

## FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

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### What Is A Restorationist?

We commonly refer to ourselves as the “restoration”. Just what is a restorationist and what is being or has been restored? I thought about these questions as I was reading a book called “Jewish Culture & Customs” by Steve Herzig. According to Herzig, after the destruction of the Temple in 70 A.D., the Jews were scattered to the four corners of the earth. Two distinct groups emerged from this dispersion; the Ashkenazic and the Sephardic Jews. The Sephardic became concerned with what they should know, while the Askenazic were concerned with what they must do.

Ashkenazic Jews were devoted to Talmudic studies. They isolated themselves from the world. The pogroms, discrimination and persecution, encouraged this isolation. A sect developed called the Hasidim or the pious ones. The Jews, as pictured in the musical, “Fiddler on the Roof” were Ashkenazic Jews.

The Sephardim Jews developed their own system of rituals for the daily lives of their people. While there are other, smaller groups of Jews, the Ashkenazic and Sephardic “groups” are usually used as examples of what it meant to be Jewish.

As groups of Jews began to be separated geographically, their theological interpretations of the Torah began to differ. There are some Jews, (but not a high percentage) that consider themselves to be Jewish, but do not believe in a God. Most Jews still believe in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, but

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## TESTIMONIES AND SERMON NOTES

### Remembering - Hidden Things Revealed

Anan Smith had just sung “There’s an old, old path made strangely sweet, by the touch divine of His blessed feet”. High Priest Robert Rolfe reminded us of the congregational musical of a few years ago in which we sang, “Sing it. You’ll never forget it!” He then declared, “We are here today remembering - at least we are supposed to be. The body of Christ - that’s what you are - has come together to remember the covenant we have made in baptism. One of the things I think of when I come here, because of where I come from, is what a really good group of people you are. As I look around at each of you, I just see the best of this part of the country, because when I’m in court, I see the other group - people who are doing things to themselves and to each other that are pretty awful. This scripture came to mind and I would like to read it. I wanted to say ahead of time that I think you are really good people so you don’t think that I am lashing you in some way.

“This is Apostle Paul speaking, 1 Corinthians 11:26-29: ‘For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord’s death till he come. Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.’” Our speaker interrupted his reading to comment, “The way I read that is that it is the same as if you had killed Him.” “‘But let a man (You ought to read that ‘person’) examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh condemnation to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body.’ Apostle Paul is saying that is what Jesus told His disciples when He had that meal we call ‘in the upper room’.

“For those of you who were here, and I expect many of you were, remember a few weeks ago Gerry talked about the Bible code and about the things that were hidden in the Bible. One of those was that World War 3 would start in three years. I don’t know if you care about those details, but if that’s the case, if you were thinking about repenting, this may be the time.

“When I was Pastor at Andover, the women talked about, if they absolutely knew Jesus was coming back, how long a time would they have to know before they would change anything. As

they talked about that, they admitted that as long as they knew they had three years, they wouldn't change what they were doing today. And there is our dilemma.

### **Hidden Things**

"I am going to be talking about hidden things today, and I am going to be talking about that in the context that we are about ready, as the body of Christ, to eat and drink as the Apostle Paul talks about. I don't know that we completely understand what the Lord had in mind when He kept telling us to do this often. I think there is more to it than just a vague memory, 'Oh, yeah. I remember You. You died on the cross!' I think there is more to it than that. I think there is real spiritual power and strength that we gain from this sacrament and from doing it often.

"Is there anyone here this morning who is completely honest with themselves and with the Lord who hasn't some secret things that they haven't confessed to God? I don't expect you to stand up. If you want to, you are welcome to, but it would be great if we were at the level of spiritual maturity where we could confess our sins to one another and then get the support that would result in if we were able to do it. Many of us carry these kind of things within us, and I'm not talking about that we are Jack the Ripper in our spare time or that we are out robbing banks when no one we know is around. I'm talking about those things in terms of attitudes we have and bad feelings we carry about our families, our bosses, our neighbors - those things that have never been resolved that continue to plague us if we are honest.

### **Lie To God? He Searches Your Heart**

"I would like to read for a moment, a very famous scripture from Acts 5:1-11 - 'But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, And kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet. But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? While it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God. And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost; and great fear came on all them that heard these things. And the young men arose, wound him up, and carried him out, and buried him. 'And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in. And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much? And she said, Yea, for so much. Then Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out. Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost; and the young men came in, and found her dead, and carrying her forth, buried her by her husband. And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things.'

"I'm not trying to tell you that you are going to lie to God, but there is a lesson involved here. One lesson, I guess is, 'Don't lie to God, if you think that's possible'. Do you think you can lie to God, whatever is on your heart? Of course not! You can't do it anyway, but if you do, remember who you are lying to. This is the Creator of the Universe! this is the most powerful being that exists. You need to be nice to beings with that kind of power. The scripture says, (1 Chronicles 28:9) 'Know thou the God of thy Father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind; for the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth the imaginations of the thoughts; if thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou

forsake him, he will cast thee off forever.'

"Do you feel comfortable thinking that God is searching through your thoughts, and the imaginations of your heart? Now, there are two ways that you can respond to that idea. You can put your hands over your eyes and ears and hope that He can't see what you are thinking. It's not going to work! The better way is to say, 'Yes, Lord. I have had this thought, and it's not a good thought. Please help me to get rid of it! You know I have desired this thing and I know that's not a good thing. Help me to overcome that desire and get rid of it' If you approach it that way, I think that the Lord will bless you in overcoming whatever it is.

"I had a person say to me not too long ago, 'I'm not a bad person.' Can you say that about yourself? Anybody here feel like they are a bad person, come and see me after. If you don't do bad things, you can say, 'I'm not a bad person!' What if, though, in terms of thinking about coming to this table, that the worse thing that you do every day is not seeking your Lord, Jesus Christ. If that's the worst thing that you do, listen to 2 Chronicles 12:14, a very short scripture: referring to Rehoboam, 'And he did evil, because he prepared not his heart to seek the Lord.' If we don't prepare our heart to seek the Lord, isn't that in itself an evil that we need to repent of? If we do not prepare our hearts to seek the Lord, the scripture says, that will lead us to do evil.

### **The Wages of Sin is Death**

"How many of you remember the person named Achan whose story is found in the book of Joshua. Achan thought that he could hide something from the Lord. The Israelites went into this place to go after the people with whom they were warring, and the Lord told them, 'Don't save anything. Don't take anything - no money, no spoils, no livestock, no nothing!' But he did. you can find it in Joshua 7:20-22. He hid this stuff that he took under the earth in his tent, and as a result, all of Israel suffered dearly. And Joshua, because he was a prophet of the Lord, realized that this had happened and called him before him and said, 'How can you think that you are going to do this? You are lying to God!' What was the result? Achan, his wife, his children, his live stock, everything was destroyed. What a price to pay! You say, 'Well, surely the Lord won't do that to us.' What did the Apostle Paul say? 'The wages of sin is death' - the same in every age. It's not just today. If you break the laws of God, you will pay, just like if you break the law of gravity, you pay. You can't break His law and not pay. I have a scripture here from Ecclesiastes 12:14 which says, 'For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.' In Achan's case, the sin was revealed right away. In our case, it might take a little longer.

"Let me ask you this, 'Have you who consider yourselves to be the body of Christ made a covenant with God? Have you come before Him with prayer and thanksgiving and with a repentant heart? If you did not, you have just heard what Apostle Paul has said about that. Will God merely say, 'Oh well, you tried a little to follow your vow. That's all right. You're only human.' Being only human is not a handicap. It's a blessing. It's not something that keeps you back. It's something that should propel you forward.

"I found a scripture in the book of Numbers about doing this - Numbers 30:1-2. 'This is the thing which the Lord hath commanded. If a man vow a vow unto the Lord or swear an oath to bind his soul with a bond; he shall not break his word, he shall do according to all that proceedeth out of his mouth.' It always has been - always will be!

### God Reveals Hidden Things

“You know there are many things hidden by God. Some of those are good. Some are evil. One of the ways our prayers can be answered is for God to reveal hidden things. Has God ever revealed anything hidden to you? Let me give you a way you can find out hidden things. Just pick up your scriptures, any one of them, and start reading. When you find something you don’t understand, start praying every day and fasting that the Lord will reveal what that means unto you. You will not only have that prayer answered. It will increase your faith in God.

“In any case, I would like to remind you of Daniel. This is in Daniel 2:20-22. Remember what the edict was? Nebuchadnezzar had too many bureaucrats, and he said, ‘I’ve got a plan. I will get rid of them. All right, all you guys, I had this dream. You tell me what the dream was and what it means. If you don’t, I’m going to kill you all.’ That happened to include Daniel and his three friends. Now, the people who had been there the longest - the higher echelon of the bureaucrats said, ‘You can’t expect us to do that! If you will tell us the dream, we will tell you what it meant.’ The king said, ‘No! Tell me what the dream was and what it meant or you are all history!’ Daniel and his friends said, ‘Well, give us time to ask. And they prayed and they fasted, and as you know the account, the answer was given to Daniel. You know Daniel is one of the few people referred to in the scriptures as a friend of God. Daniel, when he got this knowledge said, ‘Blessed be the name of the Lord forever and ever.’ We don’t talk a lot about how important the name of God is, but it sure is talked about a lot in the scriptures. Blessing the name of the Lord is important. ‘For wisdom and might are his; And he changeth the times and the seasons; he removeth kings and setteth up kings; he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding; He revealeth the deep and the secret things; He knoweth what is in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with him.’

“I have a friend who is a research scientist who said he was struggling in his work. He said he offered a prayer that the Lord would help him, and as he said, ‘I went for broke!’ In other words, what he was doing was one of those things that could have been a disaster. But he came up with an immense discovery. I don’t think he realized how important it was, but one of the company lawyers came down and spent an hour or so with him. Then the president of the company came and spent another hour or so with him. And when he said, ‘Is this really that important?’ They said, ‘The patent rights alone on this discovery are worth millions of dollars, not counting what this will do for our process.’ So here he is, a lowly lab worker working on a project. Now he is the division chairman, chief over all this and has all these people working under him. Kind of sounds like Daniel, doesn’t it? Whether you are righteous or not, you will recognize people who have that influence of the Spirit with them. ‘It’s not all bad that sometimes God has hidden some things. It says in the scriptures that the death of Christ was one of those hidden things. Paul said if that fact wasn’t hidden, the princes of the world would not have crucified Jesus. It’s found in 1 Corinthians 2:7-11: But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory; Which none of the princes of this world knew; for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.’

“Did you ever wonder how the adversary fell into that trap? You know that he did the worst he could and it turned out to be the salvation of all men! I think Apostle Paul is right. If he had known, that crucifixion would not have happened. But this scripture goes

on to say: ‘But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.’ You have probably heard that before, and a song has a line that goes on and says, ‘Therefore, fear.’ And the thing we are fearing,” Brother Rolfe spoke with deep emotion, “is that there will be anyone who falls short of that. It goes on to say: ‘But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, except he has the Spirit of God.’

“Have any questions about things? Something bothering you? Anything a mystery? Things that are hidden? You are going to have that opportunity, probably not too long. For some of you it will be a lot quicker than you ever imagined. Jesus is going to be coming, and then you can ask Him about those things - particularly if you are one of His.

“In fact, I found this scripture, Doctrine and Covenants 98:5g, and I didn’t remember that this was a promise that was given to us. ‘In that day when the Lord shall come, He shall reveal all things; things which have passed, and hidden things which no man knew; things of the earth by which it was made, and the purpose and the end thereof; things most precious; things that are above, and things that are beneath; things that are in the earth, and upon the earth, and in heaven.’ That should pretty well cover it! At least, I think that would pretty well answer my questions.

“So let us examine ourselves and allow the Spirit of God to come within us. If you haven’t done so, you are still going to have a moment to reflect, to pray to God and to repent of any sins you may not have thought about. I hope that we can carry on our hearts that promise that, ‘Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.’”

In that extra moment of preparation afforded us, we sang, “Here, O My Lord, I See Thee Face to Face,” then were served the emblems of Christ’s sacrifice for us. We were dismissed with a prayer that the Lord would be with us as we try to make good on our covenant and to be known as friends of God.

## The Wisdom of Solomon - Seek God

The entire sixteenth Psalm was read by Brother Gordon Winkler as the premise of his sermon on February 8. “Preserve me, O God; for in thee do I put my trust. Thou hast said unto me, that thou art the Lord my God, and, My goodness is extended unto thee; And to all the saints that dwell in the earth, and the excellent, in whom is all my delight. And the wicked, there is no delight in them; their sorrows shall be multiplied upon all those who hasten for to seek another god; their drink offerings of blood will I not accept, nor take up their names into my lips. Therefore thou, Lord, art the portion of mine inheritance, and of my cup; thou maintainest my lot. The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea I have a goodly heritage. I will bless the Lord, who hath given me counsel; my reins also instruct me in the night seasons. I have set the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth; my flesh also shall rest in hope. For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer

thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt show me the path of life; in thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures forevermore.”

Kathleen Myers sang of the many ministries that together define “That’s what Jesus means to me.” Gordon responded to the song, saying, “That’s what we are going to talk about this morning. Kathy selected a song that was very appropriate for today’s topic. He then quoted an article which he felt was very well stated and to which he said he had related well. It is by Alan Perkins. “The pursuit of God is a lifelong quest. It’s not merely a phase of our spiritual growth, nor is it an optional activity. Rather, it is fundamental to our lives as Christians, from beginning to end. You could even say that continuing to seek after God, continuing to draw closer to Him, is what Christianity is all about. Because true religion isn’t just a matter of right knowledge or right conduct. It’s not just a matter of beliefs or morals, Christianity is a relationship; an ever deepening experience of God, a lifetime of striving after him in faith, and obedience, and love.” ‘

“If you can accept Mr. Perkin’s position as something we all need to be doing; then we can’t become complacent. We can’t rest on what we already know and what we have experienced. We need to keep seeking and pursuing God with diligence and perseverance all of our lives. It is the one thing worth giving our lives to, and it comes with a guarantee of success.

“Moses promised the Children of Israel in Deuteronomy 4:29, ‘But if from thence thou shalt seek thy God, thou shalt find Him, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul.’

“In my life. I always feel a little uncomfortable preaching to somebody and telling them something that they need to do. It’s always easier for me if I get a little introspection and look at things in my life, so you can take often times my presentations as confessions, I suppose. They are things that are important to me, and I hope will relate well to you.

### **We Are Infinitely “Lucky”**

“God is not hiding. He is not unwilling to be found. But He is not likely to reveal himself to the careless or to the indifferent, or to the merely curious. God can be known, and God will be known, but only by those that seek Him. I hope this morning that you are here because you desire to seek God. I want to show to you that seeking and knowing God will give you the greatest happiness and satisfaction in your life, both now and in the world to come. I want to stimulate us to seek God whole heartedly, and not merely out of a sense of duty or obligation but out of joy, hope and desire. I want us to be thoroughly convinced that a life striving after God is the most fulfilling and rewarding life possible.

“I once saw a poster that at the top said, ‘REWARD’. At the bottom it said, ‘LOST DOG - ONE EYE - THREE LEGS - AND A CROOKED TAIL. ANSWERS TO THE NAME OF LUCKY’. That represents what I think God sees in me. He sees me as spiritually deformed, but lucky because God has paid the reward so that I could come back home through the death of His Son, Jesus Christ. Whether you see yourselves as deformed or not, God paid the price and the reward for you to come back and be at His side also. But why? Why does it matter whether we think a life of seeking God will make us happy? Isn’t it enough to know that the scriptures speak of it? Zephaniah 2:3 says. ‘Seek ye the Lord, all ye meek of the earth...’ Lamentations 3:25 says. ‘The Lord is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him.’ Isn’t it enough that this is what we are called to do as Christians? The answer is, ‘No!’ It’s not enough for several reasons.

“First, people naturally chose for themselves what they perceive to be the greatest good. Because of our human nature, we have a tendency to choose what they think will bring the greatest happiness and satisfaction. Now, it doesn’t have to be immediate. They may have in mind some future benefit. That’s why, for instance, people who are training to be doctors endure long years of study at great expense. Their focus is on long term satisfaction and pleasure of practicing medicine. But whether the hoped for benefit is near or far, people naturally choose what they think will make them happy. And ‘happy’ can mean all kinds of things. It can mean personal fulfillment, the opportunity to make a difference. It can mean physical pleasure, having control over one’s own life, gaining power and control over others’ lives, respect, recognition and prestige, financial security and freedom from material wants, love, friendship, appreciation. There’s quite a list of things that can bring personal fulfillment. Whatever we find most desirable personally and believe to be within our grasp, that is what we will choose.

### **Satan Tempts By Making It Look Desirable**

“So, when Satan wants to tempt someone to evil, what does he do? He presents it to their minds as something highly desirable. He tries to convince them that this particular sin, whether it is greed, or envy, or lust, or gluttony, or pride, is what will make him truly happy. He plays up the benefits and conceals the cost, especially the eternal cost. He tries to make that sin look as appealing as pleasing and attractive and as good as he possibly can, just like he did with Eve. You remember in Genesis 3:11, the Bible says that after Satan was done talking to Eve as a serpent, she saw that the apple was ‘good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom.’ Remember that? She forgot about the fact that it was poison. She forgot about the fact that eating it meant death to herself and to her children because Satan had made it sound so good, and it worked. Why? Because people tend to choose what they believe will satisfy their needs and their desires.

“I think that’s true of all of us. It’s not a good long term strategy to just grit your teeth and try to do what God commands when you don’t believe it’s going to make you happy. When you don’t believe it’s in your own best interest, it’s a difficult thing to do, and if you try, you will fail. I think we have seen that through the course of people that we know and friends who have been in the church and have left. They came to church. They went to Sunday school, and we thought things were going the way they should go if they were believing in God; but in the end what you usually find out is that there was something else that was more desirable that gave them more happiness than their belief in seeking God.

“If we are not convinced that seeking God is the source of greatest good, then sooner or later Satan will come along with something that seems more desirable, and we will depart from the path of obedience and holiness. Trying to be godly by forcing happiness on ourselves will only cause us to fail. The only way to persevere in godliness is to be persuaded that seeking first His kingdom and His righteousness is going to produce the greatest happiness and satisfaction possible - that the path of faithful service to Christ is also the road to our greatest joy and our greatest pleasure.

### **The Problem**

“You see, the problem isn’t that we desire our own happiness. The problem is that deep down, we are not absolutely convinced that following God is the best way to obtain it. We think that perhaps we would be happier if we devoted ourselves to gratifying

every physical desire, or if we devoted ourselves to becoming wealthy and acquiring houses, and cars, and boats. Perhaps if we had unlimited wealth and power and freedom, we would be more satisfied. Secretly, in the back of our minds, we are not really convinced that pursuing God is the path to our greatest joy. We wonder if perhaps, we are missing out on what's best. That's what the problem is - not that we desire joy or satisfaction or happiness but that we doubt whether seeking God is the way to find it.

"Perhaps Hugh Hefner really is better off than we are - or Donald Trump, or Bill Gates, or some Arab Sheik with billions of dollars in oil money and palaces and a harem. Are we better off seeking God than they are? I hope we all answer, 'Yes!' to that. In fact, we have a case study in the book of Ecclesiastes that I'm going to share with you here in a minute. Some of you may remember reading in Ecclesiastes. There is a song written that makes chapter 3 very common to some. It says that for every thing there is a season and to every time there is a purpose under heaven.

"The reason that this is such a good case study is that King Solomon had all of those things that we just talked about. He had all kinds of riches, servants, all kinds of power, buildings, everything. So I would like you to listen to how King Solomon describe this in Ecclesiastes. It's pretty easy reading and I think you get a sense of the struggles this man had to justify the things that he had and find value in them and happiness. I'm going to start reading from Chapter 2:1 and then go to verses 4 and 11. 'I said in my heart, Go to now. I will prove thee with mirth; therefore enjoy pleasure; and behold, this also is vanity. I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards. I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kind of fruits; I made me pools of water, to water there with the wood that bringeth forth trees; I got me servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house; also I had great possessions of great and small cattle above all that were in Jerusalem before me; I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces; I gat me men singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men, as musical instruments, and that of all sorts. So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem; also my wisdom remained with me. And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy; for my heart rejoiced in all my labor; and this was my portion of all my labor. Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labor that I had labored to do; and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun.'

"If you read through the book of Ecclesiastes, you will find that Solomon had all the things we usually imagine will bring us happiness - not only wealth and power and pleasure, but also wisdom and knowledge and respect and achievement. He was declared a great ruler; and yet, none of those things was sufficient. Solomon struggled to find value in his life, and in his discourse, if you read through, you see that he really addresses a lot of things other than those material things. He addressed the future in terms of inheritance. He had this really ill feeling that he had worked all his years and accumulated all of this, and what had he gained from it? It was going to be gone. When he died, in terms of his relationship to that, it was gone! He was leaving it to his heirs, and he even questioned whether or not his heirs were worthy of it and whether they could manage it. He did talk quite a bit about material things, but another thing I found interesting was that he struggled about the value of knowledge. Even though he was a wise person, was learned and had much knowledge, he was concerned that even that was

gone with him. What value did he gain from being a smart person, a knowledgeable person if in the end, that too, was going to be gone?

### **Solomon's Conclusions Instruct Us**

"Here are a few of the conclusions from Solomon's reflections over his life that I picked out:

1. The world doesn't offer anything that is lasting.

2. Man is no better than the beasts. We eat, we breathe, and then we return to the dust. (Doesn't that give you a good feeling knowing that you are no better off than the cow out there on the hillside between Mt. Ayr and Lamoni?)

3. All that we have are gifts from God.

In the fifth chapter verses 19-20, Solomon said that we should enjoy our work, accept our lot in life that is indeed a gift from God. In chapter 11 he says that if you wait for things to be perfect, you will never get anything done. We often say, 'If I just knew a little bit more.' 'If I had another week or two to prepare.' 'If I had given myself opportunity to attend the class, I would then be a better off to be a witness or to teach the class'. Have you ever thought how often you are waiting to have all of it to be perfect before you go on? If you do that, Solomon's conclusion is, that we never get anything accomplished.

4. And finally, (this is his conclusion in chapter 12), he says that we should 'Fear God, and keep His commandments; for this is the whole duty of man'. After Solomon looked back over his whole life, after he had looked at all the things he had accomplished, all the things he had collected, and he analyzed what is going to be the future, he realizes that we are no more than just like a beast. We are all going to eat. We are all going to breathe and then return to dust! He concludes that the greatest thing we can do is to 'Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is our whole duty, the whole duty of man!'

"Now Satan tells us that if we could have all of this, or that or of some other thing, we would be happy. Then when we get it and find that we are not happy, he tells us we just need a little more of it or that we need something else to go along with it. He was the master of the enhancement plan. I think he was behind the computer industry; because I know that with computers we just think, if we had a little more speed, our computer would be a lot better; or if we had improved graphics, our computer would be a little better. Or if we had a bigger monitor, that would really be better! So, I think those are the kind of enhancements that I think Satan must be a part of.

"So, off we go, at least in our own minds, searching for happiness in every thing but God Himself. And what a tragedy, and how blinded we have become; when the one thing that would truly make us happy has been within our grasp all this time if we had just reached out and taken it. That's God, Himself! Paul says in 1 Timothy 6:6, 'But godliness with contentment is great gain.' Seeking after God results in great gain and great happiness!

### **Is Seeking God to Find Happiness Selfish**

"We have heard the introspections and reflections of Solomon and his conclusion that man's whole duty is to keep the commandments of God and we have heard the support of the scriptures that tell us to seek God, and that to have happiness, eternal happiness, is really reward. Let me ask you this. Does all of this sound a little selfish to you? Why would God choose to motivate us to faithful obedience by promising us personal benefits? Do you ever have those kind of thoughts? Maybe it's just a symptom of my questioning nature. It may be that because of my job, when anybody comes to me with a good idea, I am always looking to see if it's

really a good idea or whether there is hidden cost associated with it or problems that are going to generate issues for me later on in terms of personnel or something like that. But did you ever wonder that we as individuals are seeking God for that reward of eternal happiness? Let me propose this answer.

“First, God wants us to remember that our fundamental relationship with Him is one of receiving from Him rather than giving to Him - one of being served rather than serving. Is it not true we cannot give anything to Him except that we have already received it from Him? We cannot serve Him except by the power and abilities which He has already given us. We are recipients of His blessings and benefits - of His love and His mercy. He calls us to obey, and suffer and strive, not because He needs anything from us but because these are the means through which He has chosen to bless us, His beloved children. But I don’t think our seeking God for personal benefit and reward, this reward of happiness, is as much for us as it is a matter of providing a way, a conduit for God to bless us.

“Paul said, speaking to the Greeks at Athens, Acts 17: 24,25,27: “God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands. Neither is worshipped with men’s hands, as though he needed anything, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; ... That they should seek the Lord, if they are willing to find him, for he is not far from every one of us; ...’ And Mark tells us that our relationship to Jesus is one of being served by Him rather than of serving Him. Mark 10:45 - “For even the Son of man came, not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many.’

“Further, seeking after God is not selfish because we don’t seek the things that the world seeks - the kind of things that can only be obtained at someone else’s expense. Remember Solomon listed all of those things. There’s only so much gold to go around and if you are seeking so much gold and wealth, that means that someone else isn’t going to have it. Those are the kind of relationships and the kind of things that the world would want us to seek - those things that are obtained at someone else’s expense. What we seek in God are things like joy and peace and fulfillment and happiness. And these all are things of which there is an unlimited supply. And more than this, they are things that come from serving others and putting the needs of others ahead of our own. That’s the opposite of selfish. It’s finding joy and fulfillment not in serving ourselves and putting our needs first, but in serving others and putting their needs first. “We can seek God and follow and obey Him with joy, knowing that no matter how much we give or sacrifice or suffer, we will receive more in return. It is impossible to give to God and not receive a hundred times back from Him because He loves us. He loves us more than we can possibly imagine. And that’s why we can say, as did David in Psalm 40, ‘I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy law is written within my heart.’

“So let us seek the Lord with all our hearts, with all our soul, our might, mind and strength every day of our lives, that we may receive from Him all that He desires to give us.”

## Love The Foundation of Marriage

Elder Steven Smith announced that because it was Valentine’s Day he was prepared to talk of love - not just love in general but the

relationship between husbands and wives, and the promises that exist in the scriptures concerning that relationship. He promised to use six scriptures in his ministry and began by defining the terms, ‘husband’ and ‘wife’.

“‘Husband’ is developed from an older English term meaning *buandi*, and *buandi* is the direct translation from Hebrew of ‘*Alummah*’ and means an individual in bondage, he said. After a slight ripple of laughter went through the congregation, he explained, “It is one who chooses to be bound; and it has been applied to a manager who is bound to manage a business. It’s also applied to one who cultivates or takes care of animals that require a large amount of time. Interesting imagery here!”

‘Wife’, he said, “comes from the Swedish ‘*viv*’, and that is a direct translation from the Hebrew, “*Ishshah*” which means to twist or to turn and also means a woman. *Meyara* is a wife who is a curse. *Baalayyehudah* is a wife who is a Master of Israel. Interestingly enough, the *Ishshah* is very close to a term in Hebrew meaning foundation.” So before going to discuss husbands and wives, our speaker read Luke 6:27-38. He called this scripture the baseline of how we should treat each other, and as he read he wrote on the white board at his side the salient points of the message:

### The Baseline Is Love

“But I say unto you who hear my words, Love your enemies, (This is just the baseline. This is what you are supposed to do for your enemies, therefore you can probably love your wife.) do good to them who hate you. (This is for all people. Hopefully your husband or wife doesn’t hate you!) Bless them and pray for them who despitefully use you and persecute you. And unto him who smiteth thee on the cheek, offer also the other; or, in other words, it is better to offer the other, than to revile again. And him who taketh away thy cloak, forbid not to take thy coat also. For it is better that thou suffer thine enemy to take these things, than to contend with him. (Let’s not contend). Verily I say unto you, Your heavenly Father who seeth in secret, shall bring that wicked one into judgment.

“Therefore give (Be giving.) to every man who asketh of thee; and of him who taketh away thy goods, ask them not again. And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise. (A kind of a ‘Do unto others’.) For if ye love them only who love you, what reward have you? For sinners also do even the same. And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what reward have you? For sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again.

“But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great; and ye shall be the children of the Highest; for he is kind unto the unthankful, and to the evil. Be ye therefore merciful, (Be merciful.) as your Father also is merciful. Judge not, and ye shall not be judged; condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned; forgive, and ye shall be forgiven. Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, ... . (So we have the giving again!)”

“This is the basis of how you are supposed to treat our enemies. If this is the basis of how we are supposed to treat our enemies, we can probably say that this is the basic behavior that we expect when we are treating somebody whom we truly love - someone to whom we are married. Can we say that this is how we treat our spouses? If not, we need some growth to be able to bring our relationship up to the enemy level. That’s scripture number one.

The next scripture to which Brother Smith turned was 1 Peter 3:1-2. He introduced it as a blessing that Peter spoke of in the

relationship of husbands and wives. 'Likewise ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conduct of the wives; While they behold your chaste conduct coupled with fear.' On the board he wrote 'to be subject', then asked, "What does that mean?"

### **Right Relations And Prayers Will Not Be Hindered**

"If you look up the word subject in the dictionary, you will find there are many meanings, but there is a Greek word, hypokeimenon, that has been translated to be subject which means to be the foundation. Let's read that first part again. 'Likewise, ye wives, be the foundation for your husband, that, if any obey not the word, they may without the word be won by the conduct of the wife.' Interesting! The wives are to be the foundation. The analogy here is not the body. The analogy here is a house. Without a good foundation the husband - wife relationship does not exist. Peter says, if the husbands don't believe, because of your good foundation you can even win them over, 'while they behold your chaste conduct coupled with fear.' There is quite a bit of control in the foundation of the house. Perhaps that is my own interpretation of what is going on, but when you put it with the one who twists but is also the foundation, it certainly makes sense. And then he talks a little bit more about not adorning themselves especially just on the outside but doing it on the inside as well. Peter goes over to verse 7 and says,

"Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, (I know that sounds a little bit harsh to call a woman a weaker vessel, and yet at the same time, if you look at various types of vessels, if you look at a rubber made container that can take a lot of battering and throw it around and you look at fine china which if you drop it it breaks, which is the weaker vessel? So husbands, treat your wife like fine china!" and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers may not be hindered. Interestingly enough, if we go beyond the enemy status, have a functioning relationship with a wife who can become subject, or the foundation for the two, you have a stronger relationship; and if the husband will treat the wife like fine china and dwell with her, not looking in another direction, your prayers will not be hindered. What an interesting promise! Your prayers will not be hindered!

Verse 8-9 - "Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another; love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous, not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing; but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called that ye should inherit a blessing.' So both of them should be of one mind, compassionate, loving, having pity, courteous, not giving evil for evil, not railing." Steven asked for the meaning of railing and agreed that it meant to "put up a fence", to argue, to separate. "If you are being railed, somebody is yelling at you and shouting. Don't shout back. Be courteous. You may have to have pity for them. You have to love them. You have to be compassionate. You want to be of one mind. And instead of giving evil, you give them a blessing. And so at those moments when you or others are 'putting up rails' it's time for you to bless them. "Knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye may inherit a blessing,' he repeated. There are two promises in that scripture. Your prayers will not be hindered, and you will inherit a blessing. That's the promise of Peter.

"So, if you wives become the foundation for your relationship, if you will, by your conduct win over your husband, (coupled with fear) and if you husbands will dwell with your wives according to knowledge, giving honor unto your wife and treating her like fine china; then if you both will be of one mind, having compassion one

for another, love as brethren, be cheerful, be courteous, not rendering evil for evil or railing for railing, but going ahead and giving a blessing, you will find that your prayers will not be hindered, and you will inherit a blessing. What a wonderful Valentine's Day promise from First Peter the third chapter, verses 1 through 9!

### **Benevolence and Togetherness Foil Satan**

"Let's go over to Paul. This is or number three scripture. Paul wrote a lot about marriage. In 1 Corinthians 7:3-4 he talks about the husband first. 'Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence; ...' Benevolence is being kind, inclined to do good, gracious, giving, and charitable. So, husbands, toward your wives you should be kind. You should be inclined to do good. You should be charitable. That's First Corinthians 7:3, the first part. And the second part of First Corinthians 7:3 says: 'And likewise also the wife unto the husband.' So benevolence, this kindness, this charitableness, this tendency to be good is an equal opportunity gift that we should be giving to each other on Valentine's Day. Benevolent, actually every day as we choose to be husbands and wives.

"The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband; and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife. Depart ye not one from the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourself to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency.' So if you are benevolent and depart not, except when you are going out to fast and to pray - don't just take off on each other all the time, one of the promises that he is giving here is that Satan can't tempt you. That's a kind of a neat little promise if we are benevolent with each other and if we stay with each other.

"So we go to another promise of Paul's found in Ephesians 5:18. 'And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord. (So it starts off with the idea of keeping your thoughts on the Lord.) Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.' (And this is the prelude to when he gets into talking to the wives and to the husbands.) And he says, 'Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church; ...'

When I looked up the head, again I realized that there are a number of different ideas or definitions of head. One of them is that if you look at the head of a paper, you are looking at the top. We have already seen the foundation. The analogy is more of a structure than of a body, and the head can't stay up without the foundation. They become one. They become intertwined. I had a friend that we called Grandpa Thomas. Grandpa Thomas lost his wife and decided to remarry. When he asked Grace to marry him he said, 'I want one thing to be clear. We need to realize that I am the head of the house.' Grace looked at him and said, 'As long as one other thing is clear. As long as you realize that I am the neck that turns the head.' An example of the two working together.

Our speaker returned to the scripture: "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church; and he is the Savior of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Now he says, 'Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church not having spot or wrinkle or any such

thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.’ (So a part of this promise is no wrinkles or spots.) ‘So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh: but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church;’ So we find that Paul’s promise, in this case, is that if the wives will be submissive to the husbands. If each husband will love and nourish and cherish his wife to the point that he would give his life for her - to the point that they would do all for their wife, then you will be presented without wrinkle or blemish or spot. That’s a pretty good promise to have. Note that this scripture only asks that the wife submit to love - the love of her husband.

As an aside, our speaker recalled, “Paul Harvey has over the years, given the names of couples whose marriages have gone usually over fifty years, naming them and telling where they are from. He reported that there was a sociologist who was making a study of couples whose marriages lasted the longest - those that were kind of without wrinkles or spots - marriages that had made it through everything, had stayed together and were happy. The sociologist found that he could take all marriages, and by asking some questions determine which ones were going to survive. He distilled it down to the fact that if, in a couple, the man learned to say, ‘Yes, Dear,’ it would survive. If he would nourish and cherish his wife, we have the promise of a perfect situation.”

#### **God Requires Monogamy**

Next Brother Smith went to the Book of Mormon, reading from Jacob 2:54-56. “Behold, the Lamanites, your brethren, whom ye hate, because of their filthiness and the cursings which hath come upon their skins, are more righteous than you; (Ouch! talking to these people!) For they have not forgotten the commandments of the Lord, which were given unto our fathers, that they should have, save it were one wife: and concubines they should have none; and there should not be whoredoms committed among them. And now this commandment they observe to keep; wherefore because of this observance in keeping this commandment, the Lord God will not destroy them, but will be merciful unto them; and one day they shall become a blessed people.’

“Despite all the filthiness, despite all the cursings of this people, they kept one commandment - one man, one wife, no concubines, no affairs, neither for the guys nor the girls, either way. As a result there were three promises from the Lord. They will not be destroyed. He will be merciful, and they will become blessed. The power of the love and the union of the family is fantastic in that if we will keep this commandment that one man should have one wife, one wife should have only one husband, you don’t have any concubines, you don’t have any affairs, you aren’t looking in other directions - if you will do that, you will be more blessed than the people of Nephi because you won’t be destroyed. The Lord will be merciful to you for all the other things, and you will become a blessed people.

Jacob 2:57-59 “Behold, their husbands love their wives, and their wives love their husbands, and their husbands and their wives love their children; and their unbelief and their hatred toward you is because of the iniquity of their fathers; Wherefore how much better are you than they, in the sight of your creator? O my brethren, I fear, that unless you repent of your sins, that their skins will be whiter than yours, when ye shall be brought with them before the throne of God.” “This is the promise of Jacob that the Lord would preserve the Lamanites, and we know in the end, even though the Nephites were blessed more at this point in time, that they chose a

different action, and they no longer had the blessing. When they chose not to repent of this wickedness, they were eventually destroyed and the Lamanites, who had chosen the way of monogamy were allowed to survive.

#### **Watch and Pray Always in Families**

“And finally, the blessing of Jesus. For this I am going to go to third Nephi 8:50-52 - ‘And it came to pass that when Jesus had spoken these words unto his disciples, he turned again unto the multitude, and said unto them, Behold, verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye must watch and pray always, lest ye enter into temptation; For Satan desireth to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; therefore ye must always pray unto the Father in my name; and whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, which is right, believing that ye shall receive, behold it shall be given unto you. Pray in your families unto the Father, always in my name, that your wives and your children may be blessed.’ Watch and pray, not by yourselves but in your families, and your wives and your children shall be blessed, and ‘whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, which is right, believing that ye shall receive, behold it shall be given unto you.’

“Six scriptures delineate how we are to treat each other on Valentine’s Day and the rest of the year. Six scriptures that talk about the relationship - creating a foundation and a head that goes with that foundation. Six scriptures that expect that you treat your spouse at least like an enemy and go beyond the status of enemy, and pray with them in your family, and nothing will be impossible.”

## **If You Talk the Talk - Walk the Walk**

Our guest speaker Sunday, February 22 was Richard Reeves of Independence, Missouri. His scripture was the familiar pronouncement of James 2:25, “For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead.”

“A few years ago I read a book entitled, *The Day America Told the Truth*. It is a book that dealt with many issues including the relevance of religion in one’s life. One chapter is entitled, ‘Who Really Believes in God?’ There were 90% of the people they surveyed in America who said that they truly believe in God. If you stopped right there and went no farther in the book, you would think that God must really play an important part in the lives of Americans today in dealing with important issues. If you read the rest of the book, however, you come out with a completely different conclusion. In every section of the country that they surveyed, when people were asked how they made up their minds on moral issues - important issues we have today - on right or wrong, they simply did not go to God to find the answer. It was found that for most people, religion played virtually no part at all in their life. When it comes to shaping an opinion on a long list of important issues like birth control, abortion, teaching creationism, even the role of women in the clergy - on not one of these questions did a majority of the people who were surveyed ever seek the guidance of religion or of a religious person - a Priest, a Rabbi, anyone regardless of what religion they were. All they knew was how they felt about the issue. That formed their opinion. Only one American in five ever consulted a minister or a Priest.

“A little over half of those surveyed had not been to a religious service in a minimum of three months. Only one in three had been in a religious service in more than a year. Yet it was the same people



who were interviewed who were a part of the 90% who said they truly believed in God today. More than 58% of these people said they attended church service on a more or less regular basis when they were young. Yet less than half - only 27% - still did so as adults. And the one that really got to me was that the survey concludes that only one out of ten believed in all of the Ten Commandments. Forty percent of them believed in five or fewer of the Ten Commandments, sometimes now referred to as the 'Ten Suggestions' but we still call them Commandments today.

### **Why Bring this Up?**

"Now, the reason I bring this to your attention today is that the majority of people, at least those researched in this book, and I believe it is somewhat accurate, talk God today but don't live God. We probably all come upon those people who talk of Christ and know their scriptures, but their life doesn't show it. Apparently, this was the same case in the day of James. There were those who spoke the language of Christianity but who didn't live the reality of it. James puts out in very concise terms the major premise of his epistle. That is 'Faith without works is dead.'

"James says that faith that isn't evidenced by a life of integrity is not Biblical, Christlike faith. James is not saying that works is an added extra to faith, which many of us have heard. That is not what he is saying. James is saying that it is an expression of that faith. It is a response to that faith that you say you have. The lesson is clear in James. If we say we have faith, there needs to be some kind of proof in our lives that proves that we indeed have faith. Someone has said, if you were arrested for being a Christian, and had to go to trial, would there be enough evidence found in the things that you had done to convict you? Would your actions prove that you really were a Christian - that you really were a believer in Christ? I believe James was saying the same thing.

"This statement of James' is the most controversial of the top ten most controversial texts in all the scripture. If it is not carefully understood, it becomes a serious error in a very important part of doctrine. In verses 14 and 15 of chapter 2 James refers to what people say about their faith, and he rejects this so-called faith. He points out at least three reasons for the failure of this verbal faith and its affirmation in one's life. The first is that verbal faith does not save. He gives us two rhetorical questions to make his point. First he says, 'What profit is it, my brethren, for a man to say he hath faith and hath not works?' The second is, 'Can faith save him?'

### **Two Kinds of Faith**

"James is not talking about general faith. He is talking about that kind of faith - the faith that you just say it. You talk the good game. You talk the talk but you don't walk the walk. Can that kind of faith save you? And the answer is, of course, it can't. In other words faith that does not demonstrate itself in your life is not genuine. You have all heard the scripture, 'Where your treasure is, there your heart is also.' A few verses later James writes, 'For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead.' James is simply saying if one has truly been born again, his or her life will have been changed. James is addressing himself to the conflict that there was in mere verbal assent of ones belief and a vital display of actions in the way you live. The one thing that James and those who were close to Christ could not accept was the idea that one could make the profession with words and have no constructive actions in their lives in outward ways.

"Christ could not accept such hypocrisy either. We have to do more than just say it. Because verbal faith is powerless to save, the second part of this is that verbal faith does not serve. He says that

because it is not able to save, it is also incapable of serving. Once again James uses a stirring illustration to drive home his point in verse 16 of chapter 2. Here he recites a little parable which many scholars and theologians believe was a common occurrence in the early church. James asks his readers to imagine having a brother or a sister come up to their door and knock. He is destitute of food, has not adequate clothing, and he is asking for help. When he opened the door the Christian would say, 'Depart in peace. Be warmed, be filled.' and doesn't give him what he stands in need of when they have it. James says that this kind of a Christian throws doubt upon the integrity of their own faith because they do not give him what he needs when they have it.

"It's this point that the Apostle John is making in First John 3:17 and 18 when he says, 'But whoso hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue only, but in deed and in truth.' So a faith that is not expressed in one's life style, according to James, may not be genuine.

"The third point he makes is that verbal faith does not survive. James makes a very strong statement in verse 17, chapter 2 when he writes that faith that does not have works is dead. He says, it was never alive because it lacks the quality of bearing fruit in one's life. It was the profession only faith. While having form, he says, this kind of faith lacks faith because it is outwardly inoperative because it is inwardly dead. James says that we have the right to see the evidence that ones' faith is genuine. And you know what, Jesus said the very same thing. In Matthew 7:25-30 Jesus said, 'Ye shall know them by their fruits; for do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so, every good tree bringeth forth good fruit, but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit; neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. And every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore, by their fruit ye shall know them. Verily I say unto you, It is not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, that shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father who is in heaven.' Doeth the will - action - expression of what you say, you act.

"James proposes one more hypothetical situation. He imagines someone coming forth with a very liberal interpretation of the whole issue saying, 'Now this person says they have faith, and this person says they have faith; and, well, they just have different emphases of spirituality in their lives and they are both right'. He kind of explodes at that. While this is a loose paraphrase that I made, it is what I believe James was addressing with this point. While this Christian says that and another Christian says the same thing, you can verify each by the fruits of their lives. James sort of explodes when he says, 'Show me thy faith without works, and I will show you my faith with my works.' James was not arguing against the importance of faith in the Christian experience. He was attacking the validity of a professed faith that produces no outward result in ones life.

### **Mere Mental Assent - The Devil Level**

"James makes another point about faith in that real faith is more than just a mere mental assent to a system of facts. He uses the demons to prove his example. He says in verse 19, 'Thou believest there is one God; thou doest well; the devils also believe, and tremble; thou hast made thyself like unto them, not being justified.' According to James, anyway, there are no atheists among the demons. Isn't that unique? They struggle and tremble at the mention

of the name of Christ. Jesus encountered several persons possessed by demons in His earthly ministry. They always recognized, always, His deity and spoke respectfully. You can see that in Mark, in Matthew the eighth chapter, in Luke the eighth chapter, Acts the sixteenth chapter, and several others. We have no mention that these demons have ever seen Him before. They may even have been a long way off, yet soon as they saw Him, they didn't run and hide. They knew exactly who He was, recognized His omnipotence. Indeed they believed sincerely that He had the power to take care of them - to destroy them, and they were scared. These were supernatural spirits engaged in taking over the souls of men and women, yet they always recognized His omnipotence. But while their faith, was sincere and honest, it did not transform their character or their conduct or change their possibilities or their prospects for the future.

"James continues to make his case in that he says that faith without action is useless. There are some today who have defined faith as a positive mental attitude. But faith is much more than just an attitude. According to James, faith is made perfect by works, and this is not a contradiction of Paul's doctrine of justification by faith. Not at all, and I will talk a little bit more about that. Faith is significant only when it promotes action in one's life. Faith without action is useless. It's a basic principle for everything, everywhere, always has been, always will be. It would be true in conducting a farm, a business, anything. You have land out here. We can believe and say all day, 'Corn is going to grow in that field out there', but unless we plant the seed, water it, till the ground, nurture it, pray over it, corn is not going to grow in that field even though we may believe it. Action has to be taken upon our faith. I'm not saying that the Lord can't do what He will when He wills. He can and He does, but for the most part, the Lord wants to see us take a little action on our own.

### **Active Faith Demonstrated**

Now, James appeals to two well known Old Testament figures, Abraham the Patriarch and Rahab, the harlot. Abraham is probably the most powerful example that he could have chosen. Abraham was revered as a man of God of great faith who enjoyed a very close, intimate relationship with God. Nothing that could be considered legitimate faith was contradicted by Abraham's experience, at least at the time. In Genesis 15 we read of God's promise to Abraham concerning his future when He said his seed would be as numerous as the stars in the heavens. And James quotes this in verse 22 of chapter 2 when he says, 'Abraham believed God and it was imputed unto him for righteousness; ...'. Abraham demonstrates that we are justified by faith alone, but you know, our faith is never alone. It is always accompanied by works - works of faith. We always bear fruit of what we believe. When God told Abraham to take his son, Isaac up to Mt. Moriah and sacrifice him, Abraham did what God told him to do. Abraham had to come to some real, real hard conclusions; but it was in reaching these conclusions that the true integrity of his faith came out. That was what God saw. If Abraham had said, 'I believe you, God', but had refused to obey, if he would not do what God told him to do, then you would have had what I call a mental assent instead of real faith. It was the trip up to the mountain that was the action. It was the obvious intention to go through with the sacrifice that made the difference.

"We are justified by faith alone, but not by faith that is alone. James' statement about works has often been used to illustrate the difference between James and Paul. Here James clearly states that Abraham was justified by works, and he uses Genesis to prove his

point. Paul also refers to Genesis, and uses Genesis to prove that Abraham was not justified by works. That's found in the fourth chapter of Romans. While this may seem to be a contradiction, it is not. To put it in another way, Paul used the matter in the heavenly, or the divine perspective. He asserts that we are justified in a legal, positional sense, and that faith is the ground for our justification. James, on the other hand, uses the situation from an earthly or human perspective throughout, and he says that works are the evidence before men that salvation has indeed occurred. James is saying that we are not saved by faith plus works, but he is saying that we are saved by faith that does work.

"James and Paul are not antagonists standing with drawn swords looking at each other. Rather they are standing back to back fighting different foes, if you will, of the gospel. Paul was attacking the belief that works were necessary for salvation. James, on the other hand, was attacking verbal faith that did not produce godliness in one's life. Yet, they both agreed on the same thing - that works were the proof of salvation, not the path of salvation. A lot of people do the right thing for the wrong reason. They tell the truth but not because God says to be honest - to be truthful, but because it supports their position - it benefits them, not because it is God's commandment. There is no question that some seem to imagine or that we may have heard of setting works in opposition to faith as the groundwork for justification. No man or woman, can, by general busyness or any specific work or act merit salvation. Activity is never an equal to faith. We cannot gain God's commendation by presenting to Him works of our own hands. Faith alone is His requirement. It is the sole condition on which God justifies the ungodly. But such faith goes hand in hand with obedience that is ever fruitful and shows itself in your life; and you cannot express it in any other way.

"You know, our relationship with God never leaves one's life unchanged. You are always changed. If you have ever experienced the Holy Spirit or any portion of it, your life is never the same, even if you fall away later. Faith always finds an expression in works - works of faith - not the mere doing of good. What these works would be in each individual's life, only God can bring forth that expression, and He will reveal it to each individual. We are all uniquely different.

"The second example that James uses is Rahab. I can't imagine there could be any greater contrast than the one between Abraham and Rahab. We don't know much about Rahab other than that they call her a harlot. Abraham was a Hebrew who was called of God and was the Father of all those who believed in God while Rahab, as written in the scriptures, is only known to us as a harlot. She was a Gentile who lived in the city of Jericho, the same Jericho that Israel's army marched around seven times and the walls came tumbling down. You can read that story for yourselves in the second chapter of Joshua. Abraham gave proof of his obedience to God for at least three generations, while Rahab only knew Israel's God by hearsay - what she had heard. Yet, when the time came, she displayed her faith by identifying herself with the people of God. What James is telling us is that it was because of her faith, which was an active faith - a faith that resulted in her taking action - that caused God to spare her life when the walls of Jericho came down. Rahab's works were very different than Abraham's, but they had the very same effect. They proved that she had a living, working faith, and at that moment at least, she was a woman of spiritual integrity. Because of that, the Lord spared her life. This example by James is another illustration of the interrelationship between faith

and works. He concludes his statement by saying that, 'As the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead'.

"The Christian life has to have integrity. As followers of the Lord Jesus, we must set ourselves apart from the life style of the world. We are called to put the mark of Jesus on the world, not to let the world put its mark on us. If we understand James' key illustration, we must be men and women of compassion. We must not turn our brothers and our sisters away from those things that we have the ability to share both physically and spiritually. Our message to the world has to be that we are more than just what we say.

"In closing I would like to share with you a sign I saw outside a church while traveling. It said, 'Preach the gospel all the time.' Then in small letters down below it said, 'And if necessary use words.' Think about it. You see, our greatest testimony of the Lord Jesus is not what we have to say, but how we live our lives. People should be able to look at you and know that you are Christian. If you believe in Christ, you don't have to say the words. They can see everything you do and everything you don't do that testifies of Him. We need not just talk the talk, and talking is not wrong, but we need to also walk the walk, meaning we need to just not say it but we need to live it. It is my prayer that God will bless us in our endeavor to share that. My mother used to tell me, and I'm sure you have heard it too, that actions speak louder than words. Sometimes when I would get in trouble, she would say, 'I can't hear you because your actions speak too loud!' That's the way with some of us. Sometimes we can talk a real good game, but our lives overshadow everything that we have to say; and it shouldn't be that way. We should be able to testify of the Lord Jesus and bring people to Him, and it's my prayer that He'll bless you and me in our endeavor to do that; that we will uphold one another in love, will hold onto each other and that we will all find ourselves at the same place building the Kingdom of God upon the earth."

## Music Service Inspires Worship

This Leap Year Sunday, February 29, 2004, Elder Steven L. Smith opened the service by reading Alma 3:46. "And now behold, I say unto you my brethren, If ye have experienced a change of heart, and if ye have felt to sing the song of redeeming love, I would ask, Can ye feel so now?" He then asked us to stand and sing a song of redeeming love, "Stand up, stand up for Jesus. Lift high His royal banner. It must not suffer loss!"

The first offering was made by Beth Knotts who sang one of the most beautiful of hymns based on two inspiring and assuring scriptures. One is God's action in behalf of the Israelites as recorded in Exodus 19:4 when God reminded them, "How I bare you up on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself." The other is Isaiah 49:16 where Christ promises not to forget His people saying, "Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands."

The chorus of the song declares, "And I will raise you up on eagles' wings. Bare you on the breath of dawn. Make you to shine like the sun; and hold you in the palm of my hand." Pat Bolingbroke joined Beth on the choruses with piano accompaniment. Matthew Anderson and Aquila Galusha received the monetary offerings of the Saints with Cathy Akers accompanying them at the piano with the dedicatory hymn, "I Can Hear My Savior Calling. I'll go with him, with Him all the way."

Barbra Jordison brought us assurance in a heart warming song

that declares Jesus is the one. Jesus is the way. Only the light of Jesus can chase the darkness away. A tender heart is all He needs to send his love where love's in need, and a humble spirit He will never cast away. So we can safely give all our cares to Jesus. He knows our thoughts. He feels our pain. He longs to make us whole again.

Jim Barber sang the beloved "Old Old Path" accompanied by Cathy Akers.

Mildred Smith gave a testimony of hearing the Saints in Kenya sing "What a Friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear. What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer," in an arrangement that startled her the first time she heard it. For a moment she thought the angels had joined the congregation as it sang. This heartfelt singing in the midst of difficulties that she described but that we can only imagine was an unforgettable experience.

Jazmyn Galusha surprised us with a display of her talent not only as a pianist but as a composer as well. Her composition she called, "Rain and the Rainbow", and one could actually hear the rain and feel the presence of the rainbow that followed the shower.

Robert Rolfe recalled that the last children's musical the congregation performed was "Fat, Fat Jehoshaphat". This morning, he was singing another version of Jehoshaphat's story accompanying himself on his guitar. "Great Jumpin' Jehoshaphat" rehearses the story of the faithful king of Judah whose people fasted and prayed, then sang while the Lord defeated their enemies for them. The song then assures us that we can have the same blessings if we follow their example. Brother Rolfe invited the congregation to join him on the choruses singing, "Praise ye the Lord. His mercy endureth forever. Praise ye the Lord. His mercy endureth forever. Praise ye the Lord, our God, His mercy will never end!"

Michael Jordison prefaced his offering with a statement contrasting the situation into which Esther, the African Saint who was the subject of Mildred's testimony, was born with the one into which he was born. Reflectively, he observed that it doesn't seem fair. The song he had chosen for this morning, however, speaks of the time when "All God's children of love and light, every heart will be unified. Singing praise to the Lord our King on the day of the gathering - on the day of The Gathering."

Michael also mentioned another song that is on the air now called, "He Reigns". It speaks of the voices from Africa and from the Amazon as they are raised up to the Lord; and they all say the same thing, "Glory, glory, Hallelujah to God. He Reigns!" "We are all from different places and times in the world," Michael observed, "but there is coming a time when we will all be gathered together and all be one in the Lord. That's what this song is all about."

Anan Smith sang, "Joyful, joyful we adore thee, God of glory, Lord of love," first in German then in English.

Closing our worship we all stood and sang:

"This God is the God we adore, our faithful, unchangeable friend,

Whose love is as large as His power, And knows not beginning nor end.

'Tis Jesus, the first and the last Whose Spirit will guide us safe home;

We'll praise him for all that is past, and trust him for all that's to come."

The benediction continued our praise and thanksgiving to the Lord who gave us our talents and permitted us to share them in an attitude of worship.

# FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

*Continued from front page*

how that belief is put into practice in their daily lives differs greatly. (A Jew or not a Jew?)

Just who is a Jew is a hotly contested topic. Does the following make a person a Jew: 1) a person identifies with a Jewish community, 2) the person follows a certain code of behavior, 3) the person lives in Israel, 4) the person believes certain things (about God or religion) 5) the person is born into a home where one of the parents is Jewish, 6) is Jewishness a religion or a race; a nationality or an ethnicity?

If Judaism is defined by practice, who defines the practice? What about birth? The nation of Israel today recognizes only the Conservative view. All other views are deemed illegitimate. The Conservative view states that if the mother is Jewish, a child born to that woman is Jewish. If the mother is a Gentile, a child born to that woman will be a Gentile. So, if you are a child born to a Gentile mother in Israel; if you serve in Israel's military; if you live according to Conservative Jewish customs; you are still not Jewish. However, a child of two Jewish parents that has no desire to participate in or believe in Judaism, is considered Jewish. There is much, much more to this story. I will leave the rest of the story to your own study.

For a moment, let's use the same criteria to decide just who is a Restorationist: Does the following make a person a Restorationist: 1) a person is identified with a Restoration Branch, 2) the person follows a certain code of behavior, 3) the person lives in or around Independence, Missouri, 4) the person believes certain things (about God or religion) 5) the person is born into a home where one or both of the parents is a Restorationist.

If being a Restorationist is defined by practice, whose practice? Is a certain group of beliefs required? Who determines what is included in those beliefs? If being a Restorationist is defined by our heritage, what constitutes the proper heritage? I fear that for most of us, what we do and believe is answered by Tevya in "Fiddler on the Roof". He asks, Why do we do the things we do? He strokes his beard and then answers---TRADITION!

I fear we have become "Restorationist Jews". We have eyes to see, but we don't see. We have ears to hear, but we don't hear. We have hearts that should understand, but we don't understand. (See Isaiah 6; Jeremiah 5; Ezekiel 12) Therein is the reason we are not converted and able to attain the full measure of salvation. We need to allow God to put a new heart within us. We need to fulfill the first commandment as given by Jesus; we shall

love the Lord with all our will, our life and our strength. Inside out, not outside in!

## News & Notes

### Purchases Approved By Congregation

In business session February 22 the congregation voted to accept the recommendation of the Building Committee to purchase sixty copies of the Hymns of the Saints for use by the congregation.

The earlier vote for a proposed new Hymnal based on the older book by that name had to be discarded because that hymnal was not produced as planned. The committee reviewed a number of hymnals and, realizing that no one is perfectly suited to our needs, chose one with the stipulation that others would be used as needed.

The second purchase approved was also recommended by the committee. A copy machine will soon be installed in the library.

### Reserve Your Place at Reunion

Plans for the Missionary Family Reunion at Graceland are well underway. Reservations already approach, if not exceed, 200. Reservation forms are available at centerplace.com.

### The Passion of The Christ

The congregation is planning to attend the much publicized Mel Gibson movie depicting the last hours of Jesus' life on Saturday, March 6. The movie will be shown at the Wynnson 16 theater located at 5233 N.W. 84th street, just north of I-35 in Johnston. The group will assemble at Ryan's Family Steak House at 1900 N.W. 86th Street in Clive, between Hickman and University and next door to Krispy Kreme doughnuts, for lunch at 11 a.m. We expect to be at the theater by 12:30 p.m. The costs of the movie and the lunch will be defrayed by the congregation. Sign up with Pat Bolingbroke if you wish to attend.

### Youth Continue to Achieve

Brock Bastow was graduated from Northwest Missouri State University recently and is now employed with the Walmart Company in Maryville.

Names of the Galusha children have appeared frequently in the Lamoni Chronicle as they have participated in musical recitals, wrestling matches and the Pine Box Derby.

Heidi Winkler and Brandy Anderson have been outstanding members of their competing basketball teams and are looking forward to competing in track.

Cara Smith has produced a book introducing children to hospital experiences that her professors consider publishable.

Rex Lin and Jon Ammon Smith will be graduated by Graceland University this spring.

### Reporter to Kenya

Mildred Smith, who usually reports the services and assists with the preparation and distribution of the Newsletter, will be in Kenya during the last week of March and the first week of April. She will be accompanying Douglas Smith to Africa for a second women's retreat. Her absence may cause a delay in the distribution of the April issue of this letter.

### Patriarch Dies

Funeral services were held this Wednesday at Oak Grove for Patriarch Earl Allen. Brother Allen died after a long battle with cancer.



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

## **Nephite Testimony Shared With Michael Jordison**

Jim McKiddie, my cousin from the Independence area, shared this testimony with me. He is a social worker who deals mainly with the elderly who cannot care for themselves, both medically and judiciously.

One of his clients was recently placed in the hospital, diagnosed with the onset of dementia. Recently he made an unscheduled visit to see how she was doing. He found her in a private room, staring out the window. Entering, and calling her name he asked, "How are you doing?" She just replied, "I want to see one of those witnesses again."

It is Jim's responsibility to know who visits and administers medication to his clients. He should have been notified if there were visitors to her room. "Was it one of the doctors or nurses?" he inquired, knowing that many medical staff would have entered her room at any given time. His mind raced with trying to figure out who might have been there, or whether this was just a part of the dementia, and she had made the whole visitation up. With her mind still focused on the visitors, she said, "I only met one of them. He came to visit me last night. He told me that I would be going home to be with God soon, and that I shouldn't worry about it."

Not sure of whom she was referring, but recalling in the back of his mind a reference to "three witnesses", Jim asked, "You said one of those witnesses?" "The one who visited me said that there two others like him, and they walked the earth witnessing and testifying of their book" she replied.

Jim asked her "What book?" She told him that it was like the Bible, but not like her Bible. It was different. She said they called it the "Book of.... something". She couldn't remember the name. "The Book of Mormon!?" He interjected. "Yes, that's it,"

she exclaimed. "The Book of Mormon".

Jim started to get a little excited. Knowing her condition, however, he thought that maybe she was remembering testimonies that she had heard previously and thought they had happened to her now. He asked her to what church she went, and she replied that she had been a Methodist all her life. He asked if she had ever heard of or attended the Mormon church or the Reorganized church. She said that she had heard of them, but didn't know very much about them. "Why do you ask?" she said.

He then shared with her the story of Jesus Christ in the Book of Mormon and told her how He had granted a special request to three of His disciples who would remain on earth until His return.

When he went back to his office that day, Jim looked up the number for this woman's brother and called him. After briefly advising him of her condition he mentioned that in their conversation they had discussed religion. "What church did you attend growing up?" he asked her brother. "We always went to the Methodist church - all our lives," he replied. Jim was satisfied that this woman had indeed been visited by one of the three Nephites.

"I had the chance to visit again with my cousin the next week," Michael reported, "in asking permission to share this testimony. He said that there was an update to the story. He had stopped at the hospital to check on his client and was climbing the stairs when he received a call from his office notifying him that the hospital called with news that she had just passed away. Jim took comfort at the words of the "witness"; that she would soon pass on, but not to worry, that she was going to be with God."