

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

Rob Rolfe • 619 S. State, Lamoni, IA 50140 • 641-784-6030

Speaking with God's Voice

Henry Schaeffer commonly said, "if God spoke once, then always". One of the distinctives of our belief is that God speaks, not only to the priesthood, but to everyone. Believing that, when someone says they had an experience and that "God", how do we know that what they said is truly a message from God? This is particularly true when the message is offered during a worship service and is preceded by, "thus saith the Spirit" or some other designation that God is/has spoken.

The first thing we should remember is that church law states specifically that only the prophet of the church can receive law or doctrine that is BINDING on the church. Other "inspired" messages may come from a male or a female and be general or specific, of a local nature or general nature. What are the principles involved in our making decisions about such messages?

Elbert A. Smith, in a chapter he titled "Use and Abuse of Spiritual Gifts", shared the following insight on the matter of individuals taking upon themselves the giving of "inspired messages":

"It is not necessary now to refer to any living person, so no one need be hurt. But in past years we have noted men who too often or too continuously sought to wear the mantle of prophet. Their ministry became out of proportion and one-sided...Finally they died quietly in their beds never having been or done any of the things they dramatized in their own

Continued on page 12

TESTIMONIES AND SERMON NOTES

Communion and the Kingdom

The emblems of the flesh and blood of our Lord had already been served when Elder Alan Smith spoke to the congregation. Romans 14:17, "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." was the scripture he shared with us as he began his March Communion sermon. If we really are about the business of wanting to have the kingdom of God in our lives, he said, maybe we need to review what the kingdom is all about and how we can apply these principles in our lives beyond the time we spend together in church.

Some of you can quote Romans 14:17 with me if I get you started. "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." Paul gives us the best known definition of the kingdom in this letter to the Roman Saints. If we want to have the kingdom in our lives, then we are looking for ways to make righteousness, peace and joy as shared by the Holy Ghost in our lives 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The kingdom will not be just part of our lives a few hours of the week. When we are truly sharing in it, it will be part of our families, our work, our recreation -- all of our lives.

How, then, can we learn to live righteously? This means coming into a right relationship with our heavenly Father. We must have His presence with us daily. We start by learning to keep His commandments, beginning with the two He said were most important - loving Him and loving each other - loving God with all our being and loving others as we love ourselves. We learn to repent and be forgiven. We learn to see with new eyes, recognizing that this is not something we can do ourselves. We must have the Holy spirit with us to guide our decisions and actions.

How do we obtain peace? The world thinks of peace as the opposite of war. The peace Jesus talked about was the opposite of fear. The scriptures tell us peace is the reward for righteous action. When we have his perfect love in our lives, we have nothing to fear; so we are at peace no matter what other circumstances surround us. His peace comes when there is nothing of which we have to be afraid. When we are at one with the heavenly Father, his love casts out all fear. Doctrine and Covenants 59:5c tells us "... but learn that

he who doeth the works of righteousness, shall receive his reward, even peace in this world, and eternal life in the world to come.” Or, as Isaiah wrote, 48:18: “ Oh that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea.”

Joy comes with sharing with others the light of the Gospel. Joy comes in sharing Jesus with others. Section 16:3f- 4a of the Doctrine and Covenants tells us “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! 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!”

Did you notice where the joy comes? It comes from seeing others respond to the love of God and sharing with them in the kingdom relationships. The kingdom is not just about personal salvation, but about working so we can share these wonderful relationships with as many people as possible. The Kingdom is about helping others catch the same vision. It’s a part of the process of expanding the Kingdom from our personal lives to our families, to our branches, to the world.

The Kingdom Has Been Lived

We have examples from the scriptures which give us insight into how we need to live if we are going to be part of the kingdom. Take the example of Enoch’s city. Genesis 7:23 tells us: “And the Lord called his people, Zion, because they were 1) of one heart and of one mind, 2) and dwelt in righteousness; 3) and there were no poor among them.”

God’s people learn to focus on Him and His will so we are of one heart and mind. They dwell together in righteousness, that right relationship with their heavenly father. Because of this, there are no poor among them in spirit or in purse. The blessings of the Lord are shared with everyone who is seeking to follow Christ.

We have the experience in the Americas following Christ’s return for another example of principles of kingdom living. We find this account in 4 Nephi 1:13, 17-19: “They did walk after the commandments which they had received from their Lord and their God, continuing in fasting and prayer, and in meeting together oft, both to pray and to hear the word of the Lord. . . . And it came to pass that there was no contention in the land, because of the love of God which did dwell in the hearts of the people. And there were no envying, nor strifes, nor tumults, nor whoredoms, nor lyings, nor murders, nor any manner of lasciviousness; And surely there could not be a happier people among all the people who had been created by the hand of God:”

The people on this continent 1) Walked after the commandments 2) Fasted and prayed and met together often 3) The Love of God in hearts did away with strife (is this another way to say they were of one heart and mind?) 4) There was not a happier people among all the people God created.

We live in a world where we hear people talk about understanding the purpose that drives our lives. Setting priorities in our effort to come to the kingdom is important, as Jesus pointed out on both continents. 3 Nephi 6:11 (and similarly in Matthew 6:38) Jesus said “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.”

How do we make the kingdom of God the purpose in our lives? So often we say we want to have the kingdom, and we put in on our list of 22 things to do today. How do we move the kingdom to

number one on the list each day when we are so busy with other things? I don’t have all the answers today, but I want to get you thinking about your life and where you need to start if you want to have the kingdom in it.

The Power of the Ordinances

Coming to the communion table as we did this morning can play an important part in our having the Spirit to be with us, an essential part of kingdom living. Section 83 of the Doctrine and Covenants tells us: “In the ordinances thereof the power of godliness is manifest; and without the ordinances thereof and the authority of the priesthood, the power of godliness is not manifest unto men in the flesh; for without this, no man can see the face of God, even the father, and live.”

The communion prayers, as given by Christ specifically to do away with contention about them, are shared in both Moroni 4:4 and Doctrine and Covenants 17:22. The prayer on the bread we just heard says:

“O God, the eternal Father, we ask thee in the name of thy Son Jesus Christ, to bless and sanctify this bread to the souls of all those who partake of it, that they may

- 1) eat in remembrance of the body of thy Son,
- 2) and witness unto thee, O God the eternal Father, that they are
- 3) willing to take upon them the name of thy Son,
- 4) and always remember him,
- 6) and keep his commandments which he has given them,
- 6) that they may always have his Spirit to be with them. Amen.

These principles can be summed up in one phrase, I believe-- Remember who and whose we are.

When you came to the Communion table today, did you remember that you wanted to be a son or daughter of God? Did you remember that you are a son or daughter of God? You are not your own. You have been bought with a price! (1 Cor. 6:19-20). How can we forget who bought us - who paid the price for our adoption? You are a child of God, and to be a part of the Kingdom, you need to remember who you are and whose you are!

If you are a kingdom person, you are a son or daughter of God, a joint heir with Christ. You recognize the price that has been paid by Christ to buy your freedom from sin and respond by accepting him, being baptized, and always remembering you are His, that you have taken his name upon you, and you will witness to others that this is the case.

Then we have the promise of the spirit, which teaches us, calls us to repent, helps us make the best decisions and see with new eyes. The spirit gives us peace and freedom from fear, confirming that relationship we have with our Heavenly Father through Jesus Christ. And this spirit calls us to share the good news of the gospel with others.

Principles To Be Lived

There a number of principles in the scriptures that I believe will help us to the kingdom. I talked about some of these in the class I taught at the Land of Zion Family Workshop in Independence, MO recently. We talked about the principles discovered in descriptions of the kingdom already mentioned along with many more. I gave the homework for those in the class to spend some time trying to write down how each of the principles could be used to make their homes and workplaces more like the kingdom. There is not time to talk about all of these this morning, but I would like to have us look at the principle of one heart and mind -- which is shared in several different ways. I notice that when one heart and mind are mentioned -- they are mentioned in that order. I wonder if that means that we

sharing in the love of Christ is one way to help us begin to be of one mind.

This same principle is the principle of common consent. We often remember the phrase common consent, but do we remember how the scripture instructs us to come to that point? Doctrine and Covenants 25:1b says "And all things shall be done by common consent in the church, by much prayer and faith; for all things you shall receive by faith."

In other words, we begin to come to agreement on what the Lord is leading us to do when we come in an attitude of prayer and faith that we can find agreement.

When we talked about this in class, one of the men noted that he had tried to use this principle in the branch he pastored. A decision was being made on whether to purchase a piece of property to expand the church, and all but one person in the branch agreed to make the purchase. There were many who felt that a super majority of all but one person was plenty, but the pastor would not go ahead. It was only a few months later that the branch found that the piece of property in question would not have been a wise purchase because a much larger property was needed to serve the expanding needs of the branch.

The same concept is said in another way when we are told to have an eye single to the glory of God. To me this means that we look for the glory of God in everything we see and do. If we are this single-minded, aren't we of one heart and mind?

This same principle is wrapped up in the covenant we make in marriage (and we are one of only a few people who use this covenant. Doctrine and Covenants 111:2b tells us to make this covenant when we are married: "You both mutually agree to be each other's companion, husband and wife, observing the legal rights belonging to this condition; that is, keeping yourselves wholly for each other, and from all others, during your lives?"

However we want to say it -- one heart and one mind, common consent, an eye single to the glory of God, mutual consent -- we need this principle to be part of our lives if we want to share in the kingdom.

Have we taken the time in our families to talk about what it is we want to accomplish as a family? Are we on the same page in where we want to go and what we want to do? Are we on the same page as husband and wife? Have we talked with our children so they know that we want the kingdom in our family relationships? It is so easy to get caught up in the day to day routines that we don't share our heart's desires with one another. Have we developed statements that we share with each other like Joshua "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" ?

What would it take to be of one heart and mind in the businesses where we work? Hours and hours are spent making mission statements and trying to figure out what business goals are in some places. How could goals of righteous dealings with others, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost be worked into what it is we want to accomplish in our businesses?

I didn't come here this morning with all the answers. I know I'm not putting the kingdom first in my life and I don't think many of us really are. What do we need to do to make some progress toward that goal?

Remember Who and Whose We Are

What we have done in communion this morning can be a beginning if we will truly remember who and whose we are each day for the next month. My prayer is that the gift of the spirit promised here this morning will lead us to the righteousness, peace

and joy in the gift of His Spirit that will mean that when we come to the table again in a month, His kingdom will be more of a reality in every part of our lives.

When you came to the Communion table today, did you remember that you wanted to be a son or daughter of God? Did you remember that you are a son or daughter of God? You are not your own. You have been bought with a price! (1 Cor. 6:19-20). How can we forget who bought us - who paid the price for our adoption? You are a child of God, and to be a part of the Kingdom, you need to remember who you are and whose you are!

Are we ready to take upon us His name that being His children, we are a part of His kingdom? Is being a part of His Kingdom 24/7 at the very core of who we are? of what our families are all about? If our eyes are singled to the glory of God, we see things differently. We see through Jesus' eyes until by common consent, by much prayer and faith, we become one in Him. In our covenant of marriage we both mutually agree to be of one heart and mind. If we are ready to live the Kingdom, the scriptures say the places in which we live will shine as Zion and there shall not be a happier people among all the people the Lord our God has created in all the earth!

The Sacrifice of a Broken Heart

Elder Steven Smith began by explaining that sometimes when a scripture is read, those in the congregation do not catch all of the important things it says. He, therefore, asked young Aquilla Galusha to help him so others would hear the three important things for which the scripture asked of one who was to be saved. He then read 3 Nephi 5:66-68, "And behold I have given you the law and the commandments of my Father, that ye shall believe in me, and that ye shall repent of your sins, and come unto me with a broken heart and a contrite spirit. Behold, ye have the commandments before you, and the law is fulfilled; therefore come unto me and be ye saved; For verily I say unto you, that except ye shall keep my commandments, which I have commanded you at this time, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." True to his word, Elder Smith asked Aquilla whether he could remember three very important commandments that were necessary for entering into the Kingdom and made it so one could be saved. Aquilla answered correctly - to believe in Christ, to repent (keep the commandments), and come with a broken heart.

When I was reading this in Third Nephi and Jesus was saying these are things that are most important: you have to believe in Christ, you have to believe to the point that you actually repent - change the way you think about things, and then you have to come with a broken heart, I thought, "This is necessary for salvation and this is necessary for entering into the Kingdom? Why would the Lord want us to have broken hearts?"

I thought of the Communion prayer that says we are supposed to take His name upon us and keep His commandments and always remember Him. And as I looked at it, I thought, "Well, taking His name upon us is kind of like believing in Christ. That's another statement of a way to do that. And keeping His commandments - whenever we keep His commandments we have rethought it and we have repented as the Lord has asked. So that's the same. But always remembering Him and coming with a broken heart, I wasn't sure about that.

And so I started to look at the broken heart, and I asked myself "What causes my heart to break?" As I thought about it, I realized that when I sinned, my heart breaks. When I sin, I do things that the consequences are going to be things that I don't appreciate sometimes. When I sin, that hurts me, and when I am talking about the spiritual side of my nature, my heart breaks. I see that when others sin, there are times that their sin is hurtful to me, and my response? When I sin, my first response, of course, should be to repent, and that's what much of the scriptures are about. They are telling us of methods, the ways that we can change what we are doing so that we can repent. When another person sins, that also sometimes hurts me - sometimes the sins of others hurt me. And so, like the scriptures say, we have to have a response. We have to forgive them. Sometimes we talk about forgiving and forgetting, but the scriptures don't talk about forgiving and forgetting. They say to forgive and remember to pray for them - forgive and remember to love them - remember to treat them well - to bless them - to teach them.

How to Treat Those Who Break Your Heart

If we go to Luke 6:27-38 - that's going to be eleven verses and that's almost half a page, so please bear with me here. Christ is telling what you do when people who are around you have broken your heart. He says, "But I say unto you who hear my words, Love your enemies, do good to them who hate you. Bless them who curse you, and pray for them who despitefully use you and persecute you. And unto him who smiteth thee on the cheek, offer also the other; or, in other words, it is better to offer the other, than to revile again." Steven addressed a young man in the congregation. "Do you know what it means to revile again, David?" The response - "To hurt them back." "Right, so if someone hits you on the cheek, you don't want to punch them back." Then our speaker repeated, "And unto him who smiteth thee on the cheek, offer also the other; or, in other words, it is better to offer the other, than to revile again."

"And him who taketh away thy cloak, forbid not to take thy coat also." Somebody steals from you, don't try to force them to stop stealing. "For it is better that thou suffer thine enemy to take these things, than to contend with him." Ben, do you know what it means to contend? The answer, "To argue or to fight." "For it is better that thou suffer thine enemy to take these things, than to contend with him." "Verily I say unto you, Your heavenly Father who seeth in secret, shall bring that wicked one into judgment.

"Therefore give to every man who asketh of thee; and of him who taketh away thy goods, ask them not again. And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise." Treat other people like you would like to be treated, even if they happen to mess up and do something that might hurt you. "For if ye love them only who love you, what reward have you? For sinners also do even the same. And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what reward have you? For sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again.

"But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great; and ye shall be the children of the Highest; for he is kind unto the unthankful, and to the evil. Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful. Judge not, and ye shall not be judged; condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned; forgive, and ye shall be forgiven. Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal, it shall be measured to you again." And so, if other people do some sin, your responsibility is to treat them like you would like to be treated. Be kind to them. Be nice to

them, and try to love them.

My Dad had a story of a lady in Hawaii, and he often told this story of this lady who was working in a nursing home. They had a new cook, and he was driving her crazy! He was the kind of person who tended not to get along with individuals. She was the head nurse and she had to make schedules for the nurses. And when it came time to eat, he changed the time for lunch, so some of the nurses weren't able to get lunch. She would change her schedule, and he would change his until it was a real hassle! She was ready to quit right there - get out of the business and just leave because of this man who was so hard to get along with. Dad took her to that scripture and said, "How would you like to treat him like an enemy? How would you like to love him and pray for him?" He said one of two things are going to happen to him. Either he will change or he will go crazy. She liked the second alternative, so she decided she would try that and try to drive him crazy.

She started to love him. And when she loved him she started to say, "Hi." to him at times when she could have gone the other way or looked the other way. She started to be kind to him - do nice things for him. She started to treat him like she wanted to be treated. It wasn't until quite a long time after that that the church was making Portuguese sausage in the congregation to use as a money raiser. They were trying to figure out what to do, and this lady said, "I know a world famous cook. He can help us out with making Portuguese sausage. I can go and talk to him and see if he would help us. The people decided that would be a good thing and they would get together and butcher out the hog and make the sausage and the cook could control it. He did agree to do it. They were to bring the pig a day early, and being the kind of individual he was, a little contrary sometimes, he decided that he should butcher the pig, and since it was butchered, he should prepare the sausage and make it just perfect since nobody else could do what he could do. In fact, he had clients who would be willing to buy the sausage, so he went on and sold the sausage. So when everybody showed up to help make Portuguese sausage, all they had left to do was to collect the money. This was the same man who had driven this nurse crazy. In her desire to treat him like an enemy, she made a friend.

So, what will break your heart? If you sin, that will break your heart. If another person sins, that will sometimes break your heart, and you will find that despite the fact that you repent - despite the fact that you forgive, you are sometimes left with a broken heart. And sometimes there are things that happen which are not the result of your sin or the result of other's sin. Let me turn to John 9:1-3. "And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth. And his disciples," who knew that you could be hurt by your sin or somebody else's sin, "asked him saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents;... "

Sometimes there are acts of God which will sometimes kind of hurt us. In this case the young msn was blind, and there was some hurt there. There was some pain there. It wasn't a matter of the young man trying to repent or of his parents trying to repent. It was a matter that there are some things that neither can control, and there is still pain.

The Heart As the Center of Emotions

When we talk about a broken heart, we are talking about the heart as the center of emotions. Galan was a Roman. He was an individual who tried to find out how things work. The ways he tried to find things out were sometimes kind of crude. He would take pigs, strap them down on their back, cut them open and look at them while

things were working. They didn't have anesthesia back then, so this was a little painful to the pig. But what he decided was that the lungs would move and they would pump the air blood (they didn't know oxygen then) into the body, and the lungs were the pump that were moving the blood through the body.

He noticed that coming out of the liver there was a lot of blood, and this was the blood that had the food that went into the body. So he had the liver as kind of the source of the pump of the food that went into the body. And he had the heart - and it was interesting - it did have blood in it. It had the bad blood and the good blood or had the melancholy blood in it, the dark blood as well as the light blood, having two emotions in there. In fact, he had recognized that if you get excited, your heart started beating faster; and it was Galan who was the originator of the idea - well not the originator of the idea that the heart was the emotional center that responded to how you felt. He was the one who put an anatomy with the idea. The idea of the heart being the emotional center was there a little before Galan.

And so the heart was declared the center of your emotions, and that was the case until the time of Harvey who was the physician to King James, the same King James who had the Bible translated. And Harvey found by looking at snakes - you can kill a snake and their heart beats for about thirty minutes afterwards - that there was circulation going on. Harvey showed a number of things, among then he showed that the heart was actually circulating the blood around and was not the center of emotion. Because the scriptures talked about the heart as the center of emotion, the thing Harvey discovered was not believed for - oh, it took something like another hundred years for people to grab onto it and to say, "Yes, the emotions are from a different area." But, in the meantime, we still have the term of the heart being the center of your emotions.

When we look up the term, "broken heart", we see a number of translations of the actual terms. For example, one of the translations is to fall apart like a barrel stays fall apart when the barrel is not held together by rings any more. If you put that emotionally, you see that what was translated as a broken heart was talking about an emotional inability to stay together.

And so, if your heart is broken, and you have sinned, it is important to repent. Just keep that out there. And if your heart is broken and it is because another has sinned and has hurt you, it is important to forgive them to the point where you treat them just the same as you would like to be treated yourself. But sometimes, even after repentance, sometimes even after forgiveness there are times when your heart is still broken. And when your heart is still broken, some people will turn to others. The Psalmist said, "My heart was broken, and I turned and looked for pity, and there wasn't any pity." (Psalm 69:20).

When A Broken Heart Is Left Over

Sometimes you turn on others. You know the old cliché, "The boss gives you a hard time and you go home and slap your wife who yells at the kids and the kids go out and kick the dog." Sometimes you turn on others to get rid of some of that "falling apart" that has occurred. Sometimes you turn to yourself, pull away from everybody else. That's not an uncommon response. And sometimes you turn on yourself and sometimes you turn on God. These are all very human responses.

I had a client named Karen. Karen was a beautiful young lady. She had had a tough life. She had grown up in St. Joseph, Missouri. Her mother was a full blooded Indian, and she had been born out of wedlock. Her mother blamed her somewhat for that! So she had a

tough time. But Karen had a lot of motivation internally and she was able to become a nurse. She married a nice young man who was a lawyer, and they had two kids, a little boy first and a little girl second. Life was going very well for Karen.

There was some baggage that Karen had and some baggage that her husband had that caused a few problems. Among other things, her husband had a wondering eye, and it came down to where he wanted his girl friend instead of his wife. When he divorced Karen, it broke her heart, and she wasn't sure where to turn. She did get her children and she did have her house, and she continued on with her life; but her husband being a lawyer and knowing the ways of the law, kept at it. He kind of broke both of them as far as finances were concerned and finally ended up with the kids. And it broke Karen's heart.

Karen tried to continue on, but she didn't have a grounding in God to turn to. She could not forget the pain of the injustice that had been done to her. Again she was a very motivated young lady, but couldn't find the peace that she needed to find. Her heart had been broken. One day she met a very good looking, strong young man who was also an Indian from Canada. He had come into the hospital where she was working and she had taken care of him. They had some things in common, and they started going out together. This young man had another problem. He was a cocaine addict, and he introduced Karen to cocaine. And sometimes the cocaine, when you have dopamine released it turns to phenylethanolamine, and this turns to epinephrine and noraphrenine as it goes through a cascade of changes, and these things make you feel really, really good inside, really, really happy inside. The cocaine goes in there and blocks the enzymes which make it so that you normally break down the dopamine, so you feel good for awhile, then it goes down. If you have ever had that instance when somebody that you really like reaches over and touches your hand and it sends a chill down your spine? Sometimes when you have had that experience, you just feel peaceful and loved and everything is safe. Sometimes that is the result of this dopamine release. And what happens is that the cocaine goes in and makes it so those neurotransmitters aren't destroyed. And because they are not destroyed, you can have a peace and a calm that you hadn't felt before. So Karen started using cocaine that earlier she had kind of turned on herself. She had become anorexic. She lost her home, stopped going to work, lost her job, and followed her boyfriend out to New York. That was the last I heard from her for a year or so when she came back through totally devastated. She had a broken heart! She had tried everything she knew how to do, and she was unable, even at that time, to heal that broken heart. She had turned to others. She had turned to herself. She had turned on others. She had turned on herself and she had turned on God. The only thing she hadn't tried was that third commandment - a part of the commandments Third Nephi said was so very important, and that was to bring your broken hearts to Christ.

In the fifty first Psalm, the seventeenth verse - this was the one that was written right after the time that David had had Bathsheba's husband killed, had taken Bathsheba and thought he had gotten away with it. And Nathan the Prophet had come in and said, "Hunh uh! You didn't get away with it. The Lord knows what you did, and that was a really bad thing to do." David, with his broken heart wrote this sad Psalm, praying for a remission of his sin - praying, to no longer have a broken heart, and he said: "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." He said, "If I could give ten thousand rams or whatever

God required, I would do it.” But he came to the realization that what God wanted was for him to take his broken heart and offer it as a sacrifice to God.

We go to the Third Nephi 4:49-50 and Jesus says, “And ye shall offer up unto me no more the shedding of blood; yea, your sacrifices and your burnt offerings shall be done away, for I will accept none of your sacrifices and your burnt offerings;” And He makes a new part of the law and He says, “and ye shall offer for a sacrifice unto me a broken heart and a contrite spirit. And whoso cometh unto me with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, him will I baptize with fire and with the Holy Ghost, even as the Lamanites, because of their faith in me, at the time of their conversion, were baptized with fire and with the Holy Ghost, and they knew it not.”

Throughout the Book of Mormon, He says, “Come unto me with your broken heart, and I will heal it.” (Also Psalm 147:2). He says, “Come unto me with your broken heart, and make it a sacrifice, and if you’ll make this one sacrifice - you give it away!” And do you know how hard it is to give away a broken heart? Do you know how hard it is to give away those feelings of injustice? It kind of makes you feel good to hold onto that and have the feeling - the hurt. That’s why one of the things that happens is that if they hold onto the hurt long enough there is actually a mechanism to let some of that dopamine come again. That’s why we hear sad songs and cry and feel good. That’s why we watch soap operas on TV and we cry and we feel good.

God says, “Let go of it! Give it to me! Give it up. This is our sacrifice - the one sacrifice that I still require is your broken heart. And if you will bring this one sacrifice to me, that broken heart - the one thing that is left over after repentance - the one thing that is left over after you forgive another individual, I will heal it.”

The Promise

Let’s go to the 147th Psalm and the third verse. “He (the Lord) healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds.” That’s why throughout the Book of Mormon He’s always saying, “Come unto Me with your broken heart.” As you go through all the scriptures and look up all the scriptures on the broken heart, you are going to find that if you make it a habit of taking your broken heart each time your heart is broken, whether it is your own sins, somebody else’s sin or an act of God, if you will take that and give that pain, that need to turn on others or turn on God or the need to turn on yourself, and you give that away - that’s a habit that will qualify you to be baptized. If you can’t give up your broken heart, you shouldn’t be baptized. (Moroni 6:2 and Doctrine and Covenants 17:7 a-b).

He says that’s a habit that is going to qualify you to have the Holy Ghost with you. (3 Nephi 4:49-50).

He says that is a habit that is going to bring you to salvation. (3 Nephi 5:66-67).

In fact, he says, if you make this habit of bringing your broken heart to Me - giving it to Me - making it your sacrifice - He says, “The gates of hell will be shut to you.” (2 Nephi 3:54). You can’t go to hell if you do it.

He says, “If you will bring your broken heart to me, and make it a habit, you will have entrance to the kingdom.” (Doctrine and Covenants 56:5c-6a).

He says, if you will bring your broken heart to me, and make it a habit - He says, if you are poor, “the fatness of the earth” will be yours.” But if you are poor and don’t bring your broken heart to me, you don’t have that same promise. (Doctrine and Covenants 56:5c-6a.)

He says if you make a habit of bringing your broken heart to me, turning it over to me - making it a real sacrifice, then the Father will “remember all of His covenants with you” (Ether 1:112). Among those covenants that we make with Him is the covenant of Communion where, if we remember to do, we will “have His Spirit to be with us always.” Doctrine and Covenants 17:22-23)

And finally He makes the promise that if you will bring your broken heart as a sacrifice and as a habit to Him, you will know the Father. (Doctrine and Covenants 94:2 f&g).

Why We Remember The Easter Story

Seventy Ronald K. Smith read Luke 24:1-5 to introduce his sermon Easter Sunday, 2005. “Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women came unto the sepulcher, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them. And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulcher, and two angels standing by it in shining garments. And they entered into the sepulcher, and not finding the body of the Lord Jesus, they were much perplexed thereabout; and were affrighted, and bowed down their faces to the earth. But behold, the angels said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen ...” Michael Jordison followed with the song, “He is risen! Yes my Lord, He is risen today. There are linens with blood stain, but that is all that remains. There is nobody left in that grave!”

This is a day of remembrance - a day when we remember that morning when Jesus was raised. I can’t compete with the television and movies and all of those other things that have told the story over and over and over again, but I would just like to remind you of some of the story that we find from the scriptures. It seems that it was the first day of the week when the women came. They didn’t come because they expected to see Jesus alive - not at all! They had the unenviable task of preparing the body for burial.

You see, Jesus had been crucified right before the Sabbath and they had to hurry and take His body straight to the grave without having the chance to do the washing and the preparing that was traditional for the Jews. So He had laid in the tomb, the scripture says three days, and had not been prepared. So they came to take care of that task. And when they got to the tomb, they found that the rock that had been placed over the entrance was rolled away. The tomb was a cave that you would walk in. Joseph of Arimathea had had this prepared for himself, but it had never been used. In those days, and they still do, reuse the same tomb. They put the remains of other people over and put the new corpse in. But no one else had used that tomb, apparently. The soldiers had sealed the door - sealed the rock that they had rolled against the entrance to make sure that no one came and stole the body. But when the women got there, the rock was rolled way.

And there were two people sitting there in white robes or standing there, depending on which account you read, but they were there. The women went in to see the body, and it wasn’t there. And they became afraid. They thought that these men who were there had robbed the grave. And it says they were affrighted, and they bowed their faces to the earth. Then it was that the angels said, “Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is risen. Go and tell the others.”

They went and told everybody that would listen that Jesus was

alive and that He had been raised from the dead. Now they hadn't seen Him, and the disciples, being very practical people, didn't believe. They thought the women were just spreading some old wives tale - some gossip - some rumors! They thought that something different surely must have happened. If you read the account of John, he tells us that Mary Magdalene did actually stay behind the others and that she saw someone whom she thought was the gardener, and she went and begged the gardener to let her know what they had done with the body of Jesus. And Jesus turned to her and spoke to her, and when He did, she recognized Him. And He said, "Don't hold me because I haven't yet ascended to My Father who is in heaven."

Well, Peter and John, when they heard the story, they came running. Matthew tells us that Peter went into the tomb, but John makes it clear that he out raced Peter and got there first. But he did stand by the door. It was Peter that went into the tomb and looked, and he saw the grave clothes that were there. He saw the napkin that had been over Jesus' face folded by itself on the side, and he saw that Jesus was no longer there.

Luke goes on to tell us that Peter departed wondering in himself at those things that had come to pass. So everybody was not sure exactly that the testimony of these angels could really be trusted or that the testimony of the women who had seen the angels could be trusted. And I am sure that Peter was wondering in himself because, Luke tells us, and all the gospels tell us, that they didn't yet understand the scriptures that had been written and the things that had been prophesied of the resurrection. Who could blame them? There had never been a resurrection before that they knew of, and they couldn't quite understand what was going on.

Jesus Opens The Scriptures

And it seems that there were two of the disciples - one of them was Cleopas - who were leaving Jerusalem heading on their way to Emmaus. A stranger came along beside them and started talking with them as they were walking. The stranger seemed to be oblivious as to why they were so sad, and asked them, in fact, why they were so sad. And they said, "Don't you know the things that have happened?" He said, "Well, what things that have happened? Tell me about them." So they rehearsed the story of Jesus' death and told Him about this prophet who was mighty in deed and word before God and all the people and how the Chief Priests of the people had condemned Him to death, and they had actually crucified Him. They shared their deep sense of loss when they said, "But we trusted that it had been He who should have redeemed Israel!" They had hoped - they had put all of their hopes on Jesus. They thought it as He that would redeem Israel, and yet they said, "It has been three days now, that He has been in the tomb."

They also rehearsed that there had been some women who had gone and looked at the tomb and had found that it was empty and said that He was risen. They said the women had seen a vision of angels and said He is alive, but that they didn't see him. Then Jesus spoke to them, and said, "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken. Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory?" And He began at the prophecies of Moses and began to expound all the Scriptures that talked about Jesus, all of the prophecies that He would be raised from the dead and that He really was the one who would redeem Israel - not just redeeming Israel from the Roman power, but redeeming Israel from death and the grave.

So, as they came to the end of their journey, the stranger made like He was going to keep on going, and they said, "Oh, come on

in and at least have some some supper with us." And so they brought him in and made some food and they all sat down, and Jesus took the bread, broke it and He blessed it. And when He did that, they recognized Him and immediately, as soon as they recognized Him, He was gone. And they said, "Did not our hearts burn within us while He talked with us by the way?" They knew it was Jesus. And so they came and told the other disciples.

Now, the eleven disciples were together in an upper room, and they had the doors locked, and Jesus came in and visited them. The scriptures say that the disciples were afraid because they thought He was a ghost. They thought they had seen a spirit, and they were afraid of spirits. So He extended His hand and said, "Look. I want you to feel my hand. I want you to feel the wounds. He let them put their hand in the wound in His side. He said, "I want you to do this so you will know that this isn't just a spirit - that this is really Me.

So they did that, and they worshipped Him. And He asked for a piece of honey comb and fish. He said, "Have you got anything to eat?" And that's what they brought Him and He ate with them because He said, "A spirit wouldn't do that. This is really Me! It's really My body!" Then they began to understand the resurrection. In verse 43 it says, "These are the words which I spake unto you while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and the prophets, and the Psalms concerning me. Then opened He their understanding that they might understand the scriptures and he said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day; And that repentance and remission of sins could be preached in His name among all nations beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things."

So Why Do We Remember The Story?

And that brings us to the question of what does the Easter story mean. And of course many people have spent a lot of time trying to understand the Easter story and trying to communicate that story and trying to interpret it for us. And the disciples who lived through it, of course, didn't understand it and they were in the process. And it was only after reflection that they began to really understand what the story meant. I would like to just spend a few minutes talking about a couple of things that I believe the story means for our day and our time - for you and for me who are sitting here this morning.

One of the things that we get from the Easter story is the understanding of God's forgiveness. And there are two kinds of forgiveness that are illustrated in this story. If you go over to Luke the twenty third chapter, verse thirty five, you find that as Jesus was being crucified - as the Roman soldiers were nailing Him to the cross - He said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." We find that Jesus is willing to forgive those sins that are committed unknowingly, and what a comfort that is because many of us have committed sins unknowingly. I often hear people say, "Well, there are sins that I commit knowingly, but I might have done something that I didn't know, and I am afraid that God is going to really be after me because of one of those things that I didn't do - the sins of omission as well as the sins of commission. But I think this story illustrates that God really is willing to forgive all of those things we have done unknowingly, even as He forgave the soldiers who were crucifying Him. "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

But there is another story of forgiveness here, and that's with the thief on the cross. If you look in Matthew the twenty seventh chapter, you find that there were two thieves who were crucified with Jesus. One of the thieves was actually taunting Jesus from the

cross saying, "If you are the Christ, then why don't you come down and save yourself?" Verse 46 - the people were saying, "He trusted in God; let Him deliver him now; If He will save him, let him save him; for He said, I am the Son of God." They were using the Psalms where the Psalmist talked about that to fly in Jesus' teeth and say, "You said you were the Son of God. Why don't you fulfill the prophecies that said you could save yourself"

"One of the thieves also, which were crucified with Him, cast the same in his teeth" - said the same thing. "But the other rebuked him saying, Dost thou not fear God, seeing thou art under the same condemnation; and this man is just, and hath not sinned; and he cried unto the Lord that he would save him; and Jesus said unto him, This day thou shalt be with me in Paradise."

Here was a man who understood his sins - who had sinned knowingly - who had willingly done that which he knew was wrong; and, as he was being crucified with Jesus, felt unworthy to share the same fat. He said, "Please, forgive me - save me!" and Jesus said, "Don't worry. Today you will be with me in Paradise." Have you done something in your life which you know is wrong? I have. Have you done something that you believe would keep God from loving you - would keep God from forgiving you? The testimony of the story on the cross is that it doesn't matter what you have done, that if you will come to Christ and ask - if you will acknowledge your sin, that Jesus is faithful and just to forgive you; and He will do that. And what a freeing experience that can be for those who take Him at His word and are forgiven.

The other thing that comes over and over again as I read these words is the victory over death. Again there are a couple of stories from Jesus' life that illustrate the different ways that this can happen. One way that Jesus overcame death was through resurrection - not only His own but you remember that He raised Lazarus from the dead. I love that story. Jesus loved Lazarus and his two sisters, Mary and Martha. Mary and Martha and Lazarus lived in a house together in Bethany, which wasn't far from Jerusalem. Jesus was a long way away, and John tells us the story that Lazarus was very sick. Mary and Martha sent for Jesus and asked Him to come quickly because they believed that Jesus could heal their brother. Well, for whatever reason, Jesus waited around for two days before He left where He was. It doesn't fill in the details, so we don't know what His business was or what he was doing, but it took two days before He started, and by the time that He reached Bethany at Lazarus' house, Lazarus had been in the tomb for four days. When Martha she heard that Jesus was coming, she ran out to meet Him, leaving Mary in the house. Martha was crying and she said to Jesus, "You know. If you had just been here, Lazarus would not have died." And Jesus said, "Don't you know that I am the resurrection and the life and he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live?" Martha said, "I know that Lazarus is going to be raised in the last resurrection, but that doesn't help the hurt. That doesn't keep me from experiencing the pain of his death." And Jesus said to her, "Believest thou this? "Yea, Lord, I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God which should come into the world." And when she said that, she went and called Mary. Mary came to Jesus, and she, too, cried and said, "You know, if you had just been here he wouldn't have died!"

And so Jesus asked Mary where the tomb was and she took Him there. People were saying, "You know, this guy who opened the eyes of the blind. Couldn't He have made Lazarus live? They probably remembered the story where Jesus had healed the Centurion's servant by just saying the words and wasn't even there!

We are told that Jesus cried. He wept over His loved one who had died, and He went to the tomb and said, "Remove the stone." And they said, "Oh, no! He has been in there for four days. He stinks!" And Jesus said, "Do it anyway!" So they did it and with a loud voice Jesus cried, "Lazarus, come forth!" And Lazarus came forth.

I don't know how he got out there because he was still bound with all of the grave clothes and I have this picture in my mind of a mummy, you know, with all of the wrappings on. He probably had to hop to get out. I don't know, but Jesus told them to loose him and let him free. There was a lot of rejoicing that day when Jesus demonstrated His power over death. Of course, after Lazarus was raised from the dead, a lot of the people believed on Jesus and came to see Him. But there were some who went to the Pharisees. And John says that was the reason the Pharisees decided that they had to put Jesus to death, because they didn't want everybody following Jesus. So besides showing His power over death, he also sealed His own death with that act. But He showed that He had power over death - that He was the resurrection and the life.

I am also thinking of the time that Jesus' cousin, John the Baptist died. The scriptures say, that Jesus went and tried to find a solitary place in the wilderness where He could be by Himself. Jesus understood the grief of death, and some of you have gone through that and know what that's like. But even in the case where Jesus didn't bring him back to life immediately, He showed that He had power over death and can be with us.

Alan shared a testimony from the Chobars at the community Breakfast With the Master the other day. I am going to try and share it with you because it is such a neat story. I don't recall hearing the Chobars telling it, so this is third hand, but I know some of you know the story very well.

It seems that their young three month old died the Sudden Infant Death syndrome - SIDS. They found her dead in the crib. They called an ambulance. The ambulance came and for some reason they allowed the Chobars to actually ride in the ambulance where they were trying to resuscitate the little baby. They rode to the hospital, took her to the emergency room where the medical personnel and worked on her but couldn't save her.

There was a young woman who came - one of the nurses - and asked them to come with her. She took them into a lounge area and was with them while they were dealing with their grief. She pointed out a telephone and said, "If you would like to make some calls to your family and let them know, you can use that telephone." So they did, and when the time came, she called a taxi to take them home.

Later they were so appreciative of the love and care that had been shown by this nurse that they wrote a letter to the hospital administrator thanking him for this wonderful program that they had. They described the nurse, saying they especially wanted to thank the lady and gave her name. They said they appreciated the phone calls that they were allowed to make and the fact that they got the taxi for them. They received a letter back in the mail after awhile from the hospital administrator saying he appreciated the thanks, but there are a few things that we need to correct. He said, "We don't have anybody employed by that name on our hospital staff, and the room that you have described is not a lounge. It's a storage area, and there is not a phone in that room. We have been billed for some long distance calls and a taxi bill that we never knew where they came from." Though He didn't see fit to save their little baby, He was there.

Isaiah, the fifty third chapter says, "Surely he has born our griefs and carried our sorrows." And the Lord saw fit to put on Jesus

the iniquity of us all . And it is with His stripes that we are healed. So, as we reflect on the meaning of Easter, we begin to understand two great principles: that God will forgive us and that Jesus has brought about the resurrection from the dead. the reason that this happened, Returning to Luke 24:45, Jesus Himself tells us the reason for His death and resurrection. "It behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day; that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem". Jesus is there to forgive our sins and to bring the remission of sins that will bring us into the presence of God. And He has given the victory over death so that death will lose it's sting and we may stand again whole in the presence of God.

I believe in the resurrection. I believe that Jesus was resurrected from the dead. And I believe that all of us will be resurrected from the dead because the scriptures tell us that. How do I know that? I just have to have faith that that's the case. I believe that the Spirit tells us that it is true. I believe that is the meaning of Jesus and the story that we read in the scriptures.

I know that Norman has the testimony that he has seen Jesus Christ. I know that some of you have had the testimony that you have seen Jesus Christ. I believe that He's real and that He came so that we could have the victory over death. And that's why we come together to remember the Easter story.

Be Steadfast. The Battle is Won!

2 Nephi 15:1-10, followed by Doctrine and Covenants 76:2a, was chosen by High Priest Sherman Phipps for his sermon on March 20. "And now I, Nephi, can not write all the things which were taught among my people; neither am I mighty in writing, like unto speaking: for when a man speaketh by the power of the Holy Ghost, the power of the Holy Ghost carrieth it unto the hearts of the children of men. But behold, there are many that harden their hearts against the Holy Spirit, that it hath no place in them; wherefore, they cast many things away which are written, and esteem them as things of nought.

"But I, Nephi, have written what I have written; and I esteem it as of great worth, and especially unto my people. For I pray continually for them by day, and mine eyes water my pillow by night, because of them; and I cry unto my God in faith, and I know that he will hear my cry; and I know that the Lord God will consecrate my prayers, for the gain of my people. And the words which I have written in weakness, will he make strong unto them; for it persuadeth them to do good; it maketh known unto them of their fathers; and it speaketh of Jesus, and persuadeth them to believe in him, and to endure to the end, which is life eternal.

"And it speaketh harsh against sin, according to the plainness of the truth; wherefore, no man will be angry at the words which I have written, save he shall be of the spirit of the devil. I glory in plainness; I glory in truth; I glory in my Jesus, for he hath redeemed my soul from hell.

"I have charity for my people, and great faith in Christ, that I shall meet many souls spotless at his judgment seat. I have charity for the Jew: I say Jew, because I mean them from whence I came. I also have charity for the Gentiles. But behold, for none of these can I hope, except they shall be reconciled unto Christ, and enter into the narrow gate, and walk in the straight path, which leads to life, and

continue in the path until the end of the day of probation."

"For thus saith the Lord, I, the Lord, am merciful and gracious unto those who fear me, and delight to honor those who serve me in righteousness and in truth unto the end;" (76:2a).

After stating that it was his hope that the Holy Spirit would bear the message of the morning to us, Brother Phipps commented, I want to acknowledge this morning that I understand that the scriptures say, "Preach only repentance." So while I am talking about some things that aren't directly repentance, I hope that all of these things will lead us to repentance - to a greater desire to repent and remain steadfast. And steadfastness is really what I want to talk about this morning. I understand this is Palm Sunday, and I am not going to talk about that as such, except that I did think about Christ riding into Jerusalem on the back of the colt.

If I read the scriptures right, everybody was out. There with a great welcome on that day. They seemed happy to see Him and seemed to be pleased at His presence. He, of course, knew that within a few days that would change. I don't know if it changed with that particular group of people. Those people may have continued to recognize Him and to be grateful for His presence; but I would suspect that it did change for some of those who were out there that day, also. But Jesus knew that ahead of time. He knew what was before Him and what was to take place, and yet, He went ahead and went. And that's what I guess I want to talk about today. I want to encourage us, no matter what lies ahead - and of course, we don't know that like Christ did - but no matter what lies ahead to continue steadfast.

I read this scripture from Second Nephi 15. Nephi, as you have already heard, and as you were probably already familiar, talks about how much hope he has for his people - how much he desires they might know Christ. At the very end he says, "But behold, for none of these can I hope except that they shall be reconciled to Christ, and enter in at the narrow gate, and walk in the straight path, which leads to life, and continue in the path until the end of the day of probation." That's what I would like to encourage us to do today. I think that it would be safe to say that probably everybody in this room has entered into that path. Now the question becomes, can we continue in that path to the end of the day of our probation? Probably all of us, at one point or another, have thought, "Yes! I can do that! I can be faithful to the end." Then things pop up that cause us, maybe, to question or to just give up out of frustration, feeling that somehow, we can't do it! But, you know, it really isn't our battle. It's Christ's. And I thought about this as Rob was teaching the class this morning. I thought of ways in which you could listen to what I am going to say this morning and say, "Yeah, but what about --? OK, Sherman, but you didn't cover everything!"

But, you know this remaining faithful and continuing until the end would be, in fact, I think, impossible for us except for the fact that Christ has prepared the way for us. And He says He asks nothing of us except He has prepared a way for us. So this thing of remaining faithful and continuing steadfast, while sometimes appearing to be more than we can do, it isn't. The promise is there that He won't ask anything of us that we can't bear. He has already prepared a way for us to be successful in continuing steadfast.

Christ Has Won the Battle

I thought of something else this morning, and I will tell you the story. I'm not sure it fits real well, but when I think of this battle - maybe I shouldn't think of it as a battle, but sometimes to me it seems like a real battle - a real struggle to remain faithful - not so much because I am assaulted from outside - and that's true. The

world is constantly after us trying to get us to go a different way, but I think the thing I get the most frustrated with is with myself. I know this way is the right way, and yet I look around and lo and behold, I am over here. I ask myself, "How did you get over there? You know better than that!" So it is me that I get frustrated with, but I know that it's not really my battle. My thing is to acknowledge Jesus Christ in my life every day, and to expect that he will be there and that He will provide the means for me to continue on.

You know, when I was about six years old, eight years old, right on up to twenty, thirty, I don't know where to draw the line, but somewhere in there, I really responded to that song, "Send me! I'll go anywhere You want!" That was kind of how I felt. "Send me. I'll do it! I'm ready to battle! all right, I'm skinny and all that, but if You'll send me, boy I will go!" Somehow, I thought the battle was mine, and I can remember feeling that way a lot of times. "Yeah, this is a battle I can fight even though physically I might not be very big, but I am willing to go!"

I have come to a point in my life - and maybe this is just getting old, I don't know, where I hope I am still willing to do that, but at the same time I think I have come to recognize that I could run out there and try to fight a lot of battles, and they might not be God's battles. Maybe I am just fighting to be fighting and maybe just to try and prove that I am willing to go; because again, this isn't really our battle! It's God's battle, and He has already fought it and won. Now it's up to us to stay close to Him and let Him bring us through safe. I know there are a lot of questions - things you might say, "Yeah, but what about this or that?" But my feeling today is more like an experience I had when I worked at the Boy's Training School at Eldora. There was a young man there who was about sixteen or seventeen. His name was Larry. Larry was about six foot, seven or eight inches tall. He was a huge kid with a lot of problems. He was a very violent young man, and everybody was pretty scared of Larry.

They kept Larry on a lot of medication to try and keep him calmed down. The medication they gave him came in little tablets, and for most of the people that we gave that to, we would break them in half, give them one half in the morning and one half with the evening meal. But Larry, if I remember correctly, got three of those three times a day! Three with each meal, and he was still so hyper that ----- . If you gave some people too much of this medication, they would be a little lethargic. Their face would droop and they would drool. That was on half a tablet two times a day. Larry took three each meal, and sometimes you would give it to him, he would eat his meal, jump up and run across the grounds to wherever he was supposed to be. It didn't seem to have much effect on Larry! Everybody was kind of afraid of Larry.

We lived on the grounds. I was there as a part of an internship. When we were trying to figure out how we were going to get there and meet our expenses, we found that there was a condemned building right there in the middle of the grounds on the campus. So we asked if it would be possible that we live in one of the floors of that old condemned building so we wouldn't have to rent a place, because we were pretty short on money all of the time. They finally agreed to let us do that. So that's where we lived right there on the grounds.

We had two daughters at that time - Pam and Jennifer, and they were not either one in school yet, so they were pretty young. We had no money to go anywhere or do anything, so many times at night we would take the kids and go to the activities there on the grounds, ball games, and that sort of thing. There weren't many visitors at those

games, or spectators. They weren't allowed, so we were kind of an oddity. We always took the girls with us. Larry somehow kind of got attached to our two girls. Everybody else would tell us, "Don't let Larry be around those kids alone." I don't know why but I felt OK with that. It was a little worrisome sometimes. Larry would come and want to take the girls and get them cookies and milk in the kitchen. I wouldn't let him do that, but he got pretty kind of attached.

One day, I went down into the basement of the building where the recreation room was. I got to the bottom of the stairs, went down the hall and went to turn through the door that went into the other half of the building where the pool table and all that stuff was. The lights were out in there, and just as I turned to go through the door, two of the guys who lived in that particular cottage, stepped from each side of the door in front of me. It was very clear to me that they had planned this. They were there waiting for me and it was their intention to hurt me. They stepped around and said just a couple of things, and then suddenly everything went silent! Before I could really react and know exactly what was going on, this big arm came across from behind me. Larry was tall enough that he could reach straight out and his arm was over my shoulder. This big arm came across my shoulder and picked one of these kids up by the shirt and lifted him right up off the floor, held him out there at arm's length and said, "You guys better leave Mr. Phipps alone!" He set him back down on the floor and it was over.

That's kind of how I have come to view this battle that we are engaged in. I go now not so much with the idea that I am going to beat them up. I try to go about each day, keeping in mind that if I am walking where I am supposed to be, if I stay in the path, Christ is right there! It's really not my battle. He'll take care of it! And I believe that! And I believe that is true of each one of us. The thing is for us to get in the path where He wants us to be - where He can be with us - where He can go, because He can't tolerate sin. If we can get in that path where He has called us to be, and stay there, it's not our battle! It won't be Larry. It will be somebody more stable and more consistent, but He will be there!

Promises of the Book of Revelation

I wanted, along these same lines to talk to you a little bit about the Book of Revelation. When we mention Revelation, we always think about last days and what is coming, and that might be a good thing to think about; but I know for me, there's something else in here that I think I have overlooked or given very little attention to. Some of you will know - maybe all of you will know - exactly what I am talking about.

When John started "Revelation" he had a message to the churches. He recites here a number of things that are promises to him that overcomes and to him who remains faithful. I want to read some of them and remind you that these things are promises to you. They were directed to the churches. That's what it says - that these messages are to the churches. In that respect, I would just ask you to remember what the definition of church is. Maybe I'll take just a second and read that.

This is Section 3 of the Doctrine and Covenants - a section with which you are all familiar. "Behold, this is my doctrine: Whosoever repenteth and cometh unto me, the same is my church;" So, if you repent and come unto Christ and stay steadfast, then these promises are to you.

First: John says, "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God." (Rev. 2:7). We all know what the tree of life is. Right? We talked about it in class. Somebody tell me. What does the Book of Mormon say

the tree of life is?

One of the young children responded, "The love of God." "The love of God," our speaker repeated. So, "To him that overcometh (and remains steadfast - I added that "steadfast" -) will I give to eat of the love of God." What little experience I have had with the love of God - it's the greatest thing in the world. You couldn't ask for anything better, and He is just going to give us that. And He tells us that's in the midst of the paradise of God. That's where we will be if we just remain steadfast.

Second: I'm skipping around in here. Then he says, "He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death." (Rev. 2:11). How important is that to us? It's not something I sit around and think about, but when I think about it, is that worth living my life according to the commandments of God to know that the second death will not hurt me, but that I will, in fact, be in the paradise of God and participating in His love freely?

Third: Here's the next one. "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it." (Rev. 2:17). What does that mean? I will let you think about what you think the hidden manna is, but it also says, "He will give him a white stone." (If I had been thinking this morning, I would have brought a handful of white stones and passed them out.) I will let you go home and get your concordance out and see what you think it means, but here's what I think it means.

When I went to the concordance, I found two things that really struck me. The word stone has to do with a verdict of acquittal, and I don't know - (Someone asked our speaker to repeat that statement.) The word stone has to do with "a verdict of acquittal". That is one of the definitions. I will go ahead and give you the other. It's "a ticket of admission". I can tell you, in a criminal court, the verdict of acquittal will truly put a smile on your face if you are the defendant - maybe not if you are a part of the other party's family. But that one really struck home with me - "a verdict of acquittal" that He will give us! And I thought, "Who else could do that for me because surely, when I stand before His court, I will be convicted? How could somebody who knows me exactly as I am, do anything other than to say, "Yes, this man is a sinner"? But Jesus said, if I overcome - if I remain steadfast- He will give me a verdict of acquittal. Through him, I will be cleansed in spite of the fact that I have fallen and stumbled at times, or, as I indicated, the other definition that I found is "a ticket of admission". It's His plan through His Son, Jesus Christ, to admit us to paradise if we will just let Him - if we will just follow Him.

Fourth: Here's another one. "But that which ye have already, hold fast till I come. And to him who overcometh, and keepeth my commandments unto the end, will I give power over many kingdoms; and he shall rule them with the word of God; and they shall be in his hands as the vessels of clay in the hands of a potter; and he shall govern them by faith, with equity and justice, even as I received of My Father. And I will give him (He is speaking of them who overcometh and keepeth His commandments unto the end.) I will give him the morning star." (Rev. 2:25-28). I don't know what the morning star means to you. I will let you go home and look this one up, too. I looked it up. I think it means the greater glory, but you go look it up and see what you think. I had forgotten how many promises there were in "Revelation" to those who overcome and keep His commandments to the end!

Here's another one. "He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment, and I will not blot out his name out of the

book of life, but I will confess his name before My Father, and before His angels." (Rev. 3:5). I can't imagine - I can't put into words what it would be like to be able to come back into the presence of God as weak and as nothing as I am and have God's Son, Jesus Christ stand up and say, "This is My friend. Let him in!" But that's the promise if we remain steadfast.

Here's another one. "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go no more out; and I will write upon him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, this is New Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from My God; and I will write upon him My new name." (Rev. 3:12). So, if we are steadfast and keep His commandments to the end, He has promised us, we will be there in paradise and will not have to go anymore out. How great is that? I don't know about the rest of you; but some mornings I get up - not as much now as I used to - before I got this job, I will admit, but some mornings I just could hardly stand the thought of going to work. (There was a ripple of response.) That rang a bell somewhere out there, too. Or if it wasn't work, it was other things that needed to be done. You know, sometimes your kids can just wear you out! There is just something they need all of the time, and sometimes that would just wear me out. I just didn't feel that I was making any progress. I was giving all my time and energy to try and help them through whatever it was they were needing, and I couldn't see much progress. It just seemed there was something there tomorrow! But He says, if we overcome and keep His commandments unto the end, He will bring us in - into His temple and into paradise - and we will not be required to go anymore out. It sounds like everything will be there for us. Everything will be provided.

He will write upon us the name of God and the name of the new City, Jerusalem. I think that's kind of interesting, too. He will write upon us the name of the City of God. This is New Jerusalem which cometh down out of heaven from My God. Think about this. I am not going to tell you this is true, but think about it. He said He brings us in to go no more out. Then He writes upon us the name of the new City, Jerusalem, the City of God which cometh down out of heaven. So, do we inherit, then, this world after it has been renewed, made whole, fresh, clean? I think we probably do. I will let you think about that one, too.

After all of these promises, then, He says, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten; be zealous therefore, and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." We have all heard that scripture before, but how amazing is that that Jesus Christ himself would be willing to come in and sit down and spend time with us and feed us. (Rev. 3:19-20). And again He says, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." (Rev. 3:21-22). That would be us, if we repent, humble ourselves and have been baptized - and I think most of us have been baptized.

He says in there that He knocks at the door, and if we will open, He will come in and sup with us. There is another scripture that I thought about reading to you this morning from Luke 12. It talks about it in a little different sense. In that scripture it talks about how, when He comes and knocks on the door, that those servants who have been alert and ready waiting His return and who open the door to Him and let Him in, He will serve them. He will be the one that feeds us.

I had a dream this week. I don't profess that this was a spiritual dream at all. I don't mean anything like that. I just had a weird dream and thinking about it later, I was thinking about this scripture in Luke. In this dream I was traveling and stopped at a restaurant. I went in and sat down. It was a busy place, but I found a couple of tables open in the back. And I waited and waited and waited and nobody waited on me. They were waiting on everybody else but not me. Nobody paid any attention. Nobody would even come and offer me a glass of water or see if I wanted something to drink.

So after awhile I got up and moved into the other room. Still no one would wait on me. I remember looking at my watch, and finally I had been there for forty five minutes, and I thought, "That's long enough! I'm going to leave." So I got up to leave, and as I went out the door, there were some people sitting at a couple of tables close to the door and I said, "Well, good luck! I've been here for forty five minutes and can't even get a glass of water!" Then I left. After I got outside in the parking lot somebody yelled at me, "Hey!" When I turned around it was one of the waitresses, and she was really upset with me that I made this comment to the other folks there at the table. She didn't think I was being fair to them at all.

As I thought about that, not thinking of it as a spiritual dream at all, I was just thinking that is a kind of a reverse of how it is with God - or at least I think it is the reverse in that with God, He stands there with the door open, the meal prepared and set, and He does everything He can to get us to come in and eat. And He Himself is willing to serve us if we will come in and sit down. He just can't get us to come in!

I don't want to say that in terms of condemning all of us, or anything like that, because I think you people have probably come in in many respects. But sometimes having come in and sat down and eaten, we get a little lackadaisical and may decide to get up and wander out again. Hopefully we can reach a point in our lives where we don't get up and wander out again. I would like to be able to reach that point in my life.

Another Reason to be Steadfast

One other little thing. I had another little tiny experience this week that made me want to be steadfast. One of the earliest things I remember about the Lord working in a way I could perceive and understand as a young person - I think I was probably about six or seven years old. I have a brother who is a year and a half younger than me that some of you know, and he was very, very ill. He laid on the couch for a couple of days. He got to the place where he was on the couch and wouldn't move. He wouldn't respond. I knew, even as a young child that he was really sick, and my parents were really worried. They called for the Elders to come and administer to him, and even as a young person - and I wish these young people here could know this, and perhaps they do or will - I knew that my parents had made a very significant choice. Instead of calling for help from other men, medical persons - don't take this wrong - they had decided to call the Elders. The Elders came and administered to my brother who was laying on the couch completely unresponsive, as I recall, and when their prayer was finished, my brother jumped up off the couch, and he and I ran and played like we always did. That's what I remembered from the experience, but I knew that God had done that even at that young age.

Well, this week, it's kind of like things come in circles sometimes. This isn't exactly the same thing, but this week - and I wanted to talk about this because Tanner and Tegan were there, and I want to see what they remember. This week, I went over to their house one night. Tanner and Tegan and their little brother Rider,

who is not quite three, were there and their older brother Cody, who is fifteen, soon to be sixteen, was watching the kids while their mother was gone for little while. As usual, it turned out to be a lot longer than Cody expected. They were all sitting together in the living room and Rider was sitting on Cody's lap. They were all very concerned because Rider had done something to his arm and they weren't sure what. He wasn't really screaming and crying and carrying on, but he was fussy. He was sitting pretty good with Cody, but he had done something to his arm and he wasn't using it - wasn't moving it, and they wanted me to look at it. So I went over and when I went to take hold of his hand, he really reacted. If you tried to move it at all, it was clear that it really hurt. After a few minutes, Rider was laying on the couch. Cody had decided he needed to lay him down and change his diaper. (Our speaker asked his grandchildren) "What did Grandpa do for Rider?" The children responded, "He said a prayer." What happened after we said the prayer? "He got up and took right off." Just like that he was OK, wasn't he?" Tanner and Tegan enthusiastically agreed.

That's the God that I want to encourage all of you to remain steadfast to. It's the one who fulfills His word, keeps His promises and has already won the battle.

From the Pastor's Desk

Continued from front page

minds. In the meantime they had done their best (or worst) to regulate branch, district, mission and general church authorities. Even those who have some portion of the the prophetic spirit should always remember the fundamental principle that the "spirit of the prophets is subject to the prophets". I have the revelations given to Isaiah and to John and other prophets and I use them as judgment as the spirit of wisdom directs me to do." (Your pastor has noted some who claim to have an inspired message everytime the saints meet in worship.)

This is not to suggest that God does not continue to speak through his servants and His saints. It is to recommend there is need for caution, self-reflection and evaluation, on the part of each person who feels they have been moved upon by the Holy Spirit. Brother Elbert reflects further on what he calls TWO EXTREMES:

"We recognize that there are two extremes. There is danger in the excesses that I have just pointed out. On the other hand, men in responsible positions sometimes neglect to seek certain of the spiritual gifts that their position might well justify them in exercising. They allow those gifts to revert to irresponsible hands. The people do have a legitimate desire to hear on occasion a 'Thus saith the Spirit' from men (or women) from whom they trust and respect. In this connection however, it is to be remembered that devout and able men do speak under the prophetic office, revealing the will of God, but without declaring, "Thus with the Lord" To those having the gift of discernment, it is no less obvious that they are indeed exercising the gift of prophesy, but

quietly, and without the sound of trumpets. "

In the restoration, at present, we have no authorized means to accept or reject a purported message as divinely inspired, directed or binding on the church. That day may soon come, but it is not here as of this writing. Such inspired messages are usually given to edify, exhort and comfort. They may provide insight into future events. They do not have to predict anything, however. They may be given to individuals, families or groups, in local settings, like retreats, reunions, branches, gatherings, etc. According to our practice, those messages are to be addressed by the presider, if given during a some kind of service. The presider may confirm the message, deny the message, or "leave it on the table". If you are a presider who doesn't have confirmation of a message, you may simply say; "thank you for your testimony" or "thank you for the gift of the spirit". All should be done with kindness and respect to the person(s) involved, unless a definite spirit of the adversary is discerned to be present, which should be clearly rebuked by the presider.

If you believe that the Lord has given you a message, but you want confirmation, share it with someone you know and trust has mature spiritual insight. If they are clearly able to confirm the message, you will be less likely to be in error. In any event, don't think that this article was written to discourage the sharing of spiritual gifts. In my opinion, we need more, not less. But we need those gifts to be genuinely of the Spirit and not from the emotions of the person. We will probably be hearing more about the issue of "spiritual messages" in the near future. For scriptures on this subject, read: DC 27:4c; I Cor 14:36-40; DC 125:14a-c; 15:d-e; GCR 15; 222; 288; 308; 368; 550 709

News & Notes

Student Earns Honors

Jared Beck entered the social studies competition at the Pride of Iowa Academic Bowl at East Union March 3 with the Mount Ayr Community High school academic bowl team. The team won first place in the conference. Jared scored the highest of any contestant on the two tests in which he competed -- government and general social studies.

On Saturday, March 5, Jared competed in the individual speech contests at Fremont Mills, Iowa. He received a number one rating for his expository speech and number two in improvisation. He received number one ratings again with his expository speech in the state competition at Nevada.

Ceramic Engineer Wins Government Contract

Sara Rolfe wrote a proposal that won a government contract for the company for which she works in Colorado. Sara is a ceramics engineer.

Her contribution to the company has resulted in her receiving a substantial increase in salary and a bonus, and she will be the director on the project. The proposal has something to do with coatings on chips that carry a large electric charge. Her work is described by her father, Robert Rolfe, as a kind of a marriage between physics and chemistry.

Author Interviewed on Public Radio

Monday, March 13, an interview with B. Mildred Smith concerning her book, "Delmo, Threshold of Freedom" was aired on KXTV, Maryville, with each newscast of the day.

Outstanding Student Chosen

The University of Iowa Department of Accounting faculty has chosen Melissa Winkler to be the recipient of their 2005 Outstanding Senior Award. Melissa will be honored with a plaque at a recognition banquet on April 22.

Congregation Participates in Community Worship

Thursday morning, March 24, the congregation provided the worship service at the community "Breakfast With the Master" held each morning of the week before Easter at the Mount Ayr First Christian Church. Upward to 200 people gather each morning for breakfast at 6:30 and worship from 7:00 to 7:30. Jan Jordison was at the piano, Ron and Di Smith directed the music and Elder Alan Smith gave the sermon. He spoke on the meaning of Christ's cry, "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

Services Canceled

There will be no services at the Mount Ayr church on Sunday, April 3 or on Wednesday, April 6. The congregation will be assembling at the Auditorium, Independence, Missouri for the Communion Service on April 3 and for the General Assembly called for by the message delivered by the Restoration Patriarchs at such a service two years ago. Our Pastor, High Priest Robert Rolfe

will be in charge of the Lord's Supper and Elder Eric Odida has traveled from Kenya, by a series of miracles, to answer the Lord's call to bring the Communion message.

The entire congregation has been preparing for the April 6 Assembly by study, prayer, fasting and service, endeavoring to become humble as the Lord has requires to receive direction for the future.

The Elder's Conference is convened for the same week beginning at Waldo Restoration church, home of Center Place Restoration School, and using those facilities along with the Auditorium.

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