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# The Choice of Humility

*When we humble ourselves without being compelled to be humble, we are more blessed; then as we are grateful, we do the will of the Lord and become the light of the world.*

I am often impressed with how the Book of Mormon ties to and reinforces the same gospel principles taught in the Bible. One such principle is humility. This principle is taught dramatically when Alma is approached by a “great multitude” of Zoramites who have been cast out of their places of worship—synagogues they built with their own hands—and are now “despised of all men because of their poverty.”

Alma recognizes that these people are now teachable because they are humble. He sees that they are “truly penitent” and says they are blessed because they have become “lowly in heart.” “It is well that ye are cast out of your synagogues,” he says, “that ye may be humble, and that ye may learn wisdom.”

He adds:

“And now, as I said unto you, that because ye were compelled to be humble ye were blessed, do ye not suppose that they are more blessed who truly humble themselves because of the word? . . .

“. . . Blessed are they who humble themselves without being compelled to be humble; or rather, in other words, blessed is he that believeth in the word of God . . . without stubbornness of heart.”  
(See Alma 32:4–16.)

## A Great Promise

There is a great promise here—that if we humble ourselves “because of the word,” we will be more blessed. “The word of God” includes the scriptures as well as the teachings of our prophets and leaders, who provide counsel and guidance. It includes the invitation to help gather Israel, to teach and live the gospel in our homes, and to minister to those in spiritual and temporal need. As we do these things, we will see the hand of God in our lives, and this allows us to become humble without being compelled to be humble.

## The Parable of the Other Son

My wife and I once had the opportunity to visit the Hermitage Museum in Saint Petersburg, Russia. It includes splendid art from all over the world, but one particular painting caught my eye. *The Return of the Prodigal Son* was not displayed in some grandiose way but in a setting where the light could illuminate it as the painter, Rembrandt van Rijn, intended. Of course, the light falls on the prodigal son, humbled and heartbroken. And it falls on the loving father,



embracing his returning son. But light also falls on the other son, and I wondered why.

So I did some research and found that when the Savior gave this parable, He was not addressing those who loved and followed Him. He was talking to the Pharisees and scribes, who murmured because He associated with sinners. So His main message is not to the prodigal son, telling him to repent, or to the father, commending him for welcoming the repentant sinner. The main message is for the other son, who symbolically represents the Pharisees.

What is in this other son's heart? He is not humble; he is angry. He feels that he is the righteous one, that he deserves more, that he's always been faithful, and so on. The message to him is that if he were truly like his father, he would have the same love and forgiveness for his brother that his father has and would be blessed because of those feelings. In fact, the father tells him, "Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine." (See Luke 15:2–3, 11–32.)

### Becoming His Instruments

One of the important messages of the parable of the prodigal son is that if we strive to love Heavenly Father with all our heart, soul, and mind (see Matthew 22:37), we become humble enough to see how blessed we are. We humbly acknowledge our relationship with our Heavenly Father. In our prayers, we express gratitude for the help He gives us. We become willing to submit our will to God's. And as we do, we can then become instruments in His hand because we are feeling and acting like Him. We rely on His strength rather than our own.

Similar counsel is given in the Old Testament. In Proverbs 3:5–6 we read:

"Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.

"In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."

And in Proverbs 16:3, 9 we are taught:

"Commit thy works unto the Lord, and thy thoughts shall be established. . . .

"A man's heart deviseth his way: but the Lord directeth his steps."

When we choose to be humble, we acknowledge our relationship with our Heavenly Father, and we recognize that it is through the Atonement of His Son, Jesus Christ, that we can repent and be healed, then help others to do the same.

### Because of the Word

Alma says we should become humble "because of the word" (Alma 32:14). And what is the word? In addition to the scriptures, the counsel of leaders, and the promptings of the Holy Ghost, Jesus Christ is "the Word" (John 1:1). When we become humble enough to submit ourselves to the will of Heavenly Father, we reflect the light of Jesus Christ, who *always* submitted Himself to the will of the Father (see John 6:38; 3 Nephi 27:13).

"Therefore, hold up your light that it may shine unto the world," the Savior said. "Behold I am the light which ye shall hold up—that which ye have seen me do" (3 Nephi 18:24). As we share the example of Jesus Christ, because of the Word we become "the light of the world" (Matthew 5:14). Through our

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actions, others may be inspired to find their way to Him.

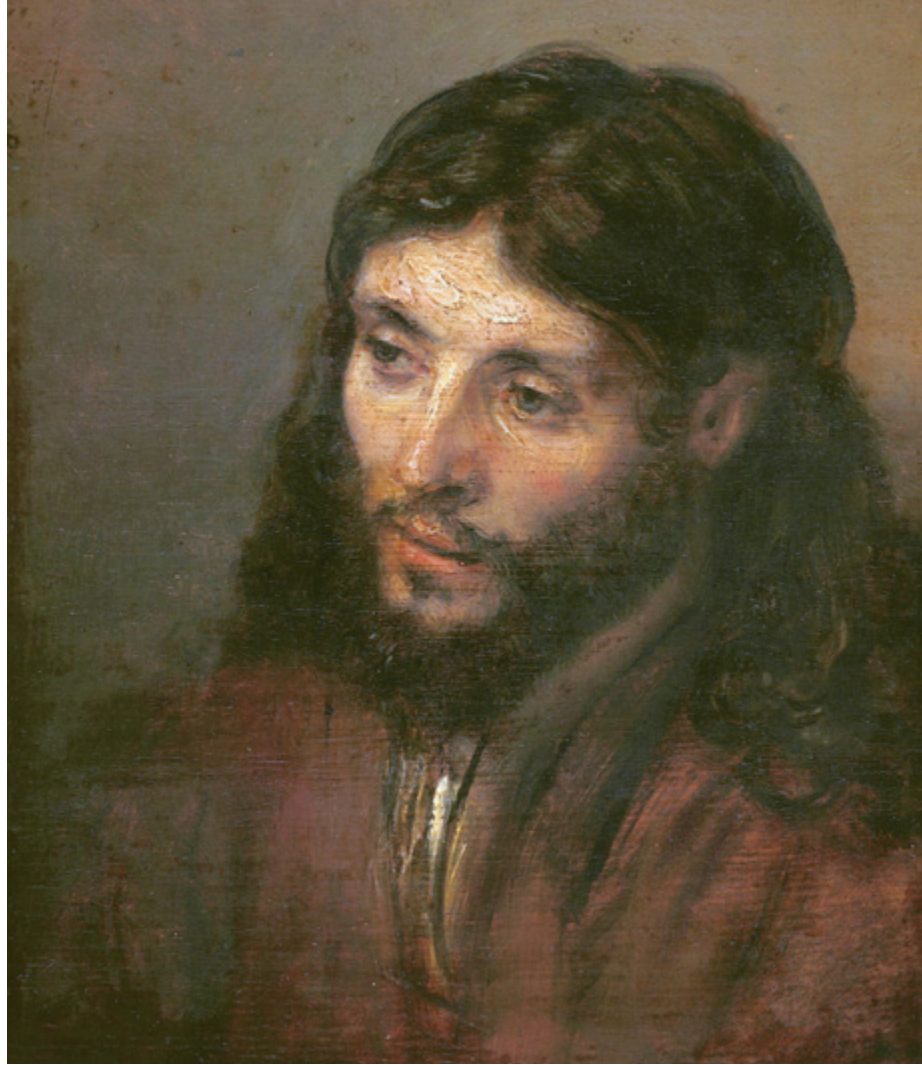
That thought alone is humbling. Sometimes we may feel that our efforts are useless. We may say, “We’re only but a few” or “Evil is rampant around me.” We may feel that the battle will be lost or that we are not worthy enough to represent Him.

But we have God’s assurance that *He* will win the battle. Remember, although Nephi “beheld the church of the Lamb of God, and its numbers were few,” he also foresaw “that the church of the Lamb, who were the saints of God, were also upon all the face of the earth” (1 Nephi 14:12). We have been reassured that the kingdom of God “shall never be destroyed” (Daniel 2:44) and that “the enemy shall not overcome” (see Doctrine and Covenants 38:9).

### Trust the Blessings

Because of the Word, we are blessed, and we need to trust those blessings. When we submit our will to Heavenly Father’s by hearkening to the Word, by repenting, and by bringing His light and salvation to those who are willing to listen and follow Him, we then become the light of the world, reflecting the light that will ultimately win the war of good versus evil.

As Paul said, “Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good” (Romans 12:21). When we strive to become humble and thankful at the same time, we are blessed with the redeeming, healing, and strengthening power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. We may not be great in numbers, and we may not be able to instantly change the whole world. But by becoming instruments in the hands of the Lord, we learn to trust His promises, which are sure (see 2 Nephi 10:17).



### Without Being Compelled

One other lesson we can draw from Alma’s experience with the Zoramites is that even when we are compelled to be humble, it can work for our good.

“For a man sometimes, if he is compelled to be humble, seeketh repentance; and now surely, whosoever repenteth shall find mercy; and he that findeth mercy and endureth to the end the same shall be saved” (Alma 32:13).

Alma says, “It is necessary that ye should learn wisdom” (Alma 32:12), and in order to do that we must become humble. So one way or the other, eventually, we must come to understand our relationship with Heavenly Father.

Like the Zoramites, and like the prodigal son, we can be compelled to be humble. But one of the great messages we learn from Alma is that we can *choose* to be humble. We can do it without being forced. Then like the brother of the prodigal son, we will see that what matters is the love of and the will of the Father. What we must do is to seek His will and welcome—with open arms—all who are trying to do the same. ■