

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

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The Body of Death

No, I am not talking about us being over weight, although, obesity can certainly cause an "early" death. The title of this message relates to another method of Roman execution. After having seen the "Passion," in which the death of our Lord was so graphically portrayed, I have become aware of another way the Romans had of punishing a victim.

When something bad happens to us, we usually are thinking, "what did I do to deserve this"? (Probably nothing, in most cases.) There is however, a direct link to our behavior and the consequential suffering. This link is sin. It is not popular to talk about sin today. Too often, we blame God for the misery we bring on ourselves. James, brother of our Lord put it this way:

"Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God...(God doesn't tempt us) But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away (dragged away) of his own lust (evil desire) and enticed...after the evil desire (lust) hath conceived (is full grown) it bringeth forth sin (gives birth to sin) and sin, when it is finished (full-grown) gives birth to death." (James 1:13-15)

All sin is this way. God doesn't sit on his throne and think about what person(s) he is going to punish each day. If we break the law (commandments) of God, we will pay. There simply is no other alternative. God "hardwired" us and all of existence this way. God told Israel, "I call heaven and earth to record (witness) this day against you, that I have set

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TESTIMONIES AND SERMON NOTES

Your Defining Moment - Choose Life!

High Priest Robert Rolfe provided the preaching ministry at April's observance of the Lord's Supper. He began by telling us that in one of our major cities, Chicago, there is a new attraction. Students are visiting it in groups and people are signing up to see it - the city morgue.

"If you wonder who would want to see it, let me tell you, it is already booked up to the end of September- every date to go see the morgue! In case you don't know what a morgue is, that's where they put the dead bodies. That's where they are kept until they are examined, sometimes by the medical examiners. Why would anyone have such a fascination with a place where they keep dead bodies? We don't have a lot of attention paid in this country to what happens after someone dies, because it's hidden.

Some people have attributed this new fascination to shows like CSI and other TV shows that get into the forensic examinations of bodies, fluids and tissues to solve crimes. Some say it's the pop culture. Some say it's because our society is now concerned with our flesh rather than our spirit; and so we are very concerned with what's going to happen to that flesh. So we center on death rather than on life. Remember, we talked in class about the Egyptians, how much their whole society centered around death and dying and the preservation of bodies after they died?

Life or Death Is The Choice

"I want to read a scripture to you that will give you a choice; and let me see if any of you can figure out what your choice might be if you were offered this opportunity. This is from Deuteronomy 30:19. It says, 'I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore, choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live'' How many of you would like to choose life? It's kind of a no-brainer. You would think, 'Why would anybody have trouble with that? Why would you not want to chose life? Unfortunately, Israel did not choose life, as we read in the Old Testament. They chose death, and that's what they got because of it.

"You know there's a fellow in jail right now - this is a matter of public record so I'm not telling you any secrets. His name is Kalen

Lively. If he were to write a book on how to mess up your life with drugs, he could do it. Sometime this month he's going to be sentenced to prison for the rest of his life. He killed his aunt for probably fifty bucks to buy drugs. And right now, you talk to Kalen and you would think there's not a nicer young man around in this area because he has pretty well got the drugs out of his system now that he's in jail. But the fact is that his aunt's life is gone, and in a real sense, his life is gone. He's about twenty years old or so, and he will likely expect to live fifty years in prison for this act. All it took for him was one moment. He was faced with a choice as to whether or not to kill his aunt to get a little bit of money or to do something else, and he chose death!

"I think of those as defining moments in life. We all face them, and when you are faced with a defining moment, usually there's a choice. That choice says a lot, not only about who you are and what you are at that time but what you are going to become. In fact, it says that your morals are what you do when you think no one else is around. Let me give you a little illustration. Let's say you are walking down the street. You see a billfold or purse lying on the side of the street. You pick it up and look. It's full of cash! What do you do? You have a choice, right? You can lay it back down and walk on. You could try to find the owner, which, by the way, is what the law requires you to do. Or, you could put the cash in your pocket and the purse or the billfold in the nearest dumpster and walk on.

"The choice that you make is really defined by what you are at that point. And if you make any of those choices, it's going to define what you are going to become. We all face those kind of moments for good or evil, and it's kind of a sad thing that too often, we face a defining moment that is so significant as to be a turning point in our life and fail to choose life.

The Prodigal Son's Defining Moments

"Jesus, in the parable of the Prodigal Son illustrated how these defining moments can be so important. I find this story in Luke 15. I refer to that as the lost and found department of the New Testament. Why? Because you have the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son.

"The account starts out, 'A certain man had two sons.' And I would like to think that you probably know these sons. You have them in your family. Maybe you are one of those two sons. The father in this story is very rich. How do I know that? Because he had lots of servants. At least back in that day, if you had enough money to hire servants, you had money! And someday, everything that my father has is going to be mine - at least my share. So, in the story, the older son appears the first time as the father's favorite. You know, the can't do anything wrong son. Whatever he does, the father is smiling. The father listens to everything that son says. He's steady. He's responsible. He's the kind of son that you can rely on when you need to have something done.

"The second son, however, is different. He feels his father doesn't love him or listen to him. He feels that he's wasting his life there with his father. He won't listen to anything his father has to say because his father just doesn't understand him! He wants out, and he wants out now! He wants to be grown up now! With pretty much everything he wants, he wants it now! You have seen this son. He's the one who has the dark blue Camaro, the back jacked way up, loud mufflers, earrings in his ears, a ring through his eyebrow, and he burns past your house in the middle of the night, the stereo blasting, no less! I'm not trying to pick on anybody here, because I've been that son, too. That's me. I'm describing myself

in this story.

"So, you have these two sons, and the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the portion of goods which falleth to me. And he divideth unto them his living.' Now, this is a defining moment for a father. For those of you who are parents, did you ever have your kids come to you and want something. They don't say, 'What can I do to earn this? I want the money. I want that'. Should the father give the son this money knowing that he hasn't earned it. He doesn't have any right to it; and very likely, he's just going to blow it all when he gets it. In the ordinary course of things, he's not going to get it until the old man is dead. So, should I give it to him? If I give it to him, is it going to get worse. or is it going to get better? Will I be able to talk to him if I give him the money that he's asking for? Will that, maybe solve some of the relationship that's turned sour. Maybe he will learn something from the school of hard knocks. He sure isn't listening to anything I am telling him. So, I'm sure, the father goes through that agony and decides to give him the money.

"Not many days after, the younger son gathered all together and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living'. Any of you ever had any riotous living? I did as a youth - you know evidence of misspent youth. I never had a problem drinking alcohol because I slept with my older brother - four years older- and when he came home drunk and threw up all over the bed, it didn't look quite as glamorous as it does when you see all of the ads on TV showing how great it is. I was introduced to the other end, when you are hurting and you are sick. In any case, riotous living is what it says on which he wasted his substance. The father's worst fears have been realized, because it happened just like he was afraid it was going to happen. The son not only commits all the sins that his father had warned him about. He foolishly blew the entire wad that he had gotten. Had nothing left. He probably thought, as many of us do, that our resources will buy us happiness. You know, live for today! Eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow you die. Or, as the Schlitz advertisement said many years ago, 'You've got to grab for all the gusto you can because you only go around once in this life', which we don't believe is true. If it was true, maybe you should grab for all the gusto you can!

"And so, he ate, he drank, he was merry. Now was the only important time to this son. But sadly, he found out that what the Book of Mormon says is true. 'Wickedness never was happiness' (Alma 17:74)! Unfortunately, you learn that afterward. If you knew that up front, you would save yourself a lot of pain.

"And so it says, 'And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land, and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks which the swine did eat; and no man gave unto him.' Now picture this. I don't know if you have seen the homeless on TV. No money. Nothing to eat. Just think about that. You are homeless. You are broke, and on top of that, there's a famine in the land. That gets about as tough as it can get for you. Things have gone from bad to worse quick; and he found out, as many young people do, that if they don't do drugs with their friends, they don't have friends. That's what keeps them together. He found out that if you don't buy the drinks around, the friends are not there any more. He was out of money, so he had no friends. He was homeless, and worst of all, hard times had hit, and everybody else was having a hard time, too. So, for a Jewish boy, you might

think about this, what's the best job you could get as a Jewish boy? Feeding pigs! You might think about that. That is not the green job on the list of jobs. In fact, if he was feeding the pigs, he was unclean. If there were any Jews around, they weren't supposed to have anything to do with him. And to show you how low he got, he was eating what the pigs ate. That's quite a ways down the list, isn't it?

"You know I talked about this once when there was a bunch of people from Lamoni Farms sitting in the congregation, and I said, 'Who would want to be living with pigs all day?' After I said it, I looked around and realized how many of them did just that, probably 12 hours a day, and I said, 'Maybe some of you don't think it's so bad!' But at least in the story, Jesus talked about that as not a good thing that this young man was living and feeding pigs and eating what the pigs had to eat. He had learned what true misery was all about. We would use the phrase, 'He bottomed out!' I don't mean that in terms of drinking.

"I had a friend who had a terrible car accident. His entire body, arms, legs, shoulders, skull fractured, ribs broken. Laying there in a body cast in the hospital, his wife serves him with divorce papers and takes everything he's got. He's lost his job, and doesn't know whether he will ever walk again because he has such tremendous injuries to his legs, all because of alcohol. He literally was drinking himself into oblivion. While he was in that bed, he came to a defining moment. He never drank again, and for years that man has been going to the sanitarium and helping alcoholics. There isn't any lie that they can tell him that he hasn't told himself many, many times before.

"And so this son came face to face with a defining moment in his life. If you were sitting there eating what the pigs didn't eat, or maybe what you could out muscle them to get or eat before you gave it to them, you might start thinking about your former life when things were better. And that's just what this young man did. It says, 'When he came to himself.' Have you ever come to yourself? You aren't thinking straight. All of a sudden it says he came to himself and he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger. I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy hired servants.'

"The story says he came to himself. That means he started seeing himself and his situation clearly - as it was without any delusion. He looked backward over his life and clearly saw what he had done and how he had treated his father - how he had treated himself - the life that he had been living. I would like you to notice the difference in the petition that he is now making to his father, at least in his mind. He hasn't returned to make it yet. In the beginning it was, 'Give me!. Give me, Father!' In this case, his petition is, 'Make me. Make me whatever it is that you want me to be. I'll be your lowest servant!' What a defining moment for this son to realize that even the lowest servant had it better than he did! And so, it says, he left the pigs and went home, ready to take whatever his father was willing to give him.

"So the story goes on, 'And he arose and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.' Notice there weren't any lectures, no, 'I told you so!' No, 'What happened to all the money?' Just unqualified love - total reconciliation of a relationship that had gone sour. And the son got a chance to say what he had rehearsed when he was feeding the pigs. 'And

the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.' I wonder sometimes if God feels that way about us, or if we have that kind of feeling that we are not worthy to be His children. But look at the father's response: 'But the father said unto his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his finger, and shoes on his feet. And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat and be merry; For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.'

"We now come to another defining moment for the son. What do you say to your father at this point? I'm sure he remembered the relationship when he left home and the hard things that were said at that time. What a change in the son's attitude! 'Father, your religion was right. I've sinned against your religion. I have sinned against your God. I have defied you. I have foolishly wasted my inheritance. I'm no longer worthy to be your son.' And if he said all of those things, would you say, 'Oh, no, you didn't do that?' No. He was right. He did all of those things. He wasn't worthy to be called a son anymore. The father didn't disagree with any of that, but his actions said it all. 'Put the best robe upon him. Put a ring on his finger. Put shoes on his feet. Kill the fatted calf. Let's celebrate. He was dead but now he's alive!

"If we have come repentant this morning, we have chosen life. Prayer and fasting and sharing in the body and blood of this sacrament that we have just eaten fills us with spiritual food. The Book of Mormon says if you pray and fast, you will have the spirit of revelation, and I think that's part of what's happening as you eat this meal. What the Lord wants us to remember in terms of His will for us, is that that act of eating and drinking is a defining moment for us. It says what we are, who we are and what we hope to become by doing it. You know, most of the promises that the Lord has given are based on one simple fact, and that's repentance. This service every time should be about our repentance - seeing ourselves as we really are, like eating the pig food in the hog yard but wanting to be with our Father. These are defining moments, that we choose life and not death.

"But you know there are other defining moments that you have got to make the decision to choose life ahead of time. Most of us think, as it says in the book of Peter, that things are going to go on just like they have always gone on from the beginning - that's the way it's going to keep happening. But I point out to you, in the Book of Mormon, it says that Jesus destroyed fifteen major cities (it lists them) and all their inhabitants in the space of about three hours. Would that be a defining moment? If you were on the receiving end, it was - to be drowned or buried or burned or whatever. Three hours isn't very long, is it? And what caused that? They had chosen death rather than life.

Choose Life and Be Changed In A Moment

"And there is a moment coming, I hope for each of you here, that in a moment you are going to be changed. Scripture says in the twinkling of an eye. I don't know how long that is. Not very long, I suspect. And you're going to be changed in just that one moment unless you are forced to wait another thousand years to experience the moment. I hope that's not true for anyone here because a moment is all it is going to take. A moment is all it takes to trust in God when you are faced with distress - to trust that He will be with us when we need Him to be there. There's a scripture in Mark 9:45 that says, 'Seek unto the Father and it shall be done in that very moment what ye shall ask.' Do you believe that? If you seek the Father, in the very moment that you ask, it is going to be

done, 'if ye ask in faith believing that ye shall receive.' Do you believe this? Do you believe God's willing to do that for you - not just for those other people?

"This is the day that we celebrate as Palm Sunday. That was a great time for Jesus and His disciples. You know He's marching into Jerusalem. The people are waving palms and shouting happy thoughts while He's riding, not walking. What a wonderful day! Do you know that Jesus, after that, wept? Do you know why? Because the Jews didn't recognize Him. A few of them may have, but for the most part, they didn't recognize him; and He held them responsible for that. That day, because they did not recognize Him, the gospel was taken from them and given to the Gentiles. They were destroyed and dispersed all over the earth. Why would He expect them to recognize Him? Because Daniel prophesied exactly how they could tell and what day it was going to be, right to the day! And many of the other prophets said this was what was going to happen, and yet in the hardness of their hearts they missed that defining moment that could have made all of the difference. So Jesus knew that this literally meant their death. They had chosen death rather than life!

"So I would ask you to think about this today, that having heaven and earth witnessing this for each of us, that before us, God has set life and death, blessing and cursing. And I would pray that each of us would choose life that we and our children would live."

Forsaken or Blessed?

After expressing appreciation for the ministry of music we had enjoyed under the direction of Sister Jan and brother Michael Jordison for Easter Sunday, Elder Alan Smith read from Isaiah 53:4-5. "Surely He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed." Next Diane Anderson appeared wearing a flowing robe reminiscent of the clothing of Jesus' day singing of the crucifixion and resurrection, as she figuratively walked 'Down the Via Dela Rosa'.

Alan announced that for the community Easter 'Breakfast with the Master' series held in Mount Ayr last week, he was asked to share a few words about one of the last statements that Jesus said from the cross when He said, 'Eli, Eli, lama, sabacthani.' or 'My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?'

"I would like to share with you a little bit of what I shared then," he said, "with a little more about what Jesus was saying to you and me, as He was to His disciples, in those few short words.

"Jesus spent a lot of His time on the cross comforting everybody else. Some people have wondered about these specific words in this regard, but I believe they were words of comfort as well when we know the whole story of what was going on. When Jesus said those words, it was the ninth hour, according to the scriptures. He was six hours into His crucifixion. It was not long before He was going to say, 'It is finished!' But even in His agony, he used the cross to reach down and share words of hope with His disciples.

"A word has been coined to help explain the pain of crucifixion. It is 'excruciating' and it literally means 'to be crucified - to have very intense or extreme pain.' When you are crucified, you eventually suffocate. That's after you have fought for breath for a

long time. That's why they broke the legs of the other two being crucified, so they couldn't push themselves back up and breathe. It would hasten their death.

Christ's Love Pervaded His Entire Life

"The cross was not the beginning of the struggle that Jesus made to be a sacrifice for our sin. All through His ministry, He was making choices to love us. We often talk about the love that Jesus had for the woman taken in adultery when the accusers were there with the stones in their hands. We say, 'What great love Jesus had for her!' But sometimes I wonder if we recognize the great love that Jesus had for the accusers. According to His gospel, we will be judged the way that we judge others. Jesus had just as much love for the accusers by telling them, 'Be careful how you judge. If any of you are without sin, be the first to cast a stone!'

"His weeping over Jerusalem is just one of many examples of His heartfelt love for us being expressed in His life. He expressed that love in many ways before He came to the Garden and sweat drops of blood over us, then went on to his scourging and His crucifixion. I believe that Jesus was taking on more spiritual and physical pain than any one of us in this whole experience; and He was doing it for a specific reason. He was taking on these physical afflictions and this spiritual pain, suffering more than any one of us has suffered, so that He could come to us and say, 'I know the suffering that you are going through. I know what it's like to suffer separation. I know what it's like to suffer pain. There is nothing that you can go through on this earth that I have not gone through already, and I can help'.

"I read for our scripture this morning from Isaiah, "Surely He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed." The Book of Mormon says, in Second Nephi 6:46, 'For behold, he suffered the pains of all men, yea, the pains of every living creature, both men and women and children who belong to the family of Adam.'

"Valle and I got over to see 'The Passion of the Christ' last night at Lamoni. It got me to thinking, if I was writing the screen play, how would I show the suffering of Jesus? Mel Gibson chose blood to show that suffering, and he showed an evil force that was lurking around in the shadows. You know, it's hard to show suffering and pain, isn't it? When you go to the hospital, they say, 'Rate your pain on a scale of 1 to 10', and you say, 'I don't know that I know what 10 is, so how do I know?' I've had a kidney stone pain, and that's my 10! But I don't know if that is somebody else's ten. Theirs might be a lot worse than that. I don't know what their pain is like. For someone else, maybe that's a five. It's hard for us to feel someone else's pain to know what the scale is -- to know what it's like. But Jesus said, 'I know what ten is, and I can help you through it, if that's what you are suffering.'

How Many Stripes Did It Take For Me?

"It's hard for us in a spiritual way, too, to understand what that's like -- to understand what a few stripes is. The scriptures warn us in Second Nephi 12:10-11, 'And there shall be many who shall say, Eat, drink and be merry; nevertheless, fear God, he 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 be so that we are guilty, God will beat us with a few stripes, and a last we will be saved in the kingdom of God.' How

many stripes did it take to heal us? We want to say, 'It only took a few for me - maybe for my neighbor it took a few more! But Jesus died for each one of us, whether we are the woman taken in adultery or the people trying to judge her.

"Jesus made this choice to die for us and to rise again, and He told His disciples that that was what He was going to do when He turned His face toward Jerusalem. So on the cross, when He spoke with His Heavenly Father, and said, 'My God, My God, Why hast thou forsaken me?', there are some who say that Jesus must have been questioning what was going on. But He had made that decision. Some thought, according to the scriptures, that He was calling to Elias for help, and some made fun of Him again because He didn't come down off the cross. But the promise of the scriptures has always been that when we are trying to follow our heavenly Father's way, He will not forsake us. For instance, Deuteronomy 31:6 - "Be strong and of good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them; for the Lord thy God, he it is that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee."

"At least some of His disciples recognized what Jesus was doing. He was quoting Psalm 22 from the cross. Do you remember what Jesus did at other times of temptation or trial in His life? What did Jesus say to satan when satan tempted him early in his ministry? 'It is written!' He went back to the scriptures and found answers -- found words for life there, and I believe that was what He was doing when He quoted Psalm 22 to the people who were there.

Psalm 22 a Prophecy

"Psalm 22 is a song that David wrote many years before Jesus came to the cross, and he told the whole story of what was about to transpire. There are two diametrically opposed messages that can be taken from these same words. 'Father, you have forsaken me!' Or, 'I'm quoting you Psalm 22.' Here are just a few of the things I think Jesus was telling His disciples. Jesus was telling His disciples what He told them before, that He was laying down His life. It was not being taken from Him. He had just told His disciples, recorded in John 17, 'Therefore doth My Father love Me because I lay down My life that I might take it up again. No man taketh it from Me, but I lay it down myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment received I from My Father.'

"In Psalm 22, David describes much of what the disciples were seeing at the cross. Here's what Psalm 22:7-8 says. 'All they that see me, laugh me to scorn. They shoot out the lip. They shake the head saying, He trusted on the Lord that He should deliver Him. Let Him deliver Him, seeing He delighted in Him.' And Matthew, describing what was going on at the cross, uses the same shaking of the head, only he calls it wagging of the head. He says, 'And they that passed by reviled Him, wagging their heads and saying, Thou that destroyest the temple and buildeth it again in three days, save thyself. If thou be the son of God, come down from the cross' - the same demeanor, the same taunt that is described in Psalm 22.

"David tells us what it feels like to be crucified when he says later in the Psalm, 'I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint. My heart is like wax. It is melted in the midst of my bowels. My strength is dried up like potshard, and my tongue cleaveth to my jaw.' I just had an experience, and I think my brother Steven may have had the same experience. We both recently had nasal surgery, and realized what it means to have your tongue cleaving to your jaw. When you have to breath through your mouth, your mouth dries out to the point where I would wake up in the

middle of the night with my tongue stuck to the roof of my mouth; and, of course, that's what's happening to the person who is being crucified. They are doing their mouth breathing trying to get any air that they can, and it all dries out.

"The Psalm describes the piercing of the hands and the feet, the gambling for His garment. The Psalm says they, 'Part My garments among them and cast lots upon my vesture.' You see, Jesus was saying, 'This has been planned from before I came to earth.' It had been shown to David. He had seen it. Jesus was telling his disciples that they were seeing the fulfillment of this prophecy right before their eyes. And we know that the disciples picked up on this, at least Matthew did, because he wrote that when they were gambling for Jesus' clothes, it was fulfillment of what the prophet David had said, and he shared some of the other detail that measure up exactly to the rendition of what David said was happening.

Jesus Tells Us How to Meet Adversity

"As well as reminding His disciples that He was in charge, that He was laying down His life - it wasn't being taken from Him, Jesus was also reminding us what to do in times of loneliness and desperation. As David emphasized in the Psalm, despite all the pain and suffering he described, 'Our fathers trusted in thee. They trusted and Thou didst deliver them. They cried unto Him and were delivered. They trusted in Thee and were not confounded. Ye that fear the Lord, praise Him. All ye seed of Jacob, glorify Him and fear Him, all ye seed of Israel; for He hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted, neither has He hid his face from them, but when he cried unto him, he was heard.'

"Jesus was saying just the opposite of what some people were thinking. He was saying that you will not be left alone when you call to him in your affliction. You will be heard. He was reminding those disciples, whom He could see were suffering to see Him suffer, that they, too, would be heard in their time when they cried unto Him. They should pray in times of loneliness and desperation. When hope seems gone; when pain is too much; when we are mired in sin to where there seems no way out, Jesus says, 'There is hope! All things work together for good to them that love the Lord.' He was telling His disciples, 'Trust me. I know about pain and affliction. You can be borne up in your pain and in your affliction, as I am now.'

The Ultimate Victory

"Jesus was also speaking to the disciples through this Psalm, telling them that the cross was the ultimate victory and that victory was being won before their eyes. Jesus reminded them that David prophesied that all the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the Lord because of what transpires in Christ's death and resurrection. "All of the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord, and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee, for the kingdom is the Lord's. He is the governor of all nations. All they that go down to the dust shall bow before Him, and none can keep alive their own soul.' The kingdom was not Rome's. Victory was not Rome's. The kingdom was not Herod's. The victory was not Herod's. The kingdom was not the Sanhedrin's. The victory was not the Sanhedrin's. 'They do not have the ultimate control over keeping their souls alive,' Jesus is saying. 'I do!'

"And David closes with the good news that what Christ was doing right before their eyes, the news that Christ's righteousness would be declared to people yet unborn - to you and me, His disciples today. 'They shall come and shall declare His righteousness unto a people that shall be born what he hath done.'

"The message of the cross comes down to you and me today. It

was done for a purpose. He had shared what would happen with His prophets. He has born our pain and He understands our sorrow. We can turn to Him in times of loneliness and desperation. The ultimate victory is His and ours if we will only accept the gift that He died for us to receive. We who are His disciples two thousand years later need to declare His righteousness and share what had been done with the world too often caught up in loneliness, desperation and sin, not knowing how to move ahead.

To Take Up Our Cross

“Another lesson that we learn most of all is that Jesus was saying that we have a responsibility as His disciples to look out for others who are desperate, hopeless and lonely. What does it mean for us to take up our cross and follow him? For most of us in this country it may not mean that we actually die an excruciating death for His sake, or for the sake of someone else. We may not literally have to lay down our life for a friend, although this isn’t true of Christians around the world any more, or hasn’t been ever probably. Many Christians today are suffering physically for their beliefs. We also have people, soldiers and others, stationed around the world who are laying down their lives for us today. So what was Jesus doing? He was taking upon Himself someone else’s suffering because of His great love for us. And I think that is what He wants us to do if we are to take up a cross in our lives today.

“When Valle’s brother Kim was dying, one of the things that we did to help him was in the middle of the night, it wasn’t the pain that was bothering him but it was just being uncomfortable. He would lay down and sleep for an hour or two. Then he would sit up on the edge of the bed. For him to be able to do that, someone had to sit there with your elbows on your knees, your hands cupped together to hold his head in your hands. Then he could go to sleep while he was sitting up. You would do that for an hour and a half at a time until he would wake up and be ready to lay back down again. As I was doing this for him, I wondered if this was some of what Christ meant that we would love other people so much that we would do anything we could to help ease their suffering and their afflictions.

“We know that the crucifixion was done because of Christ’s love for us, and for the love of the Father who sent Him, for Jesus said, in John 6:, ‘For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will but the will of Him that sent me. And this is the Father’s will which hath sent me, that of all which He hath given me, I should lose nothing but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of Him that sent me, everyone that seeth the Son and believeth on Him will have everlasting life, and I will raise him up in the resurrection of the just at the last day.’

“In some way aren’t we called to do the same thing -- to love others so much that we will help them find Christ so He can loose the bands of death that hold them? It can be by helping to relieve physical suffering or it can be to help relieve spiritual suffering. To do as Jesus did -- to love people so much, and this is the key, that we will help them to see a better way of life. As Jesus told the disciples, ‘See your life with new eyes. There is a better way!’ Is this taking up our cross and following Him - loving people so much that we’ll do anything we can to help them in their suffering?

“Just as we can be followers of the cross, we can be part of the resurrection in this life as well. Isn’t our mission about finding new life in Christ in our own lives and then helping others find new life? In a sense we can become new creatures right now in a spiritual way, looking forward to the time when we become new creatures in the physical way.

Another way to look at it is that our final exam in this world will be based on the depth of love we have developed for God and for others. We have pop quizzes along the way. Sometimes we are like Peter and we get a zero. His test had three questions and he followed with, ‘No, I don’t know Him. No, I don’t know Him. No, I don’t know Him.’ We have a tutor who comes along and says, ‘Forget that last quiz. Let’s work for the next one. Let’s develop that love.’ Christ can help us forget the zeros and prepare us for the next test so we can do better. Then when it comes time for the final, we’ll know Him and He will know us.

“The message of bringing new life is shared in the testimony of Ammon when he met his brothers after their famous missionary trip. I would just like to share his words. (Alma 14:91-104) ‘I do not boast in my own strength, or in my own wisdom; but behold, my joy is full, yea, my heart is brim with joy, and I will rejoice in my God; Yea, I know that I am nothing; as to my strength, I am weak; therefore I will not boast of myself, but I will boast of my God; for in his strength I can do all things; yea, behold, many mighty miracles we have wrought in this land, for which we will praise his name for ever. Behold, how many thousand of our brethren has he loosed from the pains of hell; and they are brought to sing redeeming love; and this because of the power of his word which is in us; therefore have we not great reason to rejoice? Yea, we have reason to praise him for ever, for he is the most high God, and has loosed our brethren from the chains of hell. Yea, they were encircled about with everlasting darkness and destruction; but behold, he has brought them into his everlasting light, yea, into everlasting salvation; and they are encircled about with the matchless bounty of his love: Yea, and we have been instruments in his hands, of doing this great and marvelous work; therefore let us glory, yea, we will glory in the Lord; yea, we will rejoice, for our joy is full; yea, we will praise our God for ever.

‘Behold, who can glory too much in the Lord? Yea, who can say too much of his great power, and of his mercy, and of his long suffering towards the children of men? Behold I say unto you, I can not say the smallest part which I feel. Who could have supposed that our God would have been so merciful as to have snatched us from our awful, sinful, and polluted state?’

‘Behold, we went forth even in wrath, with mighty threatenings to destroy his church. O then, why did he not consign us to an awful destruction; yea, why did he not let the sword of his justice fall upon us, and doom us to eternal despair? O my soul, almost as it were fleeth at the thought. Behold, he did not exercise his justice upon us, but in his great mercy hath brought us over that everlasting gulf of death and misery, even to the salvation of our souls.

‘And now behold, my brethren, what natural man is there, that knoweth these things? I say unto you, there is none that knoweth these things, save it be the penitent; Yea, he that repenteth and exerciseth faith, and bringeth forth good works, and prayeth continually without ceasing: unto such it is given to know the mysteries of God; yea, unto such it shall be given to reveal things which never have been revealed; Yea, and it shall be given unto such, to bring thousands of souls to repentance, even as it has been given unto us to bring these our brethren to repentance.’

“The world around us has many people who are lonely and desperate and mired in sin. Many of those people are us, at times, in our lives. Hear the word of Jesus from the cross today. ‘Tell me your thoughts, even your desperate ones. Though you may wonder at times, you are not forsaken. The kingdom is the Lord’s. My suffering is for you, and it will lead to ultimate victory. I call you

to take up the cross and follow me in love - to find others who are sin sick and sorrow worn. I want you to love them enough to share hope for a new life, a spiritual resurrection that will lead to a physical one; and, oh, what joy awaits you! As it says in the Doctrine and Covenants, 'If it be so that you should labor all your days in crying repentance unto this people, and bring save it be one soul unto Me. how great shall be your joy with him in the kingdom of my father.'

"These are the wonderful words of life I believe Jesus was speaking to you and me in those few words, uttered in ultimate pain, 'My God! My God! Why hast thou forsaken me?' This is the message of Easter morning"

Michael Jordison, in charge of the service, bore his testimony of meeting Jesus and learning from Him that power to create comes from the sacrifice of His love. If you want to experience real joy you have to know God, and to know God you must first be willing to lay down your life.

We sang joyously, 'Christ is alive, Alleluia' and left with the blessing of prayer for understanding and acceptance of Christ's sacrifice for us offered by High Priest Sherman Phipps.

An Invitation to Meet The Author of Our Salvation

Elder Norman Nelson had just read Isaiah 55:1-2 when Amy Mitchell sang "I Love to tell the Story of Jesus and His Love." "I hope you all think about what just happened", Norman commented seriously. "We just had a better sermon than I could ever preach. We sometimes think this is a great secret that we are keeping within ourselves. How much do we really love to tell the story? Is it still a great secret for us and nobody else? It's something you really ought to share. Amy has given us a great blessing."

Norman had just read, "Ho, everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labor for that which satisfieth not? hearken dilligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness (abundance)." Now he leaned over the pulpit and declared fervently, referring to the request of the Restoration Patriarchs that we prepare ourselves spiritually, "We have been asked to study and pray, and seek. You know all the studying and praying and everything we do is only the groundwork or the footwork. The blessing comes when we are humble enough and have done enough footwork that we can meet the author. The things are not written that you need to know.

"Consider where you are and what we are. In the beginning God created the whole universe, and He created your soul. He did this for His pleasure because He wanted you. He wanted the friendship, the companionship of you. What do you want? How badly do you want it? Adam and Eve had the Garden of Eden and all of the wonderful things that were there, and they were in the presence of God; and they wanted something else. So they disobeyed God and because they did that, all of us also began to wanting other things.

Satan's Big Lie Still Deceives Us

"Adam then began to agree with the commandments of God

and to follow Him even though he did not know why he was doing it. Adam and Eve taught their children what the Lord told them to teach them, but Satan came in and said, 'Don't do that.' And they loved Satan more than God because Satan said, 'Feed your body. Take care of yourself. Don't worry about the future. That's unimportant. What's important is what you are right now, what you can do for yourself, and what kind of glory you can find for yourself.' That's a big lie! And we're still believing it! And we are still looking for houses and cars and self glory instead of trying to be with the God who created us, being able to feel His presence and have the fruit of the Spirit that comes with being with Him. We don't have the discipline that we need to be able to hear his voice. How can we keep His commandments if we don't know them, we can't feel them, and we can't understand them?

"So this little footwork we are asked to do is merely a very slight beginning. Until we have done that for years and years until our very being can radiate the things He asks us to do, we cannot understand what He is trying to ask us to do. We must be willing to share this story and do all we can to come as close to our Father as we can be if we are to become what He wants us to be.

"Consider the Being that created everything. Gerry says there are units out there that are a thousand times as big as our sun, yet here we are thinking we can just waltz in and be with Him, not knowing anything of what He is doing or why - not really making the effort to understand what He is asking us to do. We look back in history and in the scriptures and we see what other people have done. Some persons did terrible things, yet the Lord says somehow they did things that let them understand more of what God wanted them to be.

"In the Book of Mormon we read where, the people were listening to Jesus, and they saw, and they heard and they felt what He said. We have trouble even hearing and very seldom see or feel the fullness of what He is giving us. Remember in Section 22:23b of the Doctrine and Covenants we read, 'This is my work and my glory to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.' Some in this day have said that's bad because it tells only about man. Is man singular or plural? You recognize in Genesis 1:29 that it's plural. 'I, God created man in mine own image, in the image of mine Only Begotten created I him, male and female created I them.' Some keep taking words and trying to make them mean something other than what God has said He means by them.

God's Purpose For Our Creation

"Man was created for God's pleasure, for His companion and friendship. We need to recognize that that's where we belong. We will never have a fulness of joy or happiness until we return unto Him as His friend. The sooner the better! Share the story. Do the footwork. Become what He wants you to become, and then you can be happy.

"Let's look at the book of John. John says that Christ is love. He is the truth. He is not just a man. He is God. He is the truth and love and all those attributes that we need to be. 'For God so loved the world, that he gave his Only Begotten Son that whosoever believeth on him should not perish; but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.' We worry about small sins, but we don't worry about our separation from our God. He doesn't condemn your small sins, your small worries, your small separations. He gives you the opportunity to repent from those things that separate you from Him and begin doing those things which will keep you in His presence - those things that will make

you His friend. Wherever you have been makes no difference to Him right now. What you are going to be is what He wants. He asks, 'Are you going to be My friend? Are you going to do what it takes to be with me?' Are you going to be the kind of person that can enjoy creating new worlds, creating new souls, teaching them to belong to Him and to be with Him. You are not going to be Gods, because God is God. He is what He is. He has always been, and He will always be. But He is asking you to be His friend to share with Him the glory and the honor and respect of other people.

"This little story, I believe I have told you, is the kind of experience I had. 'And there came a woman of Samaria to draw water, Jesus said to her, Give me to drink. Now his disciples were gone away into the city to buy meat. Wherefore he being alone, the woman of Samaria said unto him, How is it that thou being a Jew, askest drink of me, who am a woman of Samaria? The Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.

'Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water. The woman said unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep; from whence then hast thou that living water? Art thou greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle? Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever shall drink of this well, shall thirst again; But whosoever drinketh of the water which I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.

'Jesus said unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what; we know what we worship; and salvation is of the Jews. And the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship him. For unto such hath God promised his Spirit. And they who worship him, must worship in spirit and in truth.' (John 4:9-16; 23-26).

"Remember, Jesus told Pilate about the truth and Pilate said, 'What is truth?' (John 18:37-38). Jesus is truth! Jesus is love!

"In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit which they that believe on Him should receive;' (John 7:38-39). We still have a choice, don't we? Do we believe in Christ? Do we believe He is the truth? Do we believe He is love - He is the way? Are we sharing that with our neighbors so that we can all together come and worship Him?

The Testimony of Those Who Know Him

"I have told you before of my meeting the Lord in Nigeria, and this is similar to the testimony I have, only it happened in 1832. (Doctrine and Covenants 76:3a). 'We, Joseph Smith, Jr., and Sidney Rigdon, being in the Spirit on the sixteenth of February, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and thirty two, by the power of the Spirit our eyes were opened, and our understandings were enlightened, so as to see and understand the things of God.' This is something nobody can tell you except God Himself. You cannot see these sort of things unless God reveals them unto you. It is not written. It cannot be written. Only as you see God yourself and He ministers to you can you know.

We sometimes talk about how small we are and how much the Lord can trust us. Just as an example, would you give our baby

here a loaded thirty eight? Can God give you all the mysteries of His kingdom when you are unable to control your own emotions? What kind of damage would you do if you had all the mysteries of the Kingdom of God in your state of understanding? We haven't done the footwork! We haven't grown up! We're not ready to receive. These little items of footwork are to bring us to the shores of Jordan. We are not ready to cross, but if we do our footwork well, then the Captain of the Hosts will take us across - if we do our footwork well!

(Doctrine and Covenants 76:3g). "And now, after the many testimonies which have been given of him, this is the testimony, last of all, which we give of him, that he lives; for we saw him, even on the right hand of God;" It's true. He lives, and He's waiting for us to be humble enough and to do our footwork well enough so He can lead us to where He wants us to go.

"Again in Section 90 He gives us some of the mysteries of what's happening. He created us as innocent beings. He gave us certain abilities. He wants us to learn to be with Him. Christ Himself, when He was here, did not receive a fulness of all the mysteries of God at once; but as He remembered and followed those things which He taught, God was able to gradually give Him all of His mysteries until He could control everything in His environment. What would happen if you were now given His power - to tell the fig tree to dry up? To stop a storm? Would you use it for making money or for something else for yourself? Would you use it for the glory of God as He meant it to be?

"Intelligence or the light of truth, was not created or made" God can't give you that! You have to accept what He has given you and work with that - multiply those things you have been given. Then He can give you more, and more as you are able to understand and to follow His laws and His teaching, remembering. You know, I think it is kind of interesting, sometimes think it is a little funny, those people who think they are going to be God and have a universe of their own. What would you do with it? How would you keep it in line with all the rest of the universe?

"God is God! We never will be! But we can enjoy what He is giving us and what He is doing if we come close enough to Him to understand what it is that He is doing, and why He's doing it. We can't even testify of enough of His goodness at this point because we don't know enough of it! We need to come closer, to continually seek and pray, not just once a week - not just an hour or two here and there. Your mind needs to be tuned to God every minute of the day if you want to make happen what you would like to have happen - to be in His presence, to be able to live with Him as He wants you to live."

With deep emotion, our speaker declared, "I love you all! God does, too!"

To Be Born Again, Use the Strait Gate

Michael Jordison chose for his opening scripture Matthew 7:22-23, "Repent, therefore, and enter ye in at the strait gate; for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat. Because strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." "I would like to talk to you about what we should be doing, because I feel like the Lord is impressing upon me what my responses needs

to be to His word. This morning I would like for each of you also to consider, what is it that the Lord wants you to do at this time.

“Last Sunday, in your bulletin, Rob put a note that said something to the effect that 90% of what you hear you forget unless you take notes. I don’t know how many of you took notes last week, but I did, and I think it helped me. I would like to ask, though, how many of you remember what was said last week? How about last month?” Michael expressed concern that the messages that are presented may not be getting through. “I catch myself, many times not recalling what was said the last week, and I don’t think the Lord wants us to live our lives from Sunday to Sunday. So what should our response be?”

“I would like to take you through a quick journey through the books. From the Old testament, the book of Ecclesiastes 12:13, ‘Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter; Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man.’ From the New Testament, 1 John 5:2-4 says, ‘By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God that we keep his commandments, and his commandments are not grievous. For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.’

“From Mosiah 1:55, ‘And behold, all that he requires of you, is to keep his commandments; and he has promised you that if ye would keep his commandments, ye should prosper in the land.’ One more - a revelation in section 10:10a that was given to Hyrum Smith, 1829, ‘Behold, this is your work, to keep my commandments; yea, with all your might, mind and strength; seek not to declare my word, but first seek to obtain my word, and then shall your tongue be loosed.’

“What are we supposed to be doing right now, based on what I just read from each of the testaments? Our work - what is required of us - our duty before God and before man is to simply keep His commandments. And, if you read the scriptures, you will find that His first commandment is to repent and believe the gospel. Believe that Jesus Christ came to earth in the flesh and took upon Himself our sins, and when we believe that, we are to be baptized for the remission of those sins so that we can receive the Holy Ghost, even His Spirit, to be our comfort, our guide, our teacher, our leader, to direct all of our paths.

“My brother Nephi puts it this way (2 Nephi 13:22-30) ‘Wherefore, do the things which I have told you I have seen, that your Lord and your Redeemer should do; For, for this cause have they been shown unto me, that ye might know the gate by which ye should enter. For the gate by which ye should enter is repentance and baptism by water; and then cometh a remission of your sins by fire, and by the Holy Ghost. And then are ye in this strait and narrow path which leads to eternal life; yea, ye have entered in by the gate; ye have done according to the commandments of the Father and the Son. And ye have received the Holy Ghost which witnesses of the Father and the Son, unto the fulfilling of the promise which he hath made, that if ye enter in by the way, ye should receive.

‘And now, my beloved brethren, after ye have gotten into this strait and narrow path, I would ask, if all is done? Behold, I would say unto you, Nay; for ye have not come thus far, save it were by the word of Christ, with unshaken faith in him, relying wholly upon the merits of him who is mighty to save. Wherefore, ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect bright-

ness of hope, and a love of God and of all men. Wherefore, if ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father; Ye shall have eternal life.’ “After we have entered in by the way, then we shall receive the Holy Ghost. And it says, then we have to press forward. I think about everybody here almost has entered in by the way, haven’t we? So now, what is our duty? To press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope and a love of God and of all men.

To Be Born Of God

“Again, I would like to read to you from the words of John (1 John 5:1-4). ‘Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God; and everyone that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God that we keep his commandments, and his commandments are not grievous. For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.’

“How many of us have been born of God? Can you raise your hand and say, ‘I have been born of God.’ You know, I would like to say that, but in 1 John 3:9 John says, ‘Whosoever is born of God does not continue in sin, for the Spirit of God remaineth in him; and he cannot continue in sin, because he is born of God, having received that Holy Spirit of promise.’ O.K. Raise your hand again. Who has been born of God? Really, when we get down to it, after we have entered in by the way, we are not supposed to sin any more, technically. Right?

Our speaker quoted from radio minister Charles Stanley, ‘Does our behavior really make any difference if we know that we have been saved and are eternally secure? You bet it does. Are there any eternal consequences in the life of a believer who sins after they are saved? Yes, there are. Will everybody in heaven be able to experience the same blessings and the same rewards? No, they will not. The Bible nowhere indicates that all of us are going to have the same position in heaven. Secondly, nowhere does it indicate that everybody is going to have the same privileges in heaven. Nor does it indicate that everybody is going to be able to enjoy heaven to the same degree. Is it possible to be eternally secure and yet be an eternal looser? You bet it is! Can you imagine standing in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ who stretched out both arms on the cross, and they drove a spike in both hands and put a crown of thorns on his head, and the blood ran down his eyes and down his chest, and He did that all for one reason - that you and I could be forgiven of our sins and live happily and joyfully in this life and one of these days die and go to heaven. Can you imagine standing in his presence and saying, ‘All I really care about, Lord, is just getting in!’? Here Jesus bore all that pain physically, but he bore all that spiritual pain and suffering for us, and we get to heaven, and He’s standing there. We go up to Him and shake His hand maybe like we do when we meet the greeter at church and then shuffle on by. We just want to get in. Do you suppose that is going to cut it?

“When I go to telephone conventions, they have booths of different companies, each with little pads, pens and gimmicks that they pass out with their logo on them; and you know, I have a hard time walking up to a booth and grabbing a pen without talking to them or at least acting interested. How do I expect to get into heaven and just shake the Lord’s hand say, ‘Thanks for what you did,’ and go on in? I don’t think I can do that. And that’s in essence what the

Lord was telling us in Matthew when He said, 'Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, will enter into the kingdom of Heaven, but he who does the will of my Father.'

"When a certain ruler named Nicodemus came to Jesus, by night and inquired about getting into the Kingdom of heaven, Jesus told him that if he wanted to get into the Kingdom, he was going to have to be born of the water and of the Spirit. And that's the same born again to which John was referring - being born of God. Being born again. You remember the story of Alma the younger. His father was the High priest, and Alma was a rebellious young child, having wandered off his own path with Mosiah's sons and a few others; and he had an experience. In this experience, he was struck dumb for two days, and he met the Lord Jesus Christ. After the end of two days when the people fasted and prayed for him, he said this as he awoke, (Mosiah 11:186-189); 'I have repented of my sins and have been redeemed of the Lord. Behold, I am born of the Spirit. And the Lord said unto me, Marvel not that all mankind, yea, men and women, and all nations, kindreds, tongues and people, must be born again; Yea, born of God, changed from their fallen state to a state of righteousness; being redeemed of God, becoming His sons and daughters; and thus they become new creatures; and unless they do this, they can in no wise inherit the kingdom of God. And I say unto you, Unless this be the case, they must be cast off; and this I know because I was like to be cast off.'

"'He who is born of God doth not continue in sin', and yet I know every single one of us does continue in sin. So what's the fix? How are we going to stop this? Are we going to look to the Priesthood to tell us what to do? Are we going to listen to the radio preachers to tell us what to do? I don't think so. My brother Norman likes to say, 'Until you meet the author, you have no hope.' You can read all you want about Him. You can study all you want about Him and know lots of things about Him, but you've got to meet Him! And that was the promise that was given to each one of us that if we would enter in by the way, we would receive the Holy Ghost; and it is the Holy Ghost that is there to provide a way for us. In section 58:6 b&c, a revelation given in 1831 calling for the Saints to gather and to consecrate their properties unto the Bishop Edward Partridge in Zion, counsel was given, 'Wherefore let them bring their families to this land, as they shall counsel between themselves and me, for, behold, it is not meet that I should command in all things, for he that is compelled in all things, the same is a slothful and not a wise servant; wherefore he receiveth no reward.'

"Now just a little bit ago we were told that it was our duty and our obligation to keep the commandments. Then all of sudden we find out that here He says, 'it is not meet that I should command in all things'. How are we supposed to keep the commandments if He is not going to command us in all things? Well, He goes on to say, 'Men should be anxiously engaged in a good cause; and do many things of their own free will and bring to pass much righteousness, for the power is in them wherein they are agents unto themselves.'

The Holy Ghost Is The Power That Makes The Difference

"'The power is in them wherein they are agents unto themselves.' Michael repeated. "We have been given a special gift - the Holy Ghost. The power - you can't perform any righteous act unless the Holy Ghost is within you, because only God is righteous. Only God is pure. One of my favorite verses in the Holy Scripture is Galatians 2:20. Apostle Paul says, 'I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who

loved me, and gave Himself for me.'

"You see, when we take upon ourselves Christ by going into the waters - when we put Christ on, we become new creatures, and it's not I that lives, but it is Christ that lives within me. And it's Christ that lives within you. And it's nothing that we do. Paul says (1 Corinthians 15:10) 'But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; for I labored more abundantly than they all; yet not I but the grace of God which was with me.' It's the grace of God in us. We are saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. That doesn't mean we just have to believe. It doesn't mean that we just have to go into the waters and be baptized then continue on in our own lives. It means that the power of grace is so strong that it compels us to do right. It compels us to cease from sin. God does everything. The only thing we have to do is to choose Him. He enables us to do His work. He enables us to do the acts of righteousness. Not I, but the grace of God which is in me. That's a powerful, powerful verse when you think about it. We have the power within us to overcome this world - to do every good thing, if we will just listen to the Spirit.

"A Great and Marvelous Work Is About to Come Forth"

"I had it in my mind this morning to go over the various Priesthood offices, which includes member, and talk about our duties because the scriptures detail what each office is expected to do, but I will leave that for you to study out. You see, we are on the verge, I believe, of a very, very great and marvelous work. And the restoration of this church is not the end to the work. As Rob talked about this morning, a lot of people out there call it "replacement theology". They think the church has overstepped Israel and is now the recipient of all of Israel's promises. This church was restored so that God could remember His covenants with His people, Israel. It's not so that we could build this city of Zion and then go forth and go out from there, but so He could remember His people - the promises that He made. That's what Joseph Smith was told. 'I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and dreadful day of the Lord, and He will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the children to the promises and the covenants made with the Father'. Jesus said, (3 Nephi 7:34) 'At that day when the Gentiles shall sin against my gospel, ..., .., ...'. He didn't say, 'If' the Gentiles sin. He said "When". We are the Gentiles. At that day when we sin (See 3 Nephi 7:34-35), 'I will bring the fullness of My Gospel from among them; and then will I remember my covenant which I have made unto my people, O House of Israel', and I will bring my gospel unto them; ...'. And He will give them His fullness. And then, God throws in this one little loop hole 3 Nephi 10:1-4. 'But', speaking of the Gentiles here, 'If they will repent, hearken unto my words and harden not their hearts, I will establish my church among them and they shall come in unto the covenant, and be numbered among this, the remnant of Jacob,' That's not what I was taught when I was younger - that I was going to be numbered among 'the remnant of Jacob, unto whom I have given this land for their inheritance, and they shall assist my people, the remnant of Jacob; and also, as many of the House of Israel as shall come, that they may build a city, which shall be called the New Jerusalem.' Isn't that what we have talked about all of the time? 'Then shall they assist my people that they may be gathered in, who are scattered upon all the face of the land, in unto the New Jerusalem. And then shall the powers of heaven come down among them, and I also will be in the midst; and then shall the work of the Father commence at that day, even when this gospel shall be preached among the remnant of this people.'

How Do We Respond?

“This past week I had a meeting with the general manager of my company. He was sharing with the employees where the revenue comes in and how it’s divided so we would understand a few things and how our industry is changing. But he asked if we had any ideas on it - how the company could increase our profits and stay competitive in an ever changing market. And I told him, ‘You have got to appoint somebody or do something so that you can make sure that every employee understands and knows what they are selling.’ He wants us to be better marketers. I said, ‘You have some employees out here that are ignorant of what they are selling. You’ve got to be interested enough in each of your employees to make sure that they understand what they are selling - understand the features and how they operate.’ And isn’t that, in fact, the responsibility of the ministers, to make sure that every person understands the gospel - that every person understands what their response should be? That doesn’t mean that we all have to be geniuses. It doesn’t mean that we all have to be on the same level, but every person has to understand what their response is supposed to be and how we are supposed to react. We are supposed to know what is coming well enough that we can warn our neighbor.

“In preparing and talking with evangelicals about the fulness of the gospel, I have been writing down some questions. What is salvation? Why do we need to be baptized? Why do you have to be submerged in the water? How are we saved by grace? Just different things. Write those questions down. Can you answer them if somebody was to come up to you and ask? You know, there are a lot of things I could answer, but there are some that I couldn’t. I could give you maybe a paraphrase.

“We’ve got to make some changes in our lives. I look at you as friends - part of my family. We’ve got a small group here, and that’s what’s been happening to the Restoration. It keeps getting smaller and smaller and smaller. Groups kind of shrink. Not to hold any one group higher than another, but I think the Lord is sifting us, seeing who is really interested in being a part of His work in this Latter Day.

“Last Communion Service, I had an opportunity to sit with the Remnant Branch down in Independence through their meeting. I know that many don’t see the Remnant as being legitimate, but it is my testimony that the Lord is working with those people, and He doesn’t care what name they put upon themselves as an organization. He does care, but He’s going to work with us, and I think the Lord is calling and preparing each of the different factions and groups. Perhaps we each hear a little bit differently, but He’s calling on each of us to sanctify our lives and to prepare our lives so that we can be a part of the Latter Day work.

“We look at the coming forth of the Book of Mormon and the Restoring of the church as the Latter Day work, but the Latter Day work has only begun. It hasn’t really reached its fulfillment - its climax, yet. We need to be conditioned. We need to be visiting in the homes. The Priesthood needs to be visiting in the homes and making sure that everybody is praying, everybody is doing what is asked of them. And if the people don’t know, then the Priesthood need to be there to answer their questions. So I would ask each of you to invite the Priesthood into your home. Or when you are asked if you would like a visit, say, ‘Yes!’ Because things are not going to continue the way they have been. They can. I’m not saying that the Lord’s going to come back in a year or less. It may be fifteen years, for all I know, and some of us may be gone by then; but we have responsibilities; especially as parents, we have responsibili-

ties to make sure our children understand and know the gospel.

“I shared with a woman a couple of weeks ago on the job. She was of the Assembly of God or something like it. While I was working, she was sharing testimonies of how the Lord worked in her life. As she was sharing, she had a little child about Joshua’s age or a little younger sitting on her lap who did something that hurt or bothered her. She grabbed that child and threw him off her lap and said, ‘Go way! I’m not going to let you sit on my lap if you do that!’ Now what kind of a Christian example was that? We all do things like that - things that we don’t think about; but we’ve got to make sure that our children learn and understand the gospel; and many of us older people are still children. I’m still a child in many respects of the gospel. The scriptures say that the ax will be laid to the root of every tree. What do you suppose that means? That means every person, including you, Ben, Brandy, Tyler, Sam every person is going to have to make a choice of who they are going to serve. And it’s not going to be up to your parents to make that decision for you. It’s going to be up to you guys, and you will have to decide who you are going to serve - just like when Joshua says, ‘As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.’ You can say, ‘As for me, I will serve the Lord.’

“And you can’t just say that and go from Sunday to Sunday and just come to church. Your life has to be an example of that. Remember what it said. If you are going to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, you have to be born of water and of the Spirit. And John tells us, if we are born of God, we do not continue in sin. I have often shared this with classes that I have taught, that when you are faced with the law, then you are accountable to it. When we are baptized, when we receive the Holy Ghost to be our guide, it doesn’t necessarily mean that we stop committing sin, because we don’t. What it means is that when the Holy Ghost convicts you of that sin, you turn from it. When the Holy Ghost does convict us and we don’t turn from sin, then it becomes sin to us. And as we go through our life, the Holy Ghost points out different elements of it saying, ‘You need to change this. You need to change that.’ That’s how we grow from grace to grace because it’s God’s power within us that enables us to change.

There’s an excellent testimony in the book, Infallible Proofs. It’s found on page 84. It was a vision given to Alfred White, and I would encourage each of you to look it up. It talks about the redemption of Zion. It gives you an understanding of how Zion is going to be redeemed and that it is the power of the Holy Ghost that redeems Zion. We need to change our lives so that we can be ready to move with the Lord. We often talk about sins of commission - things that we are doing wrong. There are also sins of omission - things that we should be doing that we are not. The Lord has convicted me that there are many things in my life that I’m not doing to be prepared for when He moves in power - when the Lord remembers His covenant with His people. Are we going to be prepared to join them? I have a feeling there is not going to be a whole lot of time to make up our minds. There may be a little bit of time for some of us, but we have got to be ready to move. Scriptures say that ‘Zion’s conditions are no closer nor further away than the spiritual condition of my people justifies.’ That means that we can have Zion’s conditions right here in Mt. Ayr if we are prepared - if we will humble ourselves.

“Do you know Jesus, or do you know just a little bit about Him; Arthur Oakman used to say, ‘Have you met Him?’ ‘Has He made a difference in your life?’ If you have, you need to show it. On the way here this morning, we were listening to the radio, and there

was a song. The words go, 'If we are the body, why aren't His arms reaching, why aren't His hands healing, why aren't His words teaching, why aren't His legs going, why is His love not showing ...?' There are things we need to see within our lives, things we need to realize so that the body can move fluidly without hindrance, so that the stone which is cut out of the mountain without hands can roll forth unhindered by us; or else we may just get rolled over, and be like the Jews.

"That's not exactly what I was going to say this morning, but I am hoping and praying that each of you will consider the words of admonition and counsel that has been given to us by the Patriarchs. They have asked us to fast and to study and to pray. To keep track of our blessings and prepare ourselves to meet God. Did we come here this morning expecting Christ to be standing up here - to learn from Him?

"I want to leave you with, Section 22 of the Doctrine and Covenants. Moses was wondering why God had made all these things and God said, 'For mine own purpose have I made all these things, and it remaineth in me. ' Then the Lord God sheds a little bit of light. He "spake unto Moses saying, The heavens they are many and they cannot be numbered unto man; but they are numbered unto me, for they are mine. And as one earth shall pass away, and the heavens thereof, even so shall another come. And there is no end to my works, neither to my words, for this is my work and my glory, to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.' The glory and the work of Jesus are one and the same.

"We look at the law like the Jews as a school master to keep us confined to the strait and narrow path, but God wants us to know something, that His work and His glory are one and the same. Any reward that we have in life which is worth having, the reward is the same as the act of service. When you give your life for somebody else, that is the reward. That's something only the followers of Jesus Christ can know, because the world doesn't teach that. That's the humility that Jesus Christ clothes Himself with, and that humility is all powerful. All glory. What reward are you going to have in heaven? The reward that you make for yourself here on this earth today. Are you going to live your life for yourself, or are you going to live your life for Jesus? When you live your life for Jesus, you live your life for everybody else, and that's the difference between those who are born of God and those who are not.

News and Notes

Rex Lin To Be Baptized

The branch shared in to good news Wednesday, April 28, that Rex Lin has decided to be baptized. Plans were for the baptism to be held Sunday, May 2.

Trip to Zoo Planned

Saturday, May 1 is the day for the congregation's trip to the Henry Doorley Zoo in Omaha. Meet at the church in Mt. Ayr by 8:15 for loading. The plan is to leave from the church at 8:30. It is hoped that by going together we may get group rates. Travel to Omaha takes about 3 hours. Some choose to take their lunch. Last year many of the group gathered and had dinner together in Omaha before returning home.

Gabel Galusha Wins in Gymnastics

Gabel Galusha was awarded a second, third and fourth place in recent Winterset Gymnastics Tournament events.

National Honor Society

Jared Beck was inducted into the Mount Ayr Community high school chapter of the National Honor Society recently. Heidi Winkler, who was inducted last year, helped with the ceremony.

Jared Beck active in speech, drama

Jared Beck has been active in speech and drama at Mount Ayr Community high school this year. He had a part in the spring play and received division I ratings at the state speech contest.

Special Observance of the Lord's Supper

At the invitation of the Restoration Pastors of Zion and Central Missouri, there was a special observance of the Lord's Supper at the Auditorium in Independence, Missouri on April 25. Eighteen members of the congregation attended.

Smiths Home from Kenya

Mildred and Douglas Smith have returned from Kenya, East Africa where they participated in a women's retreat at Eyugis and provided other ministry in Nairobi, Kisumu, Eldoret, and other places. Mildred returned April 7. Douglas remained another week to go with Eric Odida and others to take the gospel to Tanzania. Mildred and Douglas bring greetings from the Odidas, the Agwandas and other Saints of that far off land; and both are eager to share their testimonies with all who wish to hear.

Women Meet For Sharing

Saturday, April 24 the women of the branch and their guests met at Mount Ayr from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m. for worship and sharing. The activity was so interesting that they didn't get around to eating their sack lunches until just before 2 p.m.. They are now anticipating another such event.

New Hymn Books Purchased

Sunday, April 18 hymns we have not sung for some time were sung in worship. The new hymn books have arrived. There are now three different books available for congregational singing and a fourth for use by the choir. The selection allows a wide range of hymns to be chosen for worship.

Ringgold Singers concert held

When the Ringgold Singers concert was held in Mount Ayr Friday, April 30, five members of the branch were part of the concert. Singing with the group were Rob and Lynda Rolfe, Alan Smith, Sue Beck and Kathy Meyers.

CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST
Mount Ayr Restoration Branch
607 E. Madison St.
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From the Pastor's Desk

Continued from front page

before you life and death...” (Deut. 30:19) Sadly, we so often choose death.

The prevailing standard of our day, even in many churches, is that God wants us to make up our own mind about morals. We should make “responsible” decisions based on the circumstances of our day. This standard is a gross perversion of the truth. God knows that if we do not follow his standard, our choice will ultimately destroy us. Sin is born, grows and becomes a cancer that eventually kills our spiritual bodies.

Apostle Paul in Romans 7:25 tells us that our bodies are warring against our minds. If we don’t subdue (overcome) our body, we serve the law of sin. “...O

wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death.?” What is this body of death that Paul uses as an example of what we are doing to ourselves. The Romans had a method of execution in which a cadaver would be tied to a victim in such a way that he couldn’t get rid of it. The rotting flesh of the carcass would contaminate the body of the victim, thus leading to a slow, horrible, painful death. This is what Paul said that sin does to an unrepentant person. If each of us does not accept salvation through the blood of Jesus Christ, we are hopeless condemned by the “body of death”. (Both as individuals and nations) What a powerful lesson from the book of Romans!