

## **"Repent and Come Unto Christ — Choose Christ"**

by Elder Bill Jones

This month we are continuing to consider the January/February theme about CHOOSING CHRIST, and what it means. Choosing Christ changes our lives. It places us in a position to receive and accept God's conditions for forgiveness which leads to redemption, salvation, immortality and eternal life.

Before we continue, it should be noted we ended the January insert with a quote from Alma 13:49-50. We incorrectly credited the quote to King Lamoni, when it was actually the king's father. Aaron (one of the sons of Mosiah) had been explaining about the fall of man and God's plan of redemption "which was prepared from the foundation of the world, through Christ, for all whosoever would believe on his name." (Read Alma 13:45)

Aaron made it very clear to King Lamoni's father that because man had fallen, mankind could not merit anything for themselves. Try as they might they would be incapable of accomplishing or bringing about eternal life on their own. Such a blessing would be dependent upon the suffering and death of Christ who would atone for their sins. The blessing would come through their faith and repentance.

The father of King Lamoni recognized that the conditions for God's willingness to forgive him and extend to him eternal life would be determined by his response to God. Aaron's words convinced him to want eternal life. The fact that Christ's sacrifice would break the bands of death, the grave would have no victory, and the sting of death would be swallowed up in the hopes of glory, appealed to him so much that he was moved to make a choice.

**CHOOSE CHRIST**

So he asked what he should do to have this eternal life of which Aaron had spoken: “Yea, **what shall I do that I may be born of God**, having this wicked spirit rooted out of my breast, and receive his Spirit, that I may be filled with joy, that I may not be cast off at the last day? Behold, said he, I will give up all that I possess; yea, I will forsake my kingdom, that I may receive this great joy.” (Read Alma 13:49-50) Aaron answered him by giving him a list of things to do: If this is what you desire, if you will bow down or humble yourself before God, if you will repent of all your sins, if you will call on his name in faith, if you believe that you will receive, then you will receive the hope you desire. (Read Alma 13:51)

Because it means so much to our lives, it is important we know what King Lamoni’s father came to understand at that moment. He realized that without Christ’s help he himself could not obtain the great gift of eternal life that God wants to give to mankind. He also understood he had to do his part to obtain that gift. The atonement of Christ does not do it all. “Deity [God] will not do for man what man **can** and **ought** [to choose] to do for himself. . . . The **completion** of the great work of atonement, . . . cannot be achieved without man’s cooperation.” (See Arthur Oakman’s BELIEF IN CHRIST, page 140)

In other words, the atonement helps us to recognize we have the opportunity and the power to conduct our lives in such a way that we can become more like Christ. We must be willing to place ourselves alongside Christ and compare our lives to His and when we see the difference, admit we are sinners and then be willing to choose Christ by changing our lives to be more like Him so that we may be restored to divine fellowship with God.

“. . . God needs no persuasion to make Him willing to forgive. . . . [as long as we meet] . . . the conditions for forgiveness.” (See Arthur Oakman’s BELIEF IN CHRIST, page 141)

It is obvious the sins that separate us from God continue to be a source of frustration to God. There are two scriptures that clearly demonstrate this. First scripture: “. . . Thou art angry, O Lord, with this people because they will not understand of thy mercies which thou hast bestowed upon them because of thy Son.” (Read Alma 16:188)

Second scripture: “. . . My blood [My sacrifice] shall not cleanse them if they hear me not.” (Read Doctrine and Covenants 28:4) The thing to be aware of in Alma 16:188, is that the wording says the Lord is angry because the people **will not** understand His mercies. It doesn’t say they **cannot** understand. Doctrine and Covenants 28:4 is similar in nature when it says “My blood shall not cleanse them if they hear me not.” This indicates the people either absolutely refuse to listen or they are inclined to demonstrate complete indifference.

Once again it becomes **a matter of choice.**

Sin separates us from God. Because of our pride, which is nurtured by Satan, we are deceived by the false illusion that we don’t need God as much as we may think. Because of our pride we may find reason to not seek Him. As a result we learn to center



our thoughts on ourselves more; our room for God in our lives grows less and we become less familiar with His Holy Spirit. Succumbing to Satan’s deceptions causes us to rely more on ourselves and less on God. Just as there is the effort to bear witness of Christ, there is the effort to bear witness against Christ.

It still comes down to **a matter of choice.**

Over and over again we read in the scriptures about various people who hardened their hearts against that which was good and could not or would not make the necessary changes in their lives. **Beware! It is easier than you might think to harden our hearts and remain in a condition that rejects the offers made by God to enter into our lives.** To become hardened suggests a process over time like the hardening of concrete. Once it has set, there is very little opportunity to turn back.

A good example is the story of Korihor, an antichrist, in Alma 16. Korihor was bold enough to confront Alma and deny there was a God, and dared Alma to show him a sign that would indicate otherwise. Even when God struck Korihor dumb because he dared to tempt God; even when Korihor admitted there was a God and that he had willingly been deceived by Satan; even when he asked Alma to pray to God that the curse might be taken from him, he still was so hardened in his ways that he showed no repentance, and Alma said to him, “. . . If this curse should be taken from thee, thou wouldest again lead away the hearts of this people; therefore, it shall be unto thee, even as the Lord will. And it came to pass that the curse was not taken off of Korihor; but he was cast out, and went about from house to house, begging for his food.” (Read Alma 16:71-72)

There is the daily struggle with personal temptations, with issues of health and finances, with feelings of inadequacies and grief and guilt, with loneliness and despair; and yet through it all there is the realization that God is merciful to us. He hears our prayers even when we are in the wilderness. It is as Alma said in Alma 16:184, “It is because of thy Son that thou hast been thus merciful unto me; therefore, I will cry unto thee in all mine afflictions; for in thee is my joy; for thou hast turned thy judgments away from me because of thy Son.”

Everyday we need to give more thought to the consequences of CHOOSING CHRIST. It provides the way that leads to FORGIVENESS AND REDEMPTION, which leads to SALVATION, IMMORTALITY and ETERNAL LIFE; and besides all that it restores us to a DIVINE FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD.

