

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

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I'm Not Much

Do you feel like you are weak? Are you only a _____ (insert your job)? Do you feel like you are insignificant in your church, in your community, in your family? Do you have physical or mental weaknesses that "prevent" you from doing certain things? Perhaps, in a word, you think you are weak. Remember! Being weak may not be so bad.

The scriptures talk about weakness a lot. Sometimes we are sick and physicians can't heal us and the Lord won't heal us. Apostle Paul, although he was an instrument in the hands of God to heal others, himself was not healed. He put it like this: "And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I sought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore, I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then am I strong." II Cor. 12:7-10.

There are numerous examples that could be given of people who overcame their weaknesses. Who would you add to this list?

Lupe Zarate was armless. He still made the McAllen (Texas) high school football team. He was expert at blocking and tackling.

Abraham Lincoln was defeated in every election until he ran for President.

Albert Einstein was expelled from school in Munich, and later failed to pass his test for a polytechnic

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TESTIMONIES AND SERMON NOTES

Called to Life With God - Try It!

For a call to worship, High Priest Robert Rolfe, who was in charge of the service, read Alma's charge to his son Helaman to whom he was leaving the responsibilities of leadership of the church. Brother Rolfe recommended them to us as we were preparing to partake of the emblems of our Lord's sacrifice for us. Alma 17:65-70: "And now my son, remember the words which I have spoken unto you: trust not those secret plans unto this people, but teach them an everlasting hatred against sin and iniquity; Preach unto them repentance, and faith on the Lord Jesus Christ: teach them to humble themselves, and to be meek and lowly in heart; teach them to withstand every temptation of the devil, with their faith on the Lord Jesus Christ; Teach them to never be weary of good works, but to be meek and lowly in heart: for such shall find rest to their souls.

"O remember my son, and learn wisdom in thy youth; yea, learn in thy youth to keep the commandments of God; yea, and cry unto God for all thy support; Yea, let all thy doings be unto the Lord, and whithersoever thou goest, let it be in the Lord; yea, let thy thoughts be directed unto the Lord; yea, let the affections of thy heart be placed upon the Lord for ever; counsel the Lord in all thy doings, and he will direct thee for good: Yea, when thou liest down at night, lie down unto the Lord, that he may watch over you in your sleep; and when thou riseth in the morning, let thy heart be full of thanks unto God; and if ye do these things, ye shall be lifted up at the last day."

"Beneath the Cross of Jesus" was sung by a trio consisting of Janice and Michael Jordison and Lynda Rolfe in further preparation for the sermon of the day by Elder Norman Nelson who thanked them and asked questions: "How many of you have met Jesus face to face this week, and talked with Him? Why not? What do we lack? What's wrong with us? Are we like the Pharisees and others who have said we are righteous and we are not? Are we really interested in meeting our Lord face to face? What would be our response if we did? Shall we make it a matter of fasting and prayer and see if it can happen next week or this week?"

Let's read the eighth Psalm: "O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! Who hast set thy glory above the heavens. Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger." (Who is the enemy? We have met the enemy and we is it!). "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honor. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet; All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field; The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas. O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!"

I was reminded of a situation in which a woman was misbehaving in school and was brought before the principal. She said, "I am just human, you know." "What do you mean, just human? Look at what He made you to be! He asked you to be like Him. He has given you the ability to be like Him! What do you mean, 'I'm just human.'?"

You are made in the image of God! You were made in the image of God! (Brother Nelson emphasized every word as he repeated the phrase.) And He expects you to be like Him. He expects you to want to live with Him forever in eternity. If you are going to be that way, you are going to have to enjoy His presence now. You can't just all of a sudden, change from what you are to what He wants you to be if you don't work at it real hard now.

Why isn't Zion here? We haven't tried hard enough to make it happen. We don't need ten thousand people to have Zion. We can have Zion here and now if we want it bad enough. In the beginning, God created everything through the power of His Son, Jesus Christ. The first man was Adam and the first woman was Eve, and they disobeyed God's command. And instead of being able to walk and talk with God and enjoy His presence, they saw themselves as physical beings only. They were unable to know the spiritual being that they once were.

In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus sweat great drops of blood because He knew the pain it would cause Him to have to be separated from His Father in order to take upon Himself our sins if we repent and come to Him. We haven't been able to experience that pain. We don't know what it's like to be separated from the Father because we haven't been there. We haven't felt what it's really like - the beauty, the joy, the wonder of talking with our God - of being with Him and experiencing His love. My friends, try it! It's wonderful! It's the most beautiful thing that can ever happen to you - just to see His face - to feel His love. Try it! It's wonderful! From the seventh chapter of Genesis we read, "Behold, I am God; Man of Holiness is my name; Man of Counsel is my name; and Endless and Eternal is my name also. Wherefore I can stretch forth my hands and hold all the creations which I have made, and mine eye can pierce them also. And among all the workmanship of my hands there has not been so great wickedness as among thy brethren; but, behold, their sins shall be upon the heads of their fathers; Satan shall be their father, and misery shall be their doom; and the whole heavens shall weep over them, even all the workmanship of my hands. Wherefore should not the heavens weep, seeing these shall suffer? But, behold, these which thine eyes are upon shall perish in the floods; and, behold, I will shut them up; a prison have I prepared for them, and he whom I have chosen hath pleaded

before my face;... (Genesis 7:42-44).

"And the Lord could not withhold; and he covenanted with Enoch, and sware unto him with an oath, that he would stay the floods; that he would call upon the children of Noah; and he sent forth an unalterable decree, that a remnant of his seed should always be found among all nations, while the earth should stand. And the Lord said, Blessed is he through whose seed Messiah shall come; for he saith, I am Messiah, the King of Zion, the Rock of heaven, which is broad as eternity; and whoso cometh in at the gate, and climbeth up by me shall never fall. Wherefore blessed are they of whom I have spoken, for they shall come forth with songs of everlasting joy.

"And it came to pass, that Enoch cried unto the Lord, saying, When the Son of Man cometh in the flesh shall the earth rest? I pray thee show me these things. And the Lord said unto Enoch, Look; and he looked, and beheld the Son of Man lifted up on the cross, after the manner of men. And he heard a loud voice, and the heavens were veiled; and all the creations of God mourned, and the earth groaned; and the rocks were rent; and the saints arose, and were crowned at the right hand of the Son of Man, with crowns of glory. And as many of the spirits as were in prison came forth and stood on the right hand of God. And the remainder were reserved in chains of darkness until the judgment of the great day. (Genesis 7:58-64). Jesus Christ is light! If we are in darkness, it is because we have chosen to be in darkness. His Spirit is available. He asks us to come to Him - to come to the light of His Spirit - to be with Him - to choose to be His children. He asks you every day, "Come to Me. Let Me teach you what you need to know. Let Me teach you what you need to know! Search the scriptures. They are they which testify of Me. Search the scriptures. They are they which testify of Me! (Brother Nelson repeated the plea.) Pray always lest you enter into temptation. Come unto Me and live in and with Me.

Enoch was able, through the power of God, to bring together a people who worshipped God - who walked and talked with God - who loved each other enough to be of one heart and one mind and dwell in righteousness together.

In Section 6:1-2: of the Doctrine and Covenants, and in many others, "A great and marvelous work is about to come forth unto the children of men." (That's what we are given.) "Behold, I am God, and give heed unto my word, which is quick and powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword, to the dividing asunder of both joints and marrow: therefore, give heed unto my words.

"Behold, the field is white already to harvest, therefore whoso desireth to reap, let him thrust in his sickle with his might, and reap while the day lasts, that he may treasure up for his soul everlasting salvation in the kingdom of God: yea, whosoever will thrust in his sickle and reap, the same is called of God; therefore, if you will ask of me you shall receive, if you will knock it shall be opened unto you."

You have got to try. "Remember the worth of souls is great in the sight of God; for, behold, the Lord your Redeemer suffered death in the flesh; wherefore he suffered the pain of all men, that all men might repent and come unto him. And he hath risen again from the dead, that he might bring all men unto him on conditions of repentance. And how great is his joy in the soul that repenteth. Wherefore you are called to cry repentance unto this people." (D&C 16:3c-3e).

It has been considered by many as to why we are given such specific instructions about coming to Christ - "Strait is the gate and narrow is the way, and few there be that find it." We think about our

instruction in Doctrine and Covenants, that was given to Joseph, but let's look back at Matthew 9:18-21 where Jesus Himself is speaking: "Then said the Pharisees unto him, Why will ye not receive us with our baptism, seeing we keep the whole law? But Jesus said unto them, Ye keep not the law. If ye had kept the law, ye would have received me, for I am he who gave the law. I receive not you with your baptism, because it profiteth you nothing. For when that which is new is come, the old is ready to be put away."

When Joseph Smith Jr. inquired of the Lord, Section 20 was given: "Behold, I say unto you, that all old covenants have I caused to be done away in this thing, and this is a new and everlasting covenant; even that which was from the beginning. Wherefore, although a man should be baptized an hundred times, it availeth him nothing; for you can not enter in at the strait gate by the Law of Moses, neither by your dead works; for it is because of your dead works, that I have caused this last covenant, and this church to be built up unto me; even as in days of old. Wherefore, enter ye in at the gate, as I have commanded, and seek not to counsel your God."

"... this is my work and my glory, to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man." (D&C 22:23b).

God has created many worlds, many civilizations, and He only speaks of this world in which we live. Christ came here, died for you and asks you to come to Him with repentance - with the abilities He has given you to be His sons and daughters, and I testify, life with Him is beautiful. Try it!

Defeating Satan, The Great Illusionist

The sermon November 14 was preceded by a group of youth from the Warrensburg, Missouri Restoration Branch singing "Isn't He beautiful, Prince of Peace, Son of God, Wonderful, Counselor, Almighty God"?

Priest Gordon Winkler introduced his sermon, expressing amazement at the way God went ahead of him to bring together a number of events to culminate in his sermon for the day. The thought for the sermon came into his mind, or, he believed, was placed there by God himself, several weeks ago. When he came to church this morning and shared in the worship service, the young man in charge of the service used Romans 14:17 as a scripture. As Gordon was preparing this morning, the words of that scripture came to his mind, and with Aaron's help, he found it, Romans 14:17; and that scripture became a part of the message of this hour. Then, Rob was going to be absent today, and needed somebody to teach the adult class, Alan was not available. ("He is over in Poland with son Nathan". Gordon said, "We pray that things are going well for them".) So he left the video titled, "The Gates of Hell" to be used in the class. It talks about Christ building His church in the place of paganism and that Satan will not prevail against it. Christ's church will come forth triumphant. That, too, was something that came into our speaker's mind several weeks ago and was incorporated into the thoughts for the day. Finally, the scripture he had chosen is from Ephesians 6, the same chapter from which Ronald Smith had chosen the call to worship for the service. "So," Brother Winkler concluded, "it's probably not a coincidence that the thought that I would like to share with you this morning was placed in my mind weeks ago".

Brother Winkler began by reading Ephesians 6:10: "Finally,

my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand.

"Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;"

On a recent trip to an Iowa Hospital Association meeting in Des Moines our speaker listened to a radio discussion about things that are no longer a part of a school day. Here are some of the things that were on their list: the pledge of allegiance. In Gordon's school one student, who had been selected by some kind of a merit system, got to lead the school in the pledge of allegiance over the intercom system. Every morning all of the other students stood by their desks, hands over their hearts, facing the flag - there was one in every room - and in unison, recited the pledge of allegiance. "Do you remember doing that?" he asked.

I also remember putting my chair on top of my desk at the end of the day. Just before school was to be let out, we got up, tipped our chairs over and put them upside down on the desk so we could be of assistance to the janitors who cleaned the floors. One of the other things mentioned was being able to clean the chalk board erasers. Probably there isn't even a chalk board anymore. They have all gone to white boards and markers. But I remember being able to go outside, clean off the chalk by knocking them together. That seemed to be a good thing, because you got to get out of classes for a little bit. Then later, I remember our school got an eraser cleaner, a kind of a vacuum thing with a belt. You put those erasers on the belt, it ran across, and the chalk dust got sucked into the bag. Apparently that's not in school anymore either.

I also remember that teachers were disciplinarians, and that for bad deeds, often times you got a paddling. How many of you remember that? I won't ask how many you got. I just asked how many of you remembered. I remember each teacher having a paddle that said, "the board or education" or something like that. That has long been done away with for a reason.

I remember practicing what we used to call "stop, drop and roll". Do you remember what that was for? If you were caught in a fire and your clothes got on fire, you were to stop, drop and roll. We would do that. We would practice. Patty, do you practice "stop, drop, and roll"? (Patty responded, "Only in the second grade"). One of the other things I remembered, and they didn't discuss this necessarily, was the disaster drills. Do you remember practicing the disaster drills, the fire drill, the tornado drill? One of the drills that I remember was a drill if there was a nuclear disaster. How many of you can remember back to practicing that drill? Remember what you did for that drill? Hands over you head and get under your desk. There would be a certain siren that would sound or a tone would come over the intercom system, and that's what we would do - put our hands over our heads and get under our desks, The reason for that drill at that time was the concern about a Communist threat of global nuclear war.

I grew up in a small community outside of Detroit, Michigan, and on the edge of our community there was a naval base called the NIKE base. At this base there were just a few buildings, a lot of concrete, a huge fence that went all the way around it and there was military security there. So at a very young age, I was left with the impression that there was a real destructive force in the world. That school drill really had meaning to me because I could see every day that base there with those missiles and those military personnel. But you know what? When I think about it now, that seems kind of silly. It seems kind of silly to think that covering your head and hiding under the desk would protect you against nuclear power - the destructive force of a bomb. I picture in my mind, and you have probably seen it too, the big mushroom cloud over Hiroshima during World War 2. Somehow, that doesn't relate to sitting under your desk with your hands over your head thinking you were going to be protected.

And so as I was going down the road listening to the parade of shows, remembering all of those drills and reliving my elementary drills through the radio, the thought came to my mind: "You are still covering your head and ducking to protect your self against the destructive powers of the world."

Are You Covering Your Head and Ducking?

You see, Satan is working in the world, and his purpose is to destroy our spiritual life - to separate us from God. His determination to do so is intense, and his time to accomplish this destruction is getting shorter. And it is silly to think, just as ducking under your desk is going to keep you safe from a nuclear bomb, it is silly to think that covering your head and ducking is going to protect you from Satan. Are you still covering your head and ducking?

I think it is important that we understand a little bit about the nature of Satan and his destructive power. You don't have to read very far into the Bible before you come to a very good explanation - a very good description of the nature of Satan's power. If you look in the third chapter of Genesis, verses four and five, it reads: "Wherefore, because that Satan rebelled against me, and sought to destroy the agency of man, which I, the Lord God, had given him; and also that I should give unto him mine own power; by the power of mine Only Begotten I caused that he should be cast down; and he became Satan. Yea, even the devil, the father of all lies, to deceive, and to blind men, and to lead them captive at his will, even as many as would not hearken unto my voice."

That passage of scripture tells us a lot about the nature of Satan. And his destructive power. I think first and foremost it is important to remember that he does NOT have God's power. He wanted God's power, but he didn't get God's power. And so our lives with God have the greater power than that which Satan offers with his destructive powers. That passage tells us that he is a liar. He has lied from the beginning in that first interaction with Eve and on through history. Every thing that he does is a lie.

Satan, The Great illusionist! The Master of Illusion!

He also uses deception as his main power. I often think that Satan is the great illusionist. We took a family vacation years ago when Melissa and Heidi were younger. We went down to Branson, Missouri, and while we were there we took in a number of shows. And one of them was a magic show. It was a big theater - a very nice production, and we got to see a magician who was an illusionist. There are two types of illusion. In the first one, you are enabled to see something that really isn't there. In the second type, you see the opposite. In the second type of illusion you don't see something that really is there; and that's the premise behind the two types of illusion

that you see.

The illusion that we saw was a tiger -- a BIG tiger -- in a cage. And there was a lovely young lady in a sports car. The curtain raises up and you see both of them. Then there was smoke, and there was a big sounding noise and flames shooting up. Of course, all of this was for the intent of distraction. Then the curtain drops real quick, the stage comes back up again and now the tiger is in the sports car and the lady is in the cage. And you are really wondering, "How did that happen?" It was an illusion!

In much the same way, Satan is that type of an illusionist. I think of some of the things that he does that are destructive. You can think of things that are similar to both types of illusions. Think of racism and how devastating an effect that has had on our world. Racism is nothing more than seeing a difference in people that really isn't there. God created all of us. He created us all in His image, and so Satan, the master illusionist, made it an illusion, and we called it racism. We have not been born with the knowledge that there is a difference in blacks and whites or any other culture than ours. We have not been born with the knowledge that Germans were different than Jews, but Nazism created that illusion for us.

An example of the second illusion, not seeing something that really is there is AIDS - Auto Immune Disease Syndrome. You see, AIDS is really a consequence of an activity and a life style. Satan would lead you to believe that a discreet affair is OK, that a man and a woman were created for each other and pleasure should be recognized independent of marriage. He has created another illusion. You are not seeing the consequences of AIDS. You are not seeing something that is really there because he disguises it.

Last Sunday, Melissa was still in Iowa City. She gave me a phone call after church, and she was kind of disturbed. There isn't a Restoration church in Iowa City, and she attends a Community of Christ church, which is the church that Linda and I, when we were studying in Iowa City, attended, and there are just some wonderful people there. But she called me, a little disturbed because, last Sunday, as you will remember, was Communion Sunday when we shared in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. And she said, "Did you know that the Community of Christ's church has changed the prayers on the bread and the wine?" I didn't know this. I knew they had been discussed, but I wasn't aware of that, and I didn't know if you were or not. And so we talked about that a little bit, and then Jan Jordison was kind enough to E-mail us a copy of the new prayers, and I would just like to share a little bit about that. Brother Winkler read:

"The sacraments of the church are essential expressions of our unity that reinforces a sense of togetherness in the context of wide diversity. ...

In recent years, some Communion services provide for the wine to be served immediately following the bread. This is done either as the servers take the emblems to the congregation or as the congregation comes forward to receive. Where this is done, the reading of two separate prayers, one right after the other, can be awkward."

Gordon explained that the notice is talking about some churches in some places now serve the emblems together. You come forward and they have an attendant at the bread and an attendant at the wine. To read separate prayers became kind of awkward, so they just combined the two prayers to read them together. And I guess at first that kind of bothered me, but it wasn't overly disturbing to me. The thing that really concerns me - what I think is an illusion again - is that, "The resolution calls for contemporary language, and an

attempt has been made to replace the archaic language with wording that is in current use; this includes gender-specific references to God.”

When I read that, that really disturbed me! Instead of saying, “Oh God, the Eternal Father, we ask Thee in the name of your son Jesus Christ ... ,” they now read, “Eternal God, we ask you in the name of your son, Jesus Christ” They have taken out “the Eternal Father” under the illusion that it is gender specific! And the thought came to me that, “You know Jesus, when He was giving the Sermon on the Mount, had His disciples together, and in that discussion He said to them, “This is how you pray.” What did Jesus tell them? “This is how you pray? ‘Our Father who art in heaven.’” And when Jesus came to the Nephites, what did He tell them how to pray? He said, “Our Father who art in heaven.” So I am concerned that Satan, that master of deception, is directing those good people away.

You know, if you think of that in terms of geometry, and Ron Smith will perk up now as he hears about math, it’s kind of the thought that if you had a line that, lets say, is north and south - you have this point here and you want to get to this point here (he illustrated with pointing). We will call that ninety degrees. What about if you started out at eighty nine and a half degrees? When you start out, you are going to be pretty close to that line, and will be close to that line for a long time. You are going to look like it is the right line. But the variance becomes greater over time and over distance. And if you stay on that path for any great time or for any distance, at the end, you are going to be a long way from that place you wanted to be. You would have been deceived. (Those references to Jesus’ instruction as to how to pray you can find in Matthew 6:10 and 3 Nephi 5:102.). But even if we have been deceived and have been subject to that great illusionist, God has provided a way to get back. He has provided the way back through repentance.

Stand Against Satan’s Destructive Ways! Here’s How!

But I want to get back to Ephesians because Paul describes a way to stand against those destructive ways of Satan. In Ephesians 6:11 he says, “Put on the whole armor of God that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil”. Do you know what wiles are? It’s a kind of strange word, isn’t it? “Stand against the wiles of the devil.” Wiles really means done with cunning arts, or deceit or trickery. Those are wiles, and it’s important that we grasp that principle, that deceit and seduction and lies and trickery are all part of Satan’s power. And without the armor of God, we are deceived into unknowingly submitting to Satan. It is essential for us to see the importance of God’s armor - the whole armor! I think there is importance in the fact that Paul says to put on the whole armor of God. The implication of that is that part of the armor is not going to be enough protection and will leave us vulnerable to Satan’s destructive powers.

So let’s just quickly look at what Paul outlines as the armor of God. The first thing that he tells us is to, “Stand therefore, having your loins girt with the truth.” Do you have an understanding of what that means? To girt means kind of wrap around. A lot of times we think of that in the context of a belt. You put your belt on and what does that do? It kind of holds everything together. It holds your pants up, holds our shirt down. A Roman soldier found his belt an important part of his armor. I think that is a good thing to mention here that as we go through this description, we have a visual image of a Roman soldier because that is that to which Paul is making these similarities His belt gathered his armor together and secured his sword to his side. We are to stand firm, having girted our loins with truth.

Truth ties our armor together. In our stand against Satan, it is the truth which lights our way and enables us to fight. Truth exists whether people recognize it or ignore it. I think that is important. “Truth exists whether people recognize it or ignore it.” Our speaker repeated the line. God’s word is truth. You look in John 14:6. Jesus says, “I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man can come unto the Father except by me.” Truth can be accepted or applied or it can be rejected and ignored, but it is still truth. Jesus said, “And ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.” That’s also in John (John 8:32). Knowing the truth can set us free. The truth reveals what is real. It casts light on every situation and enables us to see clearly Satan’s lies or his tricks that he would use to ensnare us.

A second thing about truth is that truth means that we have to live honestly. Truth must not only be known but must also be applied in our lives. A Roman soldier’s belt did him no good until it was tightly drawn around his waist, and such is the same for us. If we have that belt of truth, it will do us no good if we leave that belt hanging up in the closet.

Continuing on verse 14, Paul says, “and having the breast plate of righteousness”. What does that mean? This is where I thought about the scripture this morning that the Kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.” The breast plate covered from the shoulders down to the waist. In effect it was covering the most vital areas of the soldier. It protected his heart, his lungs, his kidneys, stomach. We need a breastplate of righteousness so that we can also avoid those mortal wounds. It is righteousness that protects us in our relationship with God. When you receive Christ, you receive His righteousness. If we do not put on the breastplate of righteousness, we will be defeated by every temptation that Satan brings along.

Verse 15 continues to say, “And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. It seems a little funny to think of your feet as needing protection, but again you have to keep it in the context of a Roman soldier. I think what’s being described here is that our feet are needed to help us to stand firm, and the gospel is what helps us stand firm. You know as a soldier in the heat of the battle, it is important that your footing is pretty solid so you don’t get pushed around or pushed down or, if you are having to go up a hill, that you are not slipping and falling. Most of the battles in that time were fought in a hand to hand combat situation, and they couldn’t afford to be pushed backwards or slip down, and neither can we! In Romans 5:1 we read: “Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord, Jesus Christ.” In Phillipians 4:7 it reads: “And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Not only do we experience peace with God, but we also experience peace of God. Peace with God means that our struggles with Him are over, and peace of God means that we experience His peace even when it seems all is lost. So it is important to consider your feet in the protective armor of Gods! Having your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel will help you stand firm and will give you traction for life’s hard times.

Continuing in verse 16 - “ ... taking the shield of faith where-with ... to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.” The imagery there is also great. I don’t know if you picture this, but the Roman soldiers had a big shield, and it was made out of wood. Often times their enemy would wrap their arrows with some type of fiber, pitch or tar and light it on fire and shoot it. When it hit that wooden armor, it would set it on fire - it would flame and burn and now the soldier

was without any armor in his fight. What the soldiers used to do, then, was to either soak that shield in water before battle so it would be wet and would not burn, or they would soak some kind of a cloth or hide in water and put it over the shield so that when the fiery darts hit, the shield wouldn't burn. I think that is imagery of why we need to have a shield of faith to protect against Satan's fiery darts as they are fired against us. Alma 17:66 says, "... teach them to withstand every temptation of the devil, with their faith on the Lord, Jesus Christ."

Verse 17 (of Ephesians 6) talks about putting on the helmet of salvation. You know where the helmet goes. - on your head, and a soldier wouldn't go into battle without having some protection for his head. A blow to the head could be fatal, and a helmet certainly gives a soldier some bit of confidence as he goes into battle. And that is what the helmet of salvation does for us. It gives us confidence to face the devil. Salvation is received through believing in Jesus Christ, accepting him and being baptized. Salvation is not received as a convenience of breaking away from a certain life style. You can't get salvation and then go back to the same way. Salvation doesn't mean that I can get away from my current life style and then decide that I can do what I was doing. That's not salvation. We need to think of salvation in terms of a changed citizenship. Contrary to popular belief, which makes it seem like you can be saved and then unsaved and saved again, salvation means a complete surrender to Jesus. That reminds me of a song that we sometimes sing, "All to Jesus I surrender". I think that's what is being talked about here as the helmet of salvation.

Lastly our scripture talks about "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." Of this description, that is the only piece of equipment that is not defensive - the only one that can be used for offense as well as to defend yourself. The soldier carries the sword strapped to his side, and it is the most common weapon used in his combat. It is used both in offense and in defense. The sword of the Spirit is a spiritual sword which can be used to defend ourselves against the blows of Satan and to strike our own blows against him. The sword of the Spirit is the word of God as found in the Bible, the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants, and you must have it familiar to you. As you read and meditate upon the word of God, you will become familiar with it, and the Holy Spirit will bring to your mind those passages which apply to those things which you are facing. We have to remember that God is more powerful than Satan, and therefore His word is more powerful than Satan's deceptive lies.

Your Chance to Choose The Winning Side!

Finally Paul concludes by saying that you must pray always. That's a concept that has been talked about many, many times throughout the scriptures. In Matthew 26:38, where Jesus is in Gethsemane and is talking to Peter, He says to Peter, "Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation. The Spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. In Luke 18:1, Jesus says: "... that men ought always to pray and not faint." And Alma 16:219, Alma says: "Humble yourselves and continue in prayer unto Him." Remember, the outcome has already been determined. God will be victorious and Satan will lose.

Tyler, if you had a chance to be on the Boston Red Sox team right now, or the Kansas City Royals, which team would you pick? Hard? I thought maybe you would choose the Red Sox because they were the World Series Champions. In a sense that's what we have the opportunity to do. We can pick. We can choose God, and we are going to be on the victorious side. You don't often get that kind of

a chance - to know what the outcome is going to be up front and to be able to pick the winning side. So you might want to remember that.

Isaiah 25:7-9 talks about that victory. It says: "And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth; for the Lord hath spoken it. And in Romans 8:31 - "If God be for us, who can prevail against us?" The Lord told us the victory is going to be God's.

To conclude this morning, then, I hope that each one of you has made the choice to choose victory - to be on the side of God. And I hope you are all comfortable in knowing that you can repent when we recognize that we have been deceived and have been led away. And I hope that the destructive forces of Satan will not dissuade you from your journey to be with your heavenly Father. I hope that you remember that you need to put on the whole armor of God, not just part of the armor. And finally, you need to pray always lest you fall into temptation.

David offered a prayer in the 71st Psalm against the enemies of his soul, and I thought maybe if we were to read a part of that together here, it would conclude this morning's message. I am just going to read selected verses of the Seventy-first Psalm. Think of this as your prayer, too: "In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust; let me never be put to confusion. Deliver me in thy righteousness, and cause me to escape; incline thine ear unto me, and save me. Be thou my strong habitation, whereunto I may continually resort; thou hast given commandment to save me; for thou art my rock and my fortress. Deliver me, O my God, out of the hand of the wicked, out of the hand of the unrighteous and cruel man. For thou art my hope, O Lord God; thou art my trust from my youth.

"O God, be not far from me; O my God, make haste for my help. Let them be confounded and consumed that are adversaries to my soul; let them be covered with reproach and dishonor that seek my hurt. But I will hope continually, and will yet praise thee more and more. ... Amen".

Thanksgiving/Blessing Service

This Thanksgiving service was dual in nature. Baby Elyse Jordison, infant daughter of Julie and Michael Jordison, was blessed and Thanksgiving was celebrated. High Priest Sherman Phipps was in charge of the service which was innovative in a number of ways. The chairs were arranged so the people were facing each other in an ellipse, hymns were chosen by members of the congregation, and Brother Phipps did not use a pulpit but worked with a lapel microphone as one of the congregation. Elder Alan Smith was called upon to offer the invocation.

Sherman read four scriptures, scriptures with which Brother Phipps believed we were all familiar but which he hoped would have new meaning for us today. "The first comes from Luke 18:15-17:

'And they brought unto him also, infants, that he might touch them; but when his disciples saw it, they rebuked them. But Jesus called them, and said, Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto

you, Whosoever will not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, shall in no wise enter therein.'

"Second - Moroni 8:13,18, 'But little children are alive in Christ, even from the foundation of the world; if not so, God is a partial God, and also a changeable God, and a respecter to persons; for how many little children have died without baptism. ... Behold, I speak with boldness, having authority from God; and I fear not what man can do; for perfect love casteth out all fear; and I am filled with charity, which is everlasting love; wherefore all children are alike unto me; wherefore I love little children with a perfect love; and they are all alike, and partakers of salvation.'

"You will recognize this next scripture, too. 3 Nephi 8:11-23. 'And as many as could come, for the multitude, did kiss his feet, insomuch that they did bathe his feet with their tears.

'And it came to pass that he commanded that their little children should be brought. So they brought their little children and sat them down upon the ground round about him, and Jesus stood in the midst; and the multitude gave way till they had all been brought unto him. And it came to pass that when they had all been brought, and Jesus stood in the midst, he commanded the multitude that they should kneel down upon the ground.

"And it came to pass that when they had knelt upon the ground, Jesus groaned within himself, and saith, Father, I am troubled because of the wickedness of the people of the house of Israel. And when he had said these words, he himself also knelt upon the earth, and behold he prayed unto the Father, and the things which he prayed, can not be written, and the multitude did bear record who heard him. And after this manner do they bear record; the eye hath never seen, neither hath the ear heard, before, so great and marvelous things as we saw and heard Jesus speak unto the Father; And no tongue can speak, neither can there be written by any man, neither can the hearts of men conceive so great and marvelous things as we both saw and heard Jesus speak; And no one can conceive of the joy which filled our souls at the time we heard him pray for us unto the Father.

'And it came to pass that when Jesus had made an end of praying unto the Father, he arose; but so great was the joy of the multitude, that they were overcome. And it came to pass that Jesus spake unto them, and bade them arise. And they arose from the earth, and he said unto them, Blessed are ye because of your faith. And now behold my joy is full. And when he had said these words, he wept, and the multitude bear record of it, and he took their little children, one by one, and blessed them, and prayed unto the Father for them.'

"This next comes from the Doctrine and Covenants 22:4b "... , but there is no God beside me; and all things are present with me, for I know them all."

"Each one of you has come here this morning to participate in this blessing of Elyse. I think it is clear from the scriptures that little children have a special message for us. They are a special blessing to us, and Jesus clearly felt it was important to take time to pray for them and to provide a special blessing for them as we intend to do here today for Elyse, God willing.

"The reason I read that last scripture that has to do with all things being present with God, and I somehow feel it's important this morning, to recognize as Elyse is blessed, that to us she is a baby, and that's how we view this. To God she is a baby also, I guess - a child - but her entire life is present before God, even in this moment. He knows what lies ahead for her, as He knows for each one of us. And so the blessing that I hope will come to her today

from the Lord will be not just for this moment - not just for while she's is a child - but it will make her a better person at every stage in her life. It will make her, hopefully, a wonderful grandmother someday.

"So this is important, and I hope that somehow we can together be humble this morning and be of one heart and one mind as our brothers bless this child. I think the Jordison sisters have some music for us."

Six of the Jordison family women, accompanied by Jan, their mother and grandmother, blended their voices in a song addressed to the "Little One" being brought before the throne of God for a blessing and the Elders who give voice to that blessing.

"Little one, God loves you, little one. So in the name of Jesus Christ, we come to bring you before the throne of God.

"Little one, precious lamb of God. Elders of Melchisedec stretch forth your hands to take this little one into your arms, on her a blessing make. Ask God to send his Spirit to guide this growing child that she may grow, a child of God, strong and undefiled.

"Little one, God loves you, little one. So in the name of Jesus Christ, we come to bring you before the throne of God."

"Elyse's grandfather, Mike Coulson, and Brother Alan Smith are going to participate in the act of blessing. What I anticipate this morning - what I hope will happen - is that they will be empowered by the Spirit to seal upon her the blessing that she needs to guide her through this temporal life - a blessing which has already been granted unto her, I am sure, by her Father in Heaven, even before the foundation of the earth."

Brother Phipps explained that one reason he wanted us to be seated as we were was so that those who wished to, and were able, could kneel as the prayer of blessing was offered for Elyse. He also asked that Sam and Isabel and whomever they wished to bring with them join the rest of their family during that prayer. A large portion of the congregation accepted Brother Phipps' invitation to kneel. Alan Smith asked, "Will you pray with me?" and offered the following prayer:

"Our kind and loving Heavenly Father, her grandfather and I bring Elyse to you at this time asking for a special blessing of Your Spirit to be with her.

"Father, we feel unworthy to stand in the stead of Your Son this morning, but we ask this special blessing on Elyse as You would, and as You did as the little ones were brought to You, as we have it recorded in the scriptures.

"Father, we would seal on Elyse at this time the blessing of Your Spirit that she may be able to eat of that wonderful fruit of Your love all her life. That she may know You and Your love and be able to draw others to this fruit in their lives as well.

"We would ask a physical blessing on her that she would grow to be strong, that she would be able to have the capacity to do Your will in all her life, the energy, the strength that she will be called upon for in every situation. May You bless her with health and with this special blessing.

"We would ask a special blessing of her mind, Father, that she would be able to know You and understand You in great measure in her life. That she would be led and guided by You in her decisions - that being part of Your Kingdom would be the desire of her heart every day.

"We ask a special blessing on her parents and know their concern and their efforts for her, and the other children in the family. May Elyse be able to testify as she grows up, like Nephi of old, that she was born of goodly parents.

“And Father, we would ask that, just as Your angels and Your fire surrounded those little ones of old, that Elyse would have this experience in her life for protection and for guidance from Your Spirit in such strong measure.

“Father, we thank You for this life and we would ask that each one of us who will know Elyse as she grows, will recognize our responsibility to help her know You and Your Son - to help her find the way of life, to know how to repent and come back to You if there are moments when she makes choices which are not the way that You would have them made, as we all do.

“We hold up this little one, then, to you, Father for this special blessing and seal it in the name of Your Son, Jesus the Christ that she may be a part of Your Kingdom and Your purposes in this world. We pray these things in the name of Your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.”

Rob Rolfe sang, a Lullaby, “Darkness covers all the land. Sounds of day are gone. But love is all around you now. And will be till the dawn.

“Stars shine on the window sill. Moon shines through the trees. Angels by your bed tonight shine where no one sees.

“So there’s no need to be afraid all the whole life through. ‘Cause God has made a promise, child, that He’ll take care of you.

“All that you’ve been dreaming of awaits you when you rise. So with the peace that Jesus brings, close your sleepy eyes.”

Michael Jordison announced: “We have asked Julia’s mother, Marie, and my Father, both to give prayers on behalf of Elyse, her life and whatever else they felt led to pray for in behalf of Elyse.

Marie Coulson offered the first prayer: “Our kind Creator, God of the Universe, we are mindful this morning that we are in the human condition and that Elyse has come from Your heavenly mount to our human condition. We know that You know of all the talents and all the beauty that she has in her, and we pray, Heavenly Father, that we may be the kind of people who will not get in Your road so that You may always be with her. We know that this is a promise You have made to all of us, and we pray that by our light we may help Elyse to always take Your hand, Heavenly Father, and in those times when she is confused, or in those times when she seeks to let go of Your hand, Heavenly Father, will You prompt her? Will You help her to know that You are always there, and that Your way is the Way that will bring her the most happiness? And we pray that Your Spirit may sustain her in those times so that she may recognize that through serving You, she may bring much happiness to others as You would have her do. We pray that in times of confusion, for we know that they will be there, that You will be her guide. Lead her over the smooth pathways. Lead her over the rugged pathways. Take her hand, Lord and encourage her always to stay near You so that she may be the shining light that You would have her to be. This is our prayer in Jesus’ Holy Name. Amen.”

Merle Jordison, grandfather of Elyse and father of Michael spoke next: “I am not as adroit as everyone else here at speaking, extemporaneously, that is, so I have chosen to write my prayer out. But it speaks from my heart, and I am sure that it probably in some sense is repetitive of what already has been said, but non-the-less it centers on the very purpose, in one sense of the word, of why we are here. So, if you don’t mind, would you bow your heads, please.

“Our Father, as we bow our heads this day we do so in thanksgiving for the many sacrifices of others who gave their all for us of today, and more especially for the greater reason that You gave all for us.

“We as individuals have many reasons to be thankful, and this

morning we are so grateful for this new life You have put as trust into our hand, little Elyse, to watch over and care for as earthly beings. May You bless her, Father. Watch over and care for her each moment as she matures, and we ask that not only with Your Spirit but with Your very presence.

“Help her throughout her life to be willing to share her life, talents and abilities in furtherance of your Kingdom. May she always look to You each moment for strength, guidance, and resolve as life runs its course. As a grandfather, I ask that she be a tower of strength to all whom she comes in contact with. Would that You bless her earthly family that together they might be one and do Thy purposes, to Your end.

“Father, we ask that these thoughts and desires be realized and again ask it in the name of Thy Son, Jesus the Holy Christ. Amen.” Thank you.

Michael Jordison spoke, explaining that although this is the part of the service where you usually have a sermon, he did not feel led to preach. “The scriptures teach that when we are led by the Holy Ghost in our meetings, we are led whether we need to preach or to pray or to exhort or to sing - that we are led in all things, and this morning, I am not led to preach.

“Jesus came to the Nephites and He said these words: (3 Nephi 5:40) “And again I say unto you, you must repent, be baptized in my name, and become as a little child or you can in no wise inherit the Kingdom of God. Verily, verily I say unto you, that this is my doctrine; and whoso buildeth upon this, buildeth upon my rock; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against them.” This is my doctrine, (3 Nephi 5: 33-34) “and I bear record that the Father commandeth all men, everywhere, to repent and believe in me; and whoso believeth in me, and is baptized, the same shall be saved, and they are they who shall inherit the kingdom of God.”

“It may seem that this morning that our service has been centered around Elyse, and in some respects it has; but we are all children of God. There is a song that goes, with God speaking, “You are a child of mine, and you are born of My own design. And you bear the heart of life. No matter where you go, you will always know that you’ve been set free in Christ”. Michael added, paraphrasing John 8:36, “And if the Son has set you free, then you indeed are free.”

“This morning we have come together to worship. We have been asked to come in humility, and I sure feel unworthy to be up here. But I feel led that at this time, rather than go on, there are some of you that may feel led to pray, and your prayers are to be directed towards each other as children and as part of the body of Christ. And I would like to ask you at this time, if you feel led, please stand and offer up your pleas and concerns to your Heavenly Father.”

Yvonne Galusha, Barbra Jordison, George Knotts, Jan Jordison, Cheryl Phipps, Aquila Galusha and Ricky Leonard each responded in prayer. Michael added: “We have received the kingdom of God. When we are serving others, we receive the kingdom of God.”

Sherman announced that Michael’s sisters had another song to sing, “but before we do that, I think George (Galusha) has an offering he would like to make, also. George announced, “Three or four weeks ago I finished learning this song, and the name of it is, ‘For Elyse’”.

The Jordison “sisters” sang the hymn, “My Shepherd Will Supply My Need”.

Sherman made a closing statement: “We came here today to celebrate, I guess, - to acknowledge if you would, Elyse’s debut - I hope that’s the right word - debut here on earth and here in our

church family - her extended family. I hope as you have been here today and before you leave that you will look around the room and you will realize that each one of us came here from the courts of heaven. You are heirs of God. Don't let that pass by. Respond to your heavenly Father. Help each one around you respond. "I am going to ask Elyse's earthly father to dismiss us." We were asked to stand and Michael suggested that we feel free to hold each others hands, if we chose, while he offered the prayer.

"Dear Desire of Nations, we come before Thee changed, Lord. We thank you that you have sought us out and that you have reached down and picked us up when we have so many times run away from You and stumbled. Lord, we would ask that your Grace would be upon us and that we may step forward instead of retreating and turning and hiding - that we may answer the call which has been issued to each one of us to live up to your expectations - to receive that gift - the Kingdom of God with it's peace and joy and righteousness - all that it encompasses while we are here on this earth and that we may receive eternal life in the world to come. We pray it in Jesus' name, Amen."

Before the congregation dispersed, Di Smith, in charge of the Thanksgiving dinner to follow, requested that a few strong men remain to help set up the tables for the meal and the rest go into the common room where Ron Smith would be waiting with his guitar to lead them in singing until time to enter the dining area. We were asked to sit as families at the tables for a Thanksgiving activity before going to the buffet for food.

On each table there was a family tree with a supply of beautiful leaves and a marker pen with which each family member was invited to write things for which they were thankful. The tree, with those leaves attached, was to be taken home for that family's Thanksgiving table.

Large leaves were also on each table on which each family was asked to write things for which the entire family was thankful. These leaves were to be fastened to a huge family tree attached to the sanctuary wall to be left there for the church family to enjoy all this season. There was also a wooden turkey on each table, the colorful napkins to be used at this meal forming his tail feathers. The experience will long be remembered by the large number of worshippers present for this service that expressed our Thanksgiving in a blessed and rather unusual way.

'Tis The Season of Joy!

Elder Alan Smith announced, "I am going to talk about joy this morning for a lot of different reasons, I guess. This is really the season of joy. We rejoice in the many blessings God has given us at Thanksgiving which we have just celebrated. At the same time we rejoice in God's greatest gift, the gift of His son, which we celebrate starting at Hallowe'en", he smiled at the facetious reference to our nation's commercialism, "or whenever the Christmas season starts.

There is another reason to talk about joy this morning. I told you I visited with Malcolm Eighmy. The Eighmy family had been to Nauvoo and had some questions. One of the things we talked about was the joy of being a Christian, and I mentioned that the Book of Mormon says a lot about joy. I remembered some of the scriptures, but once I had said that, I figured I had better study and make sure I knew what the Book of Mormon did say about joy. So, in my spare time in Poland and on the way I was looking up the

scriptures in the Book of Mormon that talk about joy. Now I would like, for a lot of different reasons, to share with you about joy this morning.

One of the occasions that tends to bring us great joy is new life. That is in terms of our physical existence or in terms of our spiritual existence. I remember the birth of our children - what a miraculous event that was to see a new life come into the world. In fact, I remember that I went to a LaMaze class after the baby was born and was sharing the joy, how exciting and what a great joy it was; and Valle had to kind of rein me in a little and tell the story from the wife's point of view. I got all of the joy and didn't have to do any of the work, I guess. But what a joy it is when we share like we did last Sunday in the blessing of the new little one - when we bring that little one to Christ and ask for a special blessing of Spirit to be with them as they grow and develop.

There's also the joy when we make a decision to follow Christ - when we decide that is what we want to do with our lives and are baptized. There is joy when we see our children, or others that we know, make that decision to follow Christ. And then, as that decision grows in their lives - as they make choices that will lead them toward the Kingdom - what joy that brings to us! Valle and I are sharing in a new joyful experience. We are going to be grandparents in the summer. Erin and Peter announced to us, in a couple of surprise ways this week end, that they are going to have their first child. These kinds of experiences all bring us joy as we go through our lives. We have joy in sharing in our families and with our church families in worship as we go through this holiday season.

While all scriptures talk about joy, the Book of Mormon and other Restoration scriptures give us some personal experiences with joy that we just do not have in the King James Version of the Bible and in some other aspects of our religious experience. First, we have the scripture in the Book of Mormon that tells us that we are created to have joy. That is one of the reasons that we are here. As it says in Second Nephi 1:115-116: "Adam fell, that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy. And the Messiah cometh in the fullness of time, that he may redeem the children of men from the fall." What a scripture for this Thanksgiving season and this Christmas season! We are created to have joy, and Jesus came that we might be redeemed.

Two Kinds of Experiences Bring Joy

If I were going to try and categorize some of the greatest joy experiences recorded in the scriptures, especially the Book of Mormon on which we are kind of focusing today, I would say there are two kinds of experiences that encompass the greatest joy. One is the experience when people come to recognize the new life Christ brings to us and the difference Christ makes in our lives. In other words, great joy comes when we have personal experience - life changing experiences - that cause us to recognize that Christ is our Savior - that Christ makes a difference - that He takes away our sin and guilt and frees us to be what we really want to be.

The other group of experiences are those of great joy when we share this new life with someone else and we see it taking hold in their lives. We see them being freed from sin. We see them beginning to follow the Lord.

I would just like to share some of these experiences with you, or remind you of them since you have probably heard most of them and will remember them as we go through. And these are just a handful of what are shared in the Book of Mormon. In the Bible we have the experiences of the Gospels, but they focus mostly on Jesus

- not on the feelings or what happened to the people to whom He ministered. And then we have the letters in the New Testament which are counsel to the church. Some of them share some testimonies, but not like we have in the Book of Mormon which tells the story of so many different people, their response and how they have come to the Christ.

Well, you don't have to go very far into the Book of Mormon, like some thirteen verses, before you find an experience of joy. That is, of course, in Lehi's vision. I shared with you the last time I spoke something of Lehi and Nephi's vision and kind of how that's a template for maybe our journey in life, but I didn't tell you what Lehi said about this experience right after he had it. I would like to share that testimony with you this morning. It comes from First Nephi 1:13-14: "And it came to pass that when my father had read and saw many great and marvelous things, he did exclaim many things unto the Lord; such as, Great and marvelous are thy works, O Lord God Almighty! Thy throne is high in the heavens, and thy power, and goodness, and mercy are over all the inhabitants of the earth; and because thou art merciful, thou wilt not suffer those who come unto thee that they shall perish! And after this manner was the language of my father in the praising of his God; for his soul did rejoice, and his whole heart was filled, because of the things which he had seen; yea, which the Lord had shown unto him."

Does that sound like Lehi was joyful when he had this experience? He learned about Christ and more about the things he had been preaching and prophesying about; but because of this experience with the Lord, he felt such great joy that he had trouble expressing it. Nephi, his son, has to say, "In this manner of language, he went on and on", because it was the desire of his heart to share what it made him feel like as he came to understand more about God and His walk with Him. As Lehi tasted of this perfect love of Christ and recognized the love of God for all mankind, his whole heart was filled with joy.

And you don't have to go very far until you are sharing the experience of Lehi's wife, Sariah in terms of having joy. You remember that Lehi had taken the family out of Jerusalem and had sent the boys back to get the Brass Plates. We have the story of them going and know of their problems and everything, but Sariah and Lehi are sitting back at the camp and don't know what's going on all of this time. None of you have probably done this, but Sariah began to worry about what was happening. And she kind of began to complain a little. She told her husband, "You are a visionary man. You have taken us out here from all the things that we had. Now you have gotten our sons killed, and we are going to die in the wilderness!"

Lehi tried to comfort her, and said, "I know that I am a visionary man; for if I had not seen the things of God in a vision, I should not have known of the goodness of God, but had tarried at Jerusalem, and had perished with my brethren. But behold, I have obtained a land of promise, in the which things I do rejoice; yea and I know that the Lord will deliver my sons out of the hands of Laban, and bring them down again unto us in the wilderness. And in this manner of language did my father Lehi comfort my mother Sariah concerning us, while we journeyed in the wilderness".

And so, when the boys came back, Sariah saw them coming, she was overjoyed that God had protected them and brought them back. And Sariah had this testimony, that the Lord really wanted them to do what Lehi had said. (1 Nephi 1:153-157) "And when we had returned to the tent of my father, behold their joy was full, and my mother was comforted; And she spake, saying, Now I know of

a surety that the Lord hath commanded my husband to flee into the wilderness; Yea, and I also know of a surety that the Lord hath protected my sons, and delivered them out of the hands of Laban, and gave them power whereby they could accomplish the thing which the Lord hath commanded them. And after this manner of language did she speak. And it came to pass that they did rejoice exceedingly, and did offer sacrifice and burnt offerings unto the Lord; and they gave thanks unto the God of Israel."

So here is Sariah. She kind of doubts what her husband has been saying as she sees her sons disappearing and experiences all these kinds of things; yet when they come back just as the Lord had promised, she has a testimony in her heart that this is what the Lord wants them to do - that they are doing the commandments of the Lord. And she rejoices, and it is interesting that Nephi says again, "And after this manner" did she go on and on. He doesn't give all the details, but he says this is the way she was speaking in joy for what the Lord had done in their lives. Another example of an experience with the Lord when we come to understand what He wants us to do and begin to believe in it. It brings us joy as we see Him working His purposes out.

There is the joyful experience of Enos as he received remission of sins. You may remember when Diane Anderson shared Enos' testimony with us one Sunday morning. Enos was out praying, he says, "And the words which I had often heard my father speak, concerning eternal life, and the joy of the saints, sunk deep into my heart." Enos was a young man, and he had heard his dad talk about this joy - the Joy of the saints, the remission of sins and what this could do in your life; but somehow, it had never happened to him. He never quite understood what this was all about. But when he was out hunting, it came to him that maybe he could be forgiven - that maybe there was something to what his father had been saying all these years. And so he prayed all day, and then he heard the voice of the Lord coming to him - telling him that his sins were forgiven. And Enos says, "I knew God could not lie, wherefore, my guilt was swept away."

This wasn't just a joy that lasted for a few minutes or lasted for a day. It was something that he carried with him all through his life so that he could say, as he prepared to die, these words: "And as I saw that I must soon go down to my grave, having been wrought upon by the power of God that I must preach and prophesy unto this people, and declare the word according to the truth which is in Christ. And I have declared it, in all my days; and have rejoiced in it, above that of the world. And I soon go to the place of my rest, which is with my Redeemer; for I know that in him I shall rest: And I rejoice in the day when my mortal shall put on immortality, and shall stand before him: then shall I see his face with pleasure, and he will say unto me, Come unto me ye blessed, there is a place prepared for you in the mansions of my Father. Amen." Does that sound like Enos understood joy in his life? His testimony was, "I have rejoiced in the truth of Christ above that of the world", and he looked forward to the joy of meeting his heavenly Father in the place prepared for him.

Now let's hear another example. Alma's baptismal charge and the response of the people is another example of joy coming into the lives of people in great measure as they individually responded to the Lord. Alma said, (Mosiah 9:39-42). "And now, as ye are desirous to come into the fold of God, and to be called his people, and are willing to bear one another's burdens, that they may be light; Yea, and are willing to mourn with those that mourn; yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort, and to stand as

witnesses of God at all times, and in all things, and in all places that ye may be in, even until death, that ye may be redeemed of God, and be numbered with those of the first resurrection, that ye may have eternal life: Now I say unto you, If this be the desire of your hearts, what have you against being baptized in the name of the Lord, as a witness before him that ye have entered into a covenant with him that ye will serve him and keep his commandments, that he may pour out his Spirit more abundantly upon you? And now when the people had heard these words, they clapped their hands for joy, and exclaimed, This is the desire of our hearts". They shared in that testimony of joy in responding to the call to live their lives, bearing one another's burdens, sharing one another's joys, and having His Spirit poured out more abundantly upon them.

There is the testimony of new life and joy from Alma's son, Alma, that he shares with his son, Helaman. You have heard this before. Remember Alma the younger had been rebellious. His father and many others had been praying for him and for the sons of Mosiah, asking that the Lord would make a change in their hearts so instead of destroying the church as they were doing they would see their calling and know what God really wanted them to do. This is Alma talking to his son, Helaman: (Alma 17:9-19) "And the angel spake more things unto me, which were heard by my brethren, but I did not hear them; for when I heard the words, If thou wilt not be destroyed of thyself, seek no more to destroy the church of God, I was struck with such great fear and amazement, lest perhaps I should be destroyed, that I fell to the earth, and I did hear no more; But I was racked with eternal torment, for my soul was harrowed up to the greatest degree, and racked with all my sins. Yea, I did remember all my sins and iniquities, for which I was tormented with the pains of hell; Yea, I saw that I had rebelled against my God, and that I had not kept his holy commandments; yea, and I had murdered many of his children, or rather led them away unto destruction; Yea, and in fine, so great had been my iniquities, that the very thoughts of coming into the presence of my God, did rack my soul with inexpressible horror. O, thought I, that I could be banished and become extinct both soul and body, that I might not be brought to stand in the presence of my God, to be judged of my deeds.

"And now, for three days and for three nights was I racked, even with the pains of a damned soul. And it came to pass that as I was thus racked with torment, while I was harrowed up by the memory of my many sins, behold, I remembered also to have heard my father prophesy unto the people, concerning the coming of one Jesus Christ, a Son of God, to atone for the sins of the world. Now as my mind caught hold upon this thought, I cried within my heart, O Jesus, thou Son of God, have mercy on me, who art in the gall of bitterness, and art encircled about by the everlasting chains of death. And now behold, when I thought this, I could remember my pains nor more; yea, I was harrowed up by the memory of my sins no more. And O, what joy, and what marvelous light I did behold; yea, my soul was filled with joy as exceeding as was my pain; yea, I say unto you, my son, that there could be nothing so exquisite and so bitter as were my pains. Yea, and again I say unto you, my son, that on the other hand, there can be nothing so exquisite and sweet as was my joy; ... "

I like his word picture of the harrow. Rodney Bastow could probably show us a harrow and what a harrow would do to you if it was running over you, back and forth. As Alma recognized and remembered the things he had done in his life and they were "harrowed up"- you know, right through that crust and down to where the sins really were that he (and you) have tried to scab over!

And Alma shares the difference between where he was and didn't realize it and what the opposite was - where joy was in his life. I don't know anywhere else in scripture that we have that shared so well as in this experience.

For these personal life experiences which bring joy, we can go on and talk about King Lamoni, King Lamoni's father, just and on and on and on in the scriptures do we have these experiences where the people find this joy, We hear them testify of how joy comes into their life and what a difference it makes in their lives when they find new life.

Joys of Sharing New Life

Not only do we have these personal experiences where joy comes into people's lives when they begin to follow Christ, but we have a whole group of testimonies of what happened and the joy that comes when we share this new life with others and see them begin to let it take hold in their lives. You know we have the promise in the Doctrine and Covenants 16:3c-4a of what can happen in our lives when we share the good news of the gospel with others. "Remember, the worth of souls is great in the sight of God; for, behold, the Lord your Redeemer suffered death in the flesh; wherefore he suffered the pain of all men, that all men might repent and come unto him. And he hath risen again from the dead, that he might bring all men unto him on conditions of repentance. And how great is his joy in the soul that repenteth. Wherefore you are called to cry repentance unto this people. And if it so be 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!"

It's not just that you have joy because you have accepted the Christ, but you will share that joy with someone as a part of the kingdom, now and in the future. You will see what has happened in their life, and that will be a testimony to you as well. "And now, if your joy will be great with one soul that you have brought unto me into the kingdom of my Father, how great will be your joy, if you should bring many souls unto me!"

So we have examples of that joy that is promised in the Doctrine and Covenants and in the Book of Mormon in the various stories. First we remember that Lehi's first reaction to tasting that fruit - that perfect love of Christ - was to look around and see where his family was because, "As I partook of the fruit thereof, it filled my soul with exceeding great joy; Wherefore I began to be desirous that my family should partake of it also; for I knew that it was desirable above all other fruit." (1 Nephi 2:52-53). His first response was to say, "I've got to share this with somebody else. I want my family to know this joy!"

Alma Senior's reaction when his son Alma had his experience which we have just shared is another example. After a long time of praying for his son they brought the body of his struck down son to him - before he had recovered his strength - while he was going through this three day period of being harrowed up in his sins. (Mosiah 11:181-186) "And they rehearsed unto his father all that had happened unto them;" So you ask, "What is the parent's first response to knowing that his son had been struck down?"

"His father rejoiced, for he knew that it was the power of God. And he caused that a multitude should be gathered together, that they might witness what the Lord had done for his son, and also for those that were with him. And he caused that the priests should assemble themselves together; and they began to fast, and to pray to the Lord their God, that he would open the mouth of Alma, that he might speak; And also that his limbs might receive their strength,

that the eyes of the people might be opened to see and know of the goodness and glory of God. And it came to pass after they had fasted and prayed for the space of two days and two nights, the limbs of Alma received their strength, and he stood up and began to speak unto them, bidding them to be of good comfort: . For, said he, I have repented of my sins, and have been redeemed of the Lord; behold, I am born of the Spirit.”

Alma’s response to his son being struck down is to say, Hooray! Thank you , Lord! And to bring the people together so, when he came out of it and gave his testimony, they could be part of that experience of caring for him and seeing him rise in his new life.

Ammon's response when he sees his brothers and Alma again after their mission to the Lamanites is one of great joy -- I don't know anyone else who goes on and on in joy and explains what it feels like to him more than Ammon does in this experience. (Alma 14:79-83) & 15:61-67 “Now, these are the words of Ammon to his brethren, which say thus: My brothers and my brethren, behold I say unto you, How great reason have we to rejoice; for could we have supposed, when we started from the land of Zarahemla hemla, that God would have granted unto us such great blessings? And now I ask, What great blessings has he bestowed upon us? Can ye tell? Behold, I answer for you; for our brethren, the Lamanites, were in darkness, yea, even in the darkest abyss; but behold, how many of them are brought to behold the marvelous light of God! And this is the blessing which hath been bestowed upon us, that we have been made instruments in the hands of God, to bring about this great work. Behold, thousands of them do rejoice, and have been brought into the fold of God. (Alma 14:97) 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. (Alma 15:61-67).

“Yea, and this is my glory, that perhaps I may be an instrument in the hands of God, to bring some soul to repentance; and this is my joy. And behold, when I see many of my brethren truly penitent, and coming to the Lord their God, then is my soul filled with joy; then do I remember what the Lord has done for me; yea, even that he hath heard my prayer; yea, then do I remember his merciful arm which he extended towards me; Yea, and I also remember the captivity of my fathers; for I surely do know that the Lord did deliver them out of bondage, and by this did establish his church; yea, the Lord God, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, did deliver them out of bondage; Yea, I have always remembered the captivity of my fathers; and that same God who delivered them out of the hands of the Egyptians, did deliver them out of bondage; yea, and that same God did establish his church among them; Yea, and that same God hath called me by a holy calling, to preach the word unto this people, and hath given me much success, in the which my joy is full; but I do not joy in my own success alone, but my joy is more full because of the success of my brethren, who have been up to the land of Nephi. Behold, they have labored exceedingly, and have brought forth much fruit; and how great shall be their reward. Now when I think of the success of these my brethren, my soul is carried away, even to the separation of it from the body, as it were, so great is my joy.”

Was he joyful? Was he excited? Not only in seeing what he had been able to do through the Lord, but what his brethren had been able to do - what was happening as the Lord carried out His

purposes - “Almost to the separation of my self from my body, I am so excited! I am so joyful!”

Then we have the record of Jesus in America. Paul tells us in Hebrews 12:2 that “For the joy that was set before Him, Jesus endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.” But we don’t have instances in the gospels that I have found of Jesus saying, “I’m carried away by the joy that I am sharing here.” But we do in the Book of Mormon. Third Nephi shares the experience which we read about last week in the blessing of children. As I read that whole experience, I picked up something new to me, anyway, and I hope it comes through to you.

The people had gathered. Jesus had healed the sick, they had come and washed his feet with their tears and kissed his feet. That was when Jesus commanded that the little children be brought before Him. So they brought their little children, sat them down upon the ground round about Him. Jesus stood in the midst and the multitude gave way until they had all been brought into Him. (3 Nephi 8:15-26). “And it came to pass that when they had knelt upon the ground, Jesus groaned within himself, and saith, Father, I am troubled because of the wickedness of the people of the house of Israel. And when he had said these words, he himself also knelt upon the earth, and behold he prayed unto the Father, and the things which he prayed, can not be written, and the multitude did bear record who heard him.

“And after this manner do they bear record; the eye hath never seen, neither hath the ear heard, before, so great and marvelous things as we saw and heard Jesus speak unto the Father; And no tongue can speak, neither can there be written by any man, neither can the hearts of men conceive so great and marvelous things as we both saw and heard Jesus speak; And no one can conceive of the joy which filled our souls at the time we heard him pray for us unto the Father.

“And it came to pass that when Jesus had made an end of praying unto the Father, he arose; but so great was the joy of the multitude, that they were overcome. And it came to pass that Jesus spake unto them, and bade them arise. And they arose from the earth, and he said unto them, Blessed are ye because of your faith. And now behold my joy is full. And when he had said these words, he wept, and the multitude bear record of it, and he took their little children, one by one, and blessed them, and prayed unto the Father for them. And when he had done this he wept again, and he spake unto the multitude, and saith unto them, Behold your little ones. And as they looked to behold, they cast their eyes towards heaven, and they saw the heavens open, and they saw angels descending out of heaven as it were, in the midst of fire; and they came down and encircled those little ones about; And they were encircled about with fire; and the angels did minister unto them, and the multitude did see and hear, and bear record; and they know that their record is true, for they all of them did see and hear, every man for himself;”

Jesus Weeps for Us - In Sorrow? In Joy?

So we have this example. Remember, Jesus wept as He prayed over the people of the House of Israel in Jerusalem. And as He came here, he wept and prayed over the sins of the people in such wonderful words that they couldn’t be recounted. But He was touched by the response of His people - how they loved as they came and washed His feet with their tears and kissed His feet, and their response in joy to things that they heard and saw. At this point He wept again, but not for their sins. He wept because His joy was

full! He had gone to the cross for the joy that was set before Him. That joy was made manifest to such a degree that the angels came in rejoicing around the little ones, and Jesus wept again in joy. Do we have that anywhere else? Do we know that Jesus wept not only for our sins but for our response when we do respond in joy?

We have the promise of great joy of sharing in the kingdom with so many others today, as well. Genesis 9::22-23: “And this is mine everlasting covenant, that when thy posterity shall embrace the truth, and look upward, then shall Zion look downward, and all the heavens shall shake with gladness, and the earth shall tremble with joy,” Are you ready to have the earth tremble with joy? Are you ready to tremble with joy? “And the general assembly of the church of the firstborn shall come down out of heaven, and possess the earth, and shall have place until the end come. And this is mine everlasting covenant, which I made with thy father Enoch.”

Jesus weeps for us. Will it because we do not respond and instead turn away? Or will He weep for us because we have responded and helped to make His joy full? Will He weep for us because as we gather together, in the church of the Firstborn, we will hug each other and kiss each other and share in that wonderful reunion where His joy is made full? It’s the season of joy! The life of Jesus and the difference He makes in our lives individually, and the difference He wants to make in our lives collectively as a part of His kingdom, make all of the difference!

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

Continued from front page

school.

Enrico Caruso, as a boy, was sent home by his voice teacher who told him he had a voice like a washboard. (His mother encouraged and taught him)

F.D.R. had polio.

Robert Louis Stevenson was an invalid most of his life.

Herbert Hoover was the orphaned son of an Iowa blacksmith.

Need I mention, Helen Keller; totally blind and a deaf mute.

As we consider all of these people, perhaps we should believe the scripture that talks about another weak person becoming strong. (Gen 50:27-33)

News & Notes

Practices For Cantata Scheduled

Three remaining practices are scheduled for the Christmas cantata. This musical offering, "How Great Our Joy", is to be presented in the sanctuary of the Mt. Ayr Church of Jesus Christ, Mtount Ayr Restoration Branch located on the north side of Highway 2 immediately east of Mount Ayr Health Care Center.

The performance is planned for December 12 at 6:30 P. M. Rhonda Mickelson is the pianist and the choir is directed by Jan Jordison. Everyone who hears of this activity, especially anyone living in the surrounding community, is invited to participate.

Dec. 1 6:00 p.m. Ron Smith home in Lamoni (before prayer meeting)

Dec. 5 1:00 p.m. After the Zionite Dinner at the church in Mount Ayr.

Dec. 12 12:15 p.m. After the morning church service in Mount Ayr

As well as the performance in Mount Ayr on Sunday, Dec. 12, the cantata will also be performed Friday, Dec. 24, as part of the Christmas Eve service at the Community of Christ in Lamoni. Watch for the time for this performance.

State Judo Champion Named

Aquila Galusha won the state Judo championship for his class this past month and will be wrestling again in Lincoln, Nebraska, December 4. Aquila wrestles in the 10 to 11 year class.

Jordison Baby Blessed

Liberty Editha Elyse Jordison was blessed in the thanksgiving /blessing service reported elsewhere in this Newsletter. Each of her grandparents participated in the service. Her grandfather, Michael Coulson assisted in the ordinance of blessing. Her grandmother Marie Coulson and grandfather Merle Jordison each offered prayers for her, and her grandmother, Jan Jordison presided at the piano for much of the music service, both for special numbers and congregational singing. Several of her aunts and cousins also provided special music for the service.

Congregation Enjoys Thanksgiving Emblem

The body and branches of a large paper tree stretch from floor to ceiling in the entry to the Mount Ayr Restoration Branch sanctuary. Attached to the tree are the thanks offerings of the families who attended the Thanksgiving/blessing service reported elsewhere in this letter. The body of the tree is brown tone and the leaves are a blaze of colors chosen by families. Written on each leaf is a statement of Thanksgiving for the gifts and blessings that family has received from their Lord. Each leaf is attached to the tree as an emblem of the donor family's thanksgiving.

Christmas Plans In the Making

Stay alert for announcements of further plans for the Christmas celebration. In addition to the Cantata announced for December 12, there will be a caroling party at which time we visit shut-ins, deliver

gifts, prepare gifts for our adopted family and eat soup. The date is yet to be announced. Please get your assignment for the adopted family gift from Di Smith.

New Year's Eve Party

A New Years Eve party on Friday, Dec. 31, will also be held. Watch for details of this event.

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