

## Gospel Doctrine Lesson 24: "Give Us Strength According to Our Faith ... in Christ" (Alma 13-16)

**LESSON GOAL:** To help us recognize the importance of honoring our foreordained roles, callings, and priesthood responsibilities and understand that following the counsel of prophets helps us enter into the rest of the Lord.

**Nehor:** An apostate Nephite who first introduced priestcraft into Zarahemla, enticed others to do evil, and established a church to promote his cause. Pretending to be a prophet he taught:

- The priests of their religion should be popular people-pleasers
- They ought not to labor with their hands but be supported by the people
- God would redeem and give eternal life to all men
- Pride was encouraged as well as the wearing of costly apparel
- No need to be concerned about sinning; all will be forgiven and enjoy eternal bliss; repentance unnecessary.
- No belief in Jesus Christ

### 1. Alma gives a powerful discourse on the priesthood and foreordination.

**Joseph Smith:** "Every man who has a calling to minister to the inhabitants of the world **was ordained to that very purpose** in the Grand Council of heaven **before this world was**" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 365).

**President Spencer W. Kimball:** "Before we came here, faithful women were given certain assignments while faithful men were foreordained to certain priesthood tasks. While we do not now remember the particulars, this does not alter the glorious reality of what we once agreed to. **You are accountable** for those things which long ago were expected of you just as are those we sustain as prophets and apostles!" ("The Role of Righteous Women," *Ensign*, Nov. 1979, 102).

**Elder Bruce R. McConkie:** "The **REST** of the Lord, where **MORTALS** are concerned, is to **gain a perfect knowledge of the divinity of the great latter-day work**. [President Joseph F. Smith said,] 'It means entering into the **knowledge and love of God, having faith** in his purpose and in his plan, to such an extent that **we know we are right**, and that we are not hunting for something else; we are **not disturbed** by every wind of doctrine, or **by the cunning and craftiness of men** who lie in wait to deceive.' It is 'rest from the religious turmoil of the world; from the cry that is going forth, here and there—lo, here is Christ; lo, there is Christ.' (*Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed., pp. 58, 125–126.) The **REST** of the Lord, in **ETERNITY**, is to **inherit eternal life, to gain the fulness of the Lord's glory**" (*Mormon Doctrine*, 633).

**President Harold B. Lee:** "I fear there are many among us who because of their faithfulness in the spirit world were 'called' to do a great work here, but **like reckless spendthrifts they are exercising their free agency in riotous living** and are losing their birthright and the blessings that were theirs had they proved faithful to their calling. Hence as the Lord has said, **'there are many called but few are chosen'**." (*Decisions For Successful Living*, 169).

**Bruce R. McConkie:** "The greatest and most important talent or capacity that any of the spirit children of the Father could gain is **the talent of spirituality**. Most of those who gained this talent were chosen, before they were born, to come to earth as members of the house of Israel. **They were foreordained to receive the blessings** that the Lord promised to Abraham and to his seed in all their generations. This foreordination is an election, Paul tells us, and truly it is so, for those so chosen, selected, or elected become, in this life, the favored people. Though all mankind may be saved by obedience, some find it easier to believe and obey than others. Hence the concept, taught by Jesus, that his sheep know his voice and will not follow the dissident voices of the world" (*A New Witness for the Articles of Faith*, 512-513).

### 2. Alma, Amulek, and other believers are persecuted for their righteousness.

**President Spencer W. Kimball:** "Now, we find many people critical when a righteous person is killed, a young father or mother is taken from a family, or when violent deaths occur. Some become bitter when oft-repeated prayers seem unanswered. Some lose faith and turn sour when solemn administrations by holy men seem to be ignored and no restoration seems to come from repeated prayer circles. **But if all the sick were healed, if all the righteous were protected and the wicked destroyed, the whole program of the Father would be annulled and the basic principle of the gospel, free agency, would be ended.**

"If pain and sorrow and total punishment immediately followed the doing of evil, no soul would repeat a misdeed. If joy and peace and rewards were instantaneously given the doer of good, there could be no evil—all would do good and not because of the rightness of doing good. There would be **no test of strength, no development of character, no growth of powers, no free agency, no Satanic controls.**

"Should all prayers be immediately answered according to our selfish desires and our limited understanding, then there would be little or no suffering, sorrow, disappointment, or even death; and if these were not, there would also be **an absence of joy, success, resurrection, eternal life, and godhood**" (*Improvement Era*, March 1966, 180, 210).

### 3. Zeezrom is healed and baptized.

Our spiritual power is linked to our faith in Christ.

**Joseph Smith**, speaking of faith: "Let us here observe, that three things are necessary in order that any rational and intelligent being may exercise faith in God unto life and salvation.

1. the idea that God actually exists.
2. a correct idea of God's character, perfections, and attributes.
3. an actual knowledge that the course of life which he is pursuing is according to God's will.

For without an acquaintance with these three important facts, the faith of every rational being must be imperfect and unproductive; but with this understanding it can become perfect and fruitful, abounding in righteousness, unto the praise and glory of God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ" (*Lectures on Faith*, #3, para. 2-5, 33).

In other words, to simplify these three principles, change them to four. Notice how these apply to Zeezrom and YOU:

1. Believe in God
2. Understand his nature
3. Find out what he wants you to do (The last two are always the most difficult.)
4. Do it

Zeezrom had experienced a striking metamorphosis from arrogant critic to missionary through stages, including shocked wonderment, honest inquiry, repentant belief, godly sorrow, forgiveness and healing, and baptism. The love and power of God, the atonement of Jesus Christ, and honest hearts make such a journey possible.

### 4. The words of Alma are fulfilled as the Lamanites destroy Ammonihah.

The Ammonihahites deserved the punishment they received. Look at what they had done to deserve this fate:

- 1) They reviled, spat upon, and **cast out Alma** when he first came to them (Alma 8:13).
- 2) They **tried bribery** to get Amulek to reject the Lord (Alma 11:22)
- 3) They had **rejected warnings and cries of repentance** from Alma and Amulek (Alma 9:15,18; 10:19).
- 4) They **spat upon and cast out the repentant Zeezrom** (Alma 14:7).
- 5) They **stoned and cast out the male believers** (Alma 15:1).
- 6) They **burned the wives and children** of the believers to mock Alma and Amulek's power (Alma 14:8-10).
- 7) They **mocked, bound, and tortured Alma and Amulek** (Alma 14:14-24).

In spite of all this wickedness, the **Ammonihahites retained an attitude of rebellion**, which is best manifest in their defiance of Alma when they said, "***We will not believe thy words if thou shouldst prophesy that this great city should be destroyed in one day***" (Alma 9:4). "***But behold, in one day it was left desolate; and the carcasses were mangled by dogs and the wild beasts***" (Alma 16:10).

### 5. Conclusion.

Questions to ponder as you read Alma 13-16:

- What **decisions** did I make in "the first place" that led to my opportunities here? To what was I foreordained? **How well am I honoring that expectation?**
- Do I understand that **choosing God does** not necessarily shield me from **pain and suffering** in mortality?
- To what degree **am I motivated** by the fact that through exceeding faith, repentance, and righteousness, I can be sanctified "through the blood of the Lamb" while yet on earth?
- Why did Alma leave his home and preach to a hostile people? Why did Amulek forsake his riches and suffer estrangement from his family and friends? **Would I do that?**

As you ponder these questions, **IMAGINE ALMA SPEAKING TO YOU** as he did to the Ammonihahites:

**Alma 13:27-29:** "And now, my brethren, I wish from the **inmost part of my heart**, yea, with **great anxiety even unto pain**, that ye would **hearken unto my words**, and **cast off your sins**, and **not procrastinate the day of your repentance**; But that ye would **humble yourselves** before the Lord, and **call on his holy name**, and **watch and pray continually**, that ye **may not be tempted** above that which ye can bear, and thus **be led by the Holy Spirit**, becoming **humble, meek, sub-missive, patient, full of love and all long-suffering**; Having **faith on the Lord**; having a **hope** that ye shall receive **eternal life**; having the **love of God always in your hearts**, that ye may be lifted up at the last day and **enter into his rest.**"