

Alma 22:1-51 *Role of the Holy Ghost*

If there is one message I have repeated to my brethren of the Twelve it is that it's the Spirit that counts. It is the Spirit that matters. I do not know how often I have said this, but I never tire of saying it—it as the Spirit that matters most.

Ezra Taft Benson, Address at mission presidents' seminar, 3 April 1985, cited in *Missionary Guide*, p.73.alma

Alma 22:9-102 *Is God the Great Spirit? (Alma 18:24-28)*

According to Lamanite traditions, God is the Great Spirit. It is obvious that by this designation the Lamanites had in mind a personal being, for King Lamoni mistakenly supposed that Ammon was the Great Spirit. (Alma 18:2-28; 19:25-27.) Both Ammon and Aaron, using the same principle of salesmanship applied by Paul on Mars Hill (Acts 17:22-31), taught that the Great Spirit was the God who created the heavens and the earth. (Alma 18:8-29; 22: 8-11.) This same Lamanite concept that God is the Great Spirit has existed among the American Indians in modern times.

Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2d ed. [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966], 340

Alma 22:14

3

Since man had fallen he could not merit anything of himself] Herein is one of the great messages in all eternity, but one that unfortunately is little understood even by many who are of the household of faith. We will not be saved in the highest heaven because we earn our way there. We will not be crowned with glory and eternal lives because we "worked out our salvation" by ourselves. It is as heretical to believe that we are exalted by works as it is to teach that we are saved by grace alone. As important as our works are in evidencing our acceptance of and commitment to Christ the Lord-works such as receiving the ordinances of salvation, performing deeds of kindness and acts of Christian charity, and enduring faithfully to the end-our works will not and cannot save us. It is impossible for any human being to do enough good deeds in this mortal sphere to qualify for life in the celestial kingdom. No, ultimately we are saved not by our works but by his works-the Lord's.

Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L. Millet, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, 4 vols. [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1987-1992], 3: 157

Alma 22:15

4

Truly there is a power in Christ, "power not only to create the worlds and divide the seas but also to still the storms of the human heart, to heal the pain of scarred and beaten souls. We must learn to trust in him more, in the arm of flesh less. We must learn to rely on him more, and on man-made solutions less. We must learn to surrender our burdens to him more. We must learn and work to our limits and then be willing to seek that grace or enabling power which will make up the difference, that sacred power which indeed makes all the difference!" (Robert L. Millet, *Life in Christ*, p. 108.) Truly Nephi taught this priceless and precious message when he reminded us that "it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do" (2 Nephi 25:23). After-meaning not "following or subsequent to" but rather "above and beyond"-after all we can do, it will be finally by the condescension and mercy and grace of the Holy One of Israel that we become like him, vessels fit to live with him who bought us with his blood.

Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L. Millet, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, 4 vols. [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1987-1992], 3: 158

5 What shall I do that I may have... eternal life...?

From Adam's day to ours, and from ours to that time when the last of the human family draws a breath on this mortal sphere, this is the grand question of all existence: What must we do to obtain eternal life? Such was the question addressed by the rich young ruler to the Master. "Keep the commandments," was the Savior's answer. "Which?" came the rejoinder. Christ reviewed the ten commandments of Sinai. "The young man saith unto him: All these things have I kept from my youth up; what lack I yet? Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me. But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions." (Matthew 19:16-22)

We are left to suppose that the inquiring rich man had assumed he would receive direction to conform to some ritualistic requirements of the Mosaic system. He did not understand that the Lord requires the whole soul and that those who gain salvation do so by their willingness to lay all of their energy, talent, and means upon the altar of God. How much more perfect the desires of Lamoni's father, whose power and fortune would undoubtedly have far exceeded his Old World counterpart. "I will give up all that I possess," he said, "yea, I will forsake my kingdom, that I may receive this great joy." Such is the pattern: we obtain the kingdom of heaven by forsaking the kingdoms of earth.

Ibid. p.159

6 Cast off at the last day

People quit trying to live the gospel because they believe they've gone too far. Perhaps they believe the Satanic lie that there is no forgiveness, that the Atonement applies to everyone else, not to them.

If we study the book every day, we'll learn that we're not cast off forever, that there is hope for us. We'll begin to understand what the scriptures mean when we get to Alma 22:15, where King Lamoni's father asks Aaron, "What shall I do that I may be born of God, having this wicked spirit rooted out of my breast, and receive his Spirit, that I may be filled with joy, that I may not be cast off at the last day?" We'll learn to rely upon the merits of Jesus Christ. We'll learn that the major purpose of the book is to show that Jesus is the Christ, and that as long as there's a Savior, everything will work out....

Do you see why Satan doesn't want my sweet mother to read the Book of Mormon? If she reads and studies the Book of Mormon every day, she will know that her other son, who isn't the religion teacher, is not cast off forever. But if she quits studying, she may give up on her other son, whom we all pray will come back to the fold and be washed and cleansed through the holy blood of Christ.

Jack R. Christianson and K. Douglas Bassett, *Life Lessons from the Book of Mormon* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2003], 20-22

Alma 22:15, 18

7 *I will give away all my sins to know thee*

Earlier when the king's life was threatened, he was willing to give up "half of [his] kingdom" to save his mortal life (Alma 20:23), but now to save his immortal soul he was willing to give up all he had.

"Each of us must surrender our sins if we are to really know Christ. For we do not know Him until we become like Him. There are some, like this king, who must pray until they, too, have 'a wicked spirit rooted' from them so they can find the same joy."

Ezra Taft Benson, *Ensign*, November 1983, 43

8 Alma 22:18

Will Give Away All My Sins to Know Thee (contrast Alma 20:21-23)

"We may not always succeed as quickly as we would want, but as we make repentance a constant part of our lives, miracles occur. This is what happens as we see that we really can overcome our sins: Our 'confidence [waxes] strong in the presence of God' (D&C 121:45). We kneel in humility before our Father. We tell him openly of our progress, and also of our fears and doubts. As we draw near to him, he draws near to us. He gives us peace and encouragement. He heals our souls. As we continue inch by inch to repent, we determine that nothing will hold us back: we will do our part. We come to feel like that great Lamanite king who cried, 'Oh God, . . . wilt thou make thyself known unto me, and I will give away all my sins to know thee' (Alma 22:18). With this commitment to who we can become, the spiritual doors swing open. There is a new freedom to feel and to know, a freedom to become." Neil L. Anderson (*Ensign*, Apr. 1995, p. 52)

9 We cannot know the meaning of all things *right now*. But we can know, *right now*, that God knows us and loves us individually!

But, brothers and sisters, what keeps us from knowing and loving Him more? Our reluctance to give away all our sins, thinking instead that a down payment will do.

Neal A. Maxwell, in Conference Report, Oct. 2002 [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2002], 17

10 Alma 22:15, 18

Let us here observe, that a religion that does not require the sacrifice of all things never has power sufficient to produce the faith necessary unto life and salvation; for, from the first existence of man, the faith necessary unto the enjoyment of life and salvation never could be obtained without sacrifice of all earthly things. It was through this sacrifice, and this only, that God has ordained that men should enjoy eternal life; and it is through the medium of the sacrifice of all earthly things that men do actually know that they are doing the things that are well pleasing in the sight of God. When a man has offered in sacrifice all that he has for the truth's sake, not even withholding his life, and believing before God that he has been called to make this sacrifice because he seeks to do his will, he does know, most assuredly, that God does and will accept his sacrifice and offering, and that he has not, nor will not seek his face in vain. Under these circumstances, then, he can obtain the faith necessary for him to lay hold on eternal life Joseph Smith, [1985], 69

11 To take His name upon us means a willingness to do whatever He requires of us.

Someone has said that the price of a Christian life is the same today as always; it is simply to give all that we have, holding back nothing, to "give away all [our] sins to know [Him]" (Alma 22:18). When we fall short of that standard by reason of sloth, indifference, or wickedness; when we are evil or envious, selfish, sensual, or shallow; we, in a sense at least, crucify Him afresh. And when we try consistently to be our very best, when we care for and serve others, when we overcome selfishness with love, when we bear each other's burdens and "mourn with those that mourn", when we "comfort those who stand in need of comfort, and... stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all places" (Mosiah 18:8-9), then we honor Him and draw from His power and become more and more like Him, growing "brighter and brighter," if we persist," until the perfect day. (D & C 50:24)

Alexander B. Harrison, in Conference Report, Oct. 1999, 33; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1999, 27

12 [God] has planted in our hearts an instinctive desire to worship, to seek salvation, to love and serve a power or being greater than ourselves. Worship is implicit in existence itself.

The issue is not whether men shall worship, but who or what is to be the object of their devotions and how they shall go about paying their devotions to their chosen Most High. . . .

There is no salvation in worshipping a false god. It does not matter one particle how sincerely someone may believe that God is a golden calf, or that he is an immaterial, uncreated power that is in all things; the worship of such a being or concept has no saving power. Men may believe with all their souls that images or powers or laws are God, but no amount of devotion to these concepts will ever give the power that leads to immortality and eternal life.

"How to Worship," *Ensign*, December 1971

13 "We no longer have the luxury of spending our energy on anything that does not lead us and our families to Christ."

"We are Women of God," Sheri Dew, *Ensign*, Nov. 1999, p.98

14 **Alma 22:26**
Preach the Word

The power of conversion is in the "word," that is, in "preaching the gospel of the kingdom." Such was the example of the Savior, and such is the witness of virtually all scripture (see Matthew 4:23; Luke 20:1). Too often, those called to "preach the word" choose instead to be spiritual cheerleaders or to moralize on ethical principles. As well intended as such efforts may be, they lack the power of conversion.

Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L. Millett, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, 4 vols. [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1987-1992], 3:161

15 **Alma 22:30-33**

The land of Desolation was the place where the people of Jared first landed (Alma 22:30; Ether 6:12; 7:60). It was in this region that Limhi's people discovered the Jaredite ruins, describing the land as being "covered with bones of men" and "ruins of buildings" (Mosiah 8:8; cf. Ether 11:6; ca. 121 BC).

The city Desolation was built on the borders of the land Desolation, "by the narrow pass which led into the land southward" (Morm. 3:5-7). Desolation repeatedly changed hands during battles between Lamanites and Nephites near the end of the Nephite civilization. (Morm. 3:7; 4:2-3, 8, 13, 19; ca. AD361-37)

Book of Mormon Reference Companion, ed. By Dennis L. Largey [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2003], 231-232