lamanites, were also blessed.

"While the message of this story is not to insist on universal pacifism, we do learn that by not returning aggression from others we can have a profound effect on them. Literally, we can change their hearts when we follow Christ's example and turn the other cheek. Our examples as peaceable followers of Christ can inspire others to follow him." (*Living With Enthusiasm*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1966, 128).

Alma 24:29

29 Now, among those who joined the people of the Lord, they were none who were Amalekites or Amulonites, or who were of the order of Nehor, but they were actual descendants of Laman and Lemuel.

After centuries of disobedience, many more of the Lamanites repent and come unto the gospel of Christ as taught by his servants. They had felt the spirit and were no longer antagonistic toward the truth. The example of their brethren as they surrendered their lives in fulfillment of their covenant for the truth had a profound effect upon the attackers.

Mormon, the abridger of the record, addressed the hard--heartedness of the apostate Amalekites and Amulonites to the truth,

Alma 24:30

30 And thus we can plainly discern, that after a people have been once enlightened by the Spirit of God, and have had great knowledge of things pertaining to righteousness, and then have fallen away into sin and transgression, they become more hardened, and thus their state become worse than though they had never known these things.

Joseph Smith states,

"Strange as it may appear at first thought, yet it is no less strange than true, that notwithstanding all the professed determination to live godly, apostates after turning from the faith of Christ, unless they have speedily repented, have sooner or later fallen into the snares of the wicked one, and have been left destitute of the Spirit of God, to manifest their wickedness in the eyes of multitudes. From apostates the faithful have received the severest persecutions." (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*. Compiled by Joseph Fielding Smith. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976, [1977], 67).

Neal A. Maxwell adds,

"Then there are the dissenters who leave the Church, either formally or informally, but who cannot leave it alone. Usually anxious to please worldly galleries, they are critical or at least condescending towards the Brethren. They not only seek to steady the ark but also on occasion give it a hard shove! Often having been taught the same true doctrine as the faithful, they have nevertheless moved in the direction of dissent (see Alma 47:36). They have minds hardened by pride (see Daniel 5:20)." (*Men and Women of Christ*. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1991, 4).

IV. Alma 25

Alma 25:1-2

1 And behold, now it came to pass that those Lamanites were more angry because they had slain their brethren; therefore they swore vengeance upon the Nephites; and they did no more attempt to slay the people of Anti-Nephi-Lehi at that time.

2 But they took their armies and went over into the borders of the land of Zarahemla, and fell upon the people who were in the land of Ammonihah and destroyed them.

Those who had attacked the Anti-Nephi-Lehies, who were not converted, stopped their destruction and, instead turned their rage against the Nephites. They, in fulfillment of Alma's prophecy, then destroyed the city of Ammonihah. (see Alma 9:18-19; Alma 16:9.)

Alma 25:6, 13-14

6 For many of them [Lamanites], after having suffered much loss and so many afflictions, began to be stirred up in remembrance of the words which Aaron and his brethren had preached to them in their land; therefore they began to disbelieve the traditions of their fathers, and to believe in the Lord, and that he gave great power unto the Nephites; and thus there were many of them converted in the wilderness.

13 And it came to pass that when the Lamanites saw that they could not overpower the Nephites they returned again to their own land; and many of them came over to dwell in the land of Ishmael and the land of Nephi, and did join themselves to the people of God, who were the people of Anti-Nephi-Lehi.

14 And they did also bury their weapons of war, according as their brethren had, and they began to be a righteous people; and they did walk in the ways of the Lord, and did observe to keep his commandments and his statutes.

Bryan Richards states,

"[Following]...their fury [having been] exacted upon the people of Ammonihah...subsequent battles with the Nephites humbled them. They began to wonder how it was that the Nephites could be so powerful in battle--as if the Great Spirit were protecting them. The result was that they remembered the preaching of Aaron and Ammon and began to disbelieve the traditions of their fathers. This shows how far-reaching the missionary efforts of the sons of Mosiah were. The sower of the seed never knows when the seed will sprout. Often the seed lays dormant until the great Gardener gives the increase. In this case, Ammon planted,

Aaron watered; but God gave the increase (1 Cor.3:6).”
(www.gospeldoctrine.com/contents/Alma-25).

Alma 25:15-16

15 Yea, and they [People of Anti-Nephi-Lehi] did keep the law of Moses; for it was expedient that they should keep the law of Moses as yet, for it was not all fulfilled. But notwithstanding the law of Moses, they did look forward to the coming of Christ, considering that the law of Moses was a type of his coming, and believing that they must keep those outward performances until the time that he should be revealed unto them.

16 Now they did not suppose that salvation came by the law of Moses; but the law of Moses did serve to strengthen their faith in Christ; and thus they did retain a hope through faith, unto eternal salvation, relying upon the spirit of prophecy, which spake of those things to come.

John Taylor states,

“So firm a foundation having been laid for the faith of the Nephite people, we find that in every period of their history they retained their reverence for the law of Moses, though disputations sometimes arose, by reason of iniquity, with regard to its symbolism or its saving quality. The apostates, who separated themselves from the Church, occasionally fell into the grievous error of exalting the law above the Gospel, and, whilst maintaining its divine origin, they ignored its typical vale and denied that it was a preparatory system leading to a higher, holier, and more perfect law; they refused to recognize it as a schoolmaster to bring them to Christ.” (*The Mediation and Atonement*. Salt Lake City: Deseret News Company, 1882, [Photo Reprint, 1996], 112-113).

Alma 25:17

17 And now behold, Ammon, and Aaron, and Omner, and Himni, and their brethren did rejoice exceedingly, for the success which they had had among the Lamanites, seeing that the Lord had granted unto them according to their prayers, and that he had also verified his word unto them in every particular.

Sometimes we doubt whether the Lord will see fit to grant us our righteous prayers, and will he really fulfill his promises to us. The answer is yes. He will. He keeps all the promises he makes to his children. If we will continue to exercise our faith and trust in his promises, his word will be fulfilled.

V. Alma 26

Alma 26:1

1 And now, these are the words of Ammon to his brethren, which say thus: My brothers and my brethren, behold I say unto you, how great reason have we to rejoice; for could we have supposed when we started from the land of Zarahemla that God would have granted unto us such great blessings?

It is doubtful that anyone, other than the Lord, could have envisioned the miraculous success that the four sons of Mosiah II and his brethren [Muloki and Ammah-Alma 20:2] were going to experience with the Lamanites. Ammon himself states, "Now when our hearts were depressed, and we were about to turn back" (Alma 26:27).

Alma 26:3-5

3 ...for our brethren, the Lamanites, were in darkness, yea, even in the darkest abyss, and behold, how many of them are brought to behold the marvelous light of God! And this is the blessing which hath been bestowed upon us, that we have been made instruments in the hands of God to bring about this great work.
4 Behold, thousands of them do rejoice, and have been brought into the fold of God.
5 Behold, the field was ripe, and blessed are ye, for ye did thrust in the sickle, and did reap with your might, yea, all the day long did ye labor; and behold the number of your sheaves! And they shall be gathered into the garners, that they are not wasted.

Bryan Richards states,

"We should never say, 'there is no hope with this person or with this group of people.' Through spiritual eyes, we may be surprised to see how ripe the field really is. Even if the task seems as formidable as preaching to the ancient

Lamanites, the Lord has promised us that the people of the last dispensation are ready for the gospel, for he has said, "behold the field is white already to harvest; and lo, he that thrusteth in his sickle with his might, the same layeth up in store that he perisheth not, but bringeth salvation to his soul;" (D&C 4:4)."

www.gospeldoctrine.com/contents/Alma-26).

As Ammon reflected and rejoiced exceedingly upon the experience he and his brethren in the gospel had since they initially made the decision to serve a mission to the Lamanites, his brother Aaron rebuked him. Ammon responded to his brother with these words of wisdom.

Alma 26:11-12

11 But Ammon said unto him: I do not boast in my own strength, nor in my own wisdom; but behold, my joy is full, yea, my heart is brim with joy, and I will rejoice in my God.

12 Yea, I know that I am nothing; as to my strength I am weak; therefore I will not boast of myself, but I will boast of my God, for in his strength I can do all things; yea, behold, many mighty miracles we have wrought in this land, for which we will praise his name forever.

Neal A. Maxwell states,

"When we reach a point of consecration, our afflictions will be swallowed up in the joy of Christ. It does not mean we won't have afflictions, but they will be put in a perspective that permits us to deal with them. With our steady pursuit of joy and with each increasing measure of righteousness, we will experience one more drop of delight—one drop after another—until, in the words of a prophet, 'our hearts are brim with joy' (Alma 26:11). At last, the soul's cup finally runs over! ("Brim with Joy," in *Brigham Young University 1995-96 Speeches*. Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University, 26 January, 1996, 13).

To boast in our own strength and to take the credit ourselves for any success we have experienced while laboring in the Lord's vineyard is not only prideful, but foolish. When, however, we rejoice in the Lord's blessings as we have been of service, we are not being foolish. We

are but expressing our gratitude for the privilege we have had to serve in his kingdom.

Alma 26:13, 15

13 Behold, how many thousands of our brethren has he loosed from the pains of hell; and they are brought to sing redeeming love, and this because of the power of his word which is in us, therefore have we not great reason to rejoice?

15 Yea, they were encircled about with everlasting darkness and destruction; but behold, he has brought them into his everlasting light, yea, into everlasting salvation; and they are encircled about with the matchless bounty of his love; yea, and we have been instruments in his hands of doing this great and marvelous work.

Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L. Millet state,

"Surely all within the household of faith ought to acknowledge the greatness of their God in songs of praise. 'For my soul delighteth in the song of the heart; yea, the song of the righteous is a prayer unto me, and it shall be answered with a blessing upon their heads. Wherefore, lift up thy heart and rejoice, and cleave unto the covenants which thou hast made' (D&C 25:12-13). Songs of praise to our God help sanctify and cleanse our souls. Inspired music lifts the soul, teaches the gospel, and builds and sustains our faith. The Lord's people sing the songs of redeeming love when they break forth in anthems of praise and gratitude to the Almighty and when they affirm by testimony the greatness and goodness of God." (*Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, Vol.3. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1991, [3rd Printing, 1993], 26-27).

In order to share the songs of redeeming love, the Mormon Tabernacle Choir was organized to enrich the lives of the faithful everywhere. It was "founded in August 1847, one month after the Mormon pioneers entered the Salt Lake Valley. Since July 15, 1929, the choir has performed a weekly radio broadcast called *Music and the Spoken Word*, which is one of the longest-running continuous radio network broadcasts in the world..The show has been televised since the early 1960'and is now broadcast worldwide through

approximately 1,500 radio and television stations.”
([www.wikipedia.org/Mormon Tabernacle Choir](http://www.wikipedia.org/Mormon%20Tabernacle%20Choir)).

Alma 26:16

16 Therefore, let us glory, yea, we will glory in the Lord; yea, will rejoice, for our joy is full; ye we will praise our God forever. Behold, who can glory too much in the Lord? Yea, who can say too much of his great power, and of his mercy, and of his long-suffering towards the children of men? Behold, I say unto you, I cannot say the smallest part which I feel.

Neal A. Maxwell states,

“The Holy Ghost will help us by transmitting our feelings, teachings, and testimonies to others—even when, inadequate of ourselves, we cannot speak ‘the smallest part which [we] feel’ (Alma 26:16). In so many of life’s situations, do we not genuinely yearn to be able to connect, especially with those we love the most? Or with others who have played special roles in our lives? (*The Promise of Discipleship*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 2001, 95).

Alma 26:17-20

**17 Who could have supposed that our God would have been so merciful as to have snatched us from our awful, sinful, and polluted state?
18 Behold, we went forth even in wrath, with mighty threatenings to destroy his church.
19 Oh then, why did he not consign us to an awful destruction, yea, why did he not let the sword of his justice fall upon us, and doom us to eternal despair?
20 Oh, my soul, almost as it were, fleeth at the thought. Behold, he did not exercise his justice upon us, but in his great mercy hath brought us over that everlasting gulf of death and misery, even to the salvation of our souls.**

Most are not spared the sword of justice. It falls on man in accordance with God’s wisdom and foreknowledge. It did not fall upon Alma, who was numbered among the wicked priests of King Noah, or his son, Alma, the younger, or the four sons of Mosiah. As God knew the potential of each of these individuals, and all others, he gave to them the choice to change their lives and serve full-time in his

kingdom. Had any or all of them not accepted the opportunity to change the direction of their lives, we would have never known of the contribution they were capable of making in the building up the kingdom of God on earth. Others have also been given a like opportunity, but choose not to accept his offer.

Alma 26:21-22

21 And now behold, my brethren, what natural man is there that knoweth these things? I say unto you, there is none that knoweth these things, save it be the penitent.

22 Yea, he that repenteth and exerciseth faith, and bringeth forth good works, and prayeth continually without ceasing--unto such it is given to know the mysteries of God; yea, unto such it shall be given to reveal things which never have been revealed; yea, and it shall be given unto such to bring thousands of souls to repentance, even as it has been given unto us to bring these our brethren to repentance.

Joseph Smith states,

"There are but a very few beings in the world who understand rightly the character of God. The great majority of mankind do not comprehend anything, either that which is past or that which is to come, as it respects their relationship to God. They do not know, neither do they understand the nature of their relationship; and consequently they know but little above the brute beast, or more than to eat, drink, and sleep. This is all man knows about God or his existence, unless it is given by the inspiration of the Almighty.

"If men do not comprehend the character of God, they do not comprehend themselves." (*Teaching of the Prophet Joseph Smith*. Compiled by Joseph Fielding Smith. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1976, [Revised Edition, 1977], 343).

Unfortunately, many individuals have no interest in knowing about God or care about their relationship with him. Their interests lie in enjoying the pleasures they have come to experience through the stimulation of their five senses. Spiritual truth comes only to those individuals who are willing to exercise faith and join their heart with their mind in the search for truth. Only those individuals who

are willing to open their hearts and minds to learn spiritual truth, which most often comes as a feeling, can know of God and their relationship with him.

Alma 26:27-30

27 Now when our hearts were depressed, and we were about to turn back, behold, the Lord comforted us, and said: Go amongst thy brethren, the Lamanites, and bear with patience thine afflictions, and I will give unto you success.

28 ...and we have been patient in our sufferings, and we have suffered every privation; yea, we have traveled from house to house, relying upon the mercies of the world--not upon the mercies of the world alone but upon the mercies of God.

29 ...we have also entered into their temples and their synagogues and taught them; and we have been cast out, and mocked, and spit upon, and smote upon our cheeks; and we have been stoned, and taken and bound with strong cords, and cast into prison; and through the power and wisdom of God we have been delivered again.

30 And we have suffered all manner of afflictions, and all this, that perhaps we might be the means of saving some soul; and we supposed that our joy would be full if perhaps we could be the means of saving some.

Ezra Taft Benson states,

"There are times when you simply have to righteously hang on and outlast the devil until his depressive spirit leaves you. As the Lord told the Prophet Joseph Smith: 'thine adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a small moment; And then, if you endure it well, God shall exalt thee on high' (D&C 121-7-8). To press on in noble endeavors, even while surrounded by a cloud of depression, will eventually bring you out on top into the sunshine." ("Do Not Despair," in *Ensign*, October 1974, 67).

Alma 26:35, 37

35 Now have we not reason to rejoice? Yea, I say unto you, there never were men that had so great reason to rejoice as we, since the world began; yea, and my joy is carried away, even unto boasting in my God; for he has all power, all wisdom, and all understanding; he comprehendeth all things, and he is a merciful Being,

even unto salvation, to those who will repent and believe on his name.

37 Now my brethren, we see that God is mindful of every people, whatsoever land they may be in; yea, he numbereth his people, and his bowels of mercy are over all the earth. Now this is my joy, and my great thanksgiving; yea, and I will give thanks unto my God forever. Amen.

Hugh Nibley states,

"It is convenient to imagine all the righteous in one camp and the wicked in another, and this has been the usual and comfortable interpretation of the Book of Mormon--it is the good guys verses the bad guys. But this is exactly what the Book of Mormon tells us to avoid. God plays no favorites. Nephi rebukes his brothers for believing that because they are Jews they are righteous. God does not judge by party; he tells them; a good man is good and a bad man is bad, according to his own behavior. 'Behold, the Lord esteemeth all flesh in one; he that is righteous is favored of God' (1 Nephi 17:35). Family and race and nationality account for nothing. 'God is mindful of every people, whatsoever land they may be in; yea, he numbereth his people' (Alma 26:37). He numbers them as his own, not as being on one side or the other of a boundary; 'the Lord doth grant unto all nations...to teach his word...all that he seeth fit that they should have' (Alma 29:8). Nephi finds the answer to the questions 'Who are the bad guys? Where is the real enemy?' In himself. It is his own weakness that makes him frustrated and angry, he says. Why should he take it out on others? (2 Nephi 4:26-35)." (*The Prophetic Book of Mormon*, Vol.8. Edited by John W. Welch. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., and Provo, Utah: Foundation of Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1989, 506-507).

Bryan Richards states,

"The message of the Book of Mormon and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is that the gospel of [Jesus Christ] is for everyone, without regard to race color, or creed." (www.gospeldoctrine.com/contents/Alma-26).

VI. Alma 27

The Lamanites are prepared to return to their homes after being unable to defeat the Nephites. The Amalekites, however, "when they saw they could not seek revenge from the Nephites, they began to stir up the people in anger against their brethren, the people of Anti-Nephi-Lehi; therefore they began again to destroy them" (Alma 27:2).

Alma 27:3

3 Now this people again refused to take their arms, and they suffered themselves to be slain according to the desires of their enemies.

We are reminded again of how obedient the Lamanites are when they make a oath or a covenant of obedience. They were willing to suffer death, rather than violate their oath. O, that we were like the Anti-Nephi-Lehies, in our determination to keep the oaths and covenants which we have entered.

Moved with compassion, Ammon and his brethren, devise a plan that will allow the Anti-Nephi-Lehies to keep their oath and also protect them from being destroyed by their enemies. Meeting with the king of Anti-Nephi-Lehies, it is determined that Ammon and his brethren will act on their behalf and meet with the Nephite leaders. They will seek to gain land where they can live and be protected by the Nephi army. This plan was submitted to the Lord for his guidance and direction.

Alma 27:11-12

11 And it came to pass that Ammon went and inquired of the Lord, and the Lord said unto him:

12 Get this people out of this land, that they perish not; for Satan has great hold on the hearts of the Amalekites, who do stir up the Lamanites to anger against their brethren to slay them; therefore get thee out of this land; and blessed are this people in this generation, for I will preserve them.

Some may ask, "Why doesn't the Lord in his power destroy the Amalekites and then it would not be necessary to move the people from their lands?" The answer is that the Amalekites in the eyes of the Lord are not yet ready for

destruction. He also expects his servants to use their own initiative to resolve problems that arise and then to seek confirmation of their solution. (see Doctrine and Covenants 9:7-9.) It is not the Lord's desire that as his children that we should remain in a helpless state dependent upon him for both the idea and the solution. (see Doctrine and Covenants 58:27-28.)

Alma 27:20-21

20 And it came to pass that Alma conducted his brethren back to the land of Zarahemla; even to his own house. And they went and told the chief judge all the things that had happened unto them in the land of Nephi among their brethren, the Lamanites.

21 And it came to pass that the chief judge sent a proclamation throughout all the land, desiring the voice of the people, concerning the admitting their brethren, who were the people of Anti-Nephi-Lehi.

It was when Ammon and his brethren were on their way to Zarahemla to meet with the Chief Judge on behalf of the people of Anti-Nephi-Lehi, that they met Alma, the younger, on the way. (see Alma 17:1-2.) Alma now joins with his brethren in their meeting with the Chief Judge.

Matters of this magnitude were not determined by the Chief Judge, but by the voice of the people. The voice of the people is that they will be given "the land of Jershon" (Alma 27:22), and "we will guard them from their enemies with our armies, on condition that they will give us a portion of their substance to assist us that we may maintain our armies" (Alma 27:24).

Spencer J. Condie states,

"The conversion of the war-mongering Lamanites who became the Anti-Nephi-Lehies was remarkable. But just as remarkable was the instant forgiveness of the Nephites, who apparently had friends and relatives who had been killed by the Anti-Nephi-Lehies prior to their conversion (see Alma 27:6). Conversion involves a mighty change of heart, a process experienced by both the Anti-Nephi-Lehies and Nephites alike." (*Your Agency: Handle With Care*. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966, 106).

Alma 27:26

26 And it came to pass that it did cause great joy among them. And they went down into the land of Jershon, and took possession of the land of Jershon; and they were called by the Nephites the people of Ammon; therefore they were distinguished by that name ever after.

The Anti-Nephi-Lehies receive new land, the land of Jershon, and are granted protection by the Nephite army. They also receive a new name, "the people of Ammon" (Alma 27:26).

Alma 27:27-28

27 And they were among the people of Nephi, and also numbered among the people who were of the church of God. And they were also distinguished for their zeal towards God, and also towards men; for they were perfectly honest and upright in all things; and they were firm in the faith of Christ, even unto the end. 28 And they did look upon shedding the blood of their brethren with the greatest abhorrence; and they never could be prevailed upon to take up arms against their brethren; and they never did look upon death with any degree of terror, for their hope and views of Christ and the resurrection; therefore, death was swallowed up to them by the victory of Christ over it.

Neal A. Maxwell states,

"Quite clearly, therefore, ultimate hope is tied to the verifiable expectation of a resurrection and the better world to follow. Paul observed that if our hope in Christ pertained to 'this life only,' a resurrectionless view of Christ, we would be 'of all men most miserable.' (1 Corinthians 15:19.) In other words, proximate hope, disengaged from the reality of the resurrection (what some inconsistently espouse as a Christian existentialism), is not Christian hope at all.

"...When we have appropriate hope of receiving eternal life (Alma 13:29), and we retain that hope through faith (Alma 25:16), then we will--even though we love life, family, and friends have 'no terror of death' 'because of [our] hope and views of Christ and the resurrection.' (Alma 27:28.)

Indeed, true hope springs directly from our 'views of Christ.'

"No wonder the writer of Proverbs could say that 'the hope of the righteous is gladness.' (Proverbs 10:28.) Because in the attitudinal anchor that gospel hope gives us in life, it is vital (in terms of avoiding being tossed to and fro) just as is membership in His prophet-led Church, which also keeps us from being tossed to and fro by every manner of doctrine. (See Ephesians 4:11-14)" (*Notwithstanding My Weakness*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1981, [Second printing August 1981], 44).

When an individual speaks admiringly of Jesus Christ as a master teacher, and humanitarian, but is unable to accept Him as the Son of God, they are in truth denying who he really is. Only as the Son of God and a mortal mother, did Jesus Christ have the power, not only to resurrect himself, but also to resurrect each of us. No other mortal man on earth has that power. Without the hope of a personal resurrection, we are "of all men most miserable" (1 Corinthians 15:19). It is our faith in our also being resurrected that provides us today with hope.

Alma 27:30

30 And thus they were a zealous and beloved people, a highly favored people of the Lord.

As we become covenant keeping, humble, prayerful, honest in all our dealings with others, and upright in all things, we, like the people of Ammon, will become "highly favored...of the Lord" (Alma 27:30). May that day come for each of us soon.

VII. Alma 28

Alma 28:1-2

1 And now it came to pass that after the people of Ammon were established in the land of Jershon, and a church also established in the land of Jershon, and the armies of the Nephites were set round about the land of Jershon, yea, in all the borders round about the land of Zarahemla; behold the armies of the Lamanites had followed their brethren into the wilderness.

2 And thus there was a tremendous battle; yea, even such an one as never had been known among all the people in the land from the time Lehi left Jerusalem; yea, and tens of thousands of the Lamanites were slain and scattered abroad.

Bryan Richards states,

"What could be the motivation of these Lamanites in trying so hard to destroy their converted brethren? The people of Ammon had not offended them, fought them in battle, or caused them any harm, yet they are the object of great hatred. They could be accused of being 'traitors' to the Nephites but their conversion and migration presented no military threat to them. So what is the driving force?

"When hatred and malice are demonstrated for the sake only of hatred and malice, Satan is the driving force. These Lamanites would not have chased their brethren deep into Nephite territory if they were not stirred up by the Amalekites. One of the Amalekites' most pronounced qualities was hatred, 'for Satan had great hold on the hearts of the Amalekites, who did stir up the Lamanites to anger against their brethren to slay them; (Alma 27:12)."
(www.gospeldoctrine.com/contents/Alma-28).

Alma 28:3

3 Yea, and also there was a tremendous slaughter among the people of Nephi; nevertheless the Lamanites were driven and scattered, and the people of Nephi returned again to their land.

Bryan Richards states,

"We should not overlook the great sacrifice of these Nephite warriors. They were not fighting for their lands, wives, and children. They were fighting for converted Lamanites, people who were guilty of great crimes against the Nephite people. Nowhere in this narrative does Mormon tell us that there were any of the Nephites who were opposed to protecting the people of Ammon. The Nephites were not judgmental. They could forgive those who were once their bitter enemies. Not only that, they were willing to die for them. 'Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends' (John 15:13).

"Contrast the mercy and great love of these Nephites to our own petty tendencies to be judgmental. We are critical of people within our own church because of the smallest, most insignificant things. We have unnecessary conflict with neighbors and family members because we have not caught the message of the Book of Mormon. We could learn a great lesson from these Nephites who made the greatest of all sacrifices for those who were once their enemies--and they did it without a word of complaint."

(www.gospeldoctrine.com/contents/Alma-28).

As a result of the tremendous battle, a great deal of mourning and lamenting occurred.

Alma 28:6

6 And now surely this was sorrowful day; yea, a time of solemnity, and a time of much fasting and prayer.

Mormon reflects upon the sadness and loss of loved ones that occurred, and then adds,

Alma 28:12

12 While many thousands of others truly mourn for the loss of their kindred, yet they rejoice and exult in the hope, and even know, according to the promises of the Lord, that they are raised to dwell at the right hand of God, in a state of never-ending happiness.

LeGrand Richards states,

"In an interview the author had with a prominent minister, the minister admitted that his church held out no hopes for the reuniting of family ties beyond the grave. Then he added: 'But in my heart I find stubborn objections. Take of instance the kitten. When you take it away from the cat, in a few days the mother cat has forgotten all about it. Take the calf away from the cow and in a few days the cow has forgotten all about the calf. But when you take a child away from his mother, though she lives to be a hundred years old, she never forgets the child of her bosom. I find it difficult to believe that God created such love to perish in the grave.'" (*A Marvelous Work and a Wonder*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1958, [Revised Edition, 1967], 203-204).

Joseph Smith states,

"More painful to me are the thoughts of annihilation than death. If I have no expectation of seeing my father, mother, brothers, sisters and friends again, my heart would burst in a moment, and I should go down to the grave. The expectation of seeing my friends in the morning of resurrection cheers my soul and makes me bear up against the evils of life. It is like [our loved ones are]...taking a long journey, and on their return we meet them with increased joy." (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*. Compiled by Joseph Fielding Smith. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1976, [Revised Edition, 1977], 296).

I know the words of Mormon and Joseph Smith regarding the mixed feelings that occur at a funeral of one who is a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are true. There is sadness and tears regarding the separation caused by death one experiences at the loss of a loved one. This feeling of separation is, however, combined with the confirmation that one will see their loved one again. For those who have made sacred covenants in the Temples of the Lord, know that families can be together forever. This assurance brings great comfort.

Mormon concludes with the following observation:

Alma 28:13-14

13 And thus we see how great the inequality of man is because of sin and transgression, and the power of the devil, which comes by the cunning plans which he hath devised to ensnare the hearts of men.

14 And thus we see the great call of diligence of men to labor in the vineyards of the Lord; and thus we see the great reason of sorrow, and also of rejoicing—sorrow because of death and destruction among men, and joy because of the light of Christ unto life.

Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L. Millet state,

"The inequality of man: That is to say, men and women establish inequality because of their choices—they either open themselves to the happiness and joy of the blessings of God or they block the blessings of that healing and lifting influence which is within reach of all.

"Great call of diligence. That is, there is a great call to diligent service in the labors of our Master. Each and every one of us is to serve with all his heart, might, mind, and strength (see D&C 4:2).

"Joy because of the light of Christ unto life. {Peter states] "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar [purchased] people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9)." (*Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon, Vol.3.* Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1991, [3rd Printing, 1993], 193).

How blessed are the Lamanites whom Ammon and his brethren taught them the gospel of Jesus Christ. Thousand embraced their teachings and entered the waters of baptism and made sacred covenants which they revered throughout their lives. Many of their brethren, however, chose not to hear the words spoken by the Nephite missionaries. As a result of this simple choice, they continued to live in darkness without the light of truth in their lives.

Alma 28:8

8 And this is the account of Ammon and his brethren, their journeyings in the land of Nephi, their sufferings in the land, their sorrows, and their afflictions, and their incomprehensible joy, and the reception and safety of the brethren in the land of Jershon. And now may the Lord, the Redeemer of all men, bless their souls forever.

It seemed to me that while this verse appears earlier in the chapter, it is a fitting conclusion to this and the previous chapters [17-27] that addressed the missionary work of Ammon and his brethren with the Lamanites. It reminds each of us that striving to bring souls to Christ and to a knowledge of the truths of his gospel, is not easy. One often feels like they are riding on a modern day roller coaster. The ups and downs, combined with the sharp, and often unexpected turns, are similar to the emotions one feels as they serve. The disappointments and rejection, though painful, fade when compared with the joy of seeing an individual or family, enter the waters of baptism and observing the happiness in their lives. I can only imagine the joy Ammon and his brethren must have felt at the conclusion of their labors.

VIII. Alma 29

Alma 29:1-2

1 O that I were an angel, and could have the wish of mine heart, that I might go forth and speak with the trump of God, with a voice to shake the earth, and cry repentance unto every people!

2 Yea, I would declare unto every soul, as with the voice of thunder, repentance and the plan of redemption, that they should repent and come unto our God, that there might not be more sorrow upon all the face of the earth.

This prayer is by Alma, the younger, as he expressed the wishes of his heart to his God. His feelings are not uncommon to those who have themselves felt the witness of truth and through their obedience have come to experience a mighty change of their hearts. They want to share the truths they have learned with all around them who will listen.

Heber J. Grant states,

"I believe that every Latter-day Saint who has received a testimony of the divinity of the work in which we are engaged has this same feeling that Alma had--a desire that all the world might hear the testimony of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. When men and women receive a testimony of the divine mission of the Prophet Joseph Smith, they are anxious that all the world should have that same knowledge and faith. They are anxious that the gospel should go to every honest soul. And there is no other labor in all the world that brings to a human heart, judging from my own personal experience, more joy, peace and serenity than proclaiming the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ."

(Conference Report, October 1926, 4).

Alma 29:3, 6-7

3 But behold, I am a man, and do sin in my wish; for I ought to be content with the things which the Lord hath allotted unto me.

6 ...why should I desire more than to perform the work to which I have been called?

7 Why should I desire that I were an angel, that I could speak unto all the ends of the earth?

Alma then castigates himself for seeking to be more than he is. He also rebukes himself for not focusing on the work the Lord has given him to accomplish, as he seeks to enlarge his area of responsibility.

Neal A. Maxwell states,

"True spirituality helps us to achieve balance between being too content with our present self and the equally dangerous human tendency we might have of wishing for more enlarged and impactful roles" (*Notwithstanding My Weakness*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1981, [Second printing August 1981], 115).

He continues, "[What is] most important, is *what we are and what we do* within those varied allocations and in the particular 'work to which [we] have been called' (Alma 29:6).

"Thus 'the holy present' contains the allotted acres for our discipleship. We need not be situated in prime time with prime visibility in order to work out our own salvation!" ("Content with the Things Allotted unto Us," in *Ensign*, November 2000, 73).

Alma continues, "I ought not to harrow up in my desires, the firm decree of a just God, for I know that he granteth unto men according to their desire, whether it be unto death or unto life;...Yea, and I know that good and evil have come before all men;...he that knoweth good and evil, to him is given according to his desires, whether he desireth good or evil, life or death, joy or remorse of conscience" (Alma 29:4-5).

Henry D. Moyle states,

"I believe that we, as fellow workers in the priesthood, might well take to heart the admonition of Alma and be contented with that which God hath allotted us. We might well be assured that we had something to do with our 'allotment' in our pre-existent state. This would be an additional reason for us to accept our present condition and make the best of it. It is what we agreed to do.

"...we had our own free agency in our pre-mortal existence and whatever we are today is likely the result of that which we willed to be heretofore. We unquestionably knew before we elected to come to this earth the conditions under which we would here exist, and live, and work. So little wonder it is that Alma of old said that we sin in the thought, or the desire or in the wish that we were someone other than ourselves..

"I have a conviction deep down in my heart that we are exactly what we should be, each one of us, except as we may have altered that pattern by deviating from the laws of God here in mortality. I have convinced myself that we all have those peculiar attributes, characteristics, and abilities which are essential for us to possess in order that we may fulfill the full purpose of our creation here upon this earth." (*Conference Report*, October, 1952, 71).

Alma 29:9-10

9 I know that which the Lord hath commanded me, and I glory in it. I do not glory of myself, but I glory in that which the Lord hath commanded me; yea, and this is my glory, that perhaps I may be an instrument in the hands of God to bring some soul to repentance; and this is my joy.

10 And behold, when I see many of my brethren truly penitent, and coming to the Lord their God, then is my soul filled with joy; then do I remember what the Lord has done for me, yea, even that he hath heard my prayer; yea, then do I remember his merciful arm which he extended towards me.

The powerful conclusion Alma came to as he expressed the desires of his heart is the most important work each of us can perform: To serve where we have been called. In the in the pre-existent world, in the words of Henry D. Moyle, "we accept[ed] our present condition and [agreed] to make the best of it." As we, in turn, demonstrate to Our Heavenly Father, our determination to do the work in his kingdom we have been given to the best of our ability, someday He will say to us, "Well done my good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of the Lord" (Matthew 25:21). In the final analysis, the only accolade that will have real meaning in our lives will be

the approval of Our Lord and Savior for the service we have rendered.

Joseph F. Smith states,

"After all, to do well those things which God ordained to be the common lot of all man-kind, is the truest greatness" (*Gospel Doctrine*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1939, [Eighth Edition, 1949], 285).

Alma 29:12

12 Yea, I have always remembered the captivity of my fathers; and that same God who delivered them out of the hands of the Egyptians did deliver them out of bondage.

To the children of Israel, their deliverance out of bondage was an event never to be forgotten. It began with marking their doors with the blood of a lamb as they were instructed by their prophet. This allowed the Angel of death to pass by their marked doors while putting to death the firstborn of the families of Egypt. Only the lives were preserved of those who gave exact obedience to the counsel of the prophet. It was the blood of the Lamb that was to be shed, symbolizing the atonement of Jesus Christ, that will preserve us from spiritual death. It is because these lessons were so important to their spirituality that the celebration of Passover was inaugurated in order to assist Israel to remember. It was when they, and we forget, that our faith and trust in God decreases, followed by our disobedience to his commandments.

Alma 29:13-14, 16

13 Yea, and that same God did establish his church among them; yea, and that same God hath called me by a holy calling, to preach the word unto this people, and hath given me much success, in which my joy is full.

14 But I do not joy in my own success alone, but my joy is more full because of the success of my brethren, who have been up to the land of Nephi.

16 Now, when I think of the success of these my brethren my soul is carried away, even to the separation of it from the body, as it were, so great is my joy.

Alma rejoices not only in the trust he has been given by the Lord to "preach the word unto this people" (Alma 29:13), and the success he had, but he also rejoices in the success of his beloved boyhood friends, the sons of Mosiah II. It is one thing for Alma to rejoice and be grateful for the blessings the Lord had given to him; it is another, for him to rejoice in the blessings the Lord had given to his brethren.

May we each benefit from the words of Alma, the younger, and the lessons he has taught us, including remembering to be unselfish and genuine in our praise and recognition of the accomplishments of others.

IX. Conclusions

This concludes our focus upon the missionary work of Ammon and his brethren to the Lamanites. They had the desire to be an instrument in the hands of the Lord in bringing the Lamanites to the truth. They served a total of fourteen years (Alma 17:4), and while they experienced much persecution and tribulation, through the power of God, they were able to bring thousands of Lamanites to a knowledge of the gospel.

In Alma, Chapter 23, through the conversion of King Lamoni's father, he issued a proclamation that opened the door for many of his subjects to receive the word of the gospel. As they were converted to the gospel, "they never did fall away" (Alma 23:6). One of the reasons for their steadfastness in the gospel may be that they also laid down "their weapons of rebellion" (Alma 23:7). They took upon themselves the name that would separate them from the Lamanites being called Anti-Nephi-Lehies. (see Alma 23:17.)

Alma, Chapter 24, the Anti-Nephi-Lehies determined that as a result of the many sins they had committed and the lives they had taken, they "took their swords, and all the weapons they had used for the shedding of man's blood, and they did bury them deep in the earth" (Alma 24:17). They chose to give their lives in face of their enemy, rather than defend themselves in battle. All who later joined them, also entered into this covenant.

During the initial battle, they surrendered their lives, and lives were lost as a result of their oath not to protect themselves. Their Lamanite brethren were so struck by their actions, that they stopped their slaughter and joined the church. (see Alma 24:26.)

It is an important lesson for us to learn that we too must be peaceful followers of Christ and be willing to turn the other cheek.

In Alma, Chapter 25, the people of Anti-Nephi-Lehi were diligent in keeping the Law of Moses. Unlike those in the Old World, they did not lose sight of the fact that the Law of Moses was given to prepare the people for the coming of Christ and his personal sacrifice for their sins. Ammon and his brethren rejoiced for the Lord had kept his promise given to them while they were in the wilderness, "I will make an instrument of thee in my hands unto the salvation of many souls" (Alma 17:12). They saw many thousands of Lamanites join the Church of God.

Alma, Chapter 26, Ammon reflects with his brethren upon the success that they experienced among the Lamanites. When his brother, Aaron, chides him, he states, "Yea, I know that I am nothing; as to my strength I am weak; therefore I will not boast of myself, but I will boast of my God, for in his strength I can do all things;" (Alma 26:12). This is also true for each of us, if we are willing to humble ourselves before the Lord and seek to do his will.

In Alma, Chapter 27, the Lamanites, stirred upon by the Amalikitites again come in battle against the people of Anti-Nephi-Lehi. Many are killed before the Lamanites finally retreat. Ammon, fearful that those whom he has come to love, will be destroyed, seeks to put a plan in place that will allow the Anti-Nephi-Lehies to keep their covenant and also to be protected. He and his brethren receive confirmation of the plan and with the support of the king and the people, they meet with the leaders of the Nephites. The leaders and the people agree to protect their former enemies from harm. They are given the land of Jershon and the Nephi army provides them with protection for which they are reimbursed by the citizens of the land. (see Alma 27:23-24.)

In Alma, Chapter 28, again the Lamanites attack the Anti-Nephi-Lehies after they were established in the land of

Jereshon. A great battle ensues and while many Lamanites are killed and defeated, so are many of the Nephite defenders. They do not complain, even though they had lost their lives while defending a people who had once before been their enemies. The loved ones of the Nephites who lost their lives are blessed for while they are saddened at their death, they are comforted by the promises of the gospel that they will live again. Those who have made and continue to keep sacred covenants, have the promise they will be united as an eternal family.

Alma, Chapter 29, contains the wishes of Alma's heart to be of service to his God and bring souls to God. He then rebukes himself for not being content with the responsibilities the Lord has given to him. With an increased understanding, he concludes that the most important work we can perform is to serve, to the best of our ability, where we have been called to serve.

Alma, the younger, recalls the captivity and deliverance of the children of Israel from the Egyptians. It was the obedience of the people to the words of the prophet, to put the blood of a lamb around the door frame with the promise that if they did so the angel of death would pass by their homes and they would be spared. Those who were obedient, their first born were spared, while the life of the first born of the Egyptians was taken. The lessons of this event serve as a powerful reminder to each of us. These include: Our exact obedience; Always following the counsel of the prophet, and to always remember that the blood of the lamb symbolized the sacrifice of Jesus Christ as he shed his blood that we may live again. Each year the children of Israel remembered this event as part of their Passover celebration. It is when they, and we forget, the blessings of the Lord in our lives, that our faith and trust in God is weakened.

Alma's words conclude with his joy regarding the success of his brethren in bringing many Lamanites to the truth of the gospel. It is a reminder to each of us that while we may rejoice in our success, it is important we also rejoice in the success of others. As we strive to keep the commandments and to do the will of the Lord, we will receive his blessings.

In our next lesson [BM#27], we will learn to recognize how to respond to those who offer false teachings. We will also

learn, through Alma's example, how we can strengthen our own testimonies and remain true to the faith and witness we have received.