



## Show Notes & Transcripts

### Podcast General Description:

Follow Him: A *Come, Follow Me* Podcast with Hank Smith & John Bytheway

Do you ever feel that preparing for your weekly *Come, Follow Me* lesson falls short? Join hosts Hank Smith and John Bytheway as they interview experts to make your study for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints' *Come, Follow Me* course not only enjoyable but original and educational. If you are looking for resources to make your study fresh, faithful, and fun--no matter your age--then join us every Wednesday.

### Podcast Episode Descriptions

#### Part 1:

How does the Book of Mormon change the reader? Dr. Adam Miller focuses on how the Book of Mormon teaches the reader about God and enables us to participate in the redemption that the book describes, as Alma teaches his son, Corianton.

#### Part 2:

Dr. Miller continues to explore Alma's lesson to Corianton and examines the process of restoration for each Saint through the Atonement of Jesus Christ.

## Timecodes:

### Part 1

- 00:00 Part I - Dr. Adam Miller
- 04:41 How does the Book of Mormon change the reader?
- 07:47 Context in Alma 39-42
- 12:11 Alma's definition of restoration
- 19:17 Alma 40:1, 23-24 - Resurrection
- 24:49 Alma 40 - Alma discusses the Atonement of Jesus
- 28:10 Alma 41:13 - Justice and restoration
- 31:58 Hank shares a story about patriarchal blessings
- 36:09 Alma 39:7 - Alma shares examples of punishment being essential to restoration
- 45:39 Glad tidings
- 50:41 Alma teaches Corianton what he learned from an angel
- 54:32 A difficult question about judgment
- 1:00:19 Our desires
- 1:06:54 - End of Part 1 - Dr. Adam Miller

### Part 2

- 00:00 Part II– Dr. Adam Miller
- 03:59 Alma 42:27 - Who will come and partake?
- 07:13 Alma 41:7 - Judging ourselves
- 11:01 Alma 41:10 - No one gets away with evil
- 18:08 Alma 42 - Promises are about the future
- 24:11 Love is a law, not a reward
- 29:22 Alma 42:15 - God wants to bless His children
- 36:36 Dr. Miller shares his experience with the Book of Mormon
- 45:32 End of Part II– Dr. Adam Miller

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## Biographical Information:



Adam is a professor of philosophy at Collin College in McKinney, Texas.

He earned a BA in Comparative Literature from Brigham Young University and an MA and PhD in Philosophy from Villanova University.

He is the author of eight books (see links on the home page) and serves as the current director of the [Mormon Theology Seminar](#).

He and his wife, Gwen, have three children.

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Hank Smith:	00:00:04	Hello, everyone. Welcome to another episode of followHIM. My name's Hank Smith. I'm your host. I'm here with my proper and perfect co-host, John Bytheway. John, that comes from Alma 40:23, "You are proper and perfect."
John Bytheway:	00:00:18	Well, O out of two ain't bad, right?
Hank Smith:	00:00:23	And we're here with our guest, Dr. Adam Miller. John, we're taking on the second half of Alma speaking to his sons. We had Helaman and Shiblon last lesson with Dr. Welch, and now with Dr. Miller, we're taking on 39 through 42. What comes to your mind when you think of these chapters?
John Bytheway:	00:00:42	Alma wants to talk to his son about his behavior, but that only gets a few verses in Alma 39, and the rest of 39, 40, 41, 42 is this wonderful doctrine. It's validation for that idea of President Packer that a study of the doctrines of the gospel will change behavior quicker than a study of behavior. We've all heard that one before. I love these awesome doctrines that help him give a framework for everything else that's going on and for his behavior, so I'm looking forward to looking at that today.
Hank Smith:	00:01:18	When I think of these chapters, there's no better place, honestly, I can think of in scripture where you walk through the plan of salvation and your role in it. John, like I said, we have Dr. Miller with us. He's been with us in the past. Adam, what are we going to do today? What are you looking forward to?
Dr. Adam Miller:	00:01:39	It's great to be back with you. In Alma 39 to 42, as you know, Alma writes a really tender, pointed letter to his wayward son Corianton, and he spends a lot of time talking about the work of restoration, which is key to the plan of happiness. He models that work of restoration on the resurrection, and then I think step-by-step fashion, he transforms his son's understanding of justice, of punishment and repentance.

Hank Smith:	00:02:14	That's a great way to put it. You can sense the tenderness. I really like how you put that, the tenderness of this parent to a child. John, like I said before, Dr. Miller's been with us a couple of times, but why don't you introduce him to those who are joining us this year?
John Bytheway:	00:02:33	Absolutely. Dr. Adam S. Miller is a professor of philosophy at Collin College in McKinney, Texas. He has a PhD in philosophy from Villanova University. He's the author of more than a dozen books, including Original Grace, one coming out this Christmas called The Christ Child, one that has a Book of Mormon focus called The Seven Gospels: The Many Lives of Christ in the Book of Mormon, and that was co-authored with Rosalind Welch. Really excited to have you back. We were talking before. You've got a son on a mission in Bolivia, a daughter in graduate school, and a high school graduate?
Dr. Adam Miller:	00:03:08	High school graduate.
Hank Smith:	00:03:11	Dr. Miller and his wife get to be empty nesters. That's so far away from me, not even on my radar, but here it's coming up for you, Adam. Thanks for taking your time to be with us again.
Dr. Adam Miller:	00:03:21	Yes. It's really my pleasure. I've had so many people over the past couple years tell me how much they love your show, how much it means to them on a weekly basis, and I'm happy to be a part of it.
Hank Smith:	00:03:33	We're happy that you're a part of it as well. Let's look at the <a href="#">Come, Follow Me</a> manual and then, Adam, let's find out where you want to go. The title of this week's lesson is The Great Plan of Happiness, taking on these four chapters of Alma talking to his son Corianton. It says this, "When someone we love has made a serious mistake, it can be hard to know how to respond. Part of what makes Alma 39 through 42 so valuable is that it reveals how Alma, a disciple of Christ who once had his own grievous sins to repent of, handled such a situation.
	00:04:05	In these chapters, we observe Alma's boldness in condemning sin and his tenderness and love for Corianton and, ultimately, we sense Alma's confidence that the Savior shall come to take away the sins of the world and declare glad tidings of salvation unto his people. The fact that Corianton repented and eventually returned to the work of the ministry can give us hope for forgiveness and redemption when we are troubled about our own sins or the sins of someone we love." Well said. I think we learned quite a bit about Alma in the way he speaks to his

son. Adam, with that, where do you want to start with these four chapters?

- Dr. Adam Miller: 00:04:42 I think it's useful to remind people upfront here that I'm a philosopher, so as always, sorry, I'm not a historian, I'm not a scholar of ancient scripture or ancient languages. I'm not especially interested in historical questions. I'm interested instead in what we might call existential questions about what it means to be a sinner, about what it looks like to live a new life in Christ, somebody who has been saved.
- 00:05:11 So with the Book of Mormon, I'm not especially interested in what the Book of Mormon was or even with what the Book of Mormon is, so much as I'm interested in what the Book of Mormon can do. Rather than understanding the Book of Mormon as a kind of relic of history, I want to engage with it as a live power. I want to understand what the Book of Mormon is doing to me as I study it and as I try to participate in the redemption that it's describing and enacting. Maybe we'll have a little different focus than some of your other guests.
- Hank Smith: 00:05:44 We don't mind that at all, and I love that question, what is the Book of Mormon doing to me? What's happening inside of me?
- Dr. Adam Miller: 00:05:52 I take for granted that it is a live power and that it's capable of doing many things, especially in relationship to my redemption, my experience of God. I'm not going to offer the one true reading of these chapters, but I'm going to try to pay really close attention to the details of what Alma is saying. And in my experience, when I let the Book of Mormon say what it wants to say rather than telling it what I think it's supposed to say, then some really surprising and powerful things can happen, and I think that may be especially true with these chapters.
- 00:06:30 So I would recommend to listeners as a basic reading strategy here that they don't read these chapters piecemeal, bits and pieces, pulling out verses from here and there, but to really try to read these chapters as one single conversation between a father and a son, so that they can track what Alma is saying and how each of the things that he is explaining to his son is meant to inform and transform his son's understanding of the other parts.
- Hank Smith: 00:07:00 I like that. Let the text speak for itself. It's a crucial skill when reading scripture because oftentimes we like to take a certain verse, grab it and say, "This means this." It's like an organ. You focus on a single pipe. You got to hear them all together.



Dr. Adam Miller:	00:07:15	Yeah, and I think that's especially true here maybe with these chapters even especially true with the kinds of things that Alma has to say about the purpose and role of justice.
John Bytheway:	00:07:25	I'd like to call it drive-by scripture study when we grab one verse and read it and then run away instead of back up and see the whole thing. You also know I like to talk about Elder Uchtdorf and seeing the big picture first. This is this whole discussion of Alma to his son. See all of it and don't just grab one verse here and there.
Dr. Adam Miller:	00:07:47	Context is important here. We get Mormon inserting into his abridgment of the large plates three letters written by Alma to his sons about 73 years before the birth of Christ, Alma 36 through 37, where he got a letter to Helaman that offers a pretty remarkable first person and detailed account of Alma's own experience of redemption, of that kind of interior moment of conversion, which is pretty remarkable stuff. We get Alma 38, which is a letter to his son Shiblon, exhorting him to bridle his passions so that he can be filled with love. And then we get this third letter longer than the others for today, Alma chapters 39 through 42, the letter to his son Corianton, who had forsaken his ministry and gotten tangled up with Isabel.
	00:08:40	Alma calls him to repentance and unfolds the mystery of the resurrection by way of what he describes as the work of restoration, and then in the process, he transforms his son's understanding of justice and punishment and repentance.
	00:08:55	I think it's useful here to keep in mind that these letters are pretty tender, pretty personal letters that Alma composed for his sons, not for a kind of global 21st century audience. He wasn't writing these as a scripture. He meant them in a very targeted way for a very personal intimate audience. That's useful to keep in mind because we see in this more private context the way that Alma is willing to share personal details that he might not share otherwise, like the kind of thing that we get in Alma chapter 36.
	00:09:27	We see too that he's quite willing to admit in his conversation to Corianton the limits of his own prophetic knowledge and to mark when he's sharing his opinions rather than confirmed doctrine. That's very edifying insofar as we get a peek behind the curtain here to the way that Alma doesn't have to know everything to be a real prophet who is issuing a real and saving call to repentance. Alma doesn't pretend to know everything either, and I think both of those things are useful and healthy.

Hank Smith:	00:09:58	That's fantastic. That's a note I've never made before, but he does say that a couple of times, "I don't know about this certain topic, but it suffices me to say," fill in the blank.
Dr. Adam Miller:	00:10:10	Yeah, or sometimes he'll say, "I don't know, but my opinion about that topic is this," which is also useful and good. We need to explore, we need to push further into what we don't know in order to learn things that we haven't yet grasped, and that's just as true for him as for the rest of us.
	00:10:27	By way of overview with respect to our particular chapters then, in Alma 39 is Alma is urging Corianton to repent and return to the work of ministry. It's pretty personal. It has a lot to do with the details of Corianton's own life. And then in the next three chapters, Alma switches gears to something more like 30,000 feet, where he in chapter 40 explains the purpose of the resurrection and adopts resurrection as a model for what he calls the work of restoration. In Alma 41, he begins then to transform Corianton's understanding of divine justice in light of God's work of restoring all things from a state of corruption to a state of incorruption.
	00:11:13	And then in Alma 42, Alma completes this transformation of Corianton's understanding of divine justice by explaining how even God's punishments are meant as a blessing, as a good thing rather than as a curse. Sometimes in these chapters, we refer to what Alma is describing as the law of restoration. That might be a useful shorthand, but it's probably good to note that that's not language that Alma himself ever uses. He never describes restoration as the law of restoration. He just describes the kind of general work of restoration that God is engaged in.
	00:11:49	It's also useful to note that in Alma 40 to 42, Alma doesn't start out trying to explain the nature of justice. Instead, he's trying to explain the nature of resurrection, which leads him to talk about restoration, which then leads him to talk about justice as the kind of subcategory of how God goes about his work of restoration.
Hank Smith:	00:12:11	How would you describe how Alma is using the word restoration? Because we might have a listener going, "You mean the restoration of the gospel?" and that's not on Alma's radar at all.
Dr. Adam Miller:	00:12:23	This will be the first thing that I'll want to get to in detail. By way of preview, we can say that what Alma means in general by restoration is what we see modeled in the resurrection, where God restores something to its perfect and natural order, where

God takes something that is corrupted and restores it to a state of incorruption. That, I think, is Alma's baseline model of restoration.

00:12:47 Let me offer one more idea here by way of a frame for our conversation and then we can dive into the details. Rereading these chapters, this time I was thinking about Elder Kearon's talk from this past general conference, Elder Kearon's talk called God's Intent is to Bring You Home. In this talk, [Elder Kearon](#) tells a pretty memorable story about watching a traffic cop from a nearby window, if you recall this story. Let me read you Elder Kearon's description of that experience.

00:13:17 He says, "Several months ago when my wife and I were visiting another country for various church assignments, I woke up early one morning and looked blearily outside our hotel window. Down below on the busy street, I saw that a roadblock had been set up with a policeman station nearby to turn cars around as they reached the barrier. At first, only a few cars traveled along the road and were turned back, but as time went by and traffic increased, queues of cars began to build up. From the window above, I watched as the policeman seemed to take satisfaction in his power to block the flow of traffic and to turn people away. In fact, he seemed to develop a spring in his step as if he might be doing a little jig as each car approached the barrier. If a driver got frustrated about the roadblock, the policeman did not appear helpful or sympathetic. He just shook his head repeatedly and pointed in the opposite direction," which is a pretty funny story.

00:14:11 But then Elder Kearon draws this conclusion. He says, "My friends, my fellow disciples on the road of mortal life, our Father's beautiful plan, even his fabulous plan," what Alma will call here the plan of happiness, "is designed to bring you home, not to keep you out. No one has built a roadblock and has stationed someone there to turn you around and send you away. In fact, it's the exact opposite. God is in relentless pursuit of you. He wants all of his children to choose to return to him and he employs every possible measure to bring you back."

00:14:46 That's a really useful frame here for reading these chapters because maybe of all the chapters in the Book of Mormon, it's easiest here to fall into the trap of reading Alma's description of justice in chapters 39 through 42 as if God were like a traffic cop, as if the law of restoration was designed to keep you out of God's presence, as if the purpose of God's justice was to curse you with more evil because you had done evil.

	00:15:17	The truth here is the opposite. I think in context, pretty clearly, for Alma, the law of restoration is not a roadblock, but the work of restoration is the work of atonement itself. To restore a thing is to take something that's broken and to put it back together, to return it to its proper imperfect frame. And in this respect, I think God will not be denied, as Elder Kearon says. God is in relentless pursuit of us and he wants all of his children to return to him.
	00:15:48	This is the plan. This is his work. This is the purpose of restoration. It's the purpose of justice. It's even as Alma is going to point out here, though it might be hard to see the purpose of punishment. This is the good news as Joseph Smith tells us in section 76. The good news of the gospel is that God means to save us and, "God's purposes fail not, neither are there any who can stay his hand." This really is my reading of these chapters that Alma is trying to explain how the purpose of the work of restoration is to usher us into the presence of God, not to keep us out.
Hank Smith:	00:16:24	Reminds me of <a href="#">Joseph Smith</a> 's statement that I absolutely love talking about Jehovah, Jesus. He says, "He knows the situation of both the living and the dead and has made ample provision for their redemption." We're not getting by the skin of our teeth here. He has made ample provision for their living and dead. I think that's everyone.
Dr. Adam Miller:	00:16:48	God's purpose is to save us.
John Bytheway:	00:16:53	Mighty to save. Our mistakes sometimes is taking worldly models that we see and applying them to God. I remember dabbling in some different graduate programs before I found the one that I liked. I think it was a mass communications program. And the first day the professor mentioned that only a certain percentage of the class had gotten so high on, I can't even remember what the entrance exam was. Basically, he was saying, "According to stats, only about 35, 40% of you will even pass this," and I thought, "Are you trying to encourage us?" I think if we look at a professor who is trying to see how many students he can flunk and then saying that model is the same as what God's trying to do, then we've missed what Elder Kearon just taught.
	00:17:51	Well, actually, his plan is a plan to save you, not to keep you out. Sometimes we'll look at earthly parents and think God is like that. One of the greatest things we can get from these studies is what is God really like. These chapters are helpful in explaining that.

Dr. Adam Miller:	00:18:09	That I would take as a guardrail here for our reading of these chapters. If I read these chapters in a way that lead me to think about God as a kind of traffic cop enjoying his work of turning me around and sending me back or as a kind of professor who's enjoying his work flunking his students, then I think we can take for granted that I've misunderstood what's being said here, and the plan of happiness that Alma is trying to describe and the account of justice that Alma is trying to give.
Hank Smith:	00:18:41	That traffic cop reminds me of ... What does <a href="#">section 121</a> say? "We have learned by sad experience that it is the nature and disposition of almost all men, as soon as they get a little authority, as they suppose-"
John Bytheway:	00:18:53	As they suppose.
Hank Smith:	00:18:54	"... they immediately begin to exercise unrighteous dominion?" But it goes on, and Adam, I think this is what you were saying, you can correct me here, where Joseph Smith goes on in 121 to say, "Power and influence come from persuasion, long suffering, gentleness, meekness and love unfeigned, kindness and pure knowledge." Is that what you're saying that that's how the Lord works?
Dr. Adam Miller:	00:19:17	Yeah, that's how he works and he works there in line with his own commandment, of course, to love not just his friends but his enemies. Even when we position ourselves as his enemies, his love for us is indestructible and undeniable. You and I may choose to not participate in it or to flee from it. That doesn't change anything for him. Those verses from section 121 are useful too because it's not just our disposition to act that way, but it's our disposition as sinners to think that God is like that too, that if God has a little power, he's going to use it like that just like we would if we had a little power, but that's to misunderstand the whole thing. It's a symptom of the problem that you and I have in the first place.
	00:20:04	Well, let's take a look at some particular verses here then. We're going to focus here especially on chapters 40 to 42, where Alma zooms out away from the particular problems that Corianton had to talk about the plan as a whole. You note, for instance, that in verse one of <a href="#">Alma 40</a> then, Alma indicates exactly what the topic at hand is. When he says, "Now, my son, I perceive that thy mind is worried concerning the resurrection of the dead," that's important here because everything else that Alma is going to say about the plan, about justice, about punishment, all of that is against the backdrop of this larger conversation about resurrection and what it is.

	00:20:50	They don't start talking about justice. They don't start out. That's not the topic of conversation. They'll get to justice, but they start out talking about resurrection and why it's so important. This matters a lot to me here because I think what it does then is it reframes everything that Alma is going to say about what restoration is and what God's work of restoration looks like because resurrection will turn out then here in chapter 40 for Alma. Resurrection will turn out to be kind of the root model for what restoration looks like, for what God is trying to do here with his plan of happiness.
	00:21:23	In terms of resurrection, to restore a thing, Alma is going to say, is to change it from corruption to incorruption. You take something broken and you fix it or you return it to its perfect and proper frame, as he'll also say just like John Bytheway, already in his perfect, perfect proper frame.
John Bytheway:	00:21:43	Oh, O out of two, like I said.
Dr. Adam Miller:	00:21:46	For instance, toward the end of Alma 40, we get verses 23 and 24, and there, Alma says the following. He says, "The soul shall be restored to the body." He's describing the resurrection. This is restoration. "The soul shall be restored to the body and the body to the soul. Yea, and every limb and joint shall be restored to its body. Yea, even a hair of the head shall not be lost, but all things shall be restored to their proper and perfect frame. And now, my son, this is the restoration of which has been spoken by the mouths of the prophet."
	00:22:25	So he's going to say some things about justice later on that I think will be easy to misunderstand if we don't keep in mind the frame for their entire conversation, which is the topic of resurrection, resurrection as the model for restoration. What restoration is then modeled on resurrection is this business of restoring things to their proper and perfect frame, not preventing things from being restored to their proper and perfect frame, but insisting that they be restored to their proper and perfect frame.
Hank Smith:	00:22:58	And I could say that that includes me, verse 23. That's the Lord's goal is to get me there. I want to be there and he wants me there.
Dr. Adam Miller:	00:23:07	You are part emphatically of all things. He's keen on the details here as well. Every limb and joint, every hair on the head, nothing is going to be lost here. Everything will be recovered. All of it will be restored to its proper and perfect frame. That's the work of restoration.

John Bytheway:	00:23:27	It's interesting here in verse 23 that the term soul, and the soul be restored to the body, one definition of the soul is the body and the spirit together. Sometimes, and I don't know why, soul and spirit are used interchangeably in the Book of Mormon, and this is one of those places, but I think that we know what's happening here. The spirit restored to the body, and the body, every limb and joint is restored.
Dr. Adam Miller:	00:23:55	I think that's right. The Doctrine and Covenants proposes an interesting distinction between spirit and soul and identifies soul as like the combination of the spirit and body, but the Book of Mormon doesn't seem to make that distinction at all. The Bible doesn't seem to make that distinction either, and it's maybe apropos here with respect to what Alma says in these chapters as well in terms of what happens to people after they die, that space between death and resurrection. A lot of the things that the Doctrine and Covenants is going to say in general that will greatly clarify what happens in that time between death and resurrection or even in that time after we are resurrected and assigned to different kingdoms of glory, none of that's in evidence here in the Book of Mormon, and it fits squarely under the heading of what Alma describes for himself as still a kind of mystery.
Hank Smith:	00:24:49	Now, before we go any further, Adam, I think you're modeling something for us that I would like to point out, and that is there might be a tendency for those who are teaching this lesson to young people to focus almost entirely on chapter 39 and talk about sexual sin. Sexual sin is really not even mentioned in the chapter. It is in the heading, but in the chapter itself, it's not necessarily there.
	00:25:16	I think when we focus on that in this letter, we end up probably with the opposite of what you're telling us here maybe, which is God wants to save you. Instead, we might have students or youth walking out of a Sunday school class thinking, "Now I know I'm the worst person ever." There is a place in scripture to teach sexuality. Jacob 2 I'm thinking of or even Joseph of Egypt, but I would say to everyone out there, I think Adam is doing a great job modeling perhaps where you might focus on this lesson.
Dr. Adam Miller:	00:25:51	In Alma 39, Alma doesn't pull any punches in explaining to Corianton how serious his mistakes have been. Though interestingly, he tends to focus on the consequences of that mistake for Corianton's ministry, the larger scale consequences or his primary point of focus when he is correcting Corianton there. To invoke section 121 again, what we get here in

chapters 39 through 42 might be a pretty good example in general of what it looks like to reprove with sharpness as we get in Alma 39 and then to show forth an increase of love as we get demonstrated in chapters 40 through 42.

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| Hank Smith:      | 00:26:32 | I like that a lot.  |
| John Bytheway:   | 00:26:34 | That's a good way to look at it.  |
| Hank Smith:      | 00:26:36 | When we're helping someone change their behavior or get away from things that are going to hurt them, I don't think it helps to just beleaguer the point. I mean, he could go on for four chapters about how your behavior really hurts you and hurts others, hurts me, but you're right, he reproves with sharpness and now let's spend the rest of the time uplifting you, taking you somewhere, expanding your mind.   |
| Dr. Adam Miller: | 00:27:03 | Let's understand then now how God wants to resurrect you and return you to his presence. I think as Alma wants us to from Alma 40, if we take resurrection as the model for restoration, then the work of restoration is the work of atonement. It's the work of taking what is bad and making it good, it's the work of taking what is corrupt and making it whole, it's probably even the work here of taking what's good and making it better, of restoring things to their proper and perfect frame. This is what God does if we'll let him, and all of this work is modeled on, as we already indicated, God's commandment to love and especially on his commandment to love even our enemies. The work here is not the work of making sure that corrupt things stay corrupt, it's the work of raising corruption to incorruption. |
| Hank Smith:      | 00:27:52 | I like that as a model for parenting, that there's a time and a place to talk about behavior and the consequences of that behavior, but as a parent, much like a patriarchal blessing, they're usually very uplifting to help you see what you can become.  |
| Dr. Adam Miller: | 00:28:10 | The plan of happiness. Once we have that backdrop then for the discussion of restoration, then in <a href="#">chapter 41</a> , Alma moves on to the topic of justice. The first point to make here, I think, is that as I read it, Alma does not think that the law of restoration is the same thing as justice. Justice he's going to describe as a part of the work of restoration, but I think there's a tendency to read the law of restoration as if it were something like the law of karma from the Eastern traditions and to think that justice is just the same thing as karma, karma is the same thing as restoration, when I don't think against the backdrop of chapter   |



40 that that's the case at all because the model for restoration is resurrection.

00:28:59 In Alma chapter 41 in verse 13, you get Alma saying something like this. He says, "And now behold, is the meaning of the word restoration to take a thing of a natural state and place it in an unnatural state or to place it in a state opposite to its nature? O my son," he says, "this is not the case, but the meaning of the word restoration is to bring back again, evil for evil or carnal for carnal or devilish for devilish, good for that which is good, righteous for that which is righteous, just for that which is just, merciful for that which is merciful."

00:29:34 Now, there's a lot going on in that verse, and it might be easy to get tangled up in it. For the moment, for example, I want to set aside his description of how the work of restoration involves bringing back, again, evil for evil until we can talk about justice in general for a moment because, of course, that language of bringing back evil for evil sounds a lot like the traffic cop God that Corianton maybe is expecting, but that Alma is trying to undermine, I think, that expectation.

00:30:04 So let's just note a couple things about this verse before we swing back around in a little bit to that maybe more difficult question. Note here first that he says that the word restoration means to place a thing back into its natural state. And this, for example, I think is what resurrection is meant to do. We were meant to be eternal immortal beings. Here we are in mortality, but to resurrect a thing is in this sense to restore it to its natural state, to restore us to our original paradisiacal, Edenic, eternal, immortal condition. Partly what's at stake here in how we read these verses has to do with what you and I assume our natural state is. Do I assume that my natural state is good or do I assume that my natural state is evil?

00:30:56 If I assume that I am naturally a son of God, that I am in some sense naturally a divine being, then I think that makes a lot more sense here out of what Alma is saying about restoration, especially modeled on resurrection. What God's aim here is is to restore me to my natural state, which is a state that is in communion with him, which is in a state that is both immortal and capable of participating in an eternal life.

00:31:24 If though I assume that my natural state is evil, that I am naturally a sinner, of course, this verse is going to sound like bad news because then I'll just be stuck being a sinner. So that's a kind of fork in the road here, I think, in terms of how we read this verse, but I'm inclined to read it in line with chapter 40

where the model for restoration is resurrection and my assumption about myself ought to be, not that I'm naturally evil, but that I'm naturally good.

- Hank Smith: 00:31:52 That is my proper and perfect frame.
- Dr. Adam Miller: 00:31:55 That's my proper frame. Right. Exactly.
- Hank Smith: 00:31:58 Adam, what you're saying reminds me of a story I heard from a friend. His name is Steve Dalby. He said he was reading his patriarchal blessing, and for some reason, he decided to call his patriarch, who he didn't really know, had given him his blessing years before, but thought to just call him up and say thank you. So he did so. He called him up and he had an idea. He said, "Patriarch, in the blessings you've given over your time as patriarch, what have you learned?" And his patriarch said, "That's a good question." He said, "I just finished typing up blessing 999," 999, and he said, "One thing I've seen in all 999 of them is that they've all been positive." That fits really with I am naturally good. God sees me as good.
- Dr. Adam Miller: 00:32:53 That I think is the truth about who and what we are, and God's aim is to restore precisely that.
- Hank Smith: 00:33:00 I thought my patriarchal blessing might say something like, "Ooh, it does not look good, but we're going to try everything we can here, but the odds are not looking in your favor."
- Dr. Adam Miller: 00:33:12 As if it were a negative weather report.
- Hank Smith: 00:33:14 Right. Yeah.
- Dr. Adam Miller: 00:33:16 Let me suggest to one other thing about these verses that I think is quite interesting. Alma is giving us here a long list of examples of restoration, good for that which is good, righteous for that which is righteous, just for that which is just, merciful for that which is merciful. These are all examples of how the law of restoration works, which is to say justice is not the same thing as the law of restoration. Justice is one example of how sometimes the law of restoration works. Another example of the law of restoration itself as he gives us here is mercy. Mercy is not a kind of exception to how the law of restoration works. It's an essential element of how the law of restoration works, and is even prime example of the law of restoration. Mercy for mercy, justice for justice, these are both examples of restoration, and justice and restoration are not just two names for the same thing as if they were the law of karma.

	00:34:20	In Alma 42 then, Alma is going to spend a lot of time trying to transform Corianton's understanding of the purpose and role of punishment. As sinners, we are prone to misunderstand God as a kind of traffic cop. As sinners, we're prone to misunderstand ourselves as if our own natures were inherently evil, and as sinners, I think we're prone to misunderstand and misread God's punishments. We're prone to misunderstand and misread punishment as if it were God getting back at us for the evil that we had already done.
	00:34:56	But I think all of Alma 42 is really an attempt here to explain to Corianton the way that punishment, as a function of the law, as a function of justice, is a good thing. Punishment is God responding to our evil with the good that we need in order to become good and stop being evil.
Hank Smith:	00:35:18	Say that again.
Dr. Adam Miller:	00:35:19	Punishment is God responding to our evil with the good that we need in order to become good and stop being evil.
Hank Smith:	00:35:28	A course correction.
Dr. Adam Miller:	00:35:30	A course correction.
Hank Smith:	00:35:31	That you need. It's coming from a place of love.
Dr. Adam Miller:	00:35:35	It's intended as a kind of pedagogy, and I think Alma makes this quite clear in chapter 42, especially in his discussion of Adam and Eve and the role that the law plays in their expulsion from the garden of Eden and how that this is not in fact a punishment but an occasion for them to be restored. It's part of the work of restoration itself.
Hank Smith:	00:35:55	What a fantastic idea. Rather than seeing punishment as a negative, that God is looking for ways to hurt me, this is coming from a place of love, "I'm going to direct you. I'm helping you get back on track."
Dr. Adam Miller:	00:36:09	Alma emphasizes the fact that punishment is an essential part of justice that can't be denied or ignored. He even uses very famously hyperbolic language about how God would cease to be God if punishment were not in some sense involved here in the work of justice, but he also spends a lot of time trying to explain how this work of punishment is part of the work of restoring us on the model of resurrection to that perfect and proper frame so that we can move from a state of corruption to

a state of incorruption and stay in the presence of God once we get back there.

- 00:36:44 Here are a couple examples maybe. Two of them are from Alma 42, but the first one as a place to start is from Alma 39, where in [Alma 39:7](#), Alma says to his son, "And now, my son, I would to God that ye had not been guilty of so great a crime. I would not dwell upon your crimes to harrow up your soul if it were not for your good." It may feel punitive to Corianton as a sinner for his father to bring up his mistakes and to, in some sense, dwell on them, in some sense to use them to harrow up his soul, but Alma's point here is, "You're misunderstanding the very nature of what I'm doing here. I'm only bringing this up and I wouldn't have ever brought it up if it weren't good for you, if it weren't the good that you needed in response to the evil that you had done."
- 00:37:39 That I think is baseline understanding of the role of punishment in the work of justice. Insofar as God punishes us, that punishment is always God only acting out of a desire to respond to our evil with good.
- Hank Smith: 00:37:54 That's fantastic. I'm going to quote that to my children the next time there's a punishment.
- John Bytheway: 00:38:01 "You're not going to like this, but it's good for you."
- Dr. Adam Miller: 00:38:05 You're going to have to pony up though and make sure it is actually good for them.
- John Bytheway: 00:38:07 That's the hard part.
- Hank Smith: 00:38:10 That's true. Yeah, that's true.
- John Bytheway: 00:38:12 You know what this reminds me of is [President Packer](#) talking to seminary teachers or something and mentioned a check engine light. I think he called it a warning light. I mean, what a blessing that is. If you suddenly know, "Hey, I've got a bad cylinder," I mean, you could keep driving and throw a rod, ruin your whole engine, but this warning light comes up and says, "This needs attention. This needs to be looked at." That is for your good. That's for the good of your car for that to, come on. Hank, you know this winter I was trying to get up to Logan where you were, and as I left, my Sequoia gave me a not just a check engine light, it was flashing meaning pull over. I had to come up in a different car.

	00:39:01	When we were coming through Sardine Canyon, it was snowing so hard, the outbound lanes were closed because a semi-truck had jackknifed. And I thought, "Oh, had that check engine light come on while I was in Sardine Canyon," I mean, that was such a tender mercy, but it came on for my good. I got another car and made it up there. I like that idea of a check engine light in your car. You may think that's a bad thing, but what is the outcome? What are they trying to help you do? Not damage the engine further and not cause you to be in a spot where you might get in an accident.
Dr. Adam Miller:	00:39:39	That's a really nice example. If we think that God is like a traffic cop, then we're going to miss the way that what looks to us like punishment is actually a mercy, a tender mercy, as you put it here. That warning light is a tender mercy. We don't see the way that justice and mercy are both examples of the law of restoration and examples that work together as part of that work of restoration. If we end up thinking that mercy is something like the opposite of justice even, then we'll entirely miss the way that these gestures of punishment are an act of mercy on God's part.
	00:40:23	They're not him responding to our evil with evil. They're him responding to our evil with the good, the merciful good that we need in order to be transformed. And in this way, mercy and justice are both crucial aspects of this same work of restoration. There would be nothing less merciful than letting people continue to be evil. That would be evil on my part.
Hank Smith:	00:40:47	They're both coming from a place of love.
John Bytheway:	00:40:50	I was thinking about membership councils that sometimes have to be held. and Elder M. Russell Ballard said, "The first purpose of a membership council is to save the soul of the sinner." That's the first purpose. It's for your good. It might not seem that way, but that is the overarching reason for that whole thing.
Dr. Adam Miller:	00:41:12	I think that's good. If that membership council is not an act of mercy, then it has failed in its role as being part of this work of restoration.
Hank Smith:	00:41:21	They can be conducted in the wrong way, which doesn't seem to come from a place of love. Hopefully, those cases are rare.
Dr. Adam Miller:	00:41:29	We get two other verses here from chapter 42 itself that I think work in the same spirit. In Alma 42:29, Alma says, "And now, my son, I desire that ye should let these things trouble you no

more. Only let your sins trouble you with that trouble which shall bring you down to repentance." That's the only kind of troubling that God is interested in here. God is only interested in the kind of harrowing, the kind of troubling that works toward my own good, that brings me down to repentance, as he puts it here.

00:42:07 It also opens the door to, I think, a really productive way of thinking about repentance, where repentance is not a kind of punishment process through which I must go as a result of the evil that I have done, but repentance is what it looks like for me to respond with mercy to my own evil. Repentance is what it looks like for me to respond to my own evil with the good that's now needed, in the same way that God is attempting to respond to my evil with whatever good is now needed. Punishment plays a crucial role here in that sense. The way that it troubles us, the way that it warns us, as John put it, that's to our good.

John Bytheway: 00:42:47 I love verse 30 there. The very first verse in Alma 42, Alma says, "You think it's injustice a sinner should be consigned to a state of misery." He's got this idea of some sort of injustice. I love verse 30 that says, "Deny the justice of God no more. Do not endeavor to excuse yourself in the least point because of your sins by denying the justice of God." Here's the phrase I love, "But do let the justice of God and his mercy and his long suffering have," and look at this word, this phrase, "full sway in your heart." What is it that we let have full sway?

00:43:28 Maybe he was so fixated on justice and his understanding of it to the point Alma says, "You've forgotten about mercy. You've forgotten about God's patience. Let all of those have full sway in your heart." I don't know what full sway means. I'm thinking about a swing set where a swing sways, but what do you guys think that means? Is it possible to only have some things have partial sway in our heart? I think what he's adding is, "Look at these other attributes of God. Don't forget about his mercy and his patience and put that with justice. Let them have full sway."

Dr. Adam Miller: 00:44:06 I think that's a good description of the kind of tension in the conversation that Alma is having with Corianton, where Corianton thinks justice is one thing, and Alma is gradually carefully trying to transform his notion of justice to bring it in line with the actual work of restoration, which is something that has to happen for all of us because at the heart of what it means to be a sinner is for you and I to misunderstand what God is and what God wants from us, and to be saved from my sinfulness involves that process of education in which I discover

the truth about God and I discover the truth about happiness, I discover the truth about what God actually wants from me and what he wants me to join him in doing. That's what the process of redemption looks like. It looks like letting the truth about justice and mercy have full sway in my heart instead of running from them fearfully.

- Hank Smith: 00:45:00 He says that in [chapter 42](#) verse one, "And now, my son, I perceive there is somewhat more which doth worry your mind which ye cannot understand, which is concerning the justice of God in the punishment of the sinner for you try to suppose that it is injustice that the sinner should be consigned to a state of misery." I like what you said there. He sees the justice of God as a negative, where Alma is saying, "No, this is meant to help you. God wants to save you."
- Dr. Adam Miller: 00:45:29 This thing that Corianton is avoiding, Alma is trying to say is the good news. It's the good news that he's looking for, not what he should be running from.
- John Bytheway: 00:45:39 You called it good news and that is exactly at the end of chapter 39. He calls it glad tidings in verse 15. He calls it glad tidings in verse 16. He calls it glad tidings in verse 19, which is another way of saying good news with a kind of Christmas twist to it, glad tidings of great joy, and he's telling him, "You are supposed to declare glad tidings unto the people about the coming of Christ, the time of his coming."
- Dr. Adam Miller: 00:46:07 Yeah, glad tidings. It's easy for us to read these chapters, I think, the way that Corianton would rather than the way that Alma is attempting to introduce to him.
- John Bytheway: 00:46:19 Look at the names of the plan. There isn't any time that I'm aware of where it's called the plan of punishment. I don't even think it's called the plan of justice. I don't think it's called the plan of retribution. When the enemies of the people of God responded to Samuel, the Lamanite's prophecy, it says the great plan of destruction, which they had laid, had been frustrated. So they had a plan of destruction, but God has a plan of redemption and salvation and happiness even called the plan of mercy too in these chapters, isn't it?
- Dr. Adam Miller: 00:46:50 Yeah, I believe so. It's a plan of restoration. Alma tries to illustrate for Corianton here in chapter 42 how punishment is meant to be a good thing by running him through the story of Adam and Eve and the Garden of Eden. For instance, in verse 5 of Alma 42, Alma says, "If Adam had put forth his hand immediately and partaken of the tree of life, he would have

lived forever having no space for repentance." And this, it turns out, would've been a disaster. If there were no space, no room for repentance and transformation before his enjoying the fruit of the tree of life, then all would've been lost.

00:47:34 If Adam had got what he thought he wanted right at the start instead of having to go through the difficulty of what he actually needed, then the whole plan would've been frustrated. This kind of expulsion from Eden and journey through mortality is in fact a blessing, not a curse. It's fortunate as we tend to say as Latter-day Saints. The Fall is a fortunate thing. It's difficult, but it's necessary, and it's necessary here in particular to give us space, to give us time, the gift of the mercy of time for us to grow, for us to understand really the nature of good and evil, for us to understand that wickedness never was happiness in the first place and never could be. All of those things are a gift or a blessing that come disguised perhaps in the form of punishment that is easy to misunderstand.

John Bytheway: 00:48:32 I'm reminded of that verse in, is it Moses 6:55? "And they taste the bitter that they may know to prize the good." But the more I think about that, the more I love that verse, there's a purpose in opposition. There's a purpose in tasting the bitter like the warning light. I don't want to do that again. I don't like how that felt. They taste the bitter that they may know to prize the good.

Dr. Adam Miller: 00:48:58 Whereas Lehi famously says in 2 Nephi 2 that Adam felt that men might be, and here we are in mortality for the sake of joy. All of this is for the sake of joy. All of this is essential to the discovery and experience of joy, but it's easy to miss that and it's easy to get trapped in our ignorance about the nature of joy in a way that leads us to choose wrongly again and again.

John Bytheway: 00:49:28 Again and again.

Dr. Adam Miller: 00:49:31 Again and again, that's really accurate. Maybe the other thing to say about this too is Alma, as he himself confesses, is murky on some of the details of how this is all going to play out. He knows that mortality is a kind of probationary state. It is a gift. It's space for growth and change and repentance and discovery, but as Alma understands the story, that space for change in growth and redemption ends when we die.

00:50:02 But this, for you and I, from our perspective, is a great gift given to us through the Doctrine and Covenants, through Joseph Smith and the fullness of the restoration, that this space for repentance is actually much bigger than Alma thought that it was, but it doesn't just include our mortal lives here, but it



stretches long beyond our mortality into the spirit world where we will continue, the whole of the human family will continue to have a chance to accept the gospel, be transformed, discover the truth about God's love for them and rejoin his presence. In this respect, the good news is even better than Alma, I think, suspected that it was.

- Hank Smith: 00:50:41 I've thought perhaps, and I'd love for you to both comment on this, that Alma 39 through 42 could be Alma trying to walk Corianton through and teach him in the same way the angel taught him that it was very abrupt in the beginning, "Seek no more to destroy the church of God," but then as you read in Mosiah 27 and then again in Alma 36, he learns, he was wracked with this eternal torment, "My soul was harrowed up. I remembered my father speak of Christ, and now I understand I was harrowed up by the memory of my sins no more." Do you see a little bit of Alma saying, "Well, I'll play the part of the angel here. You play the part of me. I'll walk you through the same process I went through"?
- Dr. Adam Miller: 00:51:32 I think the parallels are pretty strong. That's a very astute observation.
- Hank Smith: 00:51:36 I'll take that. Can I put that on my wall that Adam Miller said that's a very astute observation?
- Dr. Adam Miller: 00:51:41 You're welcome to.
- Hank Smith: 00:51:42 Yeah, I'll put it in vinyl.
- John Bytheway: 00:51:44 Let me add to that, Hank, because I love to send this verse to my friends who are on missions, Alma 8:14, because when Alma comes out of his first attempt in Ammonihah, another angel stops him and says, "Blessed art thou, Alma. Therefore, lift up thy head and rejoice for thou hast a great cause to rejoice for thou hast been faithful in keeping the commandments of God. From the time which thou receivest thy first message from him," and then thank you Mormon for leaving this in, "Behold, I am he that delivered it unto you."
- 00:52:20 The same angel that knocked him over in one place in Mosiah 27 is now saying, "You're doing so well. You're doing so well. You have great cause to rejoice even though they kicked you out. You've kept the commandments since you first heard them." I just loved it. The angel says, "Do you remember me? That was me. I scared you pretty bad, but that was me back then."

Dr. Adam Miller:	00:52:42	Nephi describes this as having the tongue of angels. To have the tongue of angels is to minister, to speak by the power of the Holy Ghost, to declare this same message of glad tidings, and then what happens, of course, once you hear the message is that you start giving the message. The angel comes to you and effectively commissions you as an angel. You'll have heard the angel's message to the degree that you then participate in it and share it with other people.
	00:53:12	As you pointed out, Hank, that's a good example of what Alma is then doing here. He's repeating that same angelic work of fulfilling the role here of the angel who is ministering, speaking with the tongue of angels by the power of the Holy Ghost. The thing that he seems to be saddest about, perhaps to our surprise in Alma 39, is the fact that Corianton, getting tangled up with Isabel, led to him forsaking his ministry. That seems to be the sticking point for Alma, and what he wants more than anything is for Corianton to repent and take up again the work of ministry.
Hank Smith:	00:53:48	He says, "Counsel with your elder brothers and your undertakings. Suffer not yourself to be led away by these vain or foolish things and turn to the Lord with all your mind and strength." So you're not leading hearts away from him, but rather to return to God. I like that.
Dr. Adam Miller:	00:54:10	I think it's fair to say that if an angel comes to me and brings me this good news, I have not actually heard or accepted that news unless I myself then begin to fulfill that same angelic role.
John Bytheway:	00:54:24	Which is what Paul did too.
Dr. Adam Miller:	00:54:27	It's the pattern. It's the basic pattern, I think.
Hank Smith:	00:54:30	I love that.
Dr. Adam Miller:	00:54:32	Why don't we come back to the more difficult question about judgment that we left aside earlier? I think we're in a better position to try to answer that now in light of what Alma's been teaching. Alma's pretty emphatic that there are two key elements to the work of restoration. One key element to the work of restoration is resurrection, and resurrection is his model for what restoration in general is meant to do, restoring corruption to incorruption and restoring things to their proper and perfect frame.

- 00:55:08 But the other part of the work of restoration is the moment of judgment that takes place as Alma describes it. When having been resurrected, we are then, all of us, returned to the presence of God to be judged. Now, this is the moment, I think, that it's easy, especially for Corianton to misunderstand what's at stake in this experience of judgment, what God is judging, how he's judging, and why he's judging. But Alma in this same spirit says some pretty surprising and penetrating and transformative things about this moment of judgment once we've been returned to the presence of God.
- 00:55:49 For instance, in [Alma 41:3](#), Alma says this about this moment of judgment as part of the work of restoration, "And if their works were good in this life and the desires of their hearts were good, that they should also at the last day be restored unto that which is good." Now, the first part of that description of judgment is not surprising and maybe what Corianton expects that if your works were good in this life, then you will be restored unto that which is good in the next. But the middle part of Alma's description there of what's at stake in judgment pretty dramatically reframes how this judgment is going to unfold. Yeah, you'll be judged on whether or not your works were good, but also and perhaps especially, Alma says, "You will be judged on whether or not the desires of your heart were good," and that will decide whether you will have restored unto you that which is good.
- 00:56:54 This moment of judgment is not a moment when the scorecard is tallied to see what kinds of good things I did and what kinds of bad things I did, and whether that balances out to any kind of possibility of reward or redemption and the life to come, rather it's a moment when the truth about the desires of my heart are revealed, and that at the end of the day will decide what is restored unto me. And if what I wanted was good, then I will be restored unto what is good, Alma says.
- 00:57:32 He repeats that same point in verse 5 when he says, "The one is raised to happiness according to his desires for happiness or good according to his desires of good and the other, to evil according to his desires for evil." This is something that I don't think we often give nearly enough weight to when we think about what judgment is, what's being judged and how it works, that as part of the plan of restoration, what's going to be restored to us here are the good or bad things that were our original true desires, and that's going to be the decisive element. Very different from perhaps how we tend to think about it or maybe how Corianton was prone to think about it.

Hank Smith:	00:58:18	I didn't notice how often that word desires comes up.
Dr. Adam Miller:	00:58:22	Once he introduces it, it takes center stage and displaces the talk about works pretty significantly.
John Bytheway:	00:58:29	I had that line underlined, "And the desires of their hearts were good." The desire of our hearts matter. I'm thinking of a few verses. What did King Benjamin do? What did king Benjamin say? If the beggar comes and you don't have anything to give, I would that you would say in your heart or I'm hoping this, that you say in your heart, "I want to give and I would give if I had." The desire of our hearts matter.
	00:58:55	There's a verse in section 46 of the Doctrine and Covenants verse 9, "For verily I say unto you, they, spiritual gifts, are given for the benefit of those who love me and keep all my commandments; and him that seeketh so to do," and that to me is like that line. The desire of their hearts were all so good. I try and I fail, but that's the desire of my heart. So those two verses, I've got footnoted together. Desires of my hearts count, and I keep all the commandments and I seek to do so. I mess up, but I seek to do so.
Dr. Adam Miller:	00:59:32	I think that's right. That's very much in the same spirit with what Alma is trying to explain here to Corianton. Our works are important, but our desires, in some sense, are decisive.
Hank Smith:	00:59:45	John, it reminds me of what you often say about the sacrament. I am willing to keep his commandments. I am willing. I desire to take his name upon me.
John Bytheway:	00:59:55	It's kind of fun to watch for that because God is called able, but we are at the best called willing. The spirit is willing the flesh is weak.
Hank Smith:	01:00:05	Same phrase comes up in Doctrine and Covenants 137, talking about the celestial kingdom, "For I, the Lord, will judge all men according to their works, according to the desires of their hearts."
John Bytheway:	01:00:17	That's another one to put in there.
Dr. Adam Miller:	01:00:19	Let me suggest one other thing about this that maybe like Alma I could mark as my opinion on this issue. This is a really important dimension of what it means to be judged not just by our works here, but by our desires. It's very, very rare for anyone to actually want evil because to want something is by

definition to think that it's good. If you didn't think it was good, you wouldn't want it in the first place. Though people want things all the time that aren't good, this isn't because they don't want what's good, it's because they don't know what actually is good.

01:01:06 The problem here isn't that I don't want what's good, the problem is that I'm wrong about what's good. And Corianton himself is maybe a good example of this. Corianton gets tangled up with Isabel because he wants love, he wants intimacy. These are good things, love and intimacy, but he goes about it the wrong way. He participates them in the wrong way. He pursues them in a way that hurts both him and Isabel and the people that he's supposed to be ministering to. He wants the right thing, but he's wrong about how to do it, about how to get it. That's true for almost all of us almost all the time, that our desires are good, but that we tend to be wrong about what is or isn't good.

01:01:51 And if that's the case, then the work of restoration here isn't the work of trying to convince me to give up wanting what's evil and start wanting what's good, but the very work of atonement, the very work of restoration is the work of educating me about what actually is good. And once I see that, once I know it, I will get on board with it naturally. To the degree that that's true, that makes me very hopeful for the degree to which God is going to succeed here in his full-scale effort to save all of us, as Elder Kearon put it.

01:02:27 It makes me very hopeful for God's relentless pursuit of us because the problem here isn't that I'm bad or evil by nature, the problem is that I tend to be wrong about what is or isn't actually good. And if I can discover the truth, then surely I will join God and find myself happy to be in his presence again.

Hank Smith: 01:02:48 I love that. Educate me. Help me see more clearly what's good because I want good, but I might not realize what good is, and we do the same thing as parents to our children.

Dr. Adam Miller: 01:03:05 Our children are always choosing things that are good, but maybe not good for them right then or there. That's the same kind of problem with us. I would rarely choose something that wasn't good, but I often choose things that aren't good for me right then or right there.

Hank Smith: 01:03:21 Sometimes when I get frustrated at a little league basketball game, it's because I like justice. I want things to be just, and when that coach, it's usually not the referee, it's the other

		coach where I'm like, "That is not just." So I'm glad you said that, Adam. From now on, I will say, "What I want is good, but my way of acting upon it is not good for me."
John Bytheway:	01:03:46	I do think there's such a thing as having a change of heart. Maybe we want something that we think feels good for a moment, but it's not long-term good.
Hank Smith:	01:03:57	I like that. If I was going to put it on what Adam is telling us, it's King Benjamin's people finally got to see what was good and committed to it. I've been shown what is truly good.
John Bytheway:	01:04:11	We often talk about one of the things that the Savior does working on our hearts is help us change our hearts so that we desire good, and I guess what you're saying, Adam, is we need to figure out what good is and sometimes we figure it out by trial and error maybe, but King Benjamin's people had no more desire to do evil. Was that because they were more educated about what good is and they saw things they wanted maybe as temporary, maybe feels good now, but doesn't feel good in the long run?
Dr. Adam Miller:	01:04:43	I think we can be sympathetic to the position in which we find ourselves here as sinners because the kinds of things that turn out to be best, not just to be good or even better, but to be best are pretty counterintuitive things that are not going to be obvious to people on the face of it. It turns out that the very best thing that you can do to experience joy and to be happy is not to save your life but to lose it, which is pretty counterintuitive.
	01:05:15	And it's no surprise that it takes us time and space granted to us in this mortal probation to begin to discover the truth of that, to begin to discover that, "If I try to satisfy my desires, if I try to save my own life, I will do nothing but create misery for myself and other people, but that if I instead stop trying to achieve what is good for me and instead invest my heart and mind in doing what's good for others, then I will find the very good thing that I was looking for. That could take a little time and space to begin to work out. That could take a little time and space for my heart to undergo that kind of transformation and become capable of the kind of good that it was made by God to pursue in the first place."
Hank Smith:	01:05:59	Coming up in part two of this episode.

Dr. Adam Miller:	01:06:03	A pretty surprising twist here that on the day of judgment, if I don't stay in the presence of God, if I don't honor the truth about my desires, it will not be because of something that God judged about me. It will be because of a judgment or even misjudgment here that I have made about myself.
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John Bytheway:	00:01	Welcome to part two with Dr. Adam Miller. Alma 39 to 42. A change of heart is also an intellectual understanding, a better understanding of what good is. We've been talking about you have a son on a mission. How counterintuitive is that? I think I'll go on a mission to a different country at my own expense. Have people slam doors at me and stuff like that because it's so good.
Dr. Adam Miller:	00:33	That's not obvious.
John Bytheway:	00:34	Yeah, yeah. It's counterintuitive.
Hank Smith:	00:38	I had to learn that with the temple. My wife would frequently, when we were newly married, say, "Let's go to the temple. Let's go to the temple." In my mind I thought, "I don't have time. I don't have time to go to the temple." It's something you feel like you are sacrificing your time and it's counterintuitive, like you said, Adam, to realize if I spend the time, if I give up my time, if I want to make that time holy, it will actually improve all the other hours of the day.
John Bytheway:	01:07	Well, an exercise is counterintuitive, isn't it? I'm going to break my muscles down so that they'll get stronger. The whole weight room thing, I often joke that there's that sign right in the gym that says, "No pain. No gain." All my life I've had a different model, which is, "No pain. Good." Nobody believes that one.
Dr. Adam Miller:	01:35	It's a little bit like Hank was indicating earlier. It's a little bit like trying to convince your children that no, vegetables are going to make you happier.
Hank Smith:	01:47	Yeah.
Dr. Adam Miller:	01:48	Your happiness depends to some degree here on your energy levels and you're going to get more energy out of those vegetables. You'll feel better.
Hank Smith:	01:56	You will. Yeah.



Dr. Adam Miller:	01:58	It's counterintuitive.
John Bytheway:	02:00	This discussion reminded me of a <a href="#">Joseph Smith</a> statement and now I like it even more because of what he first says, but I'm thinking about that change of heart of helping us understand what good is. This is from Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, page 51. "The nearer man approaches perfection, the clearer are his views and the greater his enjoyments till he has overcome the evils of his life and lost every desire for sin. And like the ancients, arrives at that point of faith where he's wrapped in the power and glory of his maker and is caught up to dwell with him, but we consider this is a station to which no man ever arrived in the moment." I put that under my change of heart file, but that first part says the clearer are his views. Maybe Corianton had to get straightened out up here.
Dr. Adam Miller:	02:52	It's always a question, not just of heart but of mind, of the way that they're tangled together. It's useful here, I think, to see this as being crucial to the very work of restoration, that our salvation is going to depend here, not just on works but on desires and at the center of the work of restoration is the work of restoring us to our true, natural, divinely given desire for what is good then the discovery of what that actually is. And then these desires are what are decisive, and the whole purpose of law and punishment is to give us that educative pedagogical space to discover the truth about ourselves and about our desires so that when we are reunited with God, we recognize him for the thing that we were looking for the whole time rather than fleeing from him.
Hank Smith:	03:46	Reminds me of our T-shirt last year of, love is a law, not a reward.
Dr. Adam Miller:	03:52	Yeah, that's counterintuitive.
Hank Smith:	03:55	Yeah. You can have love now, come join me in my work.
John Bytheway:	03:59	Speaking of our desires, look at <a href="#">Alma 42:27</a> . It's one of the concluding verses. "Therefore, oh my son, whosoever will come, may come and partake of the waters of life freely, and whosoever will not come, the same is not compelled to come, but in the last day it shall be restored unto him according to his deeds." But what I'm seeing there is where are your desires? If you want to come, come. Whosoever will come, may come.
Dr. Adam Miller:	04:31	My intuition is that at the end of the day there're going to be very few people who don't want to come.

John Bytheway:	04:37	Thankfully, for all of us.
Dr. Adam Miller:	04:39	Let me suggest two other things about the flipside then of this moment of judgment. Alma describes the moment of salvation as the moment when we are judged not just in light of our works but in light of our desires. That's potentially a really powerful redemptive moment as we've been talking about, but if it doesn't turn out to be a powerful redemptive moment, then something else happens. The thing that he describes, I think in Alma chapter 40 verse 14, this negative moment of judgment. In Alma 40:14 Alma says, "Now this is the state of the souls of the wicked, yea, in darkness, and a state of awful, fearful looking for the fiery indignation of the wrath of God upon them." Now at first glance, that seems pretty terrifying and I think that's probably not wrong. But at second glance, I think Alma isn't saying maybe what we expect him to be saying.
	05:37	Alma isn't saying that the state of the souls of the wicked is to suffer the fiery indignation of the wrath of God. Alma is saying that the state of the souls of the wicked is to be in a state where you spend your time looking for the fiery indignation of the wrath of God. That this in a sense is what it means to be condemned to hell, to be condemned to hell and the rest of eternity looking for God to punish you, expecting at any moment that he's the kind of traffic cop who will take joy in punishing you retributively for whatever it is that you have done. It doesn't say here that God executes that wrath. It says that the sinners spend their time looking for God to execute that wrath. That's who they think God is, and that really is what it means to be a sinner is to think that that is who God is, to misunderstand his nature and to misunderstand what he's offering. And that I think is a pretty surprising turn of events here as well in terms of Alma's description of how this judgment unfolds.
John Bytheway:	06:36	You're saying that looking could be like anticipating?
Dr. Adam Miller:	06:40	Yeah. What it means to be a sinner is that I spend my time thinking that God is someone who is going to punish me and I spend my time fearfully looking for that punishment to come when that's not the work that God's engaged in at all.
Hank Smith:	06:54	Even the verse before, "These shall be cast out into outer darkness, there shall be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth." And that's because of their own iniquity. They don't understand who God is. It's not that God wants them weeping and wailing and gnashing their teeth. That's the result of not understanding God.

- Dr. Adam Miller: 07:13 Yeah, and I think we might get this even more clearly in Alma 41 verse seven, pretty surprisingly he says this, "These are they that are redeemed of the Lord. Yea, these are they that are taken out, that are delivered from the endless night of darkness and thus they stand or fall, for behold they are their own judges." A pretty surprising twist here that on the day of judgment, if I don't stay in the presence of God, if I don't honor the truth about my desires, it will not be because of something that God judged about me. It will be because of a judgment or even misjudgment here that I have made about myself.
- Hank Smith: 07:56 That is a wonderful twist. It reminds me, if you don't mind, I'm going to share a thought from a devotional, from our friend [Brad Wilcox](#). His grace is sufficient. He said, "In the past I had a picture in my mind of what the final judgment would be like, and it went something like this. Jesus standing there with a clipboard and Brad standing in the other side of the room nervously looking at Jesus. Jesus checks his clipboard and says, 'Oh, Brad, you missed it by two points.' Brad begs Jesus, 'Please check the essay question one more time. There have to be two points you can squeeze out of that essay.'"
- 08:31 That's how I always saw it, but the older I get and the more I understand the wonderful plan of redemption, the more I realize that in the final judgment it will not be the unrepentant sinner begging Jesus, 'let me stay.'. No, he will probably be saying, 'Get me out of here.' Knowing Christ's character, I believe that if anyone is going to be begging on that occasion, it would probably be Jesus begging the sinner, 'Please choose to stay. Please use my atonement not just to be cleansed but to be changed, so that you want to stay.'" I think that fits pretty well with, "I want you here." It's your misjudgment of you.
- Dr. Adam Miller: 09:15 Yeah, I think that's quite right. It's to me significant that when Alma describes this process of restoration, he says, "Your resurrection is going to do two things. When God restores you in this way to your proper and perfect frame, everyone he says will be resurrected, will receive their body and everyone will be returned to the presence of God. From there, it's just a question of whether you stay or go." We often frame our mortal journey here as a question of whether or not we can make it back to God. That's not what Alma says. It's not a question of making it back to God. Alma says, "God's going to restore all of you to his presence." The decisive question is whether or not you stay.
- John Bytheway: 09:58 Do you remember [Stephen Robinson](#)? That book he wrote called Believing Christ, he wrote in the nineties, and then wrote a follow-up called, Following Christ? There's one line I

remember from that book that was so good and that was, "The question is not, 'Am I going to make it?' The question is, 'Do I want to stay?'" I think it's kind of funny in verse seven that you're delivered from an endless night of darkness and it sounds like he knows what Section 19 teaches that if it's endless, how can you be delivered from it? It's like Alma's suffering endless torment for two days. You're like, wait a minute. And in Section 19 says, well, it's called endless because endless is my name. I didn't say there'd be no end to the punishment. But I love they are their own judges, which is so true in life. You go get a temple recommend, what's the last question?

Hank Smith:	10:51	Do you consider yourself?
John Bytheway:	10:54	Go to the stake president, what's the last question? We are our own judge a lot of times in life.
Dr. Adam Miller:	11:01	Yeah. It's in this sense that as Alma emphasizes, it's impossible to get away with anything. It's impossible to get away with evil, or as he famously says, perhaps most famously in all of these chapters, in Alma chapter 41 verse 10, Turns out that wickedness never was happiness. There's no danger of anyone ever getting away with evil. To think that you could get away with doing evil is to think that it's only evil because God punishes you with evil, as if it would've been good if he didn't punish you with evil in return. But that's not the case at all, Alma says.
	11:42	God doesn't have to punish you with evil in response to your evil because the evil is already evil. Wickedness never was the happiness in the first place. If you've chosen what was evil, if you've participated in wickedness, that is its own punishment. And God doesn't have to add anything to that pie in order for you to have already gotten what it is that you chose. God's not in the work of punishment here in terms of retribution. He's only in the work of discipline in terms of an education that we need." The wickedness, being wicked takes care of itself from the start, though, again, coming to discover that wickedness never was happiness in the first place is the very kind of education that we have to undergo in order for us to discover the truth about our own desires.
Hank Smith:	12:29	That is wonderful. It's not like you stole happiness from some sort of evil thing and you got away with it. Look at me, I got happiness out of evil. It doesn't exist there.

Dr. Adam Miller:	12:41	Sometimes we wring our hands about the possibility of people getting away with stuff as if wickedness weren't already wickedness, as if wickedness could have been happiness, but that's impossible in the first place and to worry about people getting away with wickedness is the kind of moral relativism that doesn't take seriously the fact that it's not bad because God punished you with bad for doing it. It's bad just plain because it was bad in the first place.
John Bytheway:	13:09	My dad joined the church when he was 24 and he said sometimes people would say to him, "Oh, so before that, you got to..." Fill in the blank, "As if wickedness was happiness." And that's what he would say. "Oh, you mean so wickedness is happiness, and I got to do all of that stuff?" He would remind them, "I never had a home evening. I never had a youth conference."
Dr. Adam Miller:	13:33	This is what we do. We mix these categories up, we get it wrong. We think that what's bad is good and what's good is bad and it's not because we don't want what's good but it's because if we're wrong about which one is which and to be saved is to be saved from my ignorance about the truth there.
Hank Smith:	13:52	Doesn't Samuel the Lamanite say something about trying to find happiness in iniquity is contrary to-
John Bytheway:	13:57	To the nature of that righteousness which is in our eternal head or something like that.
Hank Smith:	14:03	Yeah. It's impossible to find. There's no reason for me to punish my child for hurting themselves. They've already hurt themselves, as if they got happiness out of that.
John Bytheway:	14:16	You are, to use a 1970 song, you're looking for love in all the wrong places, look for happiness in all the wrong places.
Dr. Adam Miller:	14:26	I think this is exactly right. This would be my reading of what Alma means when he says that part of the work of restoration is to bring back evil for evil. I don't think that that means that God is going to do evil to us because we have done evil. What I think that means here in light of Alma 41:10, the claim that wickedness never was happiness. What I think that means is that God is going to bring back the truth about evil, that it was evil from the start, then you can't pretend otherwise. And that's part of what the law of restoration restores. It restores the truth about what evil actually is, that it never was happiness and no

evil needs to be added there on top of it because it was already evil in the first place.

- John Bytheway: 15:12 The clearer are his views. Could I tell you guys about an experience I had with Alma 40:11 and 12? We had a sister in our ward and her husband called me and said, "My wife's about to pass and she wanted to say goodbye." That's a very poignant moment. My wife and I went over to see Trish. I said, "Trish, can I read you a couple of verses of scripture?" I went to Alma 40, "Now concerning the state of the soul between death and the resurrection, behold, it has been made known unto me by an angel that the spirits of all men as soon as they're departed from this mortal body, yea, the spirits of all men, whether they be good or evil, are taken home to that God who gave them life. And then shall it come to pass that the spirits of those who are righteous are received into a state of happiness, which is called paradise, a state of rest, a state of peace where they shall rest from all their troubles and from all care and sorrow."
- 16:20 I'll never forget Trish looked at me and went, "I'm ready." I got to retell that story at her funeral too. She said, "I'm ready." To be able to say that I think means she had this understanding of God and what this was all about and I just thought those verses, I always want to have those in my back pocket. We have a hospital in our stake boundary and we go there a lot to give blessings and sometimes the people that we go to see have not been active at all, but those verses can give a lot of hope.
- Hank Smith: 16:56 As I read these chapters, and I read about the punishment of the sinner, you might say that they are judging themselves. I'm reading Alma 40 verse 26, "For they are unclean and no unclean thing can inherit the kingdom of God." They see themselves that way.
- Dr. Adam Miller: 17:18 And this is partly a product of the way that if I think that my salvation is about deserving or not deserving God's love, instead of joining in God's work of love, then I'm going to always end up judging myself to be insufficient in deserving it. Then I'll never find it and I will be my own judge here and I will condemn myself to not deserving love, but the problem won't be that I failed to deserve it. The problem will be that I failed to understand that love was a law and not a reward that you deserve or don't.
- Hank Smith: 17:54 That looking for the fiery indignation, it's not coming. That's how I view God. They drink the dregs of a bitter cup. That sounds very similar.

Dr. Adam Miller:	18:07	Yeah, it's their cup.
John Bytheway:	18:08	That's what it says. They're consigned to partake of the fruits of their labors. It's not, the punisher will hand you a cup. It's, you made this, now you got to eat it. In October of 2016, <a href="#">Elder Quentin L. Cook</a> , he said, "Alma 42 contains some of the most magnificent doctrine on the atonement in all scripture. Alma helped Corianton understand that it is not an injustice that the sinner should be consigned to a state of misery, but he noted that starting with Adam, a merciful God had provided a space for repentance because without repentance the great plan of salvation would've been frustrated. Alma also established that God's plan is a plan of happiness. Alma's teachings are most instructive for behold justice exerciseth all his demands, and also mercy claimeth all which is her own." And there's a footnote that says, "Notice justice is male and mercy is female."
	19:04	I don't know what to do with that. "And thus, none but the truly penitent are saved." Still quoting, "Seen in their true light, the glorious blessings of repentance and adherence to the Savior's teachings are monumentally important. It is not unfair to be clear as Alma was with Corianton about the consequences of sinful choices and lack of repentance. It has often been declared, sooner or later, everybody has to sit down to a banquet of consequences." And it sounds like, and drink the dregs of a better cup. That comes with the banquet for free at the end of Alma 40 verse 26 there.
Hank Smith:	19:44	Adam, I read in chapter 42, verse 22 and 23 that God ceaseth not to be God and mercy claimeth the penitent, mercy comes because of the atonement. What we've been talking about today is that me seeing clearly, mercy claims the penitent.
Dr. Adam Miller:	20:04	Yeah, I think that's right. To be penitent is to discover that my evil actions were evil and that they now require me to repent, which is to respond to my evil with the good that I now need in order to become good again. And that's precisely what comes into view here, as we begin to undergo this process of restoration that the atonement itself enacts.
Hank Smith:	20:29	Mercy claims me because I allow it to.
Dr. Adam Miller:	20:33	Yeah, mercy's always trying to claim me. It's just a question of whether I will allow it to claim me or not.
Hank Smith:	20:40	Adam, you wrote a book called <a href="#">An Early Resurrection</a> . I think that's Life in Christ Before You Die, and since Alma has been

talking about resurrection, I thought I might bring a couple of thoughts in from that book and have you maybe tie them together with what we've been talking about here. I loved this part of the book. "Promises are a certain way of looking forward. When I promised myself to my wife, I didn't just bind myself to her in the present, I gave her my future without waiting for that future to arrive, without waiting to see what sorrows or joys would come. I promised. Dressed in white, we knelt at the altar in the temple and joined hands. We were terribly young." Oh, I remember. "The mirror set face-to-face reflected endless futures at which we couldn't guess, still I loved her. I gave her all those futures as a gift and we kissed, now promised to each other and sealed by a holy ordinance, we live as though those futures had already come.

21:43 Now, in a very real way, our futures are given as gifts in the present and now we're empowered by those promises to love each other in the present." And then you wrote a little later in the book, "My job is to live right now as if I had already passed through death's veil and into the presence of God. My job is to live my promised redemption in the present tense. The reason I thought of those was the very end of Alma's speaking to Corianton. Let the mercy and long suffering of God have full sway in your heart, and now you are called to preach the word unto this people. I saw that same commitment to live this entire message now."

Dr. Adam Miller: 22:33 The process of restoration, it is modeled for us, as Alma sees it, by resurrection. But I think as the Book of Mormon also emphasizes again and again, perhaps uniquely in relationship to our other scripture, this is not a process that we have to wait for. The process of restoration is a process that God is anxious to get going here and now. In some very real sense, the process of my resurrection is something that God is anxious to get started right here, right now, in this life. And especially if it's the case that the only obstacle here is not God, but me, then there is no reason that I can't begin to experience my redemption now by participating with God in his work here and now. In the same way that wickedness never was happiness and never could be, it's also true that righteousness always was happiness and always will be, and that's as true now as it would be at any future date when I might find myself back in the presence of God.

Hank Smith: 23:40 Corianton can move forward in that way having promised his future to God, just like his father had.



Dr. Adam Miller:	23:48	Yeah, exactly. Especially insofar as he takes up the work of ministry and joins God in the work of restoration. There's not something else right here, it's not the case that the work of restoration will get you to some other promised end, the work of restoration and your invitation to participate in it is the thing that's on offer. It is what you're looking for.
Hank Smith:	24:11	Adam, last time we were together, we talked about the Book of Romans and I would encourage all of our listeners, if you haven't heard those episodes, please go back. We can link them in our show notes <a href="https://followhim.co">followhim.co</a> , because it was so fun to get all the feedback that we did from those episodes. It was fun to see people's worlds open up in different ways to the gospel. With the, love is a law, not a reward, do you see Corianton seeing that love is a reward here and Alma as the opposite saying, you don't have to see it that way?
Dr. Adam Miller:	24:51	For my part, I think that's very much what's at stake in this whole conversation. Corianton thinks that love is the kind of reward that he could succeed at earning or have failed at earning, and at the moment he thinks he's failed at earning it. And Alma's entire project here is to explain to him how restoration works. That restoration is not about God now giving him the evil that he deserves because he's done evil, but that the whole project of restoration as modeled by resurrection is to take what was bad and turn it into what is good, to take what was corrupted and make it incorruptible. And that that is what God is offering, and all Corianton needs to do to find what he's looking for here is to return to the ministry and participate in the work that God invited him to join in the first place.
Hank Smith:	25:42	He sought for love in, as John said, all the wrong places.
Dr. Adam Miller:	25:47	Or at least the wrong time, and the wrong way.
Hank Smith:	25:50	Yeah. All three of us are parents, and many of our listeners of course are moms and dads. How do we help our children flip that prevalent message of, "God wants to punish you"? How have you done it as a father? Because it can be so damaging. At least I've seen it in my own children, to I do something that is wrong, against the rules, against the commandments and now I see myself as not as valuable. At least knowing you, Adam, that's not what you would want my child to think, so how do I help them not think that?
Dr. Adam Miller:	26:31	I don't know that I'm much of an example for how to actually do this in practice, but in theory at least, which is what I specialize in as a philosopher, the thing that you can't do as a parent is to

indicate, in any way, that your love for that child depends on their being what you want them to be. You can't structure your relationship to them as if your love was a reward that they could earn or not, which means that maybe the one basic, essential, non-negotiable thing that I have to be capable of doing as a parent, is that I have to be capable of disconnecting my love for that child from what I want from that child.

27:25 I have to be able to uncouple here my care and concern for them, from my expectations about what they should or shouldn't be, such that I become capable of constantly seeing and adapting to what they actually need from me rather than trying to force them into the box of what I want them to be. If I try to force them into the box of what I want them to be, if I try to use them to satisfy my own desires for their lives, I will trap us both and the love that could have sustained us will become impossible.

John Bytheway: 28:07 Sometimes what we talk about maybe is more of a belief than a practice. We try to practice it, but I've tried to share with my kids that Heavenly Father has different ways of saying, "I love you." And one of them is, "I love you." And one of them is, "Thou shalt not..." That thou shalt not is going to protect you from so much hurt, heartache and sorrow, or as Adam taught us today, to use the words of Alma, "It will be for your good." Every commandment has love behind it. It's going to protect you from some pretty bad consequences. I remember reading Elizabeth Smart's book that helped her through those months of horrific captivity that she remembered how often her mother told her, "I love you no matter what." And how that sustained her. And she wasn't doing anything wrong, but a lot of people react to that kind of thing that happened to Elizabeth Smart as if they did something wrong. She didn't, but that assurance that, "My mother loves me." Was one of the things that helped her through that.

Hank Smith: 29:22 Adam, I'm going to quote another book called [Letters to a Young Mormon by Adam Miller](#). I thought of it when Alma says at the very end of this letter to Corianton, "Don't endeavor to excuse yourself. Don't deny the justice of God." Almost as if he's saying, "Don't hide from this anymore." And you wrote, "When God knocks, don't creep to the door and look through the peephole to see if he looks like you thought he would. Rush to the door and throw it open." Loved that idea. Is that what you see Alma trying to express to Corianton? And I could be absolutely wrong here, but you don't need to hide from him. He wants to bless you.

Dr. Adam Miller:	30:06	That's a strong parallel. As Alma diagnoses it, Corianton's main difficulty here may be in the fact that he's hamstrung by some expectations about who or what God is, that don't allow him now to accept the good that's being offered, and to himself, do the good that needs to be done in response to his own mistakes. And it's easy, so easy to get trapped in these expectations that, as we said a moment ago, are all structured around our false assumption that love is something that you have to deserve and that the whole point of all of this is to figure out whether or not we deserve it when really the only thing that's ever been at stake is whether or not we would be willing to participate in it.
Hank Smith:	31:00	There's a wonderful verse in <a href="#">Alma 42</a> verse 15 that we haven't talked about yet. He says, "Now the plan of mercy could not be brought about, except an atonement should be made. Therefore, God himself atoneth for the sins of the world to bring about the plan of mercy." I want to come back to this talk you brought up from Elder Kearon, God's Intent Is To Bring You Home. It seems in verse 15, it matches what Elder Kearon says here. "God does not put up roadblocks and barriers, he removes them. God himself atoneth for the sins of the world." He does not keep you out. He welcomes you in. And then this, "His entire ministry was a living declaration of this intent." Can you show us, Adam, or talk about how the Savior's ministry is a declaration of his intent to remove roadblocks?
Dr. Adam Miller:	31:55	Yeah, of course at the heart of his ministry is the work of atonement itself. The work of atonement is, I think as Alma describes it here, the work of restoration. Part of that work of restoration involves justice and punishment as a good that we need. And part of that work of restoration manifests as mercy then, as good in response to our evil, as an invitation to rejoin in response to our evil. And the atonement is really the hinge on which all of that work turns. As God exemplifies what it means to respond to corruption within corruption, to respond to what is bad, with what is good, by restoring what is bad to what is good, Jesus's mortal ministry exemplifies these same traits. Jesus went about doing good. Jesus went about commanding us to love our enemies. Jesus, before healing someone, never asked if they did or didn't deserve it. He asked if they were or weren't willing to participate in it by way of their faith. That's the pattern. That's what it looks like to join him in this work of restoration.
Hank Smith:	33:07	We have many listeners out there, Adam, who don't see themselves as good. There seems to be a view out there that only if I just do a little bit more, work harder, if I can get rid of

every single sin in my life that then I measured up. From your point of view, let's speak directly to that person, just for a minute. You're so good, at least for me, in these interviews of making me feel like, "Wait, wait. I am enough. It's not about earning my place. It's about participating in God's work."

Dr. Adam Miller: 33:47

Yeah, maybe I could speak in the first person here. I don't deserve to be loved. I'm not good enough for that, but my journey in the gospel has largely been a journey of discovering my failure to deserve love isn't because I didn't measure up in all the ways that would've qualified me to deserve that love, but because I had misunderstood what love was in the first place. I'd mistaken it for a reward, when it was in fact instead a law. It is, in my experience, profoundly liberating to discover not that I had failed to complete the right project by deserving love, but that I had been doing the wrong thing the whole time. Extraordinarily liberating to put down the burden of doing something that cannot be done, and to discover instead that the very thing that I was looking for the whole time, that love, was already right here, freely and wholly available in the invitation to love other people, friends, family, enemies included, maybe especially when that enemy seemed to be myself.

John Bytheway: 35:01

I feel like so often in these discussions we get down to a better understanding of the nature of God. Is he the traffic cop? Is he the university professor that's trying to see how many he can flunk or is he a perfect loving Heavenly Father who wants relentlessly to get all his children back? When we assign the wrong kind of character to God based on imperfect worldly examples, that's where the trouble starts and I'm really glad you started with Elder Kearon and that story because that helps us for Elder Kearon to say, "You're looking at God wrong. That's not what he's like."

Hank Smith: 35:40

I hesitate to add to God's mission statement, however, I have restated this is my work and my glory to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man as to say something like, This is my work and my glory, to help my children choose to be exalted. I will not force it. What does Alma say? "Whosoever will not come, the same is not compelled to come because righteousness isn't righteousness unless it is chosen. Exaltation isn't exaltation..." How can you be like God when he is not forced? If I were to force you, it's no longer by definition what God does, what he is. Adam, before we let you go, as you can tell, I don't want you to leave. One way I know I'm feeling the Spirit is, I do not want it to end, and I'm sure there's many listeners out there who feel the same way.

- 36:36 Tell us about the Book of Mormon as a whole. Adam, you are a voracious reader and I only have to look behind you to see that reading is a gift that you have and you've developed. Yet, here's this Book of Mormon that I know you love. Could you speak to what the Book of Mormon has done for you, maybe even specific portions of it that you want to highlight? Because one of my favorite parts of our program is taking someone like yourself, who is in my opinion, and I'm sure many others, one of the best thinkers in the church, especially one of the best philosophers in the church, right there next to Joe Spencer. Can you tell us about the Book of Mormon and your experiences with it?
- Dr. Adam Miller: 37:27 I mentioned at the outset that I don't really have a lot of interest in the Book of Mormon as a historical relic of any kind. My interest in the Book of Mormon is almost exclusively framed in terms of my experience of the book as alive living, an experience of the book in terms of what it can do here and now, and going forward of all the power that it encompasses, all the power that it can express, especially in terms of its ability to open doors to an experience of God. If I love the Book of Mormon, which I do, it's because the Book of Mormon has introduced me to God more than any other book, in all of my life, that I have ever read. This book has deeply and undeniably introduced me to God.
- 38:26 Two things I think have become obvious to me about Book of Mormon over the years, the more time that I've spent with it, the more carefully I've read it, is that number one, as a people, I don't know that we've even started to read the Book of Mormon. We've hardly ever given it a chance to speak in its own voice, to tell us what it wants to say rather than our imposing on it what we expect it to say. To that degree, we've really hamstrung the book's ability to accomplish its own mission of introducing us to Jesus Christ, but I've also found over the years that even the weakest effort on my part to engage with the book, to read it, to study it, to understand it, to spend time with it, will be rewarded with not just an understanding of the book, but with a first-person present-tense experience of God, of his love and of his power of redemption. That's what the book promises, and as best I can tell in my experience, that is exactly what the book has delivered.
- Hank Smith: 39:33 Corianton gives us some great hope here, Adam, that your point of view can change, that you can see God clearly, at least from indications later on in the book. Alma 48 says that Captain Moroni, we know that Mormon really likes, he describes him as

likened to Ammon, like the other sons of Mosiah and also Alma and his sons. And then in chapter 49, 49 verse 30, that the word of God was preached among the people, declared unto them by Helaman and Shiblon and Corianton. There's a hopeful part, and I think for every listener, at least for me, you're helping me and the book is helping me see this can happen for me.

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| Dr. Adam Miller: | 40:23 | Yeah, I would hope that it's obvious that this letter Alma writes to Corianton is itself, a powerfully hopeful letter even in its account of justice and punishment. It is an extraordinarily hopeful count of the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Corianton's good evidence that that hope is justified, and his own father Alma may be even better evidence of the fact that this hope in Christ is justified regardless of what we think we've done or how far we think we have drifted from God. God is relentless in his pursuit of us, and his purposes fail not, and his purpose is to restore us and he will.   |
| John Bytheway:   | 41:06 | In our last episode when we talked to Jack Welch, he mentioned that the word, plan, appears 10 times in Alma's letter to Corianton, and it's so fun to see what's taught there because it's called Plan of Happiness, and Plan of Redemption and Plan of Mercy and Plan of Salvation. There's God being relentless. He has this plan, as you said, he fails not.   |
| Hank Smith:      | 41:31 | Adam, thank you for spending your time with us.  |
| Dr. Adam Miller: | 41:36 | It's always a pleasure to join you. Grateful that you have me.   |
| Hank Smith:      | 41:39 | We love having you on followHIM. As we close this episode, I like to give our listeners something to do, that I've listened to this, I've loved it. It's filled my heart, it's expanded my mind. It's opened up new things that I've never seen before and now I guess I'm a practical person. How do I set down anchor? What would you say if I said, "Okay, what do I do, Adam? What do I do?"   |
| Dr. Adam Miller: | 42:07 | Let me offer a fun little exercise listeners could do by way of scripture study with the Book of Mormon. This was something that I did the other day preparing for a seminar that I'll participate in starting next week on Second Nephi, chapter two, trying to help myself become more familiar with the text and it's details. It's an interesting historical curiosity that when Joseph Smith dictated the text of the Book of Mormon, he did not dictate punctuation, and it was left to the printer to supply the punctuation so that the punctuation is non-canonical, technically. Here's a fun exercise you can try as a Latter-day Saint. You can copy and paste the text of a chapter that you're |

interested in, into a document, strip out all of its punctuation, and then you do the exercise of resupplying what a punctuation should structure that reading of the text and see what happens. See where it takes you.

- John Bytheway: 43:21 I love that.
- Hank Smith: 43:23 I love it too. I love it too. We hope everyone listening will take a little time. You might see things you've never seen before.
- Dr. Adam Miller: 43:30 You will see many things that you have never seen before.
- Hank Smith: 43:35 Well, with that, we want to thank Dr. Adam Miller for joining us today. So fun. We've talked about Job. We've talked about Romans, now we've talked about Alma and Corianton. Anyone who's new to our podcast, go back and listen to all of those previous episodes. They're so fun. You'll hear similar things to what you've heard today that will help you see in new ways. We want to thank our executive producer Shannon Sorensen, our sponsors David and Verla Sorensen, and every episode we remember our founder Steve Sorensen. We hope you'll join us next week. Looks like we're picking up the war chapters on followHIM. Before you skip to the next episode, I have some important information. This episode's transcript and show notes are available on our website, [followhim.co](http://followhim.co). That's [followhim.co](http://followhim.co). On our website, you'll also find our two free books, Finding Jesus Christ in the Old Testament and Finding Jesus Christ in the New Testament.
- 44:36 Both books are full of short and powerful quotes and insights from all our episodes from the Old and New Testaments. The digital copies of these books are absolutely free. You can watch the podcast on YouTube. Also, our Facebook and Instagram accounts have videos and extras you won't find anywhere else. If you'd like to know how you can help us, if you could subscribe to, rate, review and comment on the podcast, that will make us easier to find. Of course, none of this could happen without our incredible production crew. David Perry, Lisa Spice, Jamie Neilson, Will Stoughton, Krystal Roberts, Ariel Cuadra and Annabelle Sorensen.
- President Russell M. Nelson: 45:13 Whatever questions or problems you have, the answer is always found in the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. Turn to him. Follow him.

## HELP ME GET RID OF THE MISSIONARIES



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| Hank Smith:    | 00:03 | Welcome to followHIM Favorites. This is where John and I share a single story to go with this week's lesson. John, we're in Alma 39 through 42 today. Alma is speaking to his son, Corianton, and you've told me you have a story that goes along with what chapter?   |
| John Bytheway: | 00:16 | It goes along with Alma 40. Alma says this really interesting, very detailed thing about what happens when you die. Verse 11, starting in verse 11, "Concerning the state of the soul between death and resurrection, it has been made known unto me by an angel that the spirits of all men, as soon as they are departed from this mortal body, the spirits of all men, whether they be good or evil, are taken home to that God who gave them life. And then it shall come to pass, the spirits of those who are righteous are received into a state of happiness, which is called paradise, a state of rest, a state of peace where they shall rest from all their troubles and from all care and sorrow." |
| Hank Smith:    | 00:54 | Wow.   |
| John Bytheway: | 00:54 | Great verses.  |
| Hank Smith:    | 00:55 | Yeah. It's beautiful.  |
| John Bytheway: | 00:56 | Yeah, and I have a story. I was speaking down in Australia many years ago, and I met this sister. She briefly told me her conversion story, and I was like, "Oh my goodness. Will you send that to me?" She did. Her name is Nicola Oliver. These are her words, and I'm sharing this with her permission. She said, "I was working at an oncology hospital, and the ward that I was on had several patients whose disease had become terminal, and they were there for palliative care." Hank, I didn't know what palliative means, but it's a "make them as comfortable as you can" type of thing.   |
| Hank Smith:    | 01:28 | Yeah.  |



John Bytheway:	01:28	It's an end-of-life care.
Hank Smith:	01:30	Got it.
John Bytheway:	01:30	"On many occasions, the conversation between them would turn to the thought of what happens when you die. Indeed, many residents there would ask me this question. At the time I was training to be a nurse, I wanted to be the very best I could be, so I felt I could really use some comforting answers as I unquestionably believed at the time of death, that was the absolute end."
Hank Smith:	01:52	John, can you imagine what a depressing nurse that would be? "What happens when you die?"
John Bytheway:	01:56	I know. "Oh, it's the end." Yeah.
Hank Smith:	01:57	"Well, it's the end, so you want some jello?"
John Bytheway:	02:00	Yeah.
Hank Smith:	02:01	All right.
John Bytheway:	02:02	Yeah, yeah. What do you do? She said, "One evening after a late shift, I went home via a friend's house. He had recently got his own place, and I promised to see it. When I arrived, he answered the door looking concerned. 'You have to help me,' he said. I looked at him and said, 'Help you what?' He said, 'You've got to help me get rid of someone in the flat.' Now, this wasn't the most savory of areas. I became quite concerned who might be lurking at his place. 'Who is it?' I asked nervously. 'Some missionaries,' he said quietly." You know those unsavory missionaries?
Hank Smith:	02:32	Yes, you can tell.
John Bytheway:	02:34	"My relief was palpable. I assured him I would gladly get them out for him. No worries." She says, "So before I was going to get these gents to leave, I realized this was an excellent opportunity for me to hone my best comforting skills when it came to work. I decided to ask them what they believed happen when you die, and then I would tell my patients that. Then, they would feel better, and I would be like an angel of peace and reassurance to them. Job done. Well-"
Hank Smith:	03:00	I would be an angel.

John Bytheway:	03:02	Yeah. I know.
Hank Smith:	03:02	Give me the script. Give me the angelic script.
John Bytheway:	03:04	Isn't she great? Yeah. She said, "Well, I wasn't prepared for what happened next. As they began to explain to me about the next life and our loved ones that had already passed, I realized I instantly knew that. How could I have forgotten? It was an odd feeling. Eager to see if it happened again. I asked them another question, and then another. Each time, their answer took place somewhere inside me like a jigsaw piece, neatly making its way inside, making the picture obvious."
Hank Smith:	03:34	Wow, wow.
John Bytheway:	03:34	"I didn't know what to make of what was going on." I know. "I hadn't experienced the Holy Ghost before, so it felt peculiar, but wonderful. I knew it was something good. As the world that I knew began to change right there in the flat, they announced that they'd had to leave as it was getting late. This seemed disastrous to me. I didn't want this experience to be over. I felt like things were just beginning. I asked the missionaries with mostly disbelief, but a smidgen of childlike hope, 'Can you answer all my questions about life and everything?' My heart still before their casual reply of, 'Yeah, just not tonight. We got to go,' and off they went just like that."
Hank Smith:	04:16	"Yeah. Sure, sure. We can do that."
John Bytheway:	04:17	"Yeah, yeah. We can do that." "I was stunned how they could have all this knowledge. The answers that I firmly believed didn't exist in this life. Two guys that look so normal and everyday with the whole meaning of life, the universe, and everything within them."
Hank Smith:	04:33	Wow.
John Bytheway:	04:33	"Long story short, I continued to meet with them, and every discussion filled my heart right up. I had become accustomed to the spirit I felt during the lessons, and I knew that's how I wanted my life to be from then on. Not just a life like that, but that's... Now, there was no other way to live. So my friend was not impressed with my skills in getting rid of these unwelcome guests at his place."
Hank Smith:	04:57	"This is not what I asked you to do."

John Bytheway:	04:59	"You were supposed to get rid of these guys." "In fact, I continue to have the discussions there as my family would have no part of this wonder I had found. Towards the end, I even had to pay him per discussion for the use of his place as he soon got tired of them being there. I got baptized shortly thereafter, and I was married in the London Temple the following year to my wonderful returned missionary, Craig."
Hank Smith:	05:23	Wow.
John Bytheway:	05:23	"This story began in Ashton-under-Lyne in the Northwest of England in 1996. We now live in Mackay, Queensland, Australia. My husband of 20 years," that's when this letter was written anyway, "is the district president, and we have eight children." That's the story from Nicola Oliver.
Hank Smith:	05:42	Nicola, we love it. John, what a fantastic story. I was just envisioning it in my mind. Wow.
John Bytheway:	05:49	I loved her description that, "I felt like this puzzle piece was coming out of the air and being fit inside." I'm like, "Wait. I know this. How do I know this?"
Hank Smith:	05:58	Yeah. What a great description of how it would feel, right, to hear this message for the first time?
John Bytheway:	06:04	Yeah.
Hank Smith:	06:06	What's interesting is it's not a profound part of the book. Alma 40 isn't one where you're like, "Oh, this is our gem. This is one jewel among thousands in this book."
John Bytheway:	06:16	Yeah. That's a good point. That was what she needed at that time, even in her occupation, and it just happened to be the question she asked touched something in her. Thank you, Nicola.
Hank Smith:	06:26	Good thing to be a prepared missionary too. Thanks, John. I actually remember reading that story in your book. I think it came out a couple years ago. When It Doesn't Make Sense by John Bytheway, because, John Bytheway, doesn't make sense, so.
John Bytheway:	06:43	That's my picture. None of this makes any sense.
Hank Smith:	06:45	When John Bytheway, Doesn't Make Sense by Hank Smith. Well, we hope you'll join us on our full podcast. It's called followHIM.

You can get it wherever you get your podcasts. We're with Dr. Adam Miller this week. He's a fan favorite, so come over and join us there, and then join us next week. We'll do another followHIM Favorites.