



April 2003

NEWSLETTER

APRIL 2003

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

Rob Rolfe • 619 S. State, Lamoni, IA 50140 • 515-784-6030

Shut The Door

One of my mother's favorite phrases was, "Shut the door, were you born in a barn?" Well, I wasn't born in a barn (according to my birth certificate), but I know I didn't shut the door like my mother wanted.

Doors are interesting things. "You make a better door than a window." "Doors are something little boys can get a bang out of." Jesus said, "I am the door . . ." (John 10:7). The most famous door drawn by an artist is the one in which Jesus is standing, knocking, with no latch on the outside. Some have likened that door to our hearts.

God shut the door of the ark. (Gen. 8:38) god shut them in . . . and shut everyone else out. The parable of the 10 virgins also has the Lord shutting the door. (Matthew 25:9). And once again, everyone else was shut out.

The most famous door of all is the door of Jesus' tomb. The Pharisees wanted to keep it shut. They hired the roman soldiers to make sure it stayed shut. They put an enormous stone on it to make sure it stayed shut. All of those efforts failed. This door is famous because it is open. It has been open continuously since our Lord and King raised his body from the dead and walked through the door.

The Pharisees couldn't keep it from happening. The Roman soldiers couldn't keep it from happening. Gravity couldn't keep it from happening. He lives! That's the good news, the "gospel."

Sadly, while god is keeping the door open, much of the world is trying to push Jesus back into the tomb and close the door. They want the door shut because of the judgment they must face if it is open,

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TESTIMONIES AND SERMON NOTES

Manna From Heaven

Elder Steven Smith read John 6:47-58, a scripture that the Kinnaman family had used during the the family worship just that morning. It is the puzzling scripture in which Jesus is explaining that He is the bread of life, come down from heaven that any man may eat of and not die.

He says to his Jewish audience, "Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. But I am the living bread which came down from heaven; for if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. The Jews, therefore, strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat? Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye shall eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up in the resurrection of the just at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father; so he that eateth me, even so shall he live by me. This is that bread which came down from heaven; not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead; he that eateth of this bread shall live forever."

This passage offended many of His followers. It sounded an awful like idol worship and idol sacrifice, and the record says that many didn't follow Him after that. He even asked Peter, "What do you think of this?" and Peter said, "I have seen great things happening, so I am going to follow you, but I don't know what to think of this'.

Today we took of the bread, and we took it in semblance of having taken His body. I'd like to talk about this bread. Christ compared it to the manna that was given to the Children of Israel as they came out of Egypt. I'd like to tell you that story.

The Children of Israel, Their Story

"You've all heard of the plagues. You have all heard of their crossing the Red Sea. After they had crossed the sea, Moses was left with a multitude of people, and they went into a wilderness. When they went into the wilderness, they had some protection. The Lord had destroyed the armies of Egypt, and with the politics of the Middle East even as they are today, that meant that the Pharaoh had

**Church of Jesus Christ, Mount Ayr Restoration
Branch**

Highway 2 East, Mount Ayr, IA 50854 • Phone 641-464-3435

his hands full with insurrections and whatever else might happen; so they knew they wouldn't be followed at that point.

They had been traveling for about three days in the wilderness of Shur, and they didn't find any water. Now going three days without water it comes to where you start getting dehydrated. It becomes unsafe, and the people started to complain. So Moses moved from the wilderness of Shur to the wilderness of Marah. And the wilderness of Marah had brackish water. Even though they had water, they couldn't drink it. The Lord showed Moses a tree, and when he cast the tree into the water, the water became sweet, and they were able to drink it. This is not just one person. This is not ten people. This is not a hundred people. This is thousands or hundreds of thousands of people who were able to drink the water."

As an aside, our speaker commented, "The scripture says a certain tree was cast down into the water. I'm of the temperament that I have always wondered what kind of tree that was and whether that is something that could be replicated"

So the tree made the water sweet, and the people had water. But were the people satisfied? When the Lord gave them the water and it was made sweet, the Lord said, 'If you will diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God and do the things that are right in my sight, and give ear to my commandments (really listen to what I ask you to do), and then keep all of my statutes,' Four things they had to do. They had to really diligently listen - really, really listen. Then they had to try to do what was right, and keep the commandments, and then try to do all the statutes that He gave them. He said, 'If you will do these things, then I will put none of the diseases that I put on the Egyptians on you.' That's pretty neat. 'Our oldest children aren't going to be dying off if we will just do the things that the Lord says we should do.' Beyond that, He says, 'I will heal you.' It's very important that they keep His statutes, because the Lord asked them to do several things after that.

So they went from the wilderness of Marah, where the brackish water was made sweet, to Elim. At Elim they found twelve wells and 70 date palm trees. And the people were fed for awhile, but 70 date palm trees doesn't divide into the hundreds of thousands of people very well, and they had to leave. From Elim they went to the wilderness of Sin by Mt. Sinai. It was seventy days since they left Egypt when they reached the boundary between the wilderness of Elim and the wilderness of Sin. And the people said, 'Moses, we are getting a little bit hungry. We really need to find some way to keep ourselves fed. We just can't find enough stuff out here.'

So Moses prophesied. You remember, when they came out of Egypt, the Lord sent a great cloud before them, and a cloud after them. At this time, the cloud showed up close to the tabernacle. It came before Moses and before all of the people. The Lord spoke to Moses out of the cloud and said, 'In the evening I will give you flesh to eat, and in the morning, I will give you bread to eat.'

Now imagine a large encampment of people, and the Lord says, 'I'm going to give you enough meat to eat this evening, and in the morning, you will have bread.' That would take a lot of faith to believe that the Lord would give you meat in the evening and then bread in the morning. The people believed, and the scriptures say that evening the Lord sent quails into the camp, and they landed right in the middle of the camp where there were thousands of hungry Israelites. They had meat to eat that evening. Now that might have been described as an ecological disaster to let that many quail into an area to feed that many people, but they did just that. "In the morning, they woke up and there was dew on the ground. And as the dew came off, there was something left on the ground,

that the scriptures describe as about the size of a coriander seed. That's pretty small. And it was white, and they said it was round and kind of like hoarfrost. They said it was kind of like a wafer that was sweetened with honey. Now, the only wafer that I know of that is sweetened with honey today that I can relate to is a graham cracker. So they had this small white particle that was on the ground after the dew came off that tasted like graham crackers. And Moses said, 'Go out and gather yourself enough to feed everybody. Probably an omer is a large enough volume, so take about an omer for everybody'. And he said, 'If you need a little bit more than an omer, that's fine. If you need a little bit less than an omer, that's fine, too'.

I always wondered what an omer was, don't you? Well, it's smaller than a bath, and a bath is about nine gallons. In fact, a bath is equal to a homer, which is different from an omer. But a homer was a dry weight, which is about a bushel. A bath was a wet weight which was about 9 gallons. If you take 10 ephahs, you will have an homer or a bath. If you take 10 omers, you will have an ephah. So if you have one omer, it's about a hundredth of a homer or of about a bushel. And that's going to put us at just about five pints - 2 1/2 quarts. So Moses said, 'Go out and find about 2 1/2 quarts - find an omer - of this stuff, and gather it for everybody.'

The Children of Israel went out and they saw on the ground, these white, small beads. And I can just see them going out and saying, 'Man .. Na' In fact that's what they called it - manna. Right? Which loosely translated means, 'What is this stuff?' That's what manna means. What is this stuff? They called it manna because they didn't know whatever to call it, kind of like in Australia. When the white people came to Australia, they saw these great big rats that were jumping around on their hind legs, and they asked the aborigines, 'What are these?' And the aborigines said, 'I don't understand what you are saying.' And so we still call them 'I don't understand what you are saying', or kangaroos.

So they went out and found these small white particles all over the ground, and they asked, 'What is this?' And Moses said, 'This is bread. This is what the Lord has sent you. This white small fruit that's sweet, that tastes like a wafer;' and they were able to gather it up. But if the sun came out, it would just melt away. So the people were told to gather an omer, and they were supposed to eat what they had gathered. Moses said, 'Don't leave it overnight. This is not something you can have for the next day. This is something you can only have for now.'

Some of the people said, 'We're pretty hungry. This is pretty good stuff. Let's hold on to some of it.' And when they held onto some until the next day, they found that it was wormy, and it stunk. They couldn't eat it. So Moses said, 'Just get what you can eat for every person', so the people started learning to take what they needed and to eat what they took.

But it came time for the Sabbath, and on the day before the Sabbath, the Lord said, 'Now it's time to get two omers. This is going to be a very important thing that I want you to learn. Save that second omer for the Sabbath so you don't have to go out and gather'. He had just said, 'Don't save this stuff', and when they tried to save it, it turned wormy and really stunk. But some of the people believed and went out and got two omers. They ate half of it and saved the rest of it for the Sabbath. But some people were smarter than God, and they only took one omer, and it says they went out on the Sabbath, and there wasn't anything there. So they were hungry.

So the Lord had said, 'In the evening, you are going to have meat. In the morning you are going to have bread.' And that's a pretty amazing thing to consider that the Lord was able to give them

meat and bread for that entire week. Can you imagine depending on the Lord for an entire week for your bread? In fact, they depended on the Lord for forty years. Forty years, and all the Lord asked was that they listen to what He said; they would do what was right in His sight; they would listen to and try to keep all of the commandments that he had given them; on the sixth day they would gather twice as much as they needed for a day, and they would rest on the Sabbath.

Christ Applies the Lesson

Christ, when talking to the Jews said, 'Your fathers believed. Your fathers kept the commandments. In fact, Aaron was even commanded to take an omer and seal it up so they could show generations afterward the manna - 'what is this stuff?' - that was given to the people that would keep them alive. So for a long time, the manna was seen by the Jews. Christ said, 'If you remember this very exciting, this very great miracle that kept all of these people alive for forty years, and these people had to keep the commandments of God in order to stay alive, He said, 'The people who ate that died'. He says, 'I'm going to offer you something better. If you would like to live forever, then you need to eat my flesh and drink my blood, because it's kind of like Manna. You don't understand what it is, but I'm going to ask you to eat this bread, and the bread is like my flesh'. He said, 'It's not really what you think. You aren't eating me'. He said, 'I am the bread from heaven, and I am like the manna - those things you don't understand. You have to eat of Me, and that means, you have to take Me inside of you. You are making My blood, your blood. You are making My flesh your flesh. And when you symbolically take Me inside of you, it will be a lot like eating the manna. You will be diligently hearkening to My voice. You will be doing right. You will be giving ear to the commandments, and you will be keeping My statutes; because', He says, 'I will be living inside of you and I will be a part of you because you have done this.'

Still, the people didn't understand, and many of His disciples left at that time. And those disciples that stayed said, 'This is a hard saying. This is really hard for us to understand.' What they understood was that people would go out and sacrifice. This was happening all of the time around them. People would sacrifice to idols and to gods; and during these sacrifices, they were like great big barbecues. You could eat and drink and make merry. After the sacrifices, some would be drunk and others would leave and they would be full. And they knew that this was sinful. And for Christ to be using this type of imagery was extremely offensive to them. And Christ said, 'You don't understand. What is this stuff? Flesh means nothing. The Spirit is what's really important, and My words are My Spirit. So if you will keep My words - just like you reached out your hands and have taken the bread - it shows a willingness to take Christ into you. If you will take My words in that same way, then you will have My Spirit. Then, when you have My Spirit, you will be able to keep My commandments as I have asked of you. Then you will be living by that faith which I asked you to live by. And it's the Spirit that causes life.'

God's Spirit and the Lord's Supper

We have been told that it really isn't important whether we have grape juice or whether we have water or what we have. It's not really important that we have whole wheat bread or white bread or even crackers. That's the symbolic thing. What we need to do is to have the determination to take into us the words - to hear, to listen, to do - to always strive to do what is right - to keep the commandments. If we will, then the Lord will go on and feed us manna - more things that we don't understand. The Lord will allow us to live

spiritually in great mystery. This is the reinforcement of our baptismal covenant where it says we take His name upon us, and keep His commandments and always remember Him.

When we read those Communion prayers today, we said, 'We will take Your name upon us.' and that's what He was talking about. By 'taking a part of Me - by making it so I live in you, you are taking My name upon you'. And He is saying, 'A part of this is that you need to keep the commandments which brings you life.' And always remember Him - that great mystery - that Manna, that stuff - we don't know what it is, but it's there for our benefit.'

I Will Fear No Evil

In his opening statements, Elder Jerry Slayton acknowledged the many people from whom he had received ministry that had helped to bring the blessings he was about to share with the congregation and to apologize for using the word I so much, explaining that these are his experiences and he needs to record them as his own. He then added, "But if there is any good that comes of this, please praise the Lord because He's the one who gave me the blessings that I have to share with you." Jerry has begun to record some of the blessings and experiences in his life for his grandchildren. Those he shared with us in his sermon last August, along with the Glyph Notes testimony of his going on the Book of Mormon trip last year he labeled 'Chapter One' and this sermon 'Chapter Two'. He then read two passages of scripture on which he wished to base his testimony this day.

First from Isaiah 25, verses 1, 4, and 8. "O Lord, thou art my God; I will exalt thee, I will praise thy name; for thou hast done wonderful things; thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth. For thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall. He will swallow up death in victory, and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth; for the Lord hath spoken it."

Secondly from Isaiah 26, verses 3 and 4. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee; because he trusted in thee. Trust ye in the Lord forever; for in the Lord JEHOVAH is everlasting strength."

Lilies of the Field Continued

"About a month ago, Ron Smith was standing here speaking. His theme was how the Lord will take care of us, and he talked about the lilies of the field - you may remember that he used that scripture. I would like to continue that theme today with some testimonies of mine that relate to how I feel He has taken care of me during the past few months, during the fall and winter months. And I actually have quite a few notes, because I feel it's the details that confirm the blessing. So you will pardon me if I refer to notes from time to time because I don't want to leave something out.

I want to go back and start in the fall in the year 2002, last year. That was not a happy time for me. I was getting awfully out of breath. I was working and I got to the point I could hardly walk up a little slope like this (He demonstrated with his hands). Some of you know what it's like to come in from the back of the F. M. Smith library over at Graceland and go around to the front. I would walk up that and be out of breath. In fact, it got to the point that I couldn't walk all of the way. I would have to stand and lean against the building because I was so out of breath. It was progressively getting worse. I couldn't go upstairs and things like that, and I thought, 'I'm

going to have to quit my job.’ I had been diagnosed with asthma, and I thought, ‘I have got an explanation. The asthma is just getting worse, but how much worse is it going to get?’ I didn’t want to quit my job for many reasons.

I went to my regular check up with my oncologist, and he said, ‘You don’t have asthma. You don’t have any hemoglobin! Your hemoglobin blood count is 6 and a half and it should be 12, 13, 14. I was really, really down, and a short fix, a quick fix is that they give you transfusions. So they did. They gave me transfusions and I felt better. But how come the hemoglobin was down so far? That was the thing they had to find out. So my oncologist sent me up to Mercy Hospital in Des Moines. I was there for over a week, and they did all kinds of tests. I never realized they could give you so many tests. And the tests all came out positive. That was wonderful if you are not bleeding, but if you are bleeding? They couldn’t find where the bleeding was. That was the problem.

One of the worst tests - this is actually the first experience I want to share with you, and I don’t want to gross you out. They stuck a tube in my mouth and it had to go all the way into my upper intestines, for that’s where they thought the bleeding was. I couldn’t have anesthesia or anything, and I have a really, really bad gag reflex. The doctor just started ramming this thing down, and here I am gagging and writhing on the table, and he says, ‘We may not be able to finish this.’ Well, I felt like we had a lot invested already. I didn’t want to have to do it another time. Finally, he got it down. Then he put in some barium and some yellow fluid that looks like orange juice. Then he started to say, ‘Oh, we are getting the most wonderful pictures!’ He just loved it. It was just great. It was just what he wanted, but he said, ‘We can’t see any bleeding.’ And then he said, ‘OK. The barium needs to move down farther into your intestines, so let’s just have you sit for awhile. We’ll let it move.’

Tests Fail, But Testimony Grows

So Jerry sat with a tube down his throat and an IV in his arm and the barium wouldn’t move. He went down for the test about 7:30 in the morning and did not get back to his room until about 3:30. “So I was sitting there, probably not in a very good mood. I was feeling kind of sorry for myself. Also when they put an IV in me, I have bad veins. It doesn’t go in very well. Sometimes they have to try three and four times. So I’m thinking about all of this. Mercy hospital is a Catholic hospital, and in every room there’s cross on the wall. It’s a wood plaque with a cross - not a crucifix. It’s just a cross, a brown cross. I sat there, perspiring a lot, looking at that cross, and I got to thinking, ‘OK. I have sweat a lot, but I didn’t sweat blood. I have had all kinds of needles stuck into my body, but I never had any nails through my hands and feet. I did have a tube stuck down into my stomach, but I didn’t have a spear thrown in my side. I haven’t suffered at all. I got to thinking, ‘Look at what Christ did for us!’ I was still sitting there with the tube, but that made me feel better. I don’t care what your experience is, I have found out that if you are feeling bad about something, there is usually somebody else that’s had a worse experience than you; and you can think, ‘How blessed I am that I don’t have to go through that experience!’

They got tired of me sitting there without the barium moving, so they put me out in the hall in a wheel chair. It’s this long, long hallway, I don’t know if you can envision it. It’s the radiation area of Mercy Hospital. It’s all these shut doors, shut doors, shut doors and people go in and out now and then - very busy - and I sit there for awhile, and I begin to hear these terrible moans coming out of some of the rooms. And I think, ‘My goodness. What’s going on? What’s the matter?’ They were moans of extreme pain and agony.

Every now and then someone would say, ‘Oh, help me! Oh, help me!’

“Here I am sitting in the wheel chair with a needle attached to a big pump on wheels and a tube; and I bit the tube by mistake, and it leaked out on my beard and gown. I was a mess! But I couldn’t really move, and I thought, ‘What could I do anyway? I’m not a nurse! I couldn’t help them.’ And again I just forgot all about my trouble, and thought, ‘I need to be praying for these people.’ So I started praying for them, and again I thought, ‘They’ve got it a lot worse off than me!’ One woman came out from a test and she said, ‘I’ve had three children - I’ve gone through child birth three times, and I never had pains like I had in that room!’ I don’t know what they did to her, but my goodness!

“My test never found out anything. It didn’t do me any good, but it did leave me with this experience that I can share. They finally decided they were not going to find out anything, so they sent me home and I went back to work. I worked for a few days, and one of the neatest things happened to me the first day I walked into my English as a Second Language class. I had been gone for awhile. The students first said they were glad to see me - they missed me, and I appreciated that. Then they said, ‘We have been praying for you!’ A lot of them said, ‘We have been praying for you!’ That really, really touched me that they cared about me and were praying for me. I never had a student tell me before they were praying about me. They usually were probably thinking more about, ‘What’s he going to have on the next test, and how bad is it going to be?’ Some of them were not Christians, and they said, ‘We are praying in our own way for you.’

“After that class, one girl stayed on and started telling me about some experiences she had had in researching Christianity. She was from Kosovo, by the way, where there are a lot of Muslim people, and she had been brought up Muslim. She had been investigating Christianity and had been praying about it a lot. During one night, a voice came to her, and it was made known to her that it was Jesus speaking. And He said, ‘I am your God!’ This was to her the confirming experience that she should be a Christian. She converted, and she is now Christian. She’s still at Graceland. I shared some testimonies of mine with her. I thought, ‘WOW!. I have never ended a class like this before in thirty four years! What a wonderful way!’

Homecoming Attack Brings Blessings

“ So, I’m back home. It’s Homecoming. You know what people usually do for the Homecoming. You go to the game, and you have festivities and things. Well, I’m sitting at home. It’s about 10:00 O’clock and all of a sudden I get this terrible gagging and choking attack. I get chills and I’m shaking and I can’t do anything. I can’t get out of the chair. I had a little glass of water and when I would take a sip, it would make it go away a little bit, but soon I would need another sip, and finally the water’s gone. I couldn’t get up. Gloria was asleep. I didn’t want to wake her, but finally I was so loud that she heard me. She called the doctor and they said, ‘You had better get up to the emergency room.’ And this is kind of an ominous thing. You are going into the emergency room at ten o’clock on Saturday night and you know you are not going to get your own doctor. You are just going to get whoever is on call. But here is another blessing.

“A man walks in. He’s in a sport shirt, and his appearance does not inspire a lot of confidence, but he is a professional physician. Sure, he’s nice enough, clean, you know, but I didn’t know him. We talked awhile, and it turned out that he was on the staff of the

surgeon who would operate on me the next week and whose other people had been checking on me with all those tests. My surgeon had been gone on vacation and so was not there. I was greatly relieved because I thought, 'Here is somebody who is in on my case.' Now, what are the odds of that happening? He just did free lance, extra work. He was earning extra money, so every now and then he would come down to Leon to work. That Saturday night he was there for me.

"He felt I was not in very good shape and said, 'You have to go to Des Moines, I am going to send you in a helicopter.' Oh man! I really felt guilty about that because I didn't feel that bad! I didn't feel I ought to be riding up there in a helicopter. It was a neat ride - you know. You get to look out and see the lights and things down there. I'm feeling bad for taking up these people's time plus charging my insurance company the bill. It's a terrible bill! I think it's almost \$6,000. I can't remember. It's just out of sight!

"So I get into the hospital. Monday they give me one more test. Of course, nothing. Tuesday my surgeon walks in, and he says, 'You know, this is ridiculous! All these tests are not showing a thing. I think what we ought to do is operate. I think we ought to open you up and we're going to look at the small intestines. We are pretty sure the bleeding is in there. I'm going to examine it all pretty carefully, and hopefully, I will find where the bleeding is.' I felt greatly relieved about that. Finally something is going to happen.

"But I have to tell you what happened that morning before he walked in. I woke up that Tuesday morning and I had just had this last test. Nothing. No results. And I thought, 'I don't want to go through another week of all these tests and not know anything.' So I prayed really hard and I said, 'Lord, please help me to be able to resolve this situation'; and that afternoon, in walks my surgeon and says that was exactly what he's going to do. He also gave me a warning. He said, 'When we operate we may find one place or two places or three or four where it's bleeding. In that case we can fix it - we'll cut them out and you'll be OK. But the other side of it is, we could find a hundred places or many more. All throughout the intestines it could be bleeding. In that case, I'm sorry to say, we would just have to sew you back up. We couldn't fix that many places.

"Now I want to tell you of blessings that happened during the operation. I go into the operating room the next day. They open me up. Within five minutes he finds the place - the spot where I am bleeding. Notice I said, 'THE spot!' There was only one. Blessing number one, number two. The third blessing is that when he found it, there is a melanoma tumor in there, and he says, 'If we had not taken that out, it would have kept growing and would have blocked your intestines. That sounded very ominous to me, so I was able to avoid that problem which, if we had just kept putting it off, would surely have happened. I felt like that operation was full of blessings. The last blessing was that I healed quickly. The nurses wanted to get me up out of bed and walk me up and down the hall several times a day. It wasn't exactly a lot of fun because it hurt where the incision was, but I did it; and I was able to get on my feet and heal more quickly because of it.

"Let me step one back. I missed one thing I really need to share with you. The doctor came in in on Tuesday afternoon, and not very long after he had left, Di and Ron Smith came to visit me. They did not know I was going to be operated on the next day, because this had just happened. So I felt the Lord had sent them at that time for me. So we had a good discussion and I was able to ask Ron for an administration, which meant a lot to me to get ready for that

operation. Then after they had left, I was sitting in a chair by the window. It was a beautiful fall day. I looked up into this clear blue sky, and I was praying, 'Jesus, please be with me. Please help me get through this thing,' because it still kind of - you know, you think about things that could happen. And as I sat there praying, these words were impressed upon me, 'My son, I am with you.' I felt like that was from Jesus to assure me. After that and my administration, I really did feel pretty calm about this whole thing.

"A little later a chaplain walks in, and I think his job was to cheer me up and to help prepare me for the operation, which is fine, but I think he was surprised at my outlook on things. I felt like I was ready for the operation, so we ended up just sharing testimonies. It was a great experience. I appreciated his coming, and I don't mean to say arrogantly that I was ready, because I appreciated anybody who wanted to make the effort.

Relieved of Another Offending Tumor

"Let's skip to this winter, 2002. It wasn't very long before I got home. It took me quite awhile to heal from this surgery, so I wasn't back to work when I began to feel a hard place in my leg - right below my knee in the back. The first of December, I had my regular appointment with the oncologist. He says, 'Oh, that feels like melanoma and it's got to come out.' So I had another operation ahead of me. I went to one surgeon right away who told me first of all he thought he could do it and scheduled the surgery. The day before the surgery, he called me up and said that after looking at the MRI X-Ray pictures, he didn't feel like he could do it. It would give me more trouble if I had the operation because it might damage the muscles. This thing was bigger than a lemon. I don't know. It was kind of a strange shape, but that was the way he described it. He said, 'I'm afraid I might do you more harm by operating than by not operating.' I thanked him and just kept thinking about that. I thought, 'Maybe I wouldn't be able to walk if he operated on my muscles', but then I thought, 'What if that thing continues to grow. Is that not going to make me unable to continue to walk?' So I went back to the surgeon who had done my abdominal surgery and showed him the MRIs. He felt he could do it. He showed me one place he thought he could go in, and so forth. I was relieved. I don't know if you have ever been relieved to find out you are going to have an operation, but I was relieved, because I felt, 'OK, I am going to get rid of this thing. I am going to get it out of me.' So, December 18, this operation happens, and I have to tell you now, some blessings that came out of that.

"When I came out of the operating room and was going in to the recovery room, the surgeon comes to me and says, 'OK. I have good news for you. I didn't have to bother the muscles much at all. You should be able to walk normally after while. You may need a walker or crutches - something like that in the meantime.' And he even said I could go right home. So it was greatly different from the first operation and it was evidently far less serious than I had expected.

"I want to emphasize, I had been administered to and many people were praying for me through all these things. So you all are one of the big reasons I am able to stand here and share this today. I really feel that without your prayers and the Lord's help, I would not be here.

"The intern who came to dismiss me was Dr. Watson, the man who came in that Saturday night at Leon when I was there. He said again, 'Do you have a walker at home? You are probably going to need it.' Here is the next blessing. I never had to use the walker. I hopped around the house and four days later I was able to come to

church. Some of you may remember my hopping in and out here that Sunday. But that's how quick I was able to get back on my feet. And so I was able to go back to work in January, did winter term, and now, you know, I am doing my regular classes. So the Lord has pulled me through a lot of tough times.

Selected To Give an Important Speech

"During Winter Term, Barbara Higdon who was the former President of Graceland College, came up to me in the library one day and said, 'We are going to have a presidential inauguration for our new president at Graceland. He wants you, during that ceremony, to give a charge to him from the faculty and the staff'. You really could have knocked me over, because I had never done anything like that, and I felt very inadequate. I had never been up on the stage in any of those big events except to sit with the faculty; and, you know, you are supposed to say something important. I mean, you are not supposed to get up and give a few meaningless remarks.

"I had been in Germany with John Menzies when he was an ambassador over there, and I had had some wonderful experiences with him regarding the church. I had worked one year over there for the church and he made it possible for me to come back and work in a book fair in East Germany. I'll tell you a little more about that at another time. But I felt because of that, I really needed to say, 'Yes'. I felt I really needed to try to do my best. I accepted with trepidation. As I thought about it, I began to see this as a time to express the hopes and concerns of many people for a better Graceland.

"Then I got to thinking, 'OK. I'm supposed to represent the faculty here. I'm supposed to represent other people, so I can't just say my ideas.' So I started after dinner one day asking some of the faculty of Graceland, 'OK, you guys. What do you think you would like to have me share?' So they gave me some good ideas. I talked to others along the way who also gave me ideas, and I had some ideas of my own. I worked hard and prayed repeatedly that the Lord would help me express what should be said on this occasion. So, when I got up to share the day of the inauguration, I was prepared, because I felt like I had something significant to say."

It was announced that some of Dr. Slayton's remarks will appear in the Newsletter. In that regard, Jerry cautioned, 'I don't want to build this up so - don't expect some marvelous thing. But it was a blessing to me to be able to have that to say. So when I got up to speak the day of the inauguration, I saw just the opposite of what I see here. I saw the faces of people who I thought were going to be pretty displeased with what I had to say, at least some of them.' As an aside, Jerry commented, "I have to tell you, I feel like I am talking to my friends here, and I hope I am not boring you or displeasing you too much. I feel a lot more comfortable talking to you about it." Then he continued:

"The inauguration turned into what I thought was a worship service - the whole ceremony. It was a worship experience, at least for me. The choir sang a religious type song. Martha Hart out there on the faculty sang a religious song. There was even something on the program that said, 'Offertory'; and I thought they were going to take up an offering, but they weren't. It was just a song called 'Offertory'.

"When I got up to speak and share my part, I felt very calm. I felt at ease. I had prepared what I said. I said it, even adding some comments that were not in my original remarks, and when I started to sit down, the Chairman of the Board of Trustees sitting near me whispered, 'Excellent! Excellent!' I didn't even know the Chair-

man of the Board of Trustees very well, and I thought, 'That may be a positive sign if he liked it.' After the ceremony, he thanked me again and as we went out and at the reception afterwards several other people, including our new president, expressed their sincere thanks. I'm not trying to say this because I'm so great or I made such a wonderful speech. I am saying it because I took this occasion very seriously and really shared what was on my heart and what had been on my heart for years; and the Lord, along with the prayers of the Saints, supported and blessed me greatly. I had a lot of concerns that many of us have.

The Crux of the Matter

"I guess the common theme to what I have been trying to share with you today is that if we have hardships to go through, if we will just put our trust in the Lord and in the prayers of the Saints, He will sustain us. I'm not trying to say there will always be a happy ending. Sometimes it will be an outcome different, maybe, from what we expect. Nevertheless, He will sustain and support us. And I am so thankful today for the way the Lord has blessed me in these past months.

"I would like to end with one more scripture. It's from Psalms - Psalms 23, verse four. 'Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for thou art with me. Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.'

Editor's note: Few who heard or will read this sermon would ever guess that the man who vigorously and joyously bore this testimony of being so richly blessed is still full of melanoma tumors, many of them inoperable. One in each lung they may try to remove when summer comes and the present semester is finished.

Be Valiant In Testimony

Elder Michael Jordison shared Alma 15:16-18, the story of the meeting of Ammon with Alma and the others of those missionaries who went to the Lamanites to share the gospel. "And behold, this was a joyful meeting. Now the joy of Ammon was so great, even that he was full, yea, he was swallowed up in the joy of his God, even to the exhausting of his strength; and he fell again to the earth. Now, was not this exceeding joy? Behold, this is the joy which none receiveth save it be the truly penitent and humble seeker of happiness." He then joined his mother Jan, his sister Barbra, his wife Julie and Robert Rolfe to sing a worshipful hymn, the words of which bore a message he wished to share with us. So, after the song was finished, he read a portion of the words to us:

"I cannot tell why He, the joy of heaven,
Should give Himself to suffer for my sins.
Why Holy God should love me in my shamefulness,
Why He should die to draw my soul to Him.

But this I know, that Christ the Lord is risen.
And, praise His name, He's risen now in me.
Because He lives, we'll rise to life eternal.
He took my guilty heart. Now I'm forever free.

I cannot tell when He will rule the nations.
How He will claim His loved ones as His own.
And who can tell the holy jubilation
When all His children are gathered around His throne.

But this I know, all flesh will see His glory.
And skies will burst as all creation sings.
The sun will rise on one eternal morning
When Christ, the Savior of the world, is lord and King.”

“Is Christ the Lord and King of you here this morning? I hope that He is.” Brother Jordison then asked for our prayers and asked us to join him as he prayed, thanking God for the beautiful day, for the love He had shown forth unto himself, his family and this people, and asking the Father to uphold us in His arms that we might see Him for who He is and come to love Him as He loves us. He then proceeded with his testimony.

“I want to tell you this morning a little bit about my background. I was born into the church. I had been baptized when I was eight years old, but you know, I grew up and didn’t really know anything about the church, which, I suppose is OK. But the problem was, I didn’t know anything about Jesus Christ. So I lived a life of sin and rebellion. I turned away from my parents at times - turned away from the teachings that they taught, and it wasn’t until 1997 that I actually began to feel the need to find out who God was. That was prompted by an experience that my sister had one day. While she was in her room, a heavenly messenger came to her and, among other things, told her that she needed to tell Michael that he was to go back to church.

Converted to Jesus Christ

“Well, when she told me that, it hit me like a brick upon the side of the head. I suppose if somebody else had come up to me and said the same thing, it would not have had the same effect. There’s something about the power of a messenger sent from the presence of God who was concerned about my eternal welfare that caught me. And so I began a season of study and a season of prayer. I had a wonderful experience with the Book of Mormon, in so much that I had read through half of it in, I believe, about three days. I was working at the time, and I would come home, and Julie can testify to the fact that as soon as I got home, I would just open up the book and begin to read, and she and Samuel were ignored, I think, for the most part.

“After those three days, there was a period of darkness that entered into my life. Something happened that took me about a year to finish the rest of the book. But a few months later, I was attending a retreat at the Baptist camp ground at Ottumwa. Brother Ron Smith was giving a class on the Kingdom. While I was at that retreat, I knew there was something in my life that was keeping me away from a personal relationship with Christ; so, at the healing service I asked for administration, as everybody else had. There were two people there that I felt I wanted to perform that administration, but I didn’t say a word. Whoever the presider was, he was picking those who were to administer. As I walked up, those two gentlemen I wanted stepped out. As they administered to me, it felt as if the power of heaven was being pressed down on my very being, while at the same time, my whole body was lifted up off the floor. I didn’t fully comprehend it at the time, but now I understand what was happening. I had been praying for the Lord to remove that stumbling block and He had removed that veil that separated my heart and my comprehension of Him and His word and allowed that to settle in my heart - in my very being.

“And so after that retreat, I went home, and I began to study the words in the booklet that Ron had given us. One night as I was studying, I was writing down questions pertaining to the Kingdom of God, trying to understand for myself just exactly what Ron had

put in that booklet. As I was doing that, a heavenly vision came to me. The power of God came and quickened my mind, and gave me the revelation of Jesus Christ and who He is. And I began to see at that point that the elements of the Gospel are all embodied in the Son. And I saw Him as a point of light. Since that time, I have seen Him again. In that revelation that was given to me, and in that point of light, I saw the Christ, and He was upon the cross. The power and the glory of Christ comes from His sacrifice for His children. And that was my conversion - my experience with my Creator. And since that time, He has continued to teach me, and as I gain new bits of knowledge and understanding and truth, I have understood that all of those things were given to me at my conversion. The scales, or the veils, have been removed as I learn new truths. He planted the seed, and everything that was needful for that plant to grow was planted within that seed. Quite an experience!

Two Dreams Gives Instruction

“Well, it wasn’t long after that that I had a dream. In this dream, I was sitting in the back of a church, and Julie and Samuel were with me. It was a small church, about this size. There was one row of seats right down the center of this church. And this good looking gentleman walked in from the side up front. He was dressed well, his hair was combed back and he had a big smile on his face. He looked very charismatic - had that atmosphere about him - and he began to teach about this changeable God. I remember thinking, ‘This is not right! That’s not what I have been reading. That’s not what I’ve been studying. God doesn’t change!’

“And this woman appeared who was with this man up front, and she was trying to change my mind as if she could read my thoughts. At the time there was a bill trying to go through the house on partial birth abortion, and this was very ingrained into my mind. As a part of this dream, I began to try to explain to this woman about this procedure, and she was trying to deny it - you know, ‘it’s a woman’s choice’. I pushed her away, and I thought, ‘Depart from me, Satan! Get behind me.’

“I immediately thought of the passage from the Gospels where Jesus is standing there and He says, ‘Who am I?’ Peter says, ‘Thou art the Christ.’ and Jesus says, ‘Blessed art thou, Simon Bar Jonah. Flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto you but my Father in Heaven.’ And what happened right after that? Jesus was saying about how He was going to be crucified and Peter said, ‘Oh, no! No! No! No! We won’t let that happen!’ And what did Jesus tell Peter? ‘Get behind me, Satan!’ Peter didn’t understand what was going to have to happen.

“And so, as I pushed her away, this gentleman came up and was standing before me, and I began to look at him. I could almost see into his soul through his eyes, and I began to see who he was. And as soon as I realized that he was the father of all lies that was leading the church, I was drawn to the back of the room. And the church divided. The pews split so that they became a body of people on one side and a body of people on the other side. And as I am recalling this now, I remembered that this preacher that was up there, and as I was looking at the people he was talking to people on my right, except if you were standing in the front, they would be on the left. So, if Christ had been standing up front, they would have been on His left hand. I had never thought about that before.

“But he was talking and spreading his doctrine about the changeable God. I looked over on our side, and there wasn’t anybody up front. So I was thinking, ‘Well, you know, that isle is not very wide. Some of the people on our side probably are going to hear that. So, if they are going to hear it, why don’t we have

somebody up there preaching the opposite? Maybe we can get a little from their side to come over to the right side.’ So I went up to the front of this church building, and I remember this distinctly. I looked down. I was standing like this (Michael demonstrated) and there on the front rows were all the Priesthood sitting down. What was going on? The dream ended. The Lord showed me what had happened in the church. He gave me my own revelation - my own personal testimony. I didn’t have to rely upon somebody else. He cared for me. He loves me.

“Well, it wasn’t long after that, I had another dream, and I will just give you the gist of this dream - what the Lord was telling me. He said, ‘Michael, it’s time to get off the fence.’ I had been baptized into the church when I was eight, but I had never been baptized into Christ. The Lord was saying, ‘It’s time now to make a decision.’ Because I had already been baptized, although I couldn’t remember it, (Isn’t that odd? I’m sure everybody here can remember their baptism. Not me!), I prayed about it; and after much study and prayer, I made a decision, and the Lord confirmed that it was the proper thing to do. It was what He desired. So in 1998 I was baptized up in Little River, and shortly thereafter, I received the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost.

The Holy Ghost Teaches

“And it is my testimony to you - you know we talk a lot about the Spirit of Christ being given to every man, right? And we kind of interchange the Spirit with the Holy Ghost. It’s my testimony to you that the Holy Ghost is something extra - something special - something different. It’s a fuller measure - I think Alan talked about that a few weeks ago with his sermon on the fullness. I have begun to see how that Holy Ghost has been teaching me - how he has been convincing me. Talk to Julia. She can tell you that had I not changed and repented, we probably wouldn’t be married today. I may not have been a very bad person, but just the person that I was was not the person she would want to be married to very long.

Called to the Priesthood

“So I made that decision, went through it and I received of His Spirit. And then two years ago I had been praying for direction from the Lord. I wanted to do what He wanted me to do. So I prayed and fasted a little bit. One day Rob came up to me and said, ‘Why don’t we go to the church?’ I forget what we were doing. I said ‘OK.’ So we came over here and when we got back, he said that he had felt the call from God for me to be ordained to the office of an Elder. And I remember thinking at the time, ‘If I had my choice, I would be a teacher’; because, really, that’s what I wanted to do, for that’s what I thought we needed. I thought we really needed the Aaronic ministry in our congregation. I didn’t think we needed another Elder. So I had a hard time with the call.

“After some pressure by Rob to make a decision, I went to the first Family Missionary Reunion. It was at that Reunion that Julie and I both had our Patriarchal Blessings through Verle Cornish. Julie has her own testimony about her blessing, and everything that she had been praying for was answered. A part of my blessing was that I would be called to preach the gospel - the gospel of repentance - into other lands as well as in the lands around here. After the blessing, Verle said to me, and he wasn’t aware of anything that had happened between Rob and me, ‘According to your blessing, something might happen to you in the Priesthood.’ (I forget exactly how he worded it.) I kind of doubted again in my heart and still did not know if this is right. Later Verle came up to me and said, ‘That which you have been praying for, the answer is, ‘Yes.’ So I asked, ‘What do you mean, Verle?’ And he said the Priesthood call which

I had received was from God and that I should accept it. I understand that he had approached Brother Rob about the call after the blessing. And so, I accepted the call, yet there was still some fear and trepidation in my heart about it, and I began to wonder, ‘How can this be?’ So up to the time of the ordination I was praying earnestly and fasting and asking ‘Really what do You want from me? Do you really care about me that much? Then You had better tell me.’

“I was going through my journal recently and read some of my notes. Julie had fasted and prayed that during that service I would feel the Spirit of God. It was during that ordination - you know I had that powerful administration back at that retreat - during that ordination there was a time of listening to the prayers that were being offered and trying to understand them, and trying to say, ‘What’s going to happen? Am I going to be changed? How am I going to feel?’ It wasn’t until Brother Rob said, ‘Having been given authority of Jesus Christ, I ordain you to the office of an Elder to preach repentance,’ that the Spirit of God flowed right down from my head to my feet. I first described it to Julie like Pepto Bismol, but in retrospect, no. The correct analogy would be like oil because oil flows.

Answers Come At a Prayer Service

“Well, that would be pretty convincing, wouldn’t it? Yet, I still had some doubts. And part of those doubts were sown by the tension in our family with the Remnant Church. I felt that my ordination was not accepted by some, and that maybe the Remnant had it right. So I began another period of fasting and prayer. Let me just put this in here. The principle of fasting and prayer is true, and I have found for myself, as George Thomas will tell you, that when I fast in multiples of three, I get a better response - I get a better understanding. So I would fast for three days, no food or water for three days. At the end of this last fast there was a prayer meeting. I prayed, and I had three points of my fast to which I wanted answers. I needed to know whether or not this calling was of God. I needed to know about this Remnant Church. And I needed to know what the next step was in living my life. All three of those things were drawn out in mighty prayer during this fast, every time I got on my knees. One other thing, I wanted the manifestation of the Spirit at that prayer service.

“And so we went to prayer service and all those questions I had were answered. The Spirit of God came in and stood in our midst in bodily form. Although I could not see Him, I knew He was there. It was just like the account of Nephi’s vision. Remember when the Spirit in the form of a man came before him and spoke to him as one man speaketh to another? (1 Nephi 3:50). It was like that, and I was given to know, and these words I remember, that I was to hold my peace concerning the Remnant Church - that I was not to be concerned with them at this time, and I have since taken that stance. I was also given to know that the calling was true, and that in as much as I remained true to that calling, the next step would be provided by the Lord; and my next step was in the ministry of the body and to the lost souls in the earth. That pretty much ended my doubts of my calling. It sealed it right there.

“But you know, like Ron said one time - he was up here preaching and he said it felt like he had just been converted. Remember that, Ron? Do you remember that? He had learned something new. He had a new understanding of the gospel and of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and it was like he had just been converted! That’s the way we are all supposed to be. I don’t always do things right, but I know where my salvation lies.

True Worship and Praise

“I want to talk to you a little bit about praise and worship. We call this our eleven o’clock worship service, but do we really worship Jesus Christ. Is He really the Master and the Lord of our lives?” Michael then shared a piece that Rob had given out a few years ago, taken from an inscription on the cathedral in Lubec, Germany.

‘Thus speaketh Christ our Lord to us: Ye call me Master and obey me not. Ye call me light and see me not. Ye call me way and walk me not. Ye call me life and choose me not. Ye call me wise and follow me not. Ye call me fair and love me not. Ye call me rich and ask me not. Ye call me eternal and seek me not. Ye call me noble and serve me not. Ye call me gracious and trust me not. Ye call me might and honor me not. Ye call me just and fear me not. If I condemn you, blame me not.’ Isn’t that so true? We honor Him with our lips - with our words, but our hearts are often far removed from Him. I can speak from experience here. But Jesus wants to be Master and Lord of our lives. He wants to control every aspect of it - everything - and that’s not a comfortable thought for me. He want to control my finances because they are His. He wants to control my family because they are His. He wants to control my job because it is His. He wants to control what I say because the words are His when I stand as a representative of Him. Jesus is the whole reason why we are here, and I think many times we have lost the focus of that, and we have lost the true meaning of worship. We come to church, and we have preaching services, and I’m not saying anything about the preaching services, but when was the last time that you got down on your knees for an hour and praised the Lord. You know Ron likes to talk about the difference in remittance and forgiveness. Christ is willing to take the punishment for your sins. Don’t you think you owe Him something?

“Hymns are some of the greatest prayers of praise that we have like Norman just said. (Norman Nelson was in charge of the service and reminded us at the beginning that a hymn is a prayer unto God, and we should remember that as we sang.) To illustrate Michael turned to hymn 386 and said, “Listen to this:

My God and Father, while I stray Far from my home in life’s rough way.

O, teach me from my heart to say, “Thy will be done!”

What though in lonely grief I sigh for friends beloved, no longer nigh,

Submissive still would I reply, “Thy will be done!”

If Thou shouldst call me to resign what most I prize, it ne’er was mine.

I only yield Thee what is thine. “Thy will be done!”

Renew my will from day to day; blend it with thine, and take away

All that now makes it hard to say, “Thy will be done!”

“I only yield Thee what is thine.” Brother Jordison repeated. “What is the Lords’? He has all power, all glory, all dominion and all praise. Shouldn’t we be more concerned about those things in our lives, worshipping Him in Spirit and truth for who He is; for what He has done? For we love God because He loved us first.

“We talk about, ‘Where are the signs in the church?’ Isn’t that what it says in the Great Commission? Jesus said, ‘Go yea into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature; and he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be

damned; and these signs shall follow them that believe. In my name shall they cast out devils. They shall speak with new tongues. They shall pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them. They shall lay their hands on the sick and they shall recover.’ And we say, ‘Where are the signs today?’ I am not denying that there are signs, but the condition was that those that believe. We don’t really believe if we have an understanding of the gospel. We only believe when we have an understanding of Jesus Christ. And we’ve got to make Him the focus of our lives in every aspect. When He is that, He is able to work through us unhindered, and all the limitations and the frailties that we have are swept under the rug; and the power of God is manifest in the very words and the very deeds which we do. When we are humble and when we are submissive and when we surrender everything to God, that’s what baptism is. That’s why we are big about - Julie, when she was baptized, her little pinkie didn’t go under. So oops! Dip her again! That’s what it is. That’s what commitment is. That’s what surrender is. A complete submission to the will of God; and until we begin to do that, we are not going to see the signs. We are not going to have the prophecies and the gifts of the Spirit in greater measure. We are not going to be empowered, and we are definitely not going to be endowed as a people or as a Priesthood.

“I have a vision for Lamoni and Lamoni Stake, whatever that entails at this point - whether it is physically there or spiritually there, we are a Stake of Zion. The laws which were given to govern a stake are sufficient for a people in Zion. If we are not already familiar with how the law of God operates and how we should be living, then we are not going to be a part of Zion. That’s what the parable of the sower is talking about. It says that the angels will come and they will pluck out of the children of the kingdom. They will pluck out the ones that disobey God and will cast them out among the wicked. It’s not talking about the world. God is going to be plucking those in His church out, and His elect will be gathered. And that’s why it is so important that we have an understanding of Jesus Christ - who He is, and we begin to really praise and honor Him so that we are not a part of the gathering of the wicked of the world. ‘Go ye out of Babylon’, we have been told. I don’t know how many testimonies I have read from the last hundred years given to this church telling us to get out of Babylon. Babylon is nothing but the world, and the world is nothing but wicked. And if we don’t have Jesus Christ as Lord and Master in our lives, we are wicked, I don’t care if we have been baptized or not. There is a personal relationship. Nobody can decide for anybody else if their salvation is guaranteed. We can’t pick and choose and say that Brother So and So or Sister So and So is not carrying their weight. That’s given unto the Lord. But what we can do is be valiant in sharing our testimony - be valiant in understanding the word, and not just understanding it but doing it; for that’s the love of God that we keep His commandments. And that’s how we praise the Lord. It’s when we give Him deed service and not lip service. So, have a good day!

A Principle of The Gospel Explored

“Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. He shall be like a tree planted

by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.” (Psalm 1:1-4). Elder Corey Stark of Independence, Missouri found in this scripture the principle of the gospel about which he wished to speak, explaining that, “While some would not term it a principle of the gospel, it is indeed that. If it is a law and it is of God, it is, therefore, a principle, and if it is true, it is, therefore, of the gospel.” Brother Stark started by giving a dictionary definition of a principle. A Principle is either a basic generalization that is accepted as true and can be used as a basis for reasoning and conduct, a rule or standard, especially of behavior, a basic truth or a law or assumption, or it is a rule or law concerning a natural phenomenon or the function of a system. “It is a rule or a law of a natural phenomenon to which I want to compare my sermon today,” he asserted, then called upon his young son to assist him. They tossed a soccer ball back and forth a few times, noting that no matter how high they tossed it, or whether they were at home or 150 miles north of home, it always came down. The principle that always worked at home, worked here - the principle of gravity.

“When I was here in college twenty-five years ago, Dr. Bolingbroke and Dr. Smith taught principles. One of the principles we talked about in Dr. Bolingbroke’s class was gravity, and we even learned equations about how it works and how things are affected by it.” After determining that even the small children were aware of the principle of gravity, our speaker proceeded to say, “The principle that I am going to talk about is the principle of prosperity. You may say, ‘I never heard that one in Hebrews chapter 6 or anywhere else where the principles of the gospel are lined out.’ Noting that there few who recognize it, Brother Stark continued, “It’s an eternal principle. It’s a law. It’s constant. It’s never changing.”

The Principle Is Found in the Book of Mormon

With that assertion, he turned to the scriptures where this principle of prosperity is found in many, many places. Mormon, looking back on over a thousand years of history of Lehi’s people, writes in Third Nephi, 2:105, that, ‘Insomuch as the children of Lehi have kept his commandments, He, the lord, hath blessed and prospered them according to his word.’ Asking, “Where did Mormon get this wisdom?” our speaker turned to Alma 17:29 where you find Alma teaching one of his sons, “Behold, My son, this is not all; for ye ought to know, as I do know,’ (He’s saying, I have learned this and I need you to learn it, too), ‘that insomuch as ye shall keep the commandments of God, ye shall prosper ... ; And he said more. ‘If ye keep my commandments ye shall prosper in the land, but if ye keep not my commandments, ye shall be cut off from my presence.’”

‘Now Alma shared this with his sons, but where did he get this idea? Well, you turn back a little farther in Mosiah, and you read King Benjamin, the loving king to his faithful people, (Mosiah 1:55) said this, ‘And behold, all that he required of you is to keep his commandments; and he has promised you that if ye would keep his commandments, ye shall prosper in the land; and he doth never vary from that which he hath said; therefore, if ye do keep his commandments, he doth bless you, and prosper you.’ You see the principle? The principle is God’s law, and God gave his commandments, his law, to be followed. It’s just like we knew the ball would fall to the ground when I threw it into the air because gravity works the same here as it works in Kansas City. The equations in my physics book twenty years ago were probably there a hundred years ago, and my kids have the same equations in their science books that teach how gravity works. The laws haven’t changed, and God’s law

to us continues that, if we will keep his commandments, we will prosper.

“Now, this message was so prevalent in the Book of Mormon that even Amaron wrote about it. The words of this Amaron are found in the tiny book of Omni 1:6-10. (Omni is there with Jarom, two tiny little books that wouldn’t even make a pamphlet, probably, if you put them all together. Of all Book of Mormon authors, in number of verses, Amaron came in second last. Amaron wrote four verses, five if you include his introduction. Chemish wrote three.) Amaron introduces himself in verse 6 and in verse 7 he says it’s been four hundred years, and he has seen most of the Nephites destroyed. Mind you, with this whole four hundred years of Nephite perspective behind him, he’s got the plates in front of him, he’s got the wisdom of the ages, all that he finds essential to write at his point in time is ‘The Lord would not suffer that the words should not be verified which he spake unto our fathers saying that inasmuch as ye will not keep my commandments ye will not prosper in the land.’ In other words, he is saying, God said, ‘If ye keep my commandments ye will prosper in the land,’ but these people would not keep the commandments and they could not prosper. Amaron writes another verse, and he signs off. Out of all the things he could have written, that’s all he had to say.

“And you back up and you find he wasn’t the only one who said it. You back up, and read Lehi and Nephi, and you find they both said the same words, and why? Who did they hear it from? They heard it from Jesus Christ when Jesus himself said, ‘Inasmuch as ye shall keep my commandments, ye shall prosper.’”

“Now how many of us have taught this to our children? That’s something that may do indirectly. We teach ourselves we’ve got to follow God’s laws. It’s the right thing to do, but how many of us have realized that God said that our temporal, spiritual, our life in this world, our life in the world to come, the amount we get out of that life, is directly affected by how we follow His laws. that is the lesson He wants us to understand. That is the principle of prosperity that if we keep his commandments When we were laid backwards in the baptismal font and came out, we promised that we would keep those laws - we would keep those covenants. And he says, ‘If you do this I will be with you. You will be blessed spiritually. You will be blessed temporally.

Not only in the Book of Mormon

“Now it’s not just the Book of Mormon that says these things. If you turn to the book of 1 Kings, 2: 3, you find these words, in David’s charge to Solomon, ‘Keep the charge of the Lord thy God, to walk in His ways, to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and judgments, and his testimony, as it is written ... that thou mayest prosper in all that thou doest, and whithersoever thou turnest thyself.’ You see, it wasn’t just the Book of Mormon that preached this message. It was God’s message to all of his people. If we turn to Second Chronicles 31: 21 you find the word verified. When Solomon began to work, it says, ‘And in every work that he began in the service of the house of God, and in the law, and in the commandments to seek his God, he did it with all his heart and prospered.’ He sought the Lord to keep His commandments and he prospered. The word was verified, and he prospered.

“Men, have you been teaching this to your children? Women, have you been teaching this to your daughters? If we don’t teach the principles of God, and how we are to prosper by keeping His commandments, to our children, they get messages from the world - from the Brittany Spears and others they see in the world, and those people will teach them the wrong message. We have to teach the

right message. But, do we understand it ourselves?

The Problem

“The problem comes from not listening. The pattern is described in the Bible. Genesis 8:8 - ‘And it came to pass that Noah called upon the children of men that they would repent, but they hearkened not unto his words.’ Exodus 6:9, ‘And Moses spake also unto the children of Israel, but they hearkened not unto Moses.’ Second Kings 21:9 again God says to Israel, ‘I won’t make you move any more. I will give you the land of your fathers only if you observe to do everything I have commanded you,’ but they hearkened not, and they were seduced to do more evil than the nations which the Lord had destroyed before them. Jeremiah 24 says, ‘Obey God’s voice. I will be your God and you will be my people, and walk in the ways I have commanded you, and it will be well with you, but they hearkened not nor inclined their ear nor walked in the counsels, and they went backward and not forward.’ You see, the principles are simple. The law is eternal. But will we listen and will we benefit? You know, gravity was around before any of us understood it, and we all understood it at a pretty early age, I think. But to apply that - to take advantage of it takes study and it takes application.

Does It Really Mean That?

“Some of you are thinking, ‘You know, maybe the scriptures say that, but is that really what it means?’ Sometimes you can read a scripture and the way you emphasize a certain word or emphasize a certain verse or you can extract a certain part of the content out that take it a little out of context, so therefore, you can twist things to say what you want them to say. Let me give you an example. Say I take a sentence - ‘I didn’t say the dog bit him.’ If I said it this way, ‘I didn’t say the dog bit him’, what am I doing? I’m denying that I had anything to do with it. Now, if I say, ‘I did not say the dog bit him.’ I’m not denying that I said anything. I’m denying that was what I said. Now, if I said it this way, ‘I did not say the dog bit him.’ Now I am not denying that I had anything to say. It wasn’t the dog. It was the cat. How about this, ‘I did not say the dog bit him.’ OK, the dog licked him. You see it’s the same sentence. And how about this? ‘I did not say the dog bit him.’ OK. It’s the same sentence, but I’ve given you five different ways and it has five different meanings, right?

“Now, listen to this, ‘Keep the commandments and you prosper.’ Keep the commandments and you prosper.’ Does that sound much different to you? ‘Keep the commandments and you will prosper.’ ‘Keep the commandments and you will prosper.’ How do you take it any way and get any other meaning other than the fact that God has made a promise - God has described the principle- and He gives it to you to take advantage of. It means the same thing every way.

Does The Principle Work?

I wanted to share that with you because some people say, ‘Well, the scriptures don’t really say that.’ I challenge you to read it to me a different way that means anything else, and then, we’ll open the word and see. You know, there are examples in scripture of people who have prospered by keeping the commandments. I want to take a little journey in the Book of Mormon. This journey takes less than twenty five years. Within one generation - in the lifetime of a people, a congregation, of a nation, the people experienced this.” Corey first read from Helaman 2:139, that the people were enjoying life in a good way, ‘For behold, the Lord had blessed them (the Nephites) so long with the riches of the world, that they had not been stirred up to anger, to wars, nor to bloodsheds, therefore, they began to set their hearts upon their riches, and they

began to seek to get gain.’ Then he said, “Let me turn back. The journey starts earlier. Helaman 2:22 is the start of the course. ‘It came to pass that in this same year, there was exceeding great prosperity in the church, insomuch that there were thousands who did join themselves unto the church, and were baptized unto repentance.’ Now, these were the good days. These people were prosperous, and listen how exceeding prosperous they were. Helaman 2:23, ‘So great was their prosperity and so many the blessings which were poured out upon the people, that even the high priests and the teachers were themselves astonished beyond measure.’ Now, you all know High Priests and you all know teachers. They are in your congregation and they are in my congregation and in my time on the earth, I don’t know of any time I have ever seen the High Priests walking around with their mouths dropped open for the prosperity of God’s people. We have had good times, but these people were amazed. And verse 24. ‘It came to pass that the work of the Lord did prosper unto the baptizing and uniting to the church of God many souls; yea, even tens of thousands.’ So here we have prosperity, not just spiritual prosperity in the sense that people were joining the church, but we have temporal prosperity. They were blessed in all things, both temporal and spiritual, according to King Benjamin.

“Now the next stop on our journey is the verse I read, Helaman 2:139. The Lord had blessed these people for so long that they weren’t stirred up to anger. They weren’t stirred up to wars. They weren’t stirred up to bloodshed. They had the easy life, and they relaxed, and that’s when the problems started. And what does it say? Therefore, they began to set their hearts upon their riches, and they began to seek to get gain. A wrong move! You see, the problem is God says, ‘I love to bless you.’ Psalm 139 says, ‘I delight to give you the delights of your heart.’ Psalm 35:27 says, ‘Shout for joy, and be glad, ... let them say continually, Let the Lord be magnified, which hath pleasure in the prosperity of His servant.’ God takes pleasure in seeing us prosper? Why wouldn’t he? What parent among you wouldn’t want to see your children do well? The problem comes with God’s children, he said this, ‘When they began to want the stuff more than the creator of the stuff, then they had problems with their stuff, and everything else.’ You see, they began to set their heart upon their riches. Flip ahead to Helaman 4:47 and 48, and we find the problem. ‘The people waxed stronger and stronger in their pride,’ (Verse 47), because they set their hearts on their riches. In verses 48-51 we get the commentary. Helaman says, ‘And thus we can see how false, and also the unsteadiness of the hearts of the children of men; yea, we can see that the Lord in His great infinite goodness, doth bless and prosper those who put their trust in him; Yea, and we can see that at the very time when he doth prosper his people; yea in the increase of their fields, their flocks, and their herds, and in gold and in silver, and all manner of precious things of every kind, and art; spares their lives, delivers them from their enemies, softens the hearts of their enemies, all of these things for the welfare and happiness of you, his people. Verse 51 is the punch line. He says, ‘Yea, this is the time that they do harden their hearts, and do forget the Lord their God, and do trample under their feet the Holy One; yea, and this because of their ease, and their exceeding great prosperity.’

“You see, we fight that today. We have life, we have jobs. Sometimes we struggle and then maybe get another job or the boss gives another raise and suddenly maybe there is more money in the bank and now you just want to enjoy life; so you trade that 19 inch TV in for a 39 inch TV, and now suddenly that TV is so fun that you

want to stay up Saturday night and watch that TV and then you are just too tired to get up for church on Sunday morning. You see that happens, why? Because we had it too easy. Because of our blessings and our prosperity, we forgot in the day He blessed us.

“And what happened to these people. You know the journey started about 40 years or so BC, and now 5 or 6 years BC in the 5th chapter of Helaman, verse 45, turn ahead and we end the journey. We find that the people were in misery. This same people, the day of their poverty had come, and what was their response? It wasn't , ‘Thank you Lord for all of our blessings you continued to shower upon us’. No! They set their hearts upon their riches and said this, ‘Yea, in that day ye shall say, O that we had remembered the Lord our God, in the day that he gave us our riches, and then they would not have become slippery, that we should lose them; for behold, our riches are gone from us.’

What Has Stuff Got To Do With Anything?

“Now, don't make a mistake. Don't think I am here to tell you, or imply, that if you've got a lot of stuff - if you've got a car, you've got a home, and you've got a new bedroom now, or there is enough money in the bank, and you don't need that next paycheck, that somehow you are OK. That's not a safe stance to take with the Lord. You see, one of the principles I learned in mathematics under Ron Smith was the power of substitution. Even though it has been over twenty years, I remember him teaching us one of the most powerful principles of mathematics. You can take $A=B+C$, and you can substitute $B+C$ anytime you see A in that equation, and you know that $B+C$ will help you solve the problem and get the answer. Well, substituting one thing that equals something else helps you understand the principle. What's the principle? I read a scripture to you earlier from Alma. Keep the commandments and you will prosper. And you say, ‘Prosper’? That's a pretty wide definition, right? What's the opposite of that, and here is where we are going to do a little substitution. Break the commandments and you what? Are cut off from His presence. You see, I'm not defining your prosperity by the amount of stuff you have in your back yard or in the storage unit. Your prosperity is relative to the presence of the Lord in your life, and therefore, if the absence of prosperity is the absence of God's presence, therefore the presence of prosperity is the presence of the Lord - His Spirit that blesses and guides you in all things at all times. That is the definition of prosperity, and if you have that Spirit, you have all things. What needful things do you lack?

Scriptural Examples

“I want to give you just one quick example of how prosperity was applied in the scripture. Third Nephi 5:85 is a simple verse. You have probably read it many times. Jesus said, ‘People, I say unto you that ye shall not resist evil, but whosoever shall smite thee on the right cheek, turn also thy left.’ That's a commandment - that's a law He gave at the time when He came to visit the Nephites; but you will find, if you turn to the Fourth Book of Nephi, that the Nephite people had become proud and they began to split. The very believers who had followed Jesus, who had always assembled and worshipped together, now there was division among them. And the people who had been former believers now came against the ones who remained faithful. 4th Nephi 1:37, the unfaithful ‘did smite upon the people of Jesus; but the people of Jesus did not smite again.’ And they prospered.

Our speaker spoke of his love of living in Independence, the land of Zion, the promised land, and affirmed that the covenant made to Joseph is going to be fulfilled in that proximity and other places. He also found some people there who have a tendency to

‘smite’ their brothers and sisters. For example, he noted that when the Coop grocery store was being operated by some of the Saints, some felt that, “If you shopped at the Coop, you were faithful, but if you shopped at Hy Vee, I'm sorry, you just weren't faithful. Or if you made your whole wheat bread and you put that half a cup of unbleached flour in there just to help it rise a little better, I'm sorry! You know, you weren't faithful. We somehow followed our own thinking as to whether we were keeping the commandments, and we sometimes point at the motes in other's eye when Jesus said, ‘Get the log out of your own eye.’ Somehow we think that in our unjust judgment, we are being faithful.

“What happened? The Nephites in fourth Nephi, were smitten and they didn't smite back. That was following Jesus' command. You find in Third Nephi 13:32, a description of the disciples whom Jesus appointed, and it says, ‘But they did smite the earth with the word of God, insomuch that by His power they were delivered out of the depths of the earth; and therefore they could not dig pits sufficient to hold them.’ Where is my point? You see, God said, ‘Don't smite each other. Don't smite each other with your words, your hands and your hearts. And the people who didn't smite each other were blessed with power, and the people who applied God's plan, followed the principles, could smite. They didn't smite each other. They would smite the earth and it would open up or mountains would rise up or the oceans would part. You see, they followed the principles and they received the blessings. They kept the commandments and they prospered. They kept the commandments and they had God's presence. If they broke the commandments they were out of God's presence, and my question to you is, ‘Are you walking in the presence of the Lord?’ If you are, then you are prospering. If you are seeking the presence of the Lord, my suggestion to you is to seek to do His commandments. Seek to fulfill them, and as Alma told his son in Alma 17, ‘Seek to do them as they are written.’

An Exercise in Keeping The Commandments

“Keeping the commandments is sometimes harder that you think. I want to try something with the men, women and children.” Our speaker then asked the men 18 or older to reach out their hand as though getting ready to shake someone's hand, bend the fingers back kind of like they were holding a stick, and press their thumbs down, maybe an eighth of an inch. Then he asked, ‘Was that hard? Did you have to work really hard to do that?’

“Now you women, this is even harder. Watch me. Watch what I do with my mouth.” His mouth was closed tightly. There seemed to be nothing happening. Then he asked those younger than 18 how many had access to a computer at home, at school or at a library.

“Now pretend you are sitting at that computer. Take your hand and pretend you have that little mouse. Now just tap that mouse with your finger. That really isn't too hard, is it? that's all I want you to do.

“But now, let's back up to the guys. Now, it's pretty easy to take your thumb and push it on thin air. Now, take, if you will, the remote control of your TV set. Now you are sitting there in front of that TV set, and there is no one home. (It doesn't happen here, but it does happen back where I live.) Say there is a TV show that has women that aren't very well covered up. Can you do it? Can you press your thumb down? Does it make your pulse go up to think, ‘Can I do it? Can I turn it off?’ Keeping the commandments is harder than you think!

“All right women. Say there is a bunch of women at a lunch and you are having a good time when someone says, ‘Do you know what

she did? Do you know what she said?' and you want to say, 'What?' Well that's when ... (and his mouth snaps closed.) "Can you do that? Does it make your pulse go up to sit there and say, 'I'm not going to say anything.' It's hard. It's harder than it looks, isn't it? I mean, it's easy while you are here in church, but can you really do it? If you can, you are keeping the commandments of God.

"And kids who have a computer, you got all kinds of stuff if you have ever been on the internet that you don't want and you don't want to see. You know what, sometimes you get it whether you ask for it or not. Can you take that mouse in your hand and can you click on that little box that closes that window out? Can you do it? Good! Good! Because it's a lot more than just clicking your finger, isn't it? It's deciding in your head and deciding in your heart to do the right thing. It's like the Nephites who sat there when someone slapped them on the face, or they slapped them with their words and they didn't do it back. That's hard, isn't it? That's when you are keeping the commandments of God.

"God counsels His people. He says, "Don't fret when you see other people who prosper in their ways.' I want to share a couple more scriptures to let you know that God wants you not to worry. Isaiah 48:17, be aware that God said, 'Thus saith the Lord,' (When God says, Thus saith the Lord, that's His way of saying, 'Read my lips!') 'thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; I am the Lord, thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldst go.' You see, God is the one who joys in our prosperity. He offers it to us if we will be obedient - if we won't set our hearts upon riches. He says, I even teach you if you will listen and if you'll follow me.

"But he counsels 'Don't worry about those who prosper, and are evil doers.' Psalm 37 says, 'Fret not thyself.' Don't worry about it. Well, nevertheless, people still did, and the scripture I want to share with you comes from Psalm 73, starting at verse 3. I'm going to skip a little bit through the chapter. David witnessed something that you have all seen. David said, 'I was envious at the foolish when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.' What is he saying? 'I wish I could be kind of simple and dumb when

I saw the prosperity of the wicked people, because I realize that I didn't want to be like them, but it bothered me in my heart.' And he got down on his knees and prayed to the Lord. (Verse 12) He said, 'Lord, I see these people. These are the ungodly people. These are the people of the world, the heathens, sometimes Christians like to call them. These are the ungodly who prosper in the world, and they increase in riches.' Then he laments (verse 13-14) 'Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain. I have washed my hands ... , for all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning.' And he continues to think about these people who are ungodly and are prospering In verses 16-17, 'When I thought to know this, it was to painful for me; until I went into the sanctuary of the Lord. Then understood I their end. Surely thou didst set them (the heathen, the unrighteous) in slippery places.' And he continued to say that their prosperity wasn't assured, but yours is.

"I think I will just sum up what I wanted to say by letting you know I'm not trying to give you a formula by which you can say, 'Gosh, now I can finally have that BMW or finally I'm going to get more things.' This isn't a sermon or message about things. This is a sermon and a message about God's desires to bless you when you are obedient - when you are faithful, and that you'll know that it isn't about the amount in your checking account or the length of your RV that determines your prosperity. Rather it's by the relationship with and the indwelling and daily presence of Jesus Christ in your life

and His blessings that define prosperity. The Lord desires to bless you. I will close with this verse from Psalm 118. The Psalmist simply wrote, 'Lord, send now prosperity.'

A Song of the Righteous Is a Prayer Unto Me

The praise Psalm 113:1-3 was the scripture with which the April quarterly song service was opened. "Praise ye the Lord. O ye servants of the Lord, praise the name of the Lord. Blessed be the name of the Lord from this time and forevermore. From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same, the Lord's name is to be praised."

After singing, "O Worship the King", Ron Smith, who was in charge of the service, called for the offerings by explaining the way offerings were accepted when he was in Nigeria. A basket was placed in the front of the room. The people sort of danced down the middle aisle and placed their offerings in the basket, being careful not to reveal the amount being offered or, indeed, whether there was an amount placed there at all. Ron followed suit and dropped a rather generous amount in the basket only to learn that they did not make the trek to the basket once but repeatedly throughout the service.

The monetary offering at Mount Ayr was received by the ushers in the customary manner. The offerings that followed were of talents and praise.

The first talent offering was that of Jan Jordison's class of children singing, "W-O-R-S-H-I-P! That's what God wants of me." Each letter stood for an attribute of God or an action required of me. W, He is worthy; O, I must obey; R, our God is righteous; S, My Savior shows the Way; H, He makes me happy; I, in Him, I'll trust; P, I'll always praise Him; I must - or bust. "So I sing this melody, W-O-R-S-H-I-P."

Ron and Di Smith supported Cede Smith as she sang, "Happy is that people whose God is the Lord" (Psalm 144:15). Added to the Psalm is the question, "Where does this happy feeling come from?" and the answer, "This happy feeling comes from Jesus!" After the song was sung, the congregation was invited to join in, and we pointed heavenward with Cede as we affirmed, "This happy feeling comes from Jesus."

"Mike and Julie Jordison, Sam, Isabel and Joshua sang "Allelu, Allelu, Allelu, Alleluia, Praise Ye the Lord!" with the children taking the "Alleluia" affirmation and the adults first singing, "Praise, ye, the Lord!" then joining the children as they all praised the Lord together.

Jazmyn Galusha, Elizabeth and Laura Swartz, accompanied by Akela Galusha on the guitar, sang "Amazing Grace", each of the girls taking a verse of that familiar and beloved hymn and all joining in on the final presentation.

Jerry Slayton explained the next offering to be given by Barbra Jordison, Cara Smith and Jerry. Printed in our bulletin were the words of the song, "Seek Ye First The Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you. Hallelu, Halleluja." They were printed in both English and German. The congregation was invited to sing the English words and, if they wished, join the group singing the German. We were accompanied by Ron Smith on his guitar.

The next congregational hymn, also printed in our bulletin, was

the beloved, "My life flows on in endless song; above earth's lamentation No storm can shake my inmost calm while to that Rock I'm clinging. Since Love is Lord of heaven and earth, How Can I Keep From Singing?"

Mildred Smith read from her *Master's Touch 2*, the story of her father's desire for a good teacher for his children that was assured to him by a heavenly choir.

Tim Mitchell played a piano solo, "O Happy Day", followed by Rob Rolfe's singing, with his guitar accompaniment, the scripture story of Cain and Abel. God warned Cain, "Sin wants to have you, so watch and be strong." But Cain didn't listen and lived a life of estrangement and isolation. "So learn now a lesson from Cain and his folly. Through pride, hate and jealousy only comes wrong. Envy and anger will end in disaster. They're waiting to snare you, so watch and be strong."

Dan Kinnaman, accompanied by Jan Jordison on the piano, sang the Easter hymn, "In the grave they laid him, Love whom sin had slain, thinking that he would never wake again. Laid in the earth like grain that sleeps unseen, Love is come again like wheat arising green." The hymn's final affirmation is, "When our hearts are wintry, grieving or in pain, your touch can call us back to life again." Ron and Di Smith sang a song that first recounts some of the acts of the Lord on behalf of His people then affirms, "He can do a miracle for me. So, I'll go and do what the Lord has commanded no matter what others may say, for I know in my heart, if I trust in Him, the Lord will prepare the way."

Diane Anderson first bore her testimony of the power of the Spirit of God she felt in the room this morning and of the ministry she receives from the music services that brought her to this place in spite of incredible weariness. She then shared a story of a young girl about four years of age who goes shopping with her mother and sees a string of pearls that she wants to purchase. She has only ten cents and the pearls cost a dollar; so she works hard to earn the dollar and purchase the pearls. She wears them everywhere, even at night. At night her father always reads to her. After a couple of weeks, he asks if he may have the pearls. She expresses her love for him but also her love for the pearls. He says it is all right for her to keep them, but the next night and the next, he again asks if he may have the pearls. She offers other things but retains the pearls. On the fourth night, however, she takes off the pearls and tearfully offers them to him even before the story. Just before she goes to sleep, he gives her a box from which she takes a necklace of beautiful real pearls. He tells her he has had the real ones for her all of the time waiting for her to give up the fake ones, then he puts the pearls around her neck before she sleeps.

Diane ended with, "Imagine what our heavenly Father would do for us if we would just give Him the thing that we treasure most!" The congregation sang the first, third and fifth stanzas of the rousing hymn, "Praise ye the Lord! 'Tis good to raise your hearts and voices in His praise; His nature and His works unite to make this duty your delight."

Sue Beck sang a cappella, "The Church's One Foundation is Jesus Christ her Lord. ... From heaven He came and sought her to be his holy bride. With His own blood He bought her, and for her life he died. ... Lord, give us grace that we, like them, the meek and lowly, on high may dwell with thee."

Steven Smith sang his own composition based on the story told by an Indian story teller of an Indian girl named Tina whose legs never developed into sturdy appendages for her to live a normal life. Her father told her from the time she was little, "Some day you're

gonna soar like an eagle, run with rabbits that never tire, climb up mountains without getting winded, if you'll wait on the Lord for awhile." After a lifetime of rejection and weakness, Tina starts to pray over her frybread when an angel comes who scoops her up as her frail body drops to the floor. The angel's message is, "Today, you're gonna soar like an eagle, run with rabbits that never tire, climb up mountains without getting winded, 'cause you've waited on the Lord for awhile."

Alan, Valle and Cara Smith, accompanied by Jan Jordison at the piano, sang the rendition of the twenty third Psalm that begins, "My shepherd will supply my needs, Jehovah is his name." and ends with, "O may his house be my abode, and all my work be praise. There will I find reviving rest, and freely go and come. No more a stranger or a guest, but like a child at home."

Yvonne Galusha and daughter Cessaries, accompanied by Akela on the guitar, sang the beloved "Whispering Hope", "Soft as the voice of an angel, breathing a lesson unheard, hope with a gentle persuasion whispers her comforting word. ... When the dark midnight is over, watch for the breaking of day. ... Whispering hope - oh how welcome thy voice, how welcome, making my heart in its sorrows rejoice."

Michael Jordison and Diane Anderson came to the microphone. Michael explained that after hearing Diane's story of the pearls, it seemed appropriate to sing "I'd rather have Jesus than silver of gold. I'd rather be his than have riches untold. I'd rather have Jesus than houses or lands, I'd rather be led by His nail pierced hands, than to be the king of a vast domain, and be held in Sins dread sway." I'd rather have Jesus than man's applause, than world wide fame, than anything this world affords today.

Ron closed the service with thanks for the musical offerings and said, "There's something about a song that reaches to the heart of God, that breaks through the darkness and knits our hearts and souls together. Jesus sang hymns with His disciples, the Bible tells us, and the hymns this morning have been like prayers to God. Let's stand and sing, "Blest be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love". The benediction was pronounced by Priest Jim Barber. Cessaries Galusha, who had been the pianist for the service, played the postlude, and, for the first time many of us looked at the clock and were surprised to learn that it was well past the usual closing time.

From the Pastor's Desk

Continued from front page

both today and in the future.

They want the door shut because they want to live their lies without any regard to the reality of a spiritual universe. Like as in days of old, the people who want the door shut say: "He is not a god of miracles," "eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die," "God will justify in committing a little sin, yea, lie a little, take the advantage of one because of his words, dig a pit for thy neighbor, there is no harm in this. And do all these things, for tomorrow we die; and if it so be that we are guilty, God will beat us with a few stripes, and at last we shall be saved in the kingdom of God." (2 Nephi 12:8-11). They will be the ones on the outside of the door saying, "Lord, Lord, open unto us." And He will answer, "You know me not."

The door of the tomb is still open. It cannot be closed. "I have set before thee and open door, and no man can shut it. . . ." Rev 3:8 Don't shut the door. Don't try. Don't allow the door to close. By the way, Jesus was born in a barn.

News & Notes

Youths Continue to Earn Honors

Jared Beck and Brandi Anderson moved on from the Pride of Iowa speech competition where they each received one ratings to the District speech contest at Shenandoah, Iowa. Brandi received a two rating in prose and Jared a one rating in improvisation. In improvisation, speakers were given a situation and two characters from which they had to make a presentation. Jared's situation was counting gold bars in Ft. Knox and the characters were a millionaire and a car salesman. Those who received division one ratings at Shenandoah advanced to the state contest held March 22 at Ballard-Huxley high school where Jared again received a one rating from one of the three judges.

Cessaries Galusha won the talent portion of the South East Iowa pageant at Keokuk and was awarded a \$100 scholarship. The talent portion of the show counted for 30% of the total score.

At the Amadeus Keyboard Festival at Morningside College, in Sioux City, Iowa, Cessaries was a co-winner of the first place prize. Since there was no second place winner, the total prize money for first and second, \$450 total, was divided between the two winners. Cessaries had placed second in the Festival last year. More than 40 pianists from the tri-state region participated in the event. Heidi Winkler was named to the all conference academic team for basketball and has been nominated for induction into the National Honor Society.

Nathan Smith, with duo-pianist Janet Fetterman, performed with the UMKC Conservatory Orchestra on March 5, a privilege they won in contest. They also performed with the University Chorus on March 6 and, at the Truman Library on March 23. At Truman Library they played the entire program which they entered in contest later that week.

Piano Duo Receive National Music Club Award

Nathan Smith and Janet Fetterman received the \$10,000.00 award for their performance in the National Federation of Music Clubs competition held in Spartan, South Carolina on March 29. In addition they received the \$500.00 award for performing a contemporary American work. They are scheduled to perform at the Music Club's National convention at Nashville in August and have been invited by a professor who heard them in competition to give a concert at a university in Arkansas. Both Nathan and Janet are doctoral candidates at the UMKC Conservatory of Music and hope to enter the professional field by fall.

Life of Charles Bastow Celebrated

Elder Charles Bastow passed away Friday, March 7 at the Ringgold County Hospital in Mt. Ayr. He was almost 93 years of age. His life was celebrated on Monday, March 10 at the Wilson-Watson Funeral home and at the church next door to the Mt. Ayr Care Center where he lived with his wife, Helen, and where the Bastows had celebrated their sixtieth wedding anniversary just last month. Elder Alan Smith officiated at the funeral service. Dr. Herbert Bastow spoke in memorial for the sons and daughters of the family and Prosecuting Attorney Shannon Olsen spoke for the grandchildren. Following the service, the family and friends gathered at the Mt. Ayr Restoration branch of the church for fellowship and dinner.

Brush Up On the Basics

The first of a series of classes designed to explore the basics of the gospel began March 16 under the direction of Elder Michael Jordison. The class meets every other Sunday afternoon at 2:00 at Lamoni Book of Mormon Center. All are invited to attend.

Restoration Sacrament Service at The Auditorium

All Restoration Saints are invited by the Pastors of Zion and Central Missouri to participate in a Sacrament Service on April 6, 2003 in the Conference Chamber of the Auditorium, Independence, Mo. The doors will open at 8:30 a.m. A song service will be held from 9:15 until 9:45 a.m. The Sacrament service will begin promptly at 10:00 a.m. Please tell Pastor Robert Rolfe if you plan to attend that service.

Note the time change for April 6. Time springs forward an hour, so keep that in mind or you may arrive too late for the service.

Mount Ayr Sacrament Service Postponed

The Mount Ayr April 6 Sacrament Service is postponed until April 13 to permit members of the congregation to attend the Restoration Sacrament Service at the Auditorium, Independence, Missouri on April 6. There will be no Zion dinner following the service on the 13th.

Quarterly Fast Scheduled

The congregational fast for the souls of those who know not God will begin Friday evening, April 11 and end at the Sacrament Service April 13. Saints will gather for prayer at the regular meal times as previously during the fasts.

Senior Recital April 13

Cessaries Galusha and Amy Mohler will present their Senior Recital at 3:00 p.m. Sunday, April 13 in room 167 of the Shaw Auditorium on Graceland University campus. Refreshments will be served in the Green Room. All are invited.

Fall Retreat Planned

Put September 26,27,28 on your calendar for the fall retreat at Farwesta. Plans are well underway for a weekend of worship, learning, fellowship and fun for all ages.

Eagle Scout in for Basic Training

Dan Martwick, son of Bess Leonard, stepson of Ricky, will receive his Eagle Scout award April 27 at the Presbyterian church in Creston, Iowa. Dan, a Junior in High School has joined the Army Reserves and will receive boot camp training in South Carolina beginning June 11. He will return to complete his Senior year at school before going on to advanced training. Having his Eagle Scout award advances him a full rank in the Reserves.

Apologies in Order

Your reporter wishes to apologize for allowing the question addressed to Ronald Smith to appear in the report of his sermon in last month's issue. We give copies of the sermons to their authors for checking and she forgot that she had asked?

CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST
Mount Ayr Restoration Branch
607 E. Madison
Mount Ayr, IA 50854

News & Notes

Services planned for Easter Week

Several special activities are planned for the period leading up to Easter and on Easter Sunday in the Mount Ayr Restoration Branch.

We will be participating in Breakfast With the Master breakfasts at the First Christian Church in Mount Ayr Monday, April 14, through Saturday, April 19. Wednesday, April 16 is the day that we will be working with the folk from the United Methodist Churches at Tingley, Ellston and Wishard Chapel to do the cleanup and set up for the next day. Breakfasts begin at 6:30 a.m. and devotions at 6:55 a.m. The theme this year is "The Journey To The Cross."

There will also be a community Good Friday Service on

Friday, April 18, but details were not available at the time of the newsletter deadline.

For the Mount Ayr Restoration Branch, we will have a communion service on Palm Sunday after sharing in the service to open the Conference of Elders in Independence, MO on Sunday, April 6, at the Auditorium.

On Easter Sunday we will have a breakfast at 9 a.m., followed for the regular schedule of services.

Plan to come and share with us in worship as we remember the death of Christ for us, and the excitement of the Resurrection.