

Chiasmus in Alma 36

My son give ear to my *words* (v.1)
 Keep the commandments and ye shall *prosper in the land* (v.1)
 Do as *I* have done (v.2)
 Remember the captivity of our fathers (v.2)
 They were in *bondage* (v.2)
 He surely did *deliver* them (v.2)
 Trust in God (v.3)
 Supported in *trials, troubles, and afflictions* (v.3)
 Lifted up at the *last day* (v.3)
 I know this not of myself but of *God* (v.4)
 Born of God (v.5)
 I sought to destroy the church (vv.6-9)
 My *limbs* were paralyzed (v.10)
 Fear of being in the *presence of God* (vv.14-15)
 Pains of a damned soul (v.16)
 Harrowed up by the memory of sins (v.17)
 I remembered *Jesus Christ, a son of God* (v.17)
 I cried, *Jesus Christ, son of God* (v.18)
 Harrowed by the memory of sins no more (v.19)
 Joy as exceeding as was the *pain* (v.20)
 Long to be in the *presence of God* (v.22)
 My *limbs* received strength again (v.23)
 I labored to bring souls to repentance (v.24)
 Born of God (v.26)
 Therefore *my knowledge* is of God (v.26)
 Supported under *trials, troubles, and afflictions* (v.26)
 Trust in him (v.27)
 He will *deliver* me (v.27)
 And *raise me up at the last day* (v.28)
 As God brought our fathers out of *bondage* and captivity (vv.28-29)
 Retain a *remembrance of their captivity* (v.29)
 Know as *I* do know (v.30)
 Keep the commandments and ye shall *prosper in the land* (v.30)
 This according to his *word* (v.30)

Chiasmus

- 1 Sometimes called an inverted parallelism, is a Hebrew literary form where words or ideas are arranged in a certain order and then repeated in reverse order. This repetition emphasizes important ideas and words, in addition, the writer's main idea is often located at the center of the chiasmus

Book of Mormon Student Manual, 2003, BYU, p. 232

Alma 36:1

- 2 *Prosper in the Land*

It is not necessarily intended that all inhabitants will become materially rich in this life. Rather, there is a spiritual meaning to the word *prosper*. This verse teaches us that if we do not "keep the commandments of God," then we shall not prosper but be "cut off from his presence." Therefore, those who prosper in the land are those who are successful in obtaining the spiritual blessings of being close to the Lord. They are on a track that will lead to entering the Lord's presence.

Ibid. p. 235

Alma 36:1-2

- 3 *Remember*

1) The awfulness of sin, 2) the goodness of God, 3) the covenants of the fathers, 4) our duties to God and fellowmen, and, most important, 5) the atoning sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Book of Mormon is vital in bringing these things to our remembrance.

A relevant message of the Book of Mormon that we must never forget is that we must always remember. Remembering the "new covenant"—the Book of Mormon—requires more than reading and learning; it requires doing and becoming. Only by our remembering through living does this remarkable book, "Another Testament of Jesus Christ," have power to transform lives. It is not just its words, however profound and powerful they are, that allows a person, as the Prophet Joseph declared, to draw nearer to God than by reading any other book. The promised nearness to God and the spiritual illumination that disperses darkness in minds and hearts come to us, just as the Prophet promised, "by abiding by its precepts."

Brent Top

Alma 36:3

- 4 *"Hear my words and learn of me"*

There are those who dismiss these responsibilities, feeling they can be deferred until the child grows up. Not so, the evidence reveals. Prime time for teaching is fleeting. ... Children learn through gentle direction and persuasive teachings. They search for models to imitate, knowledge to acquire, things to do, and teachers to please.

Parents and grandparents fill the role of teacher. So do siblings of the growing child. In this regard, I offer four simple suggestions for your consideration:

1. Teach prayer
2. Inspire faith
3. Live truth, and
4. Honor God

Thomas S. Monson, "Teach the Children," *Ensign*, Nov. 1997, 17.

- 5 One day as Ed and I were maneuvering the streets of England, he turned to me with tears in his eyes, and he said, "Look." I turned and saw a child on the side of the road. And then he said, "Who will teach the children?" That thought will not leave my mind or heart. Who will teach the children? Who will teach the child who asks, "Will Heavenly Father really answer my prayer?" Who will teach Kate when at five years of age she asks, "Why do we need Jesus?" Who will teach the children? Please, will you? Will you? Will you help teach the children?

Since my call I've knelt and asked, "Father, what do you want the children to be taught?"

Teach and show the children that Heavenly Father loves them and has confidence in them because they are his children.

Teach and show them that they do need Jesus, our Savior, our guide. Help them understand and accept his love and trust him and follow him. Teach them that our prophet, President Howard W. Hunter, has said, "We should at every opportunity ask ourselves, "What would Jesus do? And then be more courageous to act upon the answer." He also said, "We must know Christ better than we know him; we must remember him more often than we remember him; we must serve him more valiantly than we serve him?" (*Ensign*, Sept. 1994, p. 5).

Teach the children that at eight years of age, when they are baptized and receive the Holy Ghost, they will be responsible for their choices. Teach them that they will be tempted, but as they listen to the still small voice of the Holy Ghost, he will help them with their choices.

We can teach the children these gospel truths and all of the truths of the plan of happiness that Heavenly Father wants his children to understand and live. Family home evening can be one of those safe and loving places where the Spirit is felt. With eight children in our home, I also have vivid memories that family home evening wasn't always easy. Remember other opportunities for teaching: family prayer, family scripture study (don't give up!), in the classroom, in the hall, in the neighborhood.

Patricia Pinegar, "Teach the Children," *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 78-79.

6 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 the failure of our... mines in Oregon, where he had invested large sums of money—all that we had and all that we could borrow—that he had been tempted... 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....

I went out and bought him a Book of Mormon, went into my office, shut the door, and told the Lord I wanted to open the book to the chapter that would do a wayward and careless brother...the most good; and this is the chapter to which I opened [the thirty-sixth chapter of Alma]....

I love that chapter.... 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.

I know no man among all my acquaintances who...has become more devoted.

George Q. Cannon, *Gospel Truth, Two Volumes in One*, ed. By Jerald L. Newquist [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 19784], 29-30, 323-324.

7 The Book of Mormon is one of the Lord's greatest tools for teaching parents how to counsel their children in righteousness. From the loving concern of Lehi and Sariah for their children at the outset of the chronicle to the intimate partnership of Mormon and his son Moroni at the end there is a continuous flow of inspiring examples of parent-child relationships. Consider the elder Alma's anxiety and ultimate joy in his son Alma. Consider further the latter's splendid legacy of instruction for his sons recorded in these current chapters.

The covenant bond is at its heart patriarchal: the word of truth flows from our Father in heaven to His sons and daughters. In resonance with this pattern, fathers and mothers are commissioned to reinforce the word of truth as they instruct their children in the operation of covenant principles. Jacob's legacy of blessings for his twelve sons (see Gen. 49) is no different in character from the blessings of truth that all fathers in Zion have the opportunity to

bestow upon their children. Mothers in Zion have the same sacred commission to impart principles of righteousness to their children. Parents are held strictly accountable. The Doctrine and Covenants makes this clear: “And again, inasmuch as parents have children in Zion, or in any of her stakes which are organized, that teach them not to understand the doctrine of repentance, faith in Christ the Son of the living God, and of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of the hands, when eight years old, the sin be upon the heads of the parents. And they shall also teach their children to pray, to walk uprightly before the Lord” (D&C 68:25,28). This is our primary purpose as parents—to teach our children. There is no greater guidebook for this purpose than the Book of Mormon.

Ed L. Pinegar and Richard J. Allen, *Teachings and Commentaries on the Book of Mormon*, p. 335

- 8 It is the duty of parents to teach their children the principles of the gospel and to be sober-minded and industrious in their youth. They should be improved from the cradle to the time they leave the parental roof to make homes and assume the duties of life for themselves, that there is a seed time and harvest, and as man sows, so shall he reap....And above all else, let us train our children in the principles of the gospel of our Savior, that they may become familiar with the truth and walk in the light which it sheds forth to all those who will receive it. “He that seeketh me early,’ the Lord said, “shall find me, and shall not be forsaken.” It behooves us, therefore, to commence in early life to travel in the straight and narrow path which leads to eternal salvation.

Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine: Selections from the Sermons and Writings of Joseph F. Smith*, comp. by John A. Widtsoe [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1939], 295-296.

Alma 36:3

- 9 *Trust in God*

“Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways knowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.” (Proverbs 3:5-6.) We are required to trust in God with our whole heart. God requires absolute obedience and surrender in every realm of our lives before he will direct our paths. Indeed, we best honor ourselves by first honoring God. To trust God is to acknowledge his wisdom and his goodness, to knowledge that he knows what is best for us and that he will bring his purposes to pass in his own time, and in his own way and according to his own will.

Millet & McConkie, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, Vol. 3 p. 262.

Alma 36:3

- 10 *Supported in their trials*

My sister Lois, legally blind from birth, not only coped but served well as a public schoolteacher for 33 years. She had that same reflex possessed by those pioneer souls who quietly picked up their handcarts and headed west, a reflex we all need. So if various trials are allotted to you, partake of life’s bitter cups, but without becoming bitter.

Neal A Maxwell, *Ensign*, May 2004 [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2004], 44.

Alma 36:10

- 11 *2 days or 3 Discrepancy between Mosiah 27:23 and Alma 36:10*

There is no... discrepancy because they are not referring to exactly the same thing. In the account... of Mosiah the time element clearly refers to the period of fasting by the priests.... In the account... of Alma, however, the term “three days and three nights” clearly refers to the *total time* Alma could not open his mouth nor use his limbs. (Alma 36:10).

Daniel H. Ludlow, *Companion*, 217-18; emphasis in original.

12 Alma 36:11

Generally our Heavenly Father will not interfere with the agency of another person unless he has a greater purpose for that individual. Two examples come to mind: Saul, who became Apostle Paul, and Alma the Younger. Both these men were deterred from their unrighteous objective of persecuting the trying and trying to destroy the Church of God. Both became great missionaries for the Church. But even as the Lord intervened, they were given choices. Alma, for example, was told: "If thou wilt be destroyed of thyself, seek no more to destroy the church of God" (Alma 36:11).

Marvin J. Ashton, "Know He is There," *BYU Speeches of the Year*, 10 Nov. 1992 [Provo, Utah: BYU Press, 1992], 5

13 Alma 36:12

Racked and Harrowed up

The prophets chose very graphic words.

Racked means "tortured." Anciently a rack was a framework on which the victim was laid with each ankle and wrist tied to a spindle which could then be turned to cause unbearable pain.

A harrow is a frame with spikes through it. When pulled across ground, it rips and tears into the soil.

Boyd K. Packer, *Ensign*, May, 2001, 23.

14 Alma 36:13

Remembered all my sins

Each violation of the divine law must be accounted for. In the day of judgment, the wicked will have "a perfect knowledge" of all their guilt, and their uncleanness, and their nakedness, while the righteous will have a "perfect knowledge of their enjoyment, and their righteous, being clothed with purity, yea, even with the robe of righteousness" (2 Nephi 9:14). Even when we repent in this life in the sincerity of our hearts, the remembrance of the sin remains, though in time the agony and the sense of personal disappointment leave us.

Millet & McConkie, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, Vol 3, p. 264.

15 Alma 36: 13-16

Process of Repentance

Alma serves as a pattern. The horror for sin that engulfed him should be felt by every wayward member of the kingdom, then repentance would be forthcoming.

Bruce R. McConkie, *New Witness for the Articles of Faith*, 228-29.

16

We must remember that repentance is more than just saying, "I am sorry." It is more than tears in one's eyes. It is more than a half a dozen prayers. Repentance means suffering. If a person hasn't suffered, he hasn't repented.... He has got to go through a change in his system whereby he suffers.

Spencer W. Kimball, *Teachings*, 99.

17

When we come to recognize our sin sincerely and without reservation, we are ready to follow such processes as will rid us of sin's effect.... Young Alma was so deep in his sin that it was most difficult for him to humble himself toward repentance, but when his experience broke down his resistance, softened his rebellion and overcame his stubbornness, he began to see himself in his true light and appraise his situation as it really was. His heart was softened. His repentance was being born.

Spencer W. Kimball, *The Miracle of Forgiveness* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1969], 157-159

18 Repentance is a very painful process... No one should think that the gift of forgiveness is fully realized without significant effort on the part of the forgiven. No one should be foolish enough to sin willingly or wantonly, thinking forgiveness is easily available.

Repentance of necessity involves suffering and sorrow. Anyone who thinks otherwise has not read the life of young Alma, nor tried to personally repent. In the process of repentance we are granted just a taste of the suffering we would endure if we failed to turn away from evil. That pain, though only momentary for the repentant, is the most bitter of cups. No man or woman should be foolish enough to think it can be sipped, even briefly, without consequence.

Jeffrey R. Holland, *The Book of Mormon: It begins with a Family* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1983], 95-96

19 The painful consequences of sin were purposely put in His plan of happiness by a compassionate Father I Heaven so that you need not follow that tragic path in life. A sinner will not only suffer in this life, but sins that have not been forgiven through true repentance will cause anguish beyond the veil [see D&C 19:4, 15-24]

Richard G. Scott, in Conference Report, Oct. 2002, 94; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2002, 87

20 What, then, of those who accept Jesus as the Christ and allow his infinite and eternal sacrifice to stand in the stead of the suffering just described? Are such excused from all suffering? Contrary to much in the Christian world tradition, the answer is no. True repentance, which centers in faith in Christ and his atoning sacrifice, still requires sufficient suffering on the part of those desiring to repent to make them one in mind and soul with the Savior. The blessings of salvation, though freely given, cannot be wholly undeserved. In all things we must unite our best effort with him who sacrificed all. The testimony of holy writ is that without suffering there is no repentance.

Millet & McConkie, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, Vol. 3, p. 267

21 **Alma 36:14**
I had murdered... his children

This is graphic language. As one who has been born of God, as one who senses the significance of this mortal sphere and thus the worth of souls, Alma knows how frighteningly awful it is to lead souls astray from the path of peace. "None but fools will trifle with the souls of men." Joseph Smith said (*Teachings*, p. 137). "Fear not them which kill the body," Jesus taught, "But are not able to kill the souls: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matthew 10:28).

Ibid p. 265

22 **Alma 36:16-17**
Godly Sorrow

It is not uncommon to find men and women in the world who feel remorse for the things they do wrong. Sometimes this is because their actions cause them or loved ones great sorrow and misery. Sometimes their sorrow is caused because they are caught and punished for their actions. Such worldly feelings do not constitute "godly sorrow"...

Godly sorrow is a gift of the Spirit. It is a deep realization that our actions have offended our Father and our God. It is the sharp and keen awareness that our behavior caused the Savior, He who knew no sin, even the greatest of all, to endure agony and suffering. Our sins caused Him to bleed at every pore. This very real mental and spiritual anguish is what the scriptures refer to as having "a broken heart and a contrite spirit." (See 3 Ne. 9:20; Moro. 6:2; D&C 20:37; 59:8; Ps. 34:18; 51:15). Such a spirit is the absolute perquisite for true repentance.

Ezra Taft Benson, "A Mighty Change of Heart," *Ensign*, Oct. 1989, 4.

23 **Alma 36:17**

The prophets teach how painful can be...

The prophet Alma, describing his feelings of guilt, said, "I was *racked* with eternal *torment*, for my soul was *harrowed up* to the greatest degree and *racked* with all my sins."

The prophets chose very graphic words.

Racked means "tortured." Anciently a rack was a framework on which the victim was laid with each ankle and wrist tied to a spindle which could then be turned to cause unbearable pain.

A harrow is a frame with spikes through it. When pulled across the ground, it rips and tears into the soil. The scriptures frequently speak of souls and minds being "harrowed up" with guilt.

Torment means "to twist" a means of torture so painful that even the innocent would confess.

Boyd K. Packer, *Ensign*, May, 2001 [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2001], 22-23.

24 **Alma 36:17**

I remembered words of my father

The teachings and testimonies of parents and other good people have an inevitable, inexorable effect. Those lessons are not lost on even the most wayward soul. Somewhere, somehow, they get recorded in the soul and may be called upon in a great moment of need.

It was in such a moment that the young Alma "remembered also to have heard my father prophesy" (Alma 36:17). That prophesy may have been uttered in a day when Alma was taunting his father, or jeering at those who believed, or willfully denying the reality of revelation. It may have come at a time when his father assumed Alma did not care or hear or understand. Or it may have come so early in life that his father might have thought he had forgotten.... Now it was being called forth for the very protection it had intended to give... There will always be a great power—even latent, delayed, residual power—in the words of God we utter.

Jeffrey R. Holland, *The Book of Mormon: It Begins with a Family* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1983], 97-98.

25

Some of you have invested months and years trying to offer people you love the gospel of Jesus Christ—to people who have not yet accepted it. Take heart. Alma the Younger, when he came to the point of extremity, remembered the words of his father and it saved his eternal life. God may yet bless you with that greatest of all returns for the investment of your time, that the words of truth you spoke will be remembered in that moment of spiritual yearning by the person you loved enough to Christ—real faith, whole-souled and unshakeable—is a power to be reckoned with in the universe.... It can be a source of inner strength, through which we find peace, comfort, and the courage to cope.

M. Russell Ballard, *Ensign*, Nov. 1992 [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1992], 32.

26

Many are sorely tried and tempted before their baptism, thinking such temptations will cease once they have been baptized. From my observation, this is not the case. The temptations often increase, although they may change in character. The greater the growth, the more subtle the temptation. Yet we are told that we are never tempted beyond our capacity to endure and overcome, so no one can say he was forced or seduced by a temptation.

Stephen R. Covey, *Spiritual Roots of Human Relations* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1974], 19

27

God never bestows upon his people, or upon an individual, superior blessings without a severe trial to prove them, to prove that individual, or that people, to see whether they will keep their covenants with him, and keep in remembrance what he has shown them. Then the greater the vision, the greater the display of power of the enemy.

So when individuals are blessed with visions, revelations, and great manifestations, look out, then the Devil is nigh you, and you will be tempted in proportion to the visions, revelations, or manifestations you have received.

Discourses of Brigham Young, comp. by John A. Widtsoe [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1954], 338.

28 In March 1835, while serving his first mission, Wilford Woodruff had to travel through rivers and swamps in the southeastern United States. To traverse the swamps, he and his companion cut down a tree and made it into a canoe. They rowed safely for about 150 miles before abandoning the canoe and walking. President Woodruff later recalled that they took a road that “lay through swamps, and was covered with mud and water most of the way, for one hundred and seventy miles. We walked forty miles in a day through mud and water knee-deep. On the 24th of March, after traveling some ten miles through mud, I was taken lame with a sharp pain in my knee. I sat down on a log.”

At this point in the journey, his companion, who had become weary of the work and had decided to return home, left him there, sitting on the log in an alligator swamp. Undaunted, Wilford Woodruff turned to the Lord. He said, “I knelt down in the mud and prayed, and the Lord healed me, and I went on my way rejoicing.

Teachings of Presidents of the Church—Wilford Woodruff [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2004], 109

29 When I was a young man, I served as counselor to a wise district president in the Church. He tried to teach me. One of the things I remember wondering about was this advice he gave: “When you meet someone, treat them as if they were in serious trouble, and you will be right more than half the time.”

I thought then that he was pessimistic. Now, more than 40 years later, I can see how well he understood the world and life. As time passes, the world grows more challenging, and our physical capacities slowly diminish with age. It is clear that we will need more than human strength. The Psalmist was right: “But the salvation of the righteous is of the Lord: he is their strength in the time of trouble” (Psalms 37:39).

Henry B. Eyring, *Ensign*, May 004 [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2004], 16

Alma 36:19

30 *Remember my pain no more*

Alma learned the eternal truth that the pain and misery that come from sin can only be erased by repentance. Physical pain ends with death. Spiritual pain, or misery, is everlasting, unless we repent.

Dallin H. Oaks, *Ensign*, November, 1991, 74-75.

31 True repentance requires that we surrender the memory of the sin, not in the sense that we are without the knowledge that we once transgressed but rather in the sense that we have laid down the burden, that our confidence might now was strong in the presence of the Lord...

We must retain sufficient memory of the pain to avoid a repetition of the suffering. Still, as we grow in the things of the Spirit, that which is forgiven is to be forgotten. It is not true repentance when we cling to a sensuous memory in whose mental replaying we find delight. “Behold, he who has repented of his sins, the same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more. By this ye may know if a man repenteth of his sin—behold, he will confess them and forsake them.” (D&C 58:42-43)

Millet & McConkie, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, Vol. 3, p. 266

32 In Alma’s account the sensitive reader can in a measure identify with him, feel his pains, experience his great sense of horror at the recognition of the depth of his sin. The reader can then share also in the great relief which Alma was to find. How did he gain this relief? In the same way every transgressor does—by partaking of the miracle of forgiveness through genuine repentance and by casting himself wholly on the mercies of Jesus Christ....

Now anguish was turned to joy, pain to calm, darkness to light. Only now could Alma have peace. He 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).

Spencer W. Kimball, *Miracle of Forgiveness* [1969], 365-66.

33 Repentance means more than simply a reformation of behavior. Many men and women in the world demonstrate great willpower and self-discipline in overcoming bad habits and the weaknesses of the flesh. Yet at the same time they give no thought to the Master, sometimes even openly rejecting Him. Such changes of behavior, even if in a positive direction, do not constitute true repentance....

Repentance involves not just a change of actions, but a change of heart.

Ezra Taft Benson, "A Mighty Change of Heart," *Ensign*, Oct. 1989, 2.

Alma 36:23

34 "I had been born of God"

Alma's conversion story, the account of his being "born of God," is a scriptural classic. In it we find the elements that ought to characterize every conversion or rebirth. The story dramatically illustrates the following principles:

The effectual prayer of the righteous avails much (see James 5:16). The appearance of the angel to Alma came not because of his worthiness but because of that of his parents, who prayed for his conversion with all their heart and soul, and also in response to the united prayers of the congregation of Saints. "And again, the angel said: Behold, the Lord hath heard the prayers of his people, and also the prayers of his servant, Alma, who is thy father; for he has prayed with much faith concerning thee that thou mightest be brought to the knowledge of the truth; therefore, for this purpose have I come to convince thee of the power and authority of God, that the prayers of his servants might be answered according to their faith" (Mosiah 27:14).

The violation of the laws of God brings suffering. The Atonement does not negate the necessity of godly sorrow or godly suffering in the process of cleansing the soul. Pain is a purifying agent. The miracle of healing the sin-laden soul rests with God, yet that miracle is rarely manifest in such a manner as to disallow all suffering.

The word suffer carries two distinct meanings: "to allow," as in "suffering the little children to come unto me," and "to feel pain." Both meanings are joined in the origin of the word that means "to bear." Bear itself means both "to carry" and "to bear up" or "endure." When a woman bears a child, she carries it in her womb until the time of birth, then in pain she brings the child into the world, and yet her labor and pain bring with it a bonding and love between mother and infant. Spiritual birth follows a like pattern in that it too involves a labor of pain which brings a bonding of love.

Marvelous joy is associated with repentance. In it we remove the burden of sin, replacing it with companionship of the Holy Spirit. Repentance is like coming home after a long absence; it is a reunion of love and glad memories.

There is a power in Christ to bear the burden of our sins. We can no more remit our own sins than we can give birth to ourselves, resurrect ourselves, or create a place for ourselves in the celestial kingdom. Truly, we are saved by the grace of our God after all we can do (see 2 Nephi 25:23).

There is a zeal and devotion that attends true repentance. "I have labored without ceasing," Alma said (verse 24). Paul, Alma's Old World counterpart, said it in this way: "But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me" (1 Corinthians 15:10).

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 much more subtle, much more imperceptible. Day by day they move closer to the Lord, little realizing they are building a godlike life." ("A Mighty Change of Heart," *Ensign*, October 1989, p. 5.)

Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L. Millet, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, 4 vols. [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1987-1992], 3: 267

Alma 36:24

35

The text offers a great lesson on the effects of repentance and redemption: when the heart is changed, dread of God converts to longing for God. Additionally, the spiritually reborn are seized with a desire that others “might also be born of God, and be filled with the Holy Ghost” (Alma 36:24).

Millet & McConkie, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, Vol. 3, p. 266

36

Those who have put off the natural man—what Paul called the “works of the flesh”—begin to enjoy what he called the “fruit of the Spirit,” namely, “love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance”; they begin to “walk in the Spirit.” (Galatians 5:19-25.) As Benjamin explained, such persons are humble and submissive, eager to know and carry out the will of the Savior, eager to have their own wishes swallowed up in the higher will of God. The Spirit of God sanctifies—it cleanses and purges filth and dross out of the human soul as though by fire. The Spirit does far more, however, than remove uncleanness. It also fills. It fills one with a holy element, with a sacred presence that motivates the person to a godly walk and goodly works. These persons do not necessarily plan out how they will perform the works of righteousness; they do not plot and design which deeds and what actions are to be done in every situation. Rather, 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. Yes, these persons do have agency. Indeed, they are freer than free, because they have given themselves up to the Lord and his purposes. They choose to do good but their choices are motivated by the Spirit of the Lord.

Robert L. Millet, *Life in Christ*, pp. 98-99.

37

Alma 36:24

Caution regarding the experience of Alma the Younger

We must be cautious, as we discuss these remarkable examples. Though they are real and powerful, they are the exception rather than the rule. For every Paul, for every Enos, for every King Lamoni, there are hundreds and thousands of people who find the process of repentance much more subtle, much more imperceptible. Day by day they move closer to the Lord, little realizing they are building a godlike life.

Ezra Taft Benson

38

Alma 36:25

Parley P. Pratt gives expression to the feelings of those who in our time have really been born again, in these words:

“If I had been set to turn the world over, to dig down a mountain, to go to the ends of the earth, or traverse the deserts of Arabia, it would have been easier than to have undertaken to rest, while the priesthood was upon me. I have received the holy anointing, and I can never rest till the last enemy is conquered, death destroyed, and truth reigns triumphant.”

From the teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, it is apparent that every member of the Church should have something of this same spirit, for he said, “Let the Saints remember that great things depend on their individual exertion, and that they are called to be co-workers with us and the Holy Spirit in accomplishing the great work of the last days.” . . .

The course Alma took, that is, to cry unto the Lord in sincere repentance—is the way for all men. And until this course is followed by men and nations, no rebirth will come to men, nor relief to nations.

Marion G. Romney, in CR, Oct. 1941, pp. 89-91

39 **Alma 36:26***Seen eye to eye*

We don't ask any people to throw away any good they have got; we only ask them to come and get more. What if all the world should embrace this Gospel? They would then see eye to eye, and the blessings of God would be poured out upon the people, which is the desire of my whole soul.

Joseph Smith, *Teachings*, p. 275.

40 **Alma 36:27***God has delivered me*

During the month of January, 1856, the weather was very cold, the temperature ranging 20 to 30 degrees below zero at times. On one occasion I found myself in the canyon alone, as it was so cold not one else cared to risk going out in the canyon that day. I was at that time hauling house logs.... After getting my logs cut and dragged down to the loading place I commenced loading them on my bob sled... The loading place being very slippery,... After getting the first one loaded on the sled I turned around to load another one. The one I had on the sled slipped off like it was shot out of a gun and struck me in the hollow of the legs and threw me forward on my face across the four logs lying on the ground, or ice.

In falling.... I found myself with my body lying face downwards across the four logs and the fifth log lying across my legs, and I was pinned to the ground with a heavy red pine log 10 inches through at the large end and 22 feet long lying across my legs. And there I was with no visible means to extricate myself and there was no aid at hand, as no one but myself was in the canyon that day. I made up my mind that I must freeze and die all alone in the mountains of Utah. Many serious thoughts passed through my mind, as you may imagine. In falling on the logs my breast and stomach were hurt and it was difficult for me to breathe. I did not conceive what to do under the trying ordeal, but concluded to ask the Lord to help me, which I did in earnest prayer. After calling upon the Lord for some time I began to make an effort to extricate myself but all in vain, as I could not move the log that was lying on me. I, however, continued my efforts until I was exhausted and lost all recollection of my situation.

And the first I remembered afterward I was one mile down the canyon witting on my load of logs and the oxen going gently along... I spoke to my oxen and stopped them and looked around in wonder and astonishment. Then I remembered being under the log at the loading place some time previous. But how long I was there I could not determine, but supposed about two hours, as I was two hours later getting home that usual.... I made an effort to get off the load and put on my overcoat but found I could not do it, as I was so sore in my legs and breast that it was with great difficulty that I could move at all....

My oxen being gentle and tractable and the road smooth and all down hill, I arrived home without difficulty. On arriving there I found my wife was anxiously waiting for me and quite uneasy about me, as I was so much later than usual. She... helped me into the house, placed me by the fireside and made me as comfortable as possible and took care of my team. I was confined to the house for some days before I could get around again.

Who it was that extricated me from under the log, loaded my sled, hitched my oxen to it, and placed me on it, I cannot say, as I do not know, or even then at the time, remember seeing any one, and I know for a surety no one was in the canyon that day but myself. Hence I give the Lord... credit for saving my life in extricating me from so perilous a situation

.Merrill, *Utah Pioneer and Apostle Marriner Wood Merrill and His Family*, 44-46; as quoted in Marriner W. Merrill, *Exceptional Stories from the Lives of Our Apostles*, comp. By Leon R. Hartshorn [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1973], 160-162.

41 **Alma 36:3-29**

Examples of Deliverance

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| 1. Alma's Conversion | Verse 6-27 |
| 2. Ancient Israel | Verse 28 |
| 3. Alma's deliverance from Noah and his wicked priests | Verse 29 |

42 Repetition is a key to learning. Our children need to hear the truth repeated, especially because there is so much falsehood abroad. Devoted Book of Mormon fathers constantly reminded their sons of saving truths. . . .

In the Book of Mormon, faithful fathers constantly bore their testimonies to their sons.

President Benson, *Witness and a Warning*, p. 69

Alma 36

Conclusion

43 For us it is not a question of leadership, nor has it ever been. Throughout the entire history of the Church, our leaders have been dynamically out in front, leading the charge, showing the way. The question we must ask ourselves is, "Are we keeping pace with the prophet? I can assure you that is a subject of considerable discussion among the members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. That was the case with President Spencer W. Kimball, when I was first called to be an Apostle, and that is the case now with President Gordon B. Hinckley. Generally speaking, the Apostles are younger than the President of the Church. From my experience, we would like to think of ourselves as having been well conditioned for the rigors of the ministry, but we often find ourselves gasping for breath—spiritually and physically—as we push ourselves to follow our prophet's lead.

I hope the same is true of every council in every ward and stake of the Church and, indeed, for every member of the Church. This is not the time to coast in our callings. Every council and every member of the Church should be sprinting to match the pace of the prophet. There is much to be done to complete the work that must be completed in this dispensation. We must work harder and smarter if we are to accomplish our great eternal goals. As individuals and families, we need to examine ourselves and our personal commitment—particularly those of us who have made covenants of consecration and sacrifice in the house of the Lord.

Are we doing all we can do to keep pace with the prophet? Are we setting an example of Christian virtue and gospel faithfulness in our lives and in our homes? Are we reaching out to our inactive or nonmember friends, family members, and neighbors with loving concern? Are we boldly opening our mouths to share our testimonies? Are we serving with all our hearts and souls as home teachers and visiting teachers and in any other callings we may receive? Our leaders are doing these things. We can expect no less of ourselves if we want to keep our anchor and chain in top condition that we might be kept out of harm's way.

M. Russell Ballard, *When Thou Art Converted*, p. 185-186

44 We can be walking witnesses and standing sermons to which objective onlookers can say a quiet "Amen".
Neal A Maxwell