

Come Follow Me Podcast
Elo Viz Production
Week 24
Alma 5-7

In Chapter five Alma is teaching the people of Zarahemla. There are only a couple of verses that I would like to focus on, or rather teachings that might cause some pondering. They are related in a way. Starting in Alma chapter 5 verse 38, Alma says:

“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.”

We have discussed previously about the Good Shepherd and how we are to hear His voice.

But, what I find interesting about this verse is the part where he says:

“in his own name he doth call you, which is the name of Christ”

What do you suppose that means?

Here are a couple of Thoughts to consider:

In the baptismal covenant and sacramental prayers we promise to take upon ourselves the name Christ. This practice takes time and effort on our part. I would even suggest that it takes daily commitments and constant willpower to overcome that natural man and be like Jesus was. To talk as He talked, serve as He served and to Love as He loved. Perhaps if we are truly taking upon ourselves the name of Christ we indeed become so much like Him that when He calls us by His name we can truly say, Lord: here am I.

I know a man that I met not too long ago, for the sake of this story we will call him John. John is an older gentleman in his late 80s, who lives in a small town with many that are poor. He himself thought living a comfortable life, is not well to do. He lives in a small, modest home alone. His wife passed away a few years ago. One day he was teaching a Sunday school class and thought it would be fun to do an object lesson. He had just been paid and so he brought a thousand dollars to church for this lesson. It went well and he taught by the spirit. He put the thousand dollars in his suit jacket and went home. A few days later a neighbor down the street had a tragic accident and their house burnt down. It was one of those trailer mobile homes and the aluminum roof collapsed into the house, neighbors from all around showed up to try and help this poor family clean up the mess and disassemble the wreckage. It became clear that they would need some heavy machinery to move any of the rubble from the accident. With not much to do they all left leaving this humble family standing there staring at the massacred home. My Friend John went by as soon as he got off work. The family was still standing there staring helplessly at the mess. As he approached them the spirit reminded him about the money still in his coat pocket and whispered softly to him that this family needed his help. Without a second thought he reached into his pocket and handed that thousand dollars to this desperate family. He has also donated much of his time and efforts to this and other families that live around him.

This mighty man reminds me of the story of the widow's mite that Jesus talked about. He is one who personifies that name of Christ in his daily life. Giving, living and speaking as Jesus would do. He is a great example to me that I can always do more and be more.

The second part I would like to share is in verse 21 of the same chapter where Alma says: "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."

There are really two categories of Christians, when it comes to this topic: those that cringe at the thought of being washed white with the blood of Christ, thinking that it sounds gory or graphic. And then there are those that brush over it and ignore the doctrine because they don't understand what it means so it is much more simple to just ignore it. I hope that this week we will take the time to really dig deep in understanding this principle and I hope that it will help us to make the necessary changes in our lives to grow closer to our Father and Savior.

Blood sacrifices have been around since the creation of the Earth. When Adam and Eve transgressed the law of God they were expelled from the Garden of Eden and forced to live out their days in the mortal realm hidden from the face of God. But before they left, they received something very special. After the earth is cursed for their sakes and Adam is told that "In the **sweat** of thy face shalt thou eat **bread**, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for **dust** thou *art*, and unto **dust** shalt thou return." (Genesis 3:19) He then gives Eve her name of Eve meaning that she is the mother of all Living (Genesis 3:20) But then this part right here, this is in Genesis chapter three verse 21: "Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make **coats** of skins, and **clothed** them."

God was the first to offer an animal sacrifice. A sacrificial lamb whose skin would be worn by Adam and Eve. Consider for a moment the significance of this: First, Adam and Eve needed to know how to do a blood sacrifice in order to offer unto their God an offering or sacrament and God showed them how to do this. And the skin of the Sacrificial Lamb was to be worn by Adam and Eve throughout their life. How much more literal can He be when he asks us to take upon us His identity? Those that have been to the temple learn that this coat of skin spoken of is a representation of the Holy garment worn today.

Throughout the early years of the earth, man came to pervert this sacred symbol of the blood sacrifice, offering all sorts of things, including humans as an offering to their false Gods. But one thing was certain. God intended this ordinance to be a sacred and holy one. A process that would cause any with a soul, deep emotion and heartbreak.

Consider for a moment this scene. You are living in the days of Abraham or Moses and passover time is approaching. You have saved and skimped for years to be able to buy a lamb for this special occasion. The day comes and you go to your neighbor who has the perfect lamb. Male, only one year old. This white, tiny lamb is the cutest thing you have ever seen. He is absolutely perfect. As you pick him up and cradle him like a newborn baby he looks into your eyes. His blue eyes are so pure and innocent. You instantly feel a connection and a deep love for this wonderful animal. You get to take him home and he will live with you for a few days before the ceremony. These tiny lambs are so precious, and loving with not a drop of guile in their little bodies.

The day comes and it is time to say goodbye to your friend. On the whole walk to the temple all these thoughts are racing through your mind. Do I have to do this? Is there perhaps another that I could sacrifice instead? Is there any other way for me to receive a remission of my sins? Is there any other way?

After the priest inserts the lamb you are instructed to lay your hand on his tiny head and a prayer is given, the words spoken imply a transfer of your sins and transgressions from you to this perfect, sinless lamb. A bond that will forever bind you to this innocent creature. The memory of his helpless eyes burned into your soul forever. Words can't describe the pain you feel as the lamb is sacrificed on the holy altar. His blood being freely spilt for you. His death is a memorial of your commitment to God.

We don't have to go through this process anymore since the death and resurrection of Christ. Which I am so glad about. I feel that if I had to go through this I would rebel and try to save these little lambs. When we consider the millions and millions of them that have died on altars it makes us question this Goodness of God and why this had to be, or at least the cruelty of man and his natural thirst for blood.

But, this whole process and tradition started with God. He was the first and also the Last to offer a sacrifice for our sakes. He started with the lamb in the garden and then Ended this commandment of the shedding of blood with His only begotten son, who willingly laid down His life as an eternal sacrifice for you. Thus ending the blood sacrifices from that time forward. And replacing it with the breaking of bread and wine as a symbol of His body and blood.

This whole principle from the beginning of time was meant to stir a change in us. An emotion that would trigger pain or sorrow, or at least some remorse for our actions. Followed by peace, gratitude and Love for the Eternal sacrifice of Jesus.

In the April 2021 General Conference President Holland was speaking of the many struggles and challenges we face and then he said this:

“Many of these we are *not* strong enough to address in and of ourselves, for the help and peace we need is not the kind “the world giveth.” No, for the truly difficult

problems we need what the scriptures call “the powers of heaven,” and to access these powers we must live by what these same scriptures call “principles of righteousness.” Now, understanding that connection between principle and power is the *one* lesson the human family never seems able to learn, so says the God of heaven and earth!”

<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2021/04/23holland?lang=eng>

That is exactly what we are speaking about here. That there is a connection between the principle and the power, and we must learn how to access it in order to fully receive of the blessings intended.

In an interesting speech given in January of this year Pastor Steve Smotherman of the Legacy Church gave a speech titled “Blood washed vs. Whitewashed”. And he talks about the facade of a Christian life. How we sometimes chose not to be blood washed but rather white washed. He tells this story of a woman that came to him for counseling. She had some issues that she needed to work on, some sins and confessions to get off her chest. But she said to him that she did not go to his church. He replied, “ok, why don't you go to your church, to your pastor.” and here is what she said to him. “I don't want them to know”.

He says that “being whitewashed is a metaphor of superficial righteousness that conceals internal decay and sin. It is a facade, a perceptive veneer that hides the true state of one's soul. When something is whitewashed it is a cheap white paint or coating to make it look clean on the surface but we know underneath it is all messed up.”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zAtjcWZy4Dc&t=3s>

It is the same problem that we face in our lives. How do we be real? I mean really blood washed by the blood of the Sacrificial lamb, Jesus Christ, and not just whitewashed with a facade of fake surface righteousness.

I can tell you that it starts with you feeling safe. You must have a good leader that you can turn to and be your real self. Good or bad, doesn't matter. We must be able to shed our armor and stand there with all of our baggage, vulnerable and exposed and trust that the person judging us will be merciful and kind. And for you that may not be Jesus... yet. But with the right leader they will show you that it can be. But until your faith is sufficient you must have someone that is able to tell you that your additions, fascinations, demons are hurting your real self and help you overcome those things. To be able to shed those natural man tendencies and put on the garment of Christ, the coat of skin of the lamb of God. That is who you were meant to be. Remember the contradictory verse in the scriptures that to a new believer makes no sense: Matthew 10:39-40

“**39** He that findeth his life shall **lose** it: and he that **loseth** his **life** for my sake shall find it.

40 He that **receiveth** you **receiveth** me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me.”

See, here is the rub. We are all sinners, we are all addicts, we are all failures and fall short of the glory of God. We all need Jesus. We all need to try and recognize our weaknesses and fall before the throne of Grace. It is Christ that will show you who you were created to be when you are willing to let go of who you think you should be. It is Jesus that will give you what you need once you are willing to let go of what you already have and all you hope to have. You are only complete and whole with and through Him. Might we be willing to truly find out who we can be in Christ is my prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.