

Seeking the Might Change of Heart

The following side-by-side discussion of Alma 5:6-31, 37-42, 53-56 discusses what Alma is teaching the people of Zarahemla, but in modern English terms. Hopefully, this will help you feel more comfortable with what he is teaching, and the change he is encouraging us to make will seem more reasonable and attainable. The scripture verses are on the left, and my commentary is on the right in a different font. I want them clearly separated and distinguishable.

6 And now behold, I say unto you, my brethren, you that belong to this church, have you sufficiently retained in remembrance the captivity of your fathers? Yea, and have you sufficiently retained in remembrance his mercy and long-suffering towards them? And moreover, have ye sufficiently retained in remembrance that he has delivered their souls from hell?

7 Behold, he changed their hearts; yea, he awakened them out of a deep sleep, and they awoke unto God. Behold, they were in the midst of darkness; nevertheless, their souls were illuminated by the light of the everlasting word; yea, they were encircled about by the bands of death, and the chains of hell, and an everlasting destruction did await them.

8 And now I ask of you, my brethren, were they destroyed? Behold, I say unto you, Nay, they were not.

9 And again I ask, were the bands of death

6 - The first few verses are full of concepts and terms that require more defining than those that come later on where he just refers back to his initial references.

What can we learn from the act of remembering what the Lord has done for us in the past? In the case of the Nephites, coming from Jewish stock, they were always taught to remember the captivity of their ancestors, and how the Lord delivered them from Egypt and other places. Now they had two deliverances from captivity within living memory of the entire population. There was the delivery of Limhi's people and the delivery of Alma's people, both held captive by the Lamanites.

Keeping in mind what the Lord has done for us in the past is an exercise in gratitude. We aren't grateful for things we don't remember. He also points out in verse 6 that the people were wicked, and as such would be going to hell. He reminds them to remember that the Lord didn't leave them in this condition, but also saved them from going to hell.

7-8 - Remember that references to being asleep or in the dark means the people were in a state of spiritual ignorance. Wickedness is like a narcotic to the spirit. It deadens our spiritual sensitivities. To come out of the dark or to awaken from a spiritual sleep is to cast off wicked practices and to become sensitive to spiritual things once again. It is like coming out of a troubling dream where you can't make sense of anything into the light of a bright, sunny day where everything becomes clear and discernable once again.

I have actually written two articles (with the same title even) about the chains of hell. If you want to read more about them you can click this link.

<https://gospelstudy.us/what-are-the-chains-of-hell/>

9 - What might it mean when it says, "their souls did

broken, and the chains of hell which encircled them about, were they loosed? I say unto you, Yea, they were loosed, and their souls did expand, and they did sing redeeming love. And I say unto you that they are saved.

10 And now I ask of you on what conditions are they saved? Yea, what grounds had they to hope for salvation? What is the cause of their being loosed from the bands of death, yea, and also the chains of hell?

11 Behold, I can tell you—did not my father Alma believe in the words which were delivered by the mouth of Abinadi? And was he not a holy prophet? Did he not speak the words of God, and my father Alma believe them?

12 And according to his faith there was a mighty change wrought in his heart. Behold I say unto you that this is all true.

expand, and they did sing redeeming love”?

Have you ever experienced a happiness so great that it seems the only way to express yourself is to sing praises of some sort? This is a result of overwhelming gratitude, a gratitude that cannot be contained. Think of the joy one feels when driving in the car and being able to blast the radio and sing at the top of your lungs. It can be a very freeing experience.

Those who recognize that their souls have been in danger of going to hell, but have been snatched from the proverbial fire and are eternally saved in the bliss and joy that comes from association with God are the people who want to “sing” God’s praises evermore. This is that song of redeeming love, our expression of appreciation for Christ’s atoning sacrifice that saved us from ourselves.

10 - This is a good question. What is the basis for our hope of being saved from the bands of death and the chains of hell? Why do we think we will live forever in a state of glory? What makes that possible? The answer to these questions is where our “hope” comes from.

11 - Alma believed in the words of God given him through a holy prophet. We also have the words of holy men, prophets. Do we believe them? Do we listen to them? Do we do what they tell us we need to do to find happiness and to be prepared for the trials of the latter-days?

The key to verse 11 is that Alma believed and he lived by the words of the prophet. He taught the words of the prophet. He didn’t second guess him. He didn’t assume that he didn’t have to live according to Abinadi’s preaching until God had revealed the exact same revelations to him. Alma put his faith in the living (well, then living) prophet, and lived his life accordingly. It was only after he did this that his own revelations began to come.

12 - “According to his faith” means that based on how he lived his life, because he believed the words of the prophet, God was able to make a change to Alma’s heart. This change we seek must be a deliberate and intentionally-sought-after change. We must know that we are seeking for a new desire or disposition in our

13 And behold, he preached the word unto your fathers, and a mighty change was also wrought in their hearts, and they humbled themselves and put their trust in the true and living God. And behold, they were faithful until the end; therefore they were saved.

14 And now behold, I ask of you, my brethren of the church, have ye spiritually been born of God? Have ye received his image in your countenances? Have ye experienced this mighty change in your hearts?

15 Do ye exercise faith in the redemption of him who created you? Do you look forward with an eye of faith, and view this mortal body raised in immortality, and this corruption raised in incorruption, to stand before God to be judged according to the deeds which have been done in the mortal body?

heart. We must want to get rid of our old desires and replace them with new ones.

13 - You don't have to be a prophet to have a change of heart. Alma taught the words of the prophet Abinadi to the people and "they humbled themselves and put their trust in the true and living God. ... they were faithful until the end; therefore they were saved." This is the same for us. The way is simple, though it can be difficult to implement. We must be willing to constantly decide to trust the words found in our scriptures and those delivered to us from our prophet, whoever he might be. This is part of being faithful "until the end."

14 - Part of being born again, or having the change made to our heart is to receive his image in our countenance. What does that mean?

Have ye received his image in your countenances?"
1 John 3:2 says, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."

Like having our hearts changed from loving sin and being willful to being compliant and desiring to be obedient, developing a Christlike attitude, or his image, takes time.

I like to think of this in a somewhat literal kind of way. When you look at a child then look at their parent, you see the similarities between the two. You see where the child received their features. So too, when we follow Christ long enough, we begin to resemble him in attitude, bearing, behavior, thought, and characteristics. We may as well look like him, because we will have become so much like him that no one would guess we weren't of his family, we are too much alike.

15-16 - In these two verses what does it mean to "exercise faith in the redemption of him who created us"? Are we able to mentally see the picture in our heads of the time when we are called up to the bar or judgment seat of Christ and are called upon to give an accounting of our time in mortality? Do we see ourselves being able to give a good account of how we spent our time away from home? Have we improved upon whatever God has given us? Can we hear his

16 I say unto you, can you imagine to yourselves that ye hear the voice of the Lord, saying unto you, in that day: Come unto me ye blessed, for behold, your works have been the works of righteousness upon the face of the earth?

17 Or do ye imagine to yourselves that ye can lie unto the Lord in that day, and say—Lord, our works have been righteous works upon the face of the earth—and that he will save you?

18 Or otherwise, can ye imagine yourselves brought before the tribunal of God with your souls filled with guilt and remorse, having a remembrance of all your guilt, yea, a perfect remembrance of all your wickedness, yea, a remembrance that ye have set at defiance the commandments of God?

19 I say unto you, can ye look up to God at that day with a pure heart and clean hands? I say unto you, can you look up, having the image of God engraven upon your countenances?

20 I say unto you, can ye think of being saved when you have yielded yourselves to become subjects to the devil?

21 I say unto you, ye will know at that day that ye cannot be saved; for there can no man be saved except his garments are washed white; yea, his garments must be purified until they are cleansed from all stain, through the blood of him of whom it has been spoken by our fathers, who should come to redeem his people from their sins.

22 And now I ask of you, my brethren, how will any of you feel, if ye shall stand before the bar of God, having your garments stained with blood and all manner of filthiness? Behold, what will these things testify against you?

words of approbation or approval for a job well done?

In 17-25 we need to recognize the state of those who have not utilized the atoning sacrifice of Christ while in mortality. These are they who haven't sought for a change of heart. They are still in love with or at least guided by the cares and concerns of the world. Their focus is still on the temporary mortal world, and not at all on the eternal nature of man and the rest of eternity we will be spending after this life. In other words, these are they who live and die being short sighted.

Do we really think the Lord will buy any excuses we might want to offer? Will we be able to look Him in the eye and pretend that He will forgive all when we have made no real effort to use His atonement to become better people?

Alma teaches here that those people will have a full recognition of their lost and fallen state. They will have to concede that God's judgments are just and that they are not worthy of living with God, for they are not at all like Him.

Just a reminder about being purified through blood: blood stains. It is one of the worst things in the world for staining clothing. But it is the blood that Christ shed, his atoning sacrifice for us that frees us, or cleanses us from our sins. So the blood of Christ acts as a cleansing agent instead of a staining or corrupting agent. The goal for us to have his blood (his sacrifice) cleanse our spiritual garments (our soul) so we are white and spotless (without sin) when we appear before him to be judged. This is why we need to use his atonement for our sins, it makes it possible to become forgiven of our wrongs in mortality and brings us to a state of holiness where we are seeking and being forgiven on a daily basis, always walking in holiness (a state of forgiveness).

23 Behold will they not testify that ye are murderers, yea, and also that ye are guilty of all manner of wickedness?

24 Behold, my brethren, do ye suppose that such an one can have a place to sit down in the kingdom of God, with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob, and also all the holy prophets, whose garments are cleansed and are spotless, pure and white?

25 I say unto you, Nay; except ye make our Creator a liar from the beginning, or suppose that he is a liar from the beginning, ye cannot suppose that such can have place in the kingdom of heaven; but they shall be cast out for they are the children of the kingdom of the devil.

26 And now behold, I say unto you, my brethren, if ye have experienced a change of heart, and if ye have felt the song of redeeming love, I would ask, can ye feel so now?

27 Have ye walked, keeping yourselves blameless before God? Could ye say, if ye were called to die at this time, within yourselves, that ye have been sufficiently humble? That your garments have been cleansed and made white through the blood of Christ, who will come to redeem his people from their sins?

28 Behold, are ye stripped of pride? I say unto you, if ye are not ye are not prepared to meet God. Behold ye must prepare quickly; for the kingdom of heaven is soon at hand, and such an one hath not eternal life.

29 Behold, I say, is there one among you who is not stripped of envy? I say unto you that such an one is not prepared; and I would that he should prepare quickly, for the hour is close at hand, and he knoweth not when the time

26-31 - Once we have experienced a change of heart, and we no longer desire to sin, how do we keep that desire? Alma gives us some things to consider, some of them in the form of a list of things we need to “strip” from our lives. Here are his questions to the saints in Zarahemla.

1. Are you still grateful for what Christ has done for you? That is, do you still feel like singing songs of redeeming love, songs that express your gratitude for Christ's redemption of your soul?
2. Are you still blameless before God? In other words, are you still using the atoning sacrifice of Christ to seek forgiveness for your sins each day?
3. Are you sufficiently humble?
4. Are you stripped of pride?
5. Are you stripped of envy?
6. Do you mock your brother or heap persecutions upon him? This includes turning away those who hunger, thirst, or are in need in any way.

shall come; for such an one is not found
guiltless.

30 And again I say unto you, is there one
among you that doth make a mock of his
brother, or that heapeth upon him
persecutions?

31 Wo unto such an one, for he is not
prepared, and the time is at hand that he must
repent or he cannot be saved!



37 O ye workers of iniquity; ye that are puffed
up in the vain things of the world, ye that have
professed to have known the ways of
righteousness nevertheless have gone astray,
as sheep having no shepherd, notwithstanding
a shepherd hath called after you and is still
calling after you, but ye will not hearken unto
his voice!

38 Behold, I say unto you, that the good
shepherd doth call you; yea, and in his own
name he doth call you, which is the name of
Christ; and if ye will not hearken unto the
voice of the good shepherd, to the name by
which ye are called, behold, ye are not the
sheep of the good shepherd.

39 And now if ye are not the sheep of the good
shepherd, of what fold are ye? Behold, I say
unto you, that the devil is your shepherd, and
ye are of his fold; and now, who can deny
this? Behold, I say unto you, whosoever
denieth this is a liar and a child of the devil.

40 For I say unto you that whatsoever is good
cometh from God, and whatsoever is evil
cometh from the devil.

41 Therefore, if a man bringeth forth good
works he hearkeneth unto the voice of the

37-42 - Our Father in Heaven set up mortality such that
we will serve or choose between two sources only.
Either we will serve the goodness that comes from God
or we will serve the evil that comes from Satan. There
are no other options available to us. For this service we
will receive a wage or recompense. Those who serve
the evil that comes from Satan will be punished, and
those who serve the goodness that comes from God
will be rewarded according to the degree they chose to
follow righteous behavior. Earth life really is a
continuation of the war of ideologies we fought in
heaven.

In verse 39 Alma compares these two camps or schools
of thought to flocks. They who lead those flocks are our
shepherds. Which shepherd do you follow? Which fold
are you deliberately choosing to be in? Are we going to
be a child or member of Satan's flock or of God's flock.
We must choose one or the other, because that is the
nature of the agency we have been given. So we must
expect to receive the wages of sin or the wages of
righteous living based on the choices we made in
mortality.

The wages of sin is spiritual death. How could it be
otherwise? Satan can promise us nothing but
permanent separation from God, since that is all he will
ever have. Satan has already experienced the second
death, which is permanent separation from God. Only
God can give us eternal life, or the opportunity to live
with Him forever. That eternal life is what He offers us.
But we have to choose where we want to be. That is our
conscious or unconscious choice, but ours to make

good shepherd, and he doth follow him; but whosoever bringeth forth evil works, the same becometh a child of the devil, for he hearkeneth unto his voice, and doth follow him.

42 And whosoever doeth this must receive his wages of him; therefore, for his wages he receiveth death, as to things pertaining unto righteousness, being dead unto all good works.



53 And now my beloved brethren, I say unto you, can ye withstand these sayings; yea, can ye lay aside these things, and trample the Holy One under your feet; yea, can ye be puffed up in the pride of your hearts; yea, will ye still persist in the wearing of costly apparel and setting your hearts upon the vain things of the world, upon your riches?

54 Yea, will ye persist in supposing that ye are better one than another; yea, will ye persist in the persecution of your brethren, who humble themselves and do walk after the holy order of God, wherewith they have been brought into this church, having been sanctified by the Holy Spirit, and they do bring forth works which are meet for repentance—

55 Yea, and will you persist in turning your backs upon the poor, and the needy, and in withholding your substance from them?

56 And finally, all ye that will persist in your wickedness, I say unto you that these are they who shall be hewn down and cast into the fire except they speedily repent.

nonetheless. And only we will be held accountable for the choice that is made.

53-56 - In these final few verses of the doctrinal part of his sermon, Alma pleads with the people, and hence, us, to examine our lives and our choices. If we are still seeking to fit into the world, to gain glory and reputation with the world then we are serving Satan. When our hearts are set on our toys, our campers, our vacations, our events and entertainment, the comforts of this life, etc., we are still wrapped up in the world and its pursuits, and we are in need of repentance. The Lord has promised that He will give us the things of this world, but only if we seek Him and His glory first.

When our hearts are focused on helping others, relieving suffering, promoting others for the good they do, serving and protecting our loved ones, etc., it is then that we are in a good place with God. God's purpose is to bring about the exaltation of His children. When that goal becomes our goal, our only goal then we are on the path to exaltation ourselves. This is what the change of heart is that we seek, to put off the desires of the natural man and to experience the joy that comes from living the life that God lives through righteous living.