

BM#29 "Give Ear to My Words" Alma 36-39

- I. Introduction
- II. Alma 36
- III. Alma 37
- IV. Alma 38
- V. Alma 39
- VI. Conclusions

I. Introduction

These four chapters, [36-39], and the three chapters that follow [40-42], are exceptional chapters. They contain the feelings of a father for his sons as he gives them admonition and correction regarding eternal truths. Given his demands in being the Prophet of the Lord and the President of His Church on the earth, one can imagine that Alma was frequently absent from his home and family, as he cared for the needs of the Church throughout the land. The added demands of missionary work would take him away for extended periods of time from his family and those about whom he cared. There were occasions when he took his sons with him, but, even then his sons would be required to share their father's attention with the membership of the Church.

We know nothing from the record about Alma's wife. We assume, however, that the majority of the rearing and caring for the children came under her responsibility given her husband's demanding schedule. Being the wife of the President of the Church, then and now, could not be easy.

We need not assume that the words recorded represent the only time that Alma sat down with his sons and had a loving conversation with them. As the Prophet, he clearly understood his responsibility as a father and husband and would not have neglected his role in these areas. What makes these chapters special to me is that they give us a personal view of Alma as a father and the love and concern he had for his sons.

Bryan Richards states,

"[T]he next seven chapters [36-42] deal with...[Alma's] advice and commandments to his three sons, Helaman, Shiblon and Corianton. Heleman as the oldest was entrusted with the records; Shiblon was so righteous that Alma had relatively

little in way of advice for him; and Corianton gets an earful. For four chapters [39-42], Alma counsels and instructs this third son on the evil of his ways. The main focus is that the sinner will not escape punishment in the resurrection. In these seven chapters, many priceless gems of doctrinal insight are given...We should follow his example of fatherhood in teaching our own [children]. And we should make these writings a regular course of study." (www.gospeldoctrine.com/contents/Alma-36).

Not only are these words of counsel and caring applicable as we instruct our own children, they also are applicable in dealing with those who may have wandered from the faith as noted in Chapter 36.

Outline of Alma 36-39:

- "Alma 36-37 Alma recounts his conversion and bears his testimony to his son Helaman. He instructs Helaman to preserve the sacred records.
- "Alma 38 Alma praised his son Shiblon for his faithfulness and encourages him to continue in righteousness, enduring to the end.
- "Alma 39 Alma admonishes his son Corianton for immoral actions and counsels Corianton about the consequences of such sin." (*Book of Mormon Gospel Doctrine Teacher's Manual*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1999, 128).

II. Alma 36

Heber J. Grant states,

"The Book of Mormon has a very warm place in my heart because of one of its chapters (Alma 36).

"I had a wayward brother who took no interest whatever in the Church until he was between thirty-five and forty years of age. I received a letter from him, telling me that on account of [financial failures, he intended] to kill himself.

"He went out into the woods intending to kill himself, but he got to thinking what a cowardly, dastardly act it would

be for him to leave his wife and children destitute. So, instead of killing himself, he knelt down and prayed; 'O God, if there is a God.'

"He got up weeping for joy, and he wrote me that he had become convinced of two things: that there is a God, and that there is a devil, one leading to life and the other to death. He sealed his letter, and then the influence came over him: 'You have now ruined your brother (Heber had given him large sums of money which he lost), and now you are trying to make amends by telling him you have commenced to pray.'

"He threw the letter into his trunk. He wrote me letters every day for about a week, all landing in his trunk, but finally he mailed one.

"He struggled with the influence: 'Your brother, when he gets that letter, will write and tell you to be baptized, and if you do so you will be a hypocrite.'

"After lying awake all one night, he went at five o'clock in the morning and got the letter. But he finally sent me another. When I got it, instead of writing him as the adversary impressed him that I would, I wrote him: 'Some day you will know the gospel is true. Don't think I want you to be baptized, if you feel that you would be a hypocrite.'

"I went out and bought him a Book of Mormon, went into my office, shut the door, and told the Lord I want to open the book to the chapter that would do a wayward and careless brother of mine the most good; and this is the chapter to which I opened [the thirty-sixth chapter of Alma]. Anyone who knows the contents of the book will admit that he cannot find another chapter comparable with the thirty-sixth chapter of Alma, not more appropriate for sending to a wayward boy.

"...I love that chapter. Why? Because, when that wayward brother of mine read it, he wrote: 'Heber, I do not know the gospel is true, but I pledge the Lord, if he ever gives me, as He gave Alma of old, a knowledge of the divinity of the gospel, that I will labor as Alma of old labored, to bring souls to a knowledge of the truth.' And, thank the Lord, he obtained the knowledge, and thank the Lord also, he has kept his pledge." (*Gospel Standards*. Compiled by Dr.

G. Homer Durham under the direction of John A. Widtsoe and Richard L. Evans. Salt Lake City: The Deseret News Press, 1941, [Eleventh Edition, 1944], 323-325).

For anyone who has ever been concerned regarding the welfare of a family member or relative, the words of Heber J. Grant confirm that the words of Alma have value for those who have wandered off the path. In this regard, Corianton, certainly took a detour from the path as he forsook his missionary service. It is important to remember that those who occupy our attention, are even of greater concern to our Heavenly Father.

Thomas R. Valletta states,

"The superscription to Alma 36 ['The commandments of Alma to his son Helaman. *Comprising chapters 36 and 37*'] was part of the ancient record translated by the Prophet Joseph Smith and dictated by him to his scribe (see also, for example, 2 Nephi, Mosiah 9, and Alma 38).

"The italicized words, '*Comprising chapter 36 and 37*' were not part of the ancient record but were added later to printed editions of the Book of Mormon." (*The Book of Mormon Study Guide: Start To Finish*. Thomas R. Valletta, General Editor. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 2015, 480).

Alma 36:1-2

**1 My son, give ear [listen] to my words; for I swear unto you, that inasmuch as ye shall keep the commandments of God ye shall prosper in the land.
2 I would that ye should do as I have done, in remembering the captivity of our fathers; for they were in bondage, and none could deliver them except it was the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob; and he surely did deliver them in their afflictions.**

Alma begins this important discussion with his oldest son, Heleman by counseling him to "give ear" or to listen carefully to the words he desires to share with him. He begins by expressing his concern that his son understand that the only way he can prosper spiritually or temporally during his mortal life is by being obedient to the commandments of God. Alma notes that in order to help him

to remember the promises of God, he reflected upon the time of the captivity of children of Israel to the Egyptians. They were slaves and had no hope for freedom, except through the deliverance of God. He reminds Heleman that the God who brought them to freedom was the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who was known as Jehovah in the Old Testament and Jesus Christ in the New Testament. In fact, all encounters the Old Testament prophets experienced with deity were with Jehovah, or the pre-mortal Jesus Christ, who spoke under the direction of His Father.

Bryan Richards states,

"[E]very student of the gospel should remember the mercy of the Lord to those who have been in captivity. One of the most quoted events in religious history is the exodus of the children of Israel from Egypt. The message of these many captivities is clear. If the people will trust in the Lord, he will deliver them from their afflictions and visit them in their trials. He will be the power by which they are freed from bondage, both physical and spiritually. (www.gospeldoctrine.com/contents/Alma-36).

Joseph Fielding Smith states,

"All revelation since the fall has come through Jesus Christ, who is the Jehovah of the Old Testament. In all of the scriptures, where God is mentioned and where he has appeared, it was Jehovah who talked with Abraham, with Noah, Enoch, Moses and all the prophets. He is the God of Israel, the Holy One of Israel; the one who led that nation out of Egyptian bondage, and who gave and fulfilled the Law of Moses. The Father has never dealt with man directly and personally since the fall, and he has never appeared except to introduce and bear record of the Son." (*Doctrine of Salvation, Vol.1*. Compiled by Bruce R. McConkie. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1954, [24th Printing, 1980], 27).

Alma 36:3-5

3 And now, O my son Helaman, behold, thou art in thy youth, and therefore, I beseech of thee that thou wilt hear my words and learn of me; for I do know that whosoever shall put their trust in God shall be supported in their trials, and their troubles, and their afflictions, and shall be lifted up at the last day.

**4 And I would not that ye think that I know of myself-
not of the temporal but of the spiritual, not of the
carnal mind but of God.**

**5 Now, behold, I say unto you, if I had not been born
of God I should not have known these things; but God
has, by the mouth of his holy angel, made these things
known unto me, not of any worthiness of myself;**

Bryan Richards states,

"This comforting doctrine ['whosoever shall put their trust in God shall be supported in their trials, and their troubles, and their afflictions'], has been demonstrated in the lives of millions of the faithful. It is a concept which is a main theme of the Old Testament--as the children of Israel had difficulty remembering to trust in the Lord and not the arm of flesh. Solomon wisely stated, 'Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths' (Prov 3:5-6).

www.gospeldoctrine.com/contents/Alma-36).

Heber J. Grant states,

"Let me say in passing that Alma knew, not better than I know, that those who put their trust in God shall be supported in all manner of afflictions and trials; because I have passed through trials and tribulations and have been supported by Him. I was able to sit by the deathbed of my last living son, for whom I had great expectations, and see him die without shedding a tear; and there was a most peaceful feeling in my heart when he passed away. So I know, as Alma of old knew, that those who trust in God shall be supported in their tribulation." (*Gospel Standards*. Compiled by Dr. G. Homer Durham under the direction of John A. Widtsoe and Richard L. Evans. Salt Lake City: The Deseret News Press, 1941, [Eleventh Edition, 1944], 324).

Alma wants Helaman to know how he gained his testimony of the gospel and how in his youth he had made mistakes. Through his experiences, he had learned important truths that he desired to share with his son, Helaman. In his youth, he and the four sons of King Mosiah were going about seeking to destroy the Church of God. One day, while they were traveling to another city, an angel sent from God appeared to them. Alma shared with his son, Helaman, the

events that occurred at the time of his conversion, beginning with the appearance of the angel. (see Alma 36:6-23; compare Mosiah 27:10-21.) The following verses have been chosen to remind us of his experience.

Alma 36:9

9 And he [angel] said unto me: If thou wilt of thyself be destroyed, seek no more to destroy the church of God.

Wilford Woodruff states,

"If the Lord sends an angel to anyone, He sends him to perform a work that cannot be performed only by the administration of an angel...The Lord had sent angels to men from the creation of the world, at different times, but always with a message or with something to perform that could not be performed without." ("The Administration of Angels." Wilford Woodruff. October 19, 1896. *Collected Discourses* 1896-1898, Vol.5. Collected and Edited by Brian Stuy. Provo, Utah: B.H.S. Publishing, 1992, [Second printing, 1999], 233).

Alma 36:11

11 And the angel spake more things unto me, which were heard by my brethren, but I did not hear them; for when I heard the words--If thou wilt be destroyed of thyself, seek no more to destroy the church of God-- I was struck with such great fear and amazement lest perhaps I should be destroyed, that I fell to the earth and I did hear no more.

Brian Richards states,

"The Mosiah version of the story sheds some light...In that version, the words of the angel are rendered, 'seek to destroy the church no more...and this even if thou wilt of thyself be cast off' (Mosiah 27:16). Now, the meaning is clear. To paraphrase again, 'even if you would rather be destroyed by the power of God, you are commanded to stop persecuting the church.'

"Alma was frightened by these words. His mind caught hold upon the concept of his own destruction. Alma understood that the angel was powerful enough to kill him for his

disobedience, although the angel's words did not really threaten him directly. Nevertheless, he knew that he must repent or be destroyed, and the immortality of youth now seemed threatened. His response was the natural instinct of self-preservation, 'I was struck with such great fear and amazement lest perhaps I should be destroyed (v.11).'
(www.gospeldoctrine.com/contents/Alma-36).

Alma 36:12-13, 16-19

12 But I was racked with eternal torment, for my soul was harrowed up to the greatest degree and racked with all my sins.

13 Yea, I did remember all my sins and iniquities, for which I was tormented with the pains of hell; yea I saw that I had rebelled against my God, and that I had not kept his holy commandments.

16 And now, for three days and for three nights was I racked, even with the pains of a damned soul.

17 And it came to pass that as I was thus racked with torment, while I was harrowed up by the memory of my many sins, behold I remembered also to have heard my father prophesy unto the people concerning the coming of one Jesus Christ, a Son of God, to atone for the sins of the world.

18 Now, as my mind caught hold upon this thought, I cried within my heart: O Jesus, thou Son of God, have mercy on me, who am in the gall of bitterness, and am encircled about by the everlasting chains of death.

19 And now, behold, when I thought this, I could remember my pains no more; yea, I was harrowed up by the memory of my sins no more.

Spence W. Kimball states,

"Now anguish was turned to joy, pain to calm, darkness to light. Only now could Alma have peace. He [later] emphasized to his son Shiblon the sole source of that peace...'And never, until I did cry out unto the Lord Jesus Christ for mercy, did I receive a remission of my sins. But behold, I did cry unto him and I did find peace to my soul (Al.38:8).'" (*Miracle of Forgiveness*. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1969, [13th Printing, 1972], 366).

Alma 36:20-21

20 And oh, what joy, and what marvelous light I did behold; yea, my soul was filled with joy as exceeding as was my pain!

21 Yea, I say unto you, my son, that there could be nothing so exquisite and so bitter as were my pains. Yea, and again I say unto you, my son, that on the other hand, there can be nothing so exquisite and sweet as was my joy.

These verses address the acute awareness that came to Alma as he realized that his actions toward the church had greatly offended his God. He feared for his personal destruction. Then his thoughts turned to his own unworthiness before God. He became aware of all his sins which caused him "to be racked with eternal torment" (Alma 36:12). He "had rebelled against...God and...not kept his holy commandments" (Alma 34:13). His pain and mental anguish continued for three days and nights. It was only when he cried out to "Jesus, thou Son of God, have mercy on me who am in the gall of bitterness, and am encircled about by the everlasting chains of death" (Alma 36:18), that Alma found any relief from the pain of his sins. He told his son, "I could remember my pains no more" (Alma 36:19). Then he states, "my soul was [then] filled with joy as exceeding as was my pain" (Alma 36:20).

Alma 36:23

23 But behold, my limbs did receive their strength again, and I stood upon my feet, and did manifest unto the people that I had been born of God.

Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L. Millet state,

"We would err if we supposed that to be born again requires a conversion experience as dramatic as Alma's. It does not. Alma's story is preserved in the scriptures because it is unusual and powerful. For virtually everyone in Alma's day and ours, the process of being born again is quiet and unobtrusive, yet all conversion experiences ought to contain certain elements in common. 'We must be cautious,' President Ezra Taft Benson has warned, 'as we discuss these remarkable examples. Though they are real and powerful, they are the exception more than the rule. For every Paul, for every Enos, and for every King Lamoni, there are

hundreds and thousands of people who find the process of repentance [to be] much more subtle, much more imperceptible. Day by day they move closer to the Lord, little realizing they are building a godlike life.' ("A Might Change of Heart," *Ensign*, October 1989, 5).

"The Spirit of God sanctifies—it cleanses and purges filth and dross out of the human soul as though by fire...It [also] fills one with a holy element, with a sacred presence that motivates the person to a godly walk and goodly works...They embody righteousness; They are goodness. In their lives, works are seldom a means to some end; good works flow from a regenerate heart and evidence their commitment to Christ...they are freer than free, because they have given themselves up to the Lord and his purposes' (Robert L. Millet. *Life in Christ*, pp. 98-99)."

(*Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon, Vol.3*. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1991, [3rd Printing, 1993], 268-269).

The miraculous transformation that had occurred to Alma resulted in a change of behavior within him.

Alma 36:24

24 Yea, and from that time even until now, I have labored without ceasing, that I might bring souls unto repentance; that I might bring them to taste of the exceeding joy of which I did taste; that they might also be born of God, and be filled with the Holy Ghost.

As Alma continued in his labor to do the work of God on earth, he was greatly blessed. He states, "because of the word which he has imparted unto me, behold, many have been born of God, and have tasted as I have tasted" (Alma 36:26). And that is not all, "I have been supported under trials and troubles of every kind, yea, and in all manner of afflictions...and I know that he will raise me up in the last day, to dwell with him in glory;" (Alma 36:27-28). Alma had been greatly blessed by the Lord. Alma then reiterates to his son, Helaman, the formula for success for an individual as well as for a nation.

Alma 36:30

30 ...ye ought to know as I do know, that inasmuch as ye shall keep the commandments of God ye shall prosper in

the land; and ye ought to know also, that inasmuch as ye will not keep the commandments of God ye shall be cut off from his presence. Now this is according to his word.

This verity has and will be repeated several times by the prophets. (see 2 Nephi 1:20; Jarom 1:9-10; Omni 1:6-7; Alma 9:13-14; 36:30; 37:13; 3 Ne.5:10-11.)

It is essential that we as individuals and as a nation remember that when we choose anything other than complete and total obedience to God's laws, we have chosen our own destruction. God, through his prophets, has shown us the way. If we choose not to follow his direction, we will reap the consequences of our choices.

III. Alma 37

Helaman has been entrusted by the Lord to keep the records and to write upon them the lessons that will be of greatest meaning to those who receive them. We will be the benefactors of the Lord's blessing.

Alma 37:1-2

**1 And now, my son Helaman, I command you that ye take the records which have been entrusted with me;
2 And I also command you that ye keep a record of this people, according as I have done, upon the plates of Nephi, and keep all these things sacred which I have kept, even as I have kept them; for it is a wise purpose that they are kept.**

The Book of Mormon Student Manual [2009] states,

"[Alma] commanded his son to keep a record of his people and taught him that the scriptures are designed to enlarge our memory, convince us of the error of our ways, and bring us to a knowledge of God and His plan of salvation (see vs.8-9)." (*Book of Mormon Student Manual*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2009, 234-235).

Alma 37:3

3 And these plates of brass, which contain these engravings, which have the records of the holy

scriptures upon them, which have the genealogy of our forefathers, even from the beginning--

Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L. Millet state,

"The brass plates play a vital role in the Book of Mormon. Nephi killed a man to obtain them, evidencing the importance of intellectual and spiritual literacy to the perpetuation of a civilization (see 1 Nephi 4:13,18; Omni 1:17). They contained the five books of Moses; the prophecies of many of the Israelite prophets, down to and including Jeremiah; [and Zenos, Zenock, Neum, and Ezias]; and a genealogy of Lehi and his family (1 Nephi 5). In addition the brass plates were a more extensive scriptural record than the Bible as we know it (see 1 Nephi 13:23). We learn from Benjamin that at least some (or possibly all) of the brass plates were written in Egyptian (see Mosiah 1:4) They were the scriptures of the Nephites, and we suppose that multiple copies were made by the Nephites in order that all the people might have access to the written word of the Lord." (*Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon, Vol.3. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1991, [3rd Printing, 1993], 272).*

We learn that these plates, one day "should go forth unto every nation...that they might know the mysteries contained thereon" (Alma 37:4). It is because they contain Holy scriptures, that they will continue to retain their brightness, thus not tarnishing as we would expect brass to do over time. (see Alma 37:5.)

Alma 37:6-7

6 Now ye may suppose that this is foolishness in me; but behold I say unto you, that by small and simple things are great things brought to pass; and small means in many instances doth confound the wise.

7 And the Lord God doth work by means to bring about his great and eternal purposes; and by very small means the Lord doth confound the wise and bringeth about the salvation of many souls.

The Lord does not seek to confound the humble and the meek of the earth that are wise. He confounds those whose minds are so set upon the things of this world and the praises of men, that they will not humble themselves regarding the

whispering of the spirit. They are wise as to the things of the world, but ignorant as to the workings of the spirit.

Alma tells his son, Helaman, that it was due to the scriptures Ammon and his brethren had, that made it possible for them to make the people aware of the false traditions that existed and brought thousands to repentance. It is also his desire that they will yet be the means of bringing thousands more of our "stiff-necked brethren, the Nephites, who are now hardening their hearts in sins and iniquities, to the knowledge of their Redeemer" (Alma 37:10).

Alma 37:14-16

14 And now remember, my son, that God has entrusted you with these things, which are sacred, which he has kept sacred, and also which he will keep and preserve for a wise purpose in him, that he may show forth his power unto future generations.

15 And now behold, I tell you by the spirit of prophecy, that if ye transgress the commandments of God, behold, these things which are sacred shall be taken away from you by the power of God, and ye shall be delivered up unto Satan, that he may sift you as chaff before the wind.

16 But if ye keep the commandments of God, and do with these things which are sacred according to that which the Lord doth command you, (for you must appeal unto the Lord for all things whatsoever ye must do with them) behold, no power of earth or hell can take them from you, for God is powerful to the fulfilling of all his words.

Alma is emphatic in his warning to his son, Helaman, regarding his care of the sacred plates. Given the result that occurred when people of Zarahemla failed to bring scriptures with them when they left Jerusalem, not only did their language become corrupted, but also "they denied the being of their Creator;" (Omni 1:17). In other words, they lost all understanding of the fundamental principles of their religion! Given the possibility that this could also occur for the Nephites, if the plates were not protected, we can better appreciate Alma's admonition to his son.

Alma 37:19

19 And now behold, one purpose hath he fulfilled, even to the restoration of many thousands of the Lamanites to the knowledge of the truth; and he hath shown forth his power in them, and he will also still show forth his power in them unto future generations; therefore they shall be preserved.

One of the divine purposes for the preservation of the sacred plates, according to Alma, was that many Lamanities "unto future generations" (Alma 37:19), may yet be brought to the truth of the gospel and the divinity of Jesus Christ as the Son of God. It is important to note that on the title page of each Book of Mormon, since it was originally published, it states, "written to the Lamanites, who are a remnant of the house of Israel;" (**Title page. *The Book of Mormon*. Palmyra [New York]: E.B. Grandin, 1830**). The preservation and the printing of the Book of Mormon from the sacred plates, abridged by Mormon and Moroni, by Joseph Smith is evidence of the preservation of the record to which Alma refers.

Alma 37:21

21 And now, I will speak unto you concerning those twenty-four plates, that ye keep them, that the mysteries and the works of darkness, and their sacred works, or the secret works of those people who have been destroyed, may be made manifest unto this people; yea, all their murders, and robbings, and their plundering, and all their wickedness and abominations, may be made manifest unto this people; yea, and that ye preserve these interpreters.

Bryan Richards states,

"By way of review, Limhi sent an expedition north to find Zarahemla, but instead, they found the 24 plates which Ether had hid in an conspicuous location (Mosiah 21:25-28; Ether 15:33). The Book of Ether is Moroni's abridgment of these 24 plates (Ether 1:2). When Alma speaks of the secret works of these people, he is speaking of the secret combinations which were so prevalent among the Jaredities (Ether 8). (www.gospeldoctrine.com/contents/Alma-37).

These works were protected and did not come to light, however, Satan did reveal them to those who participated in spreading wickedness among the Nephites. (see Helaman 6:26.)

Alma 37:23

23 And the Lord said, I will prepare unto my servant Gazelem, a stone, which shall shine forth in darkness unto light, that I may discover unto my people who serve me, that I may discover unto them the works of their brethren, yea, their secret works, their works of darkness, and their wickedness and abominations.

Bruce R. McConkie states,

"With reference to the name Gazelam, it is interesting to note that Alma in directing Helaman to preserve both the Urim and Thummin and the plates containing the Book of Ether, says that such record will be brought to light by the Lord's servant Gazelem, who will use 'a stone' in his translation work. (Alma 37:21-23.) It may be that Gazelem is a variant spelling of Gazelam and that Alma's reference is to the Prophet Joseph Smith who did in fact bring forth part at least of the Ether record. Or it could be that the name Gazelem (Gazelam) is a title having to do with power to translate ancient records and that Alma's reference was to some Nephite prophet who brought the Book of Ether to light in the golden era of Nephite history." (*Mormon Doctrine*. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966, [Second Edition], 307-308).

Alma 37:25

25 I will bring forth out of darkness unto light all their secret works and their abominations; and except they repent I will destroy them from off the face of the earth; and I will bring to light all their secrets abominations, unto every nation that shall hereafter possess the land.

Bryan Richards states,

"One of the punishments of the wicked is that they will have a perfect remembrance of all their wickedness (Alma 5:18). Another equally painful punishment is to have all one's secret sins published for public perusal. The Lord

has given us no assurance that our unrepentant deeds will remain secrets. Rather, as a punishment, he will publish them just as he published the wickedness and abominations of the Jaredites." (www.gospeldoctrine.com/contents/Alma-37).

Alma 37:32-37

32 And now, my son, remember the words which I have spoken unto you; trust not those secret plans unto this people, but teach them an everlasting hatred against sin and iniquity.

33 Preach unto them repentance, and faith on the Lord Jesus Christ; teach them to humble themselves and to be meek and lowly in heart; teach them to withstand every temptation of the devil, with their faith on the Lord Jesus Christ.

34 Teach them to never be weary of good works, but to be meek and lowly in heart; for such shall find rest to their souls.

35 ...learn in thy youth to keep the commandments of God.

36 ...cry unto God for all thy support; yea, let all thy doings be unto the Lord,...

37 Counsel with the Lord in all thy doings, and he will direct thee for good;...lie down [at night] unto the Lord he may watch over you...risest in the morning let thy heart be full of thanks unto God..

Neal A. Maxwell states,

"Meekness, though lowly, has its own quiet majesty...by being yoked to [Jesus] and His gospel, we are drawn closer to Him. Proximity only increases our meekness." (*Meek and Lowly*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1987, [2nd Printing, 1987], 114).

As we are meek and lowly and draw closer to Jesus Christ and his gospel, we gain strength and clarity of purpose in our lives. We are better able to resist the temptations of the devil, and we seek to do good works. We are obedient to the commandments, and pray to God night and day for his protection and support. Our hearts are full of thanks to God for his tender mercies in our lives. These are the attributes every father wants his son to obtain and to exemplify in his own daily life.

Alma 37:38-42

38 And now, my son, I have somewhat to say concerning the thing which our fathers call a ball, or director-- or our fathers called it Liahona, which is, being interpreted, a compass; and the Lord prepared it.
39 ...it was prepared to show unto our fathers the course which they should travel in the wilderness.
40 And it did work for them according to their faith in God; therefore, if they had faith to believe that God could cause that those spindles should point the way they should go, behold, it was done;...
41 Nevertheless, because those miracles were worked by small means it did show unto them marvelous works. They were slothful, and forgot to exercise their faith and diligence and then those marvelous works ceased, and they did not progress in their journey;
42 Therefore, they tarried in the wilderness, or did not travel a direct course, and were afflicted with hunger and thirst, because of their transgressions.

We learned earlier in the Book of Mormon, that on the morning of their departure, outside Lehi's tent door, was a "round ball of curious workmanship; and it was of fine brass. And within the ball were two spindles; and the one pointed the way whither we should go into the wilderness" (1 Nephi 16:10). We learn writing appeared on the ball for the Lord said, "Look upon the ball, and behold the things which are written" (1 Nephi 16:26). Nephi in his writings records the following:

1 Nephi 16:28-29

28 And it came to pass that I, Nephi, beheld the pointers which were in the ball, that they did work according to the faith and diligence and heed which we did give unto them.
29 And there was also written upon them a new writing, which was plain to be read, which did give us understanding concerning the ways of the Lord; and it was written and changed from time to time, according to the faith and diligence which we gave unto it. And thus we see that by small means the Lord can bring about great things.

It was not until Alma's record when we learn the name of the ball is called the "Liahona...beig interpreted, a compass;" (Alma 37:38).

We previously understood that Lehi and his company had not travelled in a straight course for it took them an inordinate amount of time to travel the distance to the land of Bountiful. Nephi records, "And we did sojourn for the space of many years, yea, even eight years in the wilderness. And we did come to the land which we called Bountiful" (1 Nephi 17:4-5).

Alma teaches his son Helaman, and all of us, an important lesson regarding Lehi's compass or Liahona.

Alma 37:43-46

43 And now, my son, I would that ye should understand that these things are not without a shadow; for as our fathers were slothful to give heed to this compass (now these things were temporal) they did not prosper; even so it is with things which are spiritual.

44 For behold, it is as easy to give heed to the word of Christ, which will point to you a straight course to eternal bliss, as it was for our fathers to give heed to this compass, which would point unto them a straight course to the promised land.

45 ...For just as surely as this director did bring our fathers, by following its course, to the promised land, shall the words of Christ, if we follow their course, carry us beyond this vale of sorrow into a far better land of promise.

46 O my son, do not let us be slothful because of the easiness of the way; for so it was with our fathers; for so was it prepared for them, that if they would look they might live; even so it is with us. The way is prepared, and if we will look we may live forever.

Some in the latter days have been critical of the children of Israel for their negligence in failing to look at the brazen serpent and be healed. They have also been critical of Lehi and his company for their failure to exercise the prerequisite faith in order to shorten their travel in the desert wilderness. Sadly, I have been one of those individuals. His words, "it is as easy to give heed to the word of Christ, [to] point [you in] a straight course to eternal bliss, as it was for our fathers to give heed to

the compass [or serpent in the wilderness!], echoed in my ear. Thanks to Alma teaching to his son Helaman, and me, I have begun my repentance.

M. Russell Ballard states,

"Great and marvelous events seem to motivate us, but small things often do not hold our attention...

"Is our journey sometimes impeded when we forget the importance of small things? (See Alma 37:46.) Do we realize that small events and choices determine the direction of our lives just as small helms determine the direction of great ships? (See James 3:4; D&C 123:16.)..."

"May the Lord bless each of us to follow the counsel of our prophets. We need to have family and personal prayers, study the scriptures, particularly the Book of Mormon; hold family home evenings; follow the admonition of the Savior to love one another and be thoughtful, kind, and gentle within the family. Through these and other similar small and simple things, we have the promise that our lives will be filled with peace and joy." ("Small and Simple Things," in *Ensign*, May 1990, 8).

Alma 37:47

47 And now, my son, see that ye take care of these sacred things, yea, see that ye look to God and live. Go unto this people and declare the word, and be sober. My son, farewell.

Jeffrey R. Holland states,

"The call of the Book of Mormon is always 'Look that ye might live.' Whether that is to look up to a staff held aloft by a prophet of God or down upon a personal, sphere-like Liahona, it is the same. They mark the way of eternal life. Indeed, they are a similitude of the Way of Eternal Life. All things are the typifying of Christ." (*Christ and the New Covenant*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1997, 177).

Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L. Millet state,

"Be sober. The gospel message is a voice of gladness, a declaration of good news, a proclamation of peace. It has

been delivered to make of us a happy people. But we are also under obligation to take seriously the manner in which the message is presented. Souls are at stake. We are taught to "trifle not with sacred things" (D&C 6:12)." (*Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon, Vol.3.* Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1991, [3rd Printing, 1993], 283).

We are blessed to have the words of Alma to his son, Helaman, for they also have application to our lives as we strive to keep the commandments and avoid the pitfalls around us.

IV. Alma 38

Alma 38 and Alma 39 are a study in contrasts. In Alma 38, the words of Alma are directed to his son, Shiblon. Shiblon was faithful and valiant in his missionary service to the Zoramites. His brother, Corianton, as we will learn in Alma, Chapter 39, was not. Their contrasting behavior does not cause their father to love them any less. Like Our Father in Heaven, He loves us when we are obedient as well as when we are not. Unfortunately, when we are disobedient we are not able to receive the blessings we would have received had we been obedient.

Alma 38:1

1 My son, give ear to my words, for I say unto you, even as I said unto Helaman, that inasmuch as ye shall keep the commandments of God ye shall prosper in the land; and inasmuch as ye will not keep the commandments of God ye shall be cut off from his presence.

As with Helaman, Alma begins his interview with Shiblon, by reminding him of the eternal law in heaven upon which all blessings and punishments are predicated. It is by our obedience to the commandments of God that we are either blessed or denied the blessings that God has for us to receive. As Alma will later witness to Coriaton, "wickedness never was happiness" (Alma 41:10).

Alma 38:2

2 And now, my son, I trust that I shall have great joy in you, because of your steadiness and your faithfulness unto God; for as you have commenced in

your youth to look to the Lord your God, even so I hope that you will continue in keeping his commandments; for blessed is he that endureth to the end.

During Shiblon's young life, he had been faithful and obedient in keeping the commandments. He had been steady in his diligence in doing the will of the Lord. He had begun his journey by entered upon the path through baptism and receiving the Holy Ghost. It is essential that he, and we, also continue on the path throughout our lives.

Alma 38:3-4

3 I say unto you, my son, that I have had great joy in thee already, because of thy faithfulness and thy diligence, and thy patience and thy long-suffering among the people of the Zoramites.

4 For I know that thou wast in bonds; yea, and I also know that thou wast stoned for the word's sake; and thou didst bear all these things with patience because the Lord was with thee; and now thou knowest that the Lord did deliver thee.

John C. Maxwell said, "A faith that has not been tested cannot be trusted." (www.bibleornot.org/a-faith-that-has-not-been-tested-cannot-be-trusted/). Shiblon had been called to serve with his father and others on a missionary journey to the Zoramites. While among the Zoramites, though the record had not previously indicated, Shiblon had been placed in jail and had also experienced stones being cast at him while he was attempting to share the gospel with the people. According to the words of his father, he bore the abuses with patience and forbearance.

Alma 38:5-6

5 And now my son, Shiblon, I would that ye should remember, that as much as ye shall put your trust in God even so much ye shall be delivered out of your trials, and your troubles, and your afflictions, and ye shall be lifted up at the last day.

6 Now, my son, I would not that ye should think that I know these things of myself, but it is the Spirit of God which is in me which maketh these things known unto me; for if I had not been born of God I should not have known these things.

Alma makes it clear to Shiblon that the insight and understanding he is sharing with him came through his own experience in learning about the workings of the spirit during his life.

John Taylor states,

"There is not a man upon the earth that has put his trust in God, I do not care what part of the world he has been in, but...can [not] say that he delivered him. I know that has been the case with me, emphatically so. I have been satisfied, when in foreign lands and in strange countries, when I had no access but to the Almighty, that he was on my side, and I know that he has answered my prayers. ("Professions of the Saints, etc," (June 17, 1860) in *Journal of Discourses, Vol.8*. London: Latter-Day Saints' Book Depot, 1861, [Eighth Reprint, 1974], 96).

In Alma 38:7-8, Alma reiterates his experience as a youth being visited by an angel as he went about his work of destruction upon the church. He was "three days and three nights in the most bitter pain and anguish of soul; and never, until I did cry out unto the Lord Jesus Christ for mercy, did I receive a remission of my sins. [only when] I did cry unto him,...did [I] find peace to my soul" (Alma 38:8).

Alma 38:9

9 And now, my son, I have told you this that ye may learn wisdom, that ye may learn of me that there is no other way or means whereby man can be saved, only in and through Christ. Behold, he is the life and the light of the world. Behold, he is the word of truth and righteousness.

Neal A. Maxwell states,

"Regardless of how mortals view Him, however, there is no other saying and atoning name under heaven (Mosiah 3:17; Moses 6:52)...All other 'gods' but Him will finally fail and fall, including all the 'ism' gods of this world and the many secular Caesars who, as we see currently, continue to come and go in 'an hour of pomp, an hour of show.'" (*Men and Women of Christ*. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1991, [6th Printing, 1997], 35).

Alma is pleased that his son is teaching the gospel to others and encourages him to continue. He gives him the following counsel: "be diligent and temperate in all things; do not be "lifted up unto pride;" (Alma 38:10-11).

Ezra Taft Benson states,

"Essentially, pride is a 'my will' rather than 'thy will' approach to life. The opposite of pride is humbleness, meekness, submissiveness, or teachableness (see Alma 13:28)." ("Cleansing the Inner Vessel," in *Ensign*, May 1986, 6).

"Do not boast in your own wisdom nor...strength;" "use boldness, but not overbearance;" "bridle all your passions;" (Alma 38:11-12).

Bruce R. McConkie states,

"The Lord has placed in our bodies certain passions and certain appetites; perhaps the strongest of these deal with what we call the sex urges. Now if we walk in an unbridled manner, after the way of the world, and are immoral and lascivious and unclean, then we are reveling in the basest sort of carnal existence. But if, on the other hand, we have the strength of character and the fortitude and ability to stand up like men and bridle our passions and control our lusts and use the sex urges in the manner in which the Lord has ordained that they should be used--which is wholesome and pure and right--if we walk without any form of sex immorality, then we are rising about the animal plane, and we are walking in the realm of spiritual things." (*Conference Report*, April 1958, 70).

"Be filled with love;" "see that ye refrain from idleness" (Alma 38:12).

Alma then reminds Shiblon not to pray like the Zoramites, "to be heard of men and to be praised for their wisdom" (Alma 38:13).

Alma 38:14

14 Do not say: O God, I thank thee that we are better than our brethren; but rather say: O Lord, forgive my unworthiness, and remember my brethren in mercy--yea, acknowledge your unworthiness before God at all times.

By having an awareness of our own unworthiness before the Lord, it serves to keep us in remembrance of Him and our dependence upon his mercy in our lives. We are nothing of ourselves without the guidance and direction of the Lord. As we keep ourselves clean and submit ourselves to his will, we can become more useful servants in building his kingdom on earth.

Alma concludes with these words of love and counsel to his son, Shiblon.

Alma 38:15

15 And may the Lord bless your soul, and receive you at the last day into his kingdom, to sit down in peace. Now go, my son, and teach the word unto this people. Be sober. My son, farewell.

It is the desire of each loving father to see his son grow up and enjoy a life of happiness. Alma knows that the greatest joy his son can have in this life and hereafter is to live a life of obedience and faithfulness to the commandments of the Lord. Through the grace of Jesus Christ, he will then be able to enter into the highest kingdom of heaven and enjoy the peace that can only be found there.

V. Alma 39

Alma 39:1-2

1 And now, my son, I have somewhat more to say unto thee than what I said unto thy brother; for behold, have ye not observed the steadiness of thy brother, his faithfulness, and his diligence in keeping the commandments of God? Behold, has he not set a good example for thee?

2 For thou didst not give so much heed unto my words as did thy brother, among the people of the Zoramites. Now this is what I have against thee; thou didst go on unto boasting in thy strength and thy wisdom.

Bryan Richards states,

"Alma's sons demonstrate the importance of setting a good example. Even more so, they demonstrate the damage that can be caused by a bad example. Shiblon and Helamen had been

good examples for their little brother, but Corianton had not [followed them]. Unfortunately, Corianton's bad example had more of an effect on the Zoramites than the good example of Shiblon, Alma, Amulek, [also Ammon, Aaron and Omner, and Zeezrom [Alma 31:6-7], put together. Even Alma's credibility was destroyed by Corianton, "for when they saw your conduct they would not believe in my words (Alma 39:11)." (www.gospeldoctrine.com/contents/Alma-39).

Francis M. Lyman states,

"It is our duty to preach the Gospel. That is our chief calling--to preach the Gospel by word, to preach it by our conduct throughout our lives. Nothing is stronger, nothing is more real, or more reliable and substantial than the good example that men set in their lives." (*Conference Report*, April, 1910, 31).

Corianton's pride got in his way of serving as a missionary. He was guilty of "boasting in...[his own] strength and...wisdom" (Alma 39:2). When we forget the Master whom we are serving, and seek instead to focus upon ourselves, we have placed ourselves upon slippery ground. If we do not make an immediate course correction in our behavior, the spirit will depart from us and we will be left to ourselves.

Alma 39:3-5

3 And this is not all, my son. Thou didst do that which was most grievous unto me; for thou didst forsake the ministry, and did go over into the land of Siron among the borders of the Lamanites, after the harlot Isabel.

4 Yea, she did steal away the hearts of many; but this was no excuse for thee, my son. Thou shouldest have tended to the ministry wherewith thou wast entrusted.

5 Know ye not, my son, that these things are an abomination in the sight of the Lord; yea, most abominable above all sins save it be the shedding of innocent blood or denying the Holy Ghost?

Bryan Richards states,

"Corianton was not seduced in a moment of personal weakness. He was not the object of pursuit. His sin was more heinous because he willingly forsook the ministry and

traveled a considerable distance to get to the land of Siron among the borders of the Lamanites. In effect, he had made the conscious choice to actively seek out 'the red light district.' What do you suppose he was thinking about as he traveled? He must have had a lot of time to reconsider his wicked choice, but the lusts of the flesh prevailed..." (www.gospeldoctrine.com/contents/Alma-39).

The Message of the First Presidency, October 3, 1942, states,

"The doctrine of this Church is that sexual sin--the illicit sexual relations of men and women--stands, in its enormity, next to murder.

"The Lord has drawn no essential distinctions between fornication, adultery, and harlotry or prostitution. Each has fallen under His solemn and awful condemnation.

"You youths of Zion, you cannot associate in non-marital, illicit sex relationships, which is fornication, and escape the punishments and the judgments which the Lord has declared against this sin. The day of reckoning will come just as certainly as night follows day. They who would palliate this crime and say that such indulgence is but a sinless gratification of a normal desire, like appeasing hunger and thirst, speak filthiness with their lips. Their counsel leads to destruction; their wisdom comes from the Father of Lies.

"You husbands and wives who have take on solemn obligations of chastity in the holy temples of the Lord and who violate those sacred vows by illicit sexual relations with others, you not only commit the vile and loathsome sin of adultery, but you break the oath you yourselves made with the Lord Himself before you went to the altar for your sealing. You become subject to the penalties which the Lord has prescribed for those who breach their covenants with Him.

"...By virtue of the authority in us vested as the First Presidency of the Church, we warn our people who are offending, of the degradation, the wickedness, the punishment that attend upon unchastity; we urge you to remember the blessings which flow from the living of the clean life." (Heber J. Grant, J. Reuben Clark, Jr., and David O. McKay. *Conference Report*, October, 1942, 11-12;

also *Messages of the First Presidency, Vol.6*. Compiled by James R. Clark. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1975, 176-177).

This "Message of the First Presidency" delivered on October 3, 1942, is only a reiteration of the policy of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints since its beginning. It remains unchanged today as the governing counsel and policy of the Church regarding chastity. As the world becomes ever more tolerant regarding sexual relations among individuals, the Lord's law remains unchanged. It may be stated as complete abstinence before marriage, total fidelity after marriage.

Of the three most serious sins, denial of the Holy Ghost, murder, and unchastity, only the sin of unchastity comes under the sins redeemed by the Savior. For this reason, one can receive forgiveness, but the road is hard and demanding.

Daniel H. Ludlow states,

"[The denial of the Holy Ghost] is an *unpardonable* sin because it cannot be paid for (or pardoned) either by the sinner himself or through the atonement of Jesus Christ.

"The second most serious sin is to commit murder--that is, to willfully shed innocent blood...this is an *unforgiveable* sin, which means that Jesus Christ cannot pay for (or 'atone for' or 'forgive') the penalty demanded by the broken law. This sin is a pardonable sin, however; that is, the sinner can eventually make full payment himself, and be received into a state of pardon. [They will inherit a telestial glory (Rev.22:15; D&C 76:103)]. (*A Companion To Your Study Of The Book Of Mormon*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1976, 222).

Bruce C. and Marie K. Hafen state,

"Perhaps there is a common element in those two sins, unchastity and murder. Both have to do with life, which touches upon the highest of divine powers. Murder involves the wrongful taking of life, while moral transgressions may lead to the wrongful giving of life. At the least, sexual transgressions involve a wrongful tampering with the sacred fountains of life-giving power, immorality rejects the God-given sanctify of life itself." (*The Belonging Heart*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1994, 271).

Alma 39:7-8

7 And now, my son, I would to God that ye had not been guilty of so great a crime. I would not dwell upon your crimes, to harrow up your soul, if it were not for your good.

8 But behold, ye cannot hide your crimes from God; and except ye repent they will stand as a testimony against you at the last day.

If we have not confessed and repented of those sins we have committed, including breaking the law of chastity, "they will stand as a testimony against...[us] at the last day" (Alma 39:8). If we are found to be unclean before the Lord, we will be unable to enter into his presence.

Richard G. Scott states,

"Do not take comfort in the fact that your transgressions are not known by others. That is like an ostrich with his head buried in the sand. He sees only darkness and feels comfortably hidden. In reality he is ridiculously conspicuous. Likewise our every act is seen by our Father in Heaven and His Beloved Son. They know everything about us...I invite each one of you to thoughtfully review your life...Is there a dark corner that needs to be cleaned out?... When it is quiet and you can think clearly, does your conscience tell you to repent?" ("Finding Forgiveness," in *Ensign*, May 1995, 77).

Alma 39:11-12

11 Suffer not yourself to be led away by any vain or foolish thing; suffer not the devil to lead away your heart again after those wicked harlots. Behold, O my son, how great iniquity ye brought upon the Zoramites; for when they saw your conduct they would not believe in my words.

12 And now the Spirit of the Lord doth say unto me: Command thy children to do good, lest they lead away the hearts of many people to destruction; therefore I command you, my son, in the fear of God, that ye refrain from your iniquities;

Alma knows firsthand the penalty when one leads "away the heart of many people to [spiritual] destruction" (Alma 39:12). It was this sin that initially brought the

appearance of an angel from God to him and the four sons of Mosiah.

Alma 39:13

13 That ye turn to the Lord with all your mind, might, and strength; that ye lead away the hearts of no more to do wickedly; but rather return unto them, and acknowledge your faults and that wrong which ye have done.

One of the qualifying steps of receiving forgiveness involves the step of restitution. This means that you make a sincere effort to restore or make up to the ones whom you have injured for the harm you did, including financial remuneration. This includes acknowledging to them your faults and your remorse for the sins you committed. It is this step that Alma is seeking to teach his son, Corianton.

Alma 39:14

14 Seek not after riches nor the vain things of this world; for behold, you cannot carry them with you.

It appears that of Alma's three sons, Corianton, in his youthful exuberance, had become enamored with the riches of the world. This focus may have been yet another contributor to his immoral actions. Others were participating, so he may have concluded that what others are doing, ["she did steal away the hearts of many" (Alma 39:4), must not be so serious!

The danger with riches is that we may begin to worship them, or spend all our time in seeking to obtain them, that they become our god to whom we give all our time and energy and thereby neglect those things that have eternal value. As Alma reminds us, even if we spend all our lives trying to obtain riches "of the vain things of this world", we "cannot carry them with...[us]" (Alma 39:14), when we leave this mortal world.

Dallin H. Oaks states,

"When we place our trust in our property, we have 'carnal security,' In that state of mind we are inclined to say that all must be well with us and with Zion, because we are prospering, thus relying on worldly success as a mark of

divine favor. He who does this is an easy mark for being led 'carefully' down to hell" [2 Ne. 28:21]. (*Pure in Heart*. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1988, [5th Printing, 1989], 79).

Alma 39:15-16

15 And now, my son, I would say somewhat unto you concerning the coming of Christ. Behold, I say unto you, that it is he that surely shall come to take away the sins of the world; yea he cometh to declare glad tidings of salvation unto his people.

16 And now, my son, this was the ministry unto which ye were called, to declare these glad tidings unto this people, to prepare their minds; or rather that salvation might come unto them, that they may prepare the minds of their children to hear the word at the time of his coming.

Corianton's failure to follow the example of righteousness provided by his older brothers, Helaman and Shiblon, and his sexual immorality, was compounded by his neglect of his mission calling to teach the gospel truths to the Zoramites. Foremost, it was his duty to teach them of the coming of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who would open the door for them to receive salvation. It appears that part of Corianton's problem was that he did not understand why he should teach the people regarding Christ when he was not going to come for approximately a hundred years.

Alma 39:17-19

17 And now I will ease your mind somewhat on this subject [the coming of Christ?]. Behold, you marvel why these things should be known [or taught?], so long beforehand. Behold, I say unto you, is not a soul at this time as precious unto God as a soul will be at the time of his coming?

18 Is it not necessary that the plan of redemption should be made known unto this people as well as unto their children?

19 Is it not as easy at this time for the Lord to send his angel to declare these glad tidings unto us as unto our children, or as after the time of his coming?

These verses mark the beginning of Alma giving his son, Corianton, the answer to the questions he has regarding the

principles of the gospel. We will address his instructions to his son during our next lesson [BM#30].

VI. Conclusions

During these four chapters [36-39], we have had the opportunity to "sit in" on the interviews that Alma had with his sons, Helaman, Shiblon, and Corianton. His words of counsel and admonition have also been a benefit to us.

In Alma, Chapters 36-37, Alma is speaking to his son, Helaman. He admonishes him to trust in God who will support him in all his tribulations. As a youth, Alma made mistakes and learned from them. He wants Helaman to understand that the eternal truths he is teaching him came directly from the spirit. Through his fear of destruction, he recalled his sins, and experienced "torment with pains of hell" (Alma 36:13). Being "racked with torment...and the memory of [his] many sins" (Alma 36:17), he cried for mercy from Jesus Christ. Only then did he receive a remission of his sins, and peace returned to his soul. Having been "born again," he dedicated his life to the service of the Lord. His desire was to bring others to repentance that they also might receive a remission of their sins through Jesus Christ. This process of being "born again," for most people occurred over an extended period of time and resulted in a desire to be of service in the kingdom of God. He reminds Helaman and us, that we will prosper as we keep the commandments, but if we choose to be disobedient, we will not receive the blessings he has to give us.

In Alma, Chapter 37, Alma counsels Helaman regarding his care of the sacred records. We learn further regarding the importance of the records or plates of brass that Nephi obtained from Laban before Lehi and his company continued on their journey in the wilderness. These brass plates will become the Nephite scriptures. Alma reminds his son, that it is by "small and simple things that great things [are] brought to pass" (Alma 37:6). Helaman is instructed to preserve the records and if he is diligent, the Lord will bless him. The records will also be preserved so that the Lamanites of "future generations" (Alma 37:19), will have them. The coming forth of the Book of Mormon is a fulfillment of this promise made to Helaman by his father, Alma. Alma gives us the name of the compass that was provided by the Lord for Lehi and his company--Liahona--and that it was as easy for them to follow its directions as it

is for us to heed the words of Christ. (see Alma 37:44.) Unfortunately, we tend to forget the importance of small things in our lives.

In Alma, Chapter 38, Alma tell his son, Shiblon, that he has great joy in his "steadiness and faithfulness" (Alma 38:2). He manifested his faith during his missionary service to the Zoramites when he was placed in bonds and stoned, but endured his persecution with patience and forbearance. (see Alma 38:4.) He reminds Shiblon and us that there is no other way or means whereby man can be saved, only in and through Christ." (Alma 38:9). It is important that we not be prideful, but should recognize our dependence upon the Lord for all the blessings we receive.

In Alma, Chapter 39, Alma instructs his son, Corianton. Corianton had failed to follow the good example his older brothers, Helaman and Shiblon, had set for him. He was boastful of his own strength and wisdom; he had been immoral in his conduct with a harlot named Isabel, and he had forsaken his missionary service to the Zoramites. He had great need for repentance for he had committed serious sins. His breaking the law of chasity was next to sin against the Holy Ghost and murder in seriousness. In love, but with directness, Alma teaches his son regarding the seriousness of his sins and how he can receive forgiveness. (see Alma 39:11-13.) Alma concludes this chapter with instructions to Coriaton regarding his questions about the principles of the gospel. This instruction will continue through the next three chapters (Alma 40-42).

As we have read the words of instruction by Alma to his three sons, Helaman, Shiblon, and Corianton, we have also been instructed in the importance of our fulfilling responsibilities and keeping covenants. Satan is untiring in his efforts to focus upon our weaknesses and if we are not steadfast and immoveable in our dedication to doing the will of the Lord, we will fall.

In our next lesson [BM#30], we will address Alma, Chapters 40-42, which contain yet further instructions by Alma to his son, Corianton.

