

Alma 29 – Alma's Soliloquy

There is no context given for this address, and no obvious audience, hence my designation of it as a soliloquy. However, I don't believe that accurately describes it. I think that in the course of recording the history of the people Alma paused to write some of the feelings of his soul, and this is the result. Whatever the source, it is a beautiful treatise on God's dealings with man.

Alma starts out with a lament which is so beautifully worded that it has been widely quoted and even used in song. However, if we stop with verse 2 we actually are left with the impression that Alma intended the exact opposite of what he was actually saying. Here are the first two verses:

O that I were an angel, and could have the wish of mine heart,
that I might go forth and speak with the trump of God, with a
voice to shake the earth, and cry repentance to every people!
Yea, I would declare unto every soul, as with the voice of
thunder, repentance and the plan of redemption, that they
should repent and come unto our God, that there might not be
more sorrow upon all the face of the earth.

The thought here is about being able to spread the word of God more widely, and thus avoid human suffering. Apparently noble thoughts, but, as Alma goes on to say, actually sinful.

But behold, I am a man, and do sin in my wish; for I ought to be
content with the things which the Lord hath alloted unto me.

The next several verses are dedicated to the idea that God deals justly with all men, and Alma should be content with the Lord's plan, instead of desiring to circumvent it. In fact, in verse 5 Alma recognizes that God deals with men according to the light they actually have. Verse 8 extends this idea in an interesting direction – God gives each nation the light that he sees fit that they should have. This idea, that apparently some nations and peoples are denied truths of the gospel because of God's will, may seem rather strange. However, in keeping with the teachings of the rest of this chapter, we should trust that God knows what he is doing, and not seek to tell him how to do his work.

Alma then touches on the same idea that Ammon expounded a few chapters earlier – he glories in the work of the Lord, not because of himself, but because he gets to participate in that work. The word of

God, and working to share it, brings true and lasting joy. This thought then leads Alma to reflect on the work of the sons of Mosiah. His joy is great because of their success, and he ends up invoking the blessing of God on them and on those who were converted because of their teaching.

Returning to the thought that this chapter is about God's dealings with man, we are left with some very important teachings. First, God loves all men and watches over them in every circumstance. Second, we cannot understand all of God's dealings, and we must exercise faith in his essential nature when we encounter things we cannot understand.