

## THE SINFUL SERVANT

Alma 39-43

By Raymond White

Sin is always bad, for anybody, at any time. But sin is doubly bad when a servant of God falls into it because the consequences are worse, reaching beyond the sinner and his immediate circle to everyone else.

Alma's son Corianton gives us the perfect example to study and understand the dire situation of the sinning servant of God.

Notice the attention this son gets. Alma had three sons: Helaman the great son, Shiblon the good son, and Corianton the sinning son. Alma blesses each of them. Helaman gets two chapters (36-37), Shiblon gets one chapter (38), and Corianton gets four chapters (39-42). So it's the sinning son that gets the attention. Alma doesn't have to worry about Helaman and Shiblon, and that leaves his mind free to fret over his third son, the wayward son, much like Jesus' parable of the 100 sheep (*Matthew 18:12*). One goes astray so the shepherd leaves the ninety and nine to go look for the missing one. And there's the prodigal son (*Luke 15:11*) who, when he returned, the father threw a party to celebrate. That's how fixated we parents get on the one child, or grandchild, who is in trouble.

It's not that we deprive the good ones, it's just that we're grateful for the good ones so that they can get along without so much of our attention so that we can turn our attention to the bad ones, or more softly, the "fallen" ones. When the prodigal son's brother complained about all the attention his wayward brother was receiving, the father reassured him, "Son, thou art always with me. All I have is thine." In other words, jealousy was unwarranted. The father was saying in essence, "Thank you for being my good son so that I can attend to your fallen brother."

Now, back to Alma and his fallen son. Corianton has gotten himself into sexual trouble with *the harlot Isabel (Alma 39:3)*. And that trouble had three consequences, actually four.

### [1] CORIANTON FORFEITED HIS SALVATION

*Alma 39:9 For except ye [repent] ye can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God.*

This was not a minor thing. Sin inserts itself between sinners and salvation. And as much as the scripture has to say about grace and forgiveness, scripture is also very clear that grace is for the repentant, not those who tempt God trying to corner God forcing him to forgive their willful sins. Grace doesn't work like that. Sin damns souls regardless of the sinner's past relationship with God.

### [2] CORIANTON INJURED GOD'S WORK

*Alma 39:12 And when they saw your conduct they would not believe in my words.*

The sinning servant not only damns himself but he also damns others by destroying the credibility of the work. Who would trust the church when the church's own leaders are living contrary to their own message? Hypocrisy will destroy any good cause.

### [3] CORIANTON LOST HIS OWN HAPPINESS

*Alma 41:10 Behold, I say unto you, wickedness never was happiness.*

The diabolical thing about sin is that it doesn't even deliver on its own promise. The sinning Christian doesn't enjoy the pleasure he or she expected to have. So the sin cost him everything and gave him nothing in return. The devil is a tough negotiator, sin is a fool's bargain. So that's the bad news. What's the good news? Is there good news? Yes. There is.

### [4] CORIANTON CAN REPENT AND DID

*Alma 42:21 And now, O my son, ye are called of God to preach the word...*

We might wonder why God would even trust him again. The point is that God does. Corianton, you have a duty to perform, a job to do. Now get on with it. And Corianton responded to the call, the trust that was placed in him.

*Alma 43:1 ...the sons of Alma did go forth among the people, to declare the word...*

*Alma 63:10 Shiblon died also and Corianton had gone forth to the land northward...*

This wayward son not only repented but became one of God's determined missionaries carrying on the work after his noble brothers were dead.

Sometimes it's like that. Sometimes it's the forgiven sinner that's the most energized, like Saul of Tarsus who killed Christians but then became the apostle Paul, one of God's most gallant and determined missionaries. Or Alma the Younger. Or for that matter, Alma the Older. And so it was with Corianton.