

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

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On Being A Pastor

After being elected at the last business meeting, I am taking the responsibility of being pastor to the Mount Ayr Restoration Branch with a great deal of humility.

I have had the responsibility before, and know that it is not an easy task, or one anyone should covet. I am humbled even more when I review some of the decisions I made or helped make at times in the past when I was pastor which have offended people or caused hard feelings or hurt. That has not been my intention, but looking back I can see that it may have been the case.

Just as our outgoing pastor Rob Rolfe said, our branch is a group of volunteers working together. We need to work together to try to grow closer as a people, to reach out to bring others to Christ and to live so that the Kingdom of God can be evident in our lives as we prepare for Christ's return.

I fully realize that it is only when the power of God's spirit is working among us that we can use our talents and gifts to the glory of God. I certainly am aware of my need for that spirit if I am going to be able to lead our branch in the way God wants us to go. We'll be holding planning sessions where we will seek everyone's ideas on what we would like to do.

I very much ask for your prayers that we can have the vision needed for us to move forward,, because the scriptures tell us that without vision, we will perish. My prayers are with each of the people who have accepted responsibility so far for aspects of our branch life and for those who will be called on to serve during the coming year. May God bless us all as we seek to serve Him and each other.

TESTIMONIES AND SERMON NOTES

Preparation to Pass The Final Exam

Seventy George Knotts was the speaker for the September Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. He chose to divide his sermon so that he would speak before the emblems were served and again after that portion of the service was finished. He began with a general greeting.

I come to you this morning in the name of Jesus and hope to be sharing with you some good thoughts. One thing I had in mind was, as I looked out and saw all of you people, some of the best people in the world are right here. Wouldn't it be a shame if we were the best people in the world? Wouldn't it be too bad if we were the best that God has. Us! We all know our weaknesses. And it says in the scriptures that we should be thankful for our shortcomings. We know our shortcomings better than anybody, and we should be thankful for them. The Lord gave us our weakness so that we might be humble. Can He really get to us and tell us what He wants us to do? In other words, being humble is teachable. Are we teachable? Right now, for a long time the Lord has been trying to get across a point, and I want to talk to you twice this morning - once before you take Communion and once after you take Communion. The reason why I want to talk to you before is that we are not supposed to take very long time in the service before we take the Communion. We are supposed to take it right away, it says that in the scriptures, so I want to talk to you after.

The Lord has been trying to get across to us for a long time something He mentions four times in the Communion prayers. Four times, He mentions it over and over, and He mentions it one month right after another, after another, after another, as long as you have been past eight years old. Most of you have been a member of the church that long, and He is telling us over and over and over again. That means either we are not very teachable, or evidently He designed it so we will always remember it.

What He repeated four times, He wants us to remember. I came up with a poem, "Don't forget to always remember to put first things first, then do the next thing. Don't forget to always remember!" The purpose of that poem was to help us remember what we are not supposed to forget.

I hope you are paying real close attention this morning when you hear the Communion prayer. You are down on your knees, looking at the back of a chair or something, but we have come up with a little device. By using your left hand, you can remember the Communion prayer. The legal part of it is that we witness unto God, (the little finger). that we take upon us His name - (that's the ring finger). We witness that we will always remember Him - (that's the longer finger}. One way to remember is to say a-a-l-l-w-a-a-y-y-s-s - stretch that out - that we will always remember Him. That we will obey His commandments - (the pointing finger), do what He tells us to do, that He will give us His Spirit to be with us, (the thumb pointing up). Now that is the basic thing in the prayer.

But in His prayer on the wine, He doesn't cover that much. He says that we will witness unto God that we will always remember Him, and He will give us His Spirit to be with us. So what is repeated actually in the second prayer on the wine is "always remember Him". And so, that's what He wants us to do this morning. He wants us to take this covenant and promise that we will always remember Him, obey His commandments that He has given us. And He wants us to do that so that He can give us His Spirit. And after awhile, the second part of this talk will be about what is key to witnessing.

Now you will be able to take this Communion prayer and have good thoughts, you will be humble and teachable, and we ought to be able to get across what He wants me to get across, and know you are among a lot of loving people right here.

The congregation sang a song of preparation, the emblems were served, and Brother Knotts resumed his message.

Last night I had a dream. In my dream I was shown two paged pieces of paper, and both of them were book lists. It was of a group of people getting together organizing or reorganizing, or setting up some kind of congregation or something - preparation to put leadership on a foundation. I had a question about the two book lists. For a long time we have been operating on intellectual processes to solving our problems, and my thought all of the time was that we need motivation. We need inspiration. We need "how to". We need something definite and concrete rather than theories about some intellectual approach to religion. So I was raising questions with these folks and it reminded me that Jesus has been wanting us to do something properly for Him for some time, but we have been trying other things.

The method of witnessing is the Holy Spirit. Without the Holy Spirit, we cannot win. With the Holy Spirit, we can not fail. And if your cup is running over, it's going to splash on somebody. If you are full of joy and you are full of the Holy Spirit and graciousness, people are going to be attracted to that, and you will get some response from somebody.

What it reminded me is this. When I was teaching school in Des Moines, they would send students out from Drake to spend six weeks with me where they would do their student teaching. When they would come, I would say, "You are going to learn more in these six weeks than you did all four years at Drake." At the end I would check with them, and without exception that was true.

The Doctrine and Covenants , 83:19b-20, tells us that in the New Testament it was done this way: the strong took the weak with them. And that's the way the church was built up in the New Testament times. Maybe we haven't had the Holy Spirit functioning in our lives as much as we need to have, and maybe the answer has been under our nose every Communion service for that long a time - about a hundred and seventy years.

The answer to our effective witnessing has been the Communion

prayer. If we would take that seriously and get more of the Holy Spirit working with us, they couldn't stop us. It would be that good. Brother Knotts explained that Evangelicals are zealously working at saving the souls of as many as they can, but they do not have the gospel in its fullness to offer. He said, "We have more and are doing less. They have less and are getting more souls to respond to Christ. Souls are very valuable to me. I want to store up much fruit."

In the Book of Mormon Christ told us the parable about the olive tree and how He wanted the plant to bear good fruit, and pretty soon every field He planted was corrupt. At last He called laborers and sent them in to try to save the trees and get them to bear good fruit. He wants fruit. He wants many souls to live the gospel. And we are falling short. Right now we are probably in a maintenance mode - maintaining our status quo.

Ron did a good job of telling us, confirming last time how it is like the Book of Acts. But it is not enough like the Book of Acts. We have to have more of the Holy Spirit functioning in our lives, and it is not going to happen until we take that Communion covenant we make right here seriously. What I said earlier was that it has been under our nose for a hundred and seventy years. Every time we take the wine and take the bread, it is right under our nose! It has been right there all of the time - so close to us yet we haven't applied it as exactly as He wants it applied.

We do other things. We go to school and have several books a semester. We take a test over those books, and we pass or fail; and most people pass. In this group they pass with flying colors. In fact, we have had groups on the honor roll, the dean's list and everything else, but how are we doing with the Lord? He asks us to take a prayer like the Communion prayer and apply it to our lives, and we are having difficulty with those two paragraphs.

He wants us to study the scriptures. That's a part of our legacy. What could the Lord do with you? Could He call you up and say, "What on earth are you doing for heaven's sake?" What would you answer Him. "Well, I took the Communion last Sunday, and I have been trying to remember that ever since. I knew I was supposed to remember something about the Communion, but I can't remember what it was that I was supposed to remember. It was all about remembering."

Well, what on earth are we doing for heaven's sake? We have just taken spiritual food. We are going to enjoy eating in a minute. We are going to take physical food. Some of the best food I have ever tasted is right here in the congregation. So we are going to eat, and we are going to enjoy that and be thankful for it as we do it.

Let us let our cups run over. If the Holy Spirit is in our life, let it run over on somebody. Share the good, you know. The Lord expects that of us. Now, one thing different. He holds us accountable for that. So whether we win or lose, will be how we play this game of life. And that's one of His rules. He wants us to be really sincere in what we have promised to Him. Just put yourself in the Lord's position. Knowing that we are human, that we forget and that we kind of let things slide, and we don't really work hard on assignments unless we have a deadline, what does He do for us? He reminds us once a month, "It might be on the final exam. I would like you to keep that in mind!" I hope you pass the final exam!

The congregation sang appropriately, "Send Me Forth, Oh Blessed Master" and were dismissed with a benediction pronounced by our Pastor asking for strength for each one to do what the experience of the Sacrament, in which we just participated requires, without excuse

Baptismal Serviced Held

Gable Galusha was baptized Sunday, Sept.10 at the Galusha farm southwest of Lamoni, and received his baptism of the Holy Ghost Sunday, September 11 at the Mount Ayr church.

On Saturday, the congregation assembled at the Galusha home and walked to the pond, a few hundred yards to the northwest. There Gable's grandfather, Elder Vernon Kent, conducted the service and his Great Uncle, Elder Wayne Kent, baptized him.

The service opened with the congregation singing, "The Old Old Path". The invocation was followed by the scripture reading from the Book of Mormon explaining why Jesus, who was Holy, still was baptized. (2 Nephi 13:8-17.)

Gable's mother and sister Jazmyn, accompanied by Cessaries on the flute and Aquila on the guitar, sang a song based on the instruction of Jesus to the people of Ancient America that they sanctify themselves for He would be coming the next day to be among them.

Brother Vernon Kent gave his testimony of his own baptism many years ago. He said: "I was born of goodly parents, therefore I was taught somewhat in the principles of the fullness of the gospel of Christ. But more than this, I was taught that there was a God in heaven and I was taught to pray to Him regularly, especially by my mother. Because of these things, there was created in me a desire to join the church and to be baptized. So when I was twelve years old a service of baptism was planned and held in the Chariton Congregation by our pastor John W. Blackstock.

"The following Sunday I was confirmed a member of the Church by John W. Blackstock. In the services of baptism and confirmation I had felt nothing out the ordinary. But two weeks later on my first communion Sunday, it was a totally different experience. The bread and the wine had been served and John W. Blackstock stood to speak to the congregation (I was told later that he spoke in prophecy.) At that moment I felt the presence of someone standing behind me and I felt someone touch me on the top of my head. From that point came the kindling fire of rebirth and as it passed over and through my body, I felt my sins were forgiven me.

"After the cleansing power of the Holy Ghost the Voice of the Holy Spirit said to me in an audible voice, "If you will remember the covenant you have made with me in the waters of baptism, the day will come when you will be called to the priesthood of this church." For years I held this in my heart and shared it with no man. But I have lived to see and experience the fulfillment of this prophecy that was given to me by the voice of the Spirit. I know and have a perfect knowledge that in the waters of baptism we are making a covenant with our Heavenly Father to keep His commandments."

Opportunity was given for others to share testimonies of their baptisms, and a number responded.

The congregation sang, "Crown Him With Many Crowns" and Gable was led into the water by His uncle. The ordinance of baptism was administered. Cessaries on the flute and Jazmyn on the violin played as the participants exited the water. The service concluded with Gable's father, George, offering a father's prayer of blessing and benediction on us all.

The congregation burst into song singing "Walking on Zion's Road" as we walked away from the site of the baptism to share in a pot luck dinner before dispersing.

Baptism Of The Holy Spirit

The baptism of the Holy Spirit followed Sunday morning at Mt. Ayr. As he took his place in front of the pulpit, Pastor Robert Rolfe addressed Gable directly:

Good morning Gabe. You are the best dressed person in the place today! I am going to be making a few remarks to you. The rest of the congregation can listen - I hope they will - but really, I am going to be talking to you. (Young Gable gave apt attention to Brother Rob's every word!)

I really did enjoy your baptism yesterday, I wasn't feeling very well, but none the less I enjoyed it very much, and I was thinking as I stood there, "Are there any fish in that pond?" (Brother Rob lifted his tie and asked, "Do you know what this tie says here? It says, 'I will make you fishers of men'. Jesus is a fisherman, too, and He is a shepherd. He does a lot of things well. So I am going to talk to you a little bit about what I hope happens here.

I appreciated very much the prayer that your grandfather offered, not only what he said, but the Spirit in which it was given was very meaningful to me, and I am sure that the heavenly Father heard that prayer. A number of things that he read from the scriptures - and I don't know if you remember all of this - but he read from the Second Book of Nephi, Chapter 13. I am going to pick up one verse because it has bothered me and I have wondered about it all my life. So I want to talk about it today. It says, "Yea, and then commeth the baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost. And then can you speak with the tongue of angels and shout praises unto the Holy One of Israel."

I have had people tell me that the fire and the Holy Ghost were the same thing, but I don't think they are. And the reason I don't think they are is that if they are the same thing, God would not have had to say it twice. He would have just said, "You are going to get the Holy Ghost", if that is all you are going to get. And I have always wondered about that fire, because I have had the experience that you are about to have. I didn't get burned. I hate being burned. I have had that happen to me. It is an awful thing! But this burning that can come can really consume those things you have in your life that you want to get rid of anyway. I think that is a part of what that fire is. And I would like to talk just briefly about a story that you are probably familiar with.

You remember when King Nebuchadnezzar said that at the sound of the music, everybody bows down to this idol or you are going to be thrown into a fiery furnace. So the music began and everybody bowed down but three people. Do you know who they were? (Gable, listening raptly, answered, "Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego".) That's correct. That is who they were. Don't you think they kind of stuck out a little bit - everyone else is bowed down and you are standing up?

Apparently the king must have liked them because he gave them a chance to still bow own even after he had already decreed that they would be killed. And they said to him, "We are not careful to answer you," which means that we are not trying to phrase this in some kind of candy coated words to make it sound good. They said, "We aren't doing it!" That really made him mad, so he told the people who did this - It was probably some kind of a brick kiln that they got tossed into - to make the fire seven times hotter. I don't know how hot that would be. It would seem like it would melt the kiln before you could get it that hot, but that's what the story says. All I know is that when they threw them in, they were all tied up and the people who threw them in died! That sounds pretty hot to me! And the part of the story I would like you to think about is, the king was looking in. He is kind of curious to see what is going to happen

because they had said to him, Gable, "We don't know if our Lord is going to deliver us or not, but we still are not going to bow down even if He doesn't deliver us!" So he looks in the kiln. What does he see? (Again Gable answers.) Yes. He sees four people, and he says, "They are all walking around!" He couldn't understand it! He said, "Didn't we throw three people in?" I don't know who told him that. The ones who threw them in were dead already, but the answer was, "Yes! We only threw three people in, but there are four in there walking around, and one of them looks like God!"

And so the king yelled, "Come Out!" and they walked out. Their clothes weren't burned. Their hair wasn't burned. They didn't even have the smell of smoke on them! You understand the smell of smoke, don't you? We burned wood at our house for years, and no matter how well you dry it, if you burn wood, you are going to smell like smoke.

So, let me ask you this. If they threw three in, and there were three who came out, and there were four people walking around in the fire, where did the fourth one go? Could be in heaven, but I would like to suggest to you that that person is still in the fire! I don't know if you ever thought about that - that they are still in that fire, and that fire is what the fire is that the Lord is going to bless you with today.

I am going to do two things. When the Children of Israel came out of Egypt, the scripture says they were guided by a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night; and when the Egyptians tried to attack them, that same pillar of fire saved them from the attack. So this fire is going to be circling around you whether you know it or not, to protect you from the things that you cannot see and don't hear, but they are there none the less. This fire is to help you during your life. But it is also going to be inside of you. You know what fire does? It burns things up. Right? Well, all of us have things that need to be cut out of our lives, and that fire will do that. It will cleanse you, if you will permit it. I will just tell you, and remember this, the Lord's Spirit - the Holy Spirit - and this fire don't live in people that don't want them to be there. So if you corrupt your temple where that Spirit is living, He is going to leave. If you clean up the temple, He will be happy to come back. And you know why that is?

I would like you to think for a minute. Do you have a best friend? Why is he or she your best friend? Probably at your age it is a he, isn't it? I might think about this for a little bit out loud for everyone. Your best friend is the one you enjoy being with. You like doing things with them. When they are not around, you think about them. You wonder what they are doing. If Jesus is your best friend, it is the same way. You want to be with Him. He wants to be with you. You want to do things with Him. You want to think the same thoughts. And I hope that this day you will choose that Jesus is going to be the best friend that you have; and that you will cultivate that kind of relationship with Him in which you can feel in your heart that He actually is your best friend. And when we sing that hymn, "What a Friend We Have in Jesus", you will say, "He sure is. I know Him and he sure is my Friend, and I want Him with me all the rest of my life!" God bless you!

Gable was invited forward and Elder Alan Smith offered the baptismal prayer as he and High Priest Robert Rolfe placed their hands on this young man's head.

Confirmation Prayer

"Our kind and loving Heavenly Father, in the name of Your Son, Jesus Christ, my brother Rob and I lay our hands on Gable's head at this time, recognizing the promise of Your scriptures that as we come to the waters of baptism, as we give up our sin to You, that

our lives are washed clean and room is made for Your Spirit to come and rest with us in power.

We know that your Spirit has been blessing Gable already in his young life, but we come at this time, standing in the stead of Your Son Jesus, to ask for the blessing and the baptism of that Holy Spirit upon Gable at this time that Your Comforter may rest with him, and the promise that it will stand beside him at all times may be a blessing in his life. We ask, Father, that You will help him to see Your Kingdom and get a vision of what it is that he can do in his life to be a part of that great effort. We ask that this Spirit would teach him and guide him and lead him through his days that he would be able to grow in his life to be a Son of God. That he may be able to have Your Spirit with him to lead and guide and teach him to be like You. And, Father, we would ask that Your Spirit would also protect him and guide and bless him through his life that he would be able to see the pitfalls in the road ahead and not only be able to miss them himself, but to be able to help lead others around them so they may be a part of Your Kingdom as well.

In those times when Gable my make decisions which are not in Your way, we would ask that this Spirit would call him to repentance - that he would repent of those things in his life that happen through his life, that he would be renewed in that Spirit every time he comes to You.

Father, we would pray for his family and for this congregation that we would be able to uphold him and lead him and be a part of Your Kingdom with him. Thank You for these many blessings that You have given and we would ask the blessing of Your Spirit in power, and even that gift of fire of the Holy Ghost

Father, we would pray for his family and for this congregation that we would be able to uphold him and lead him and be a part of Your Kingdom with him. Thank You for these many blessings that You have given and we would ask the blessing of Your Spirit in power, and even that gift of fire of the Holy Ghost that Gable may be blessed and know Your Spirit and be able to be led by it every day of his life. We pray these things in the name of Your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen."

Brother Rolfe spoke briefly to Gable of a gift of a Book of Mormon the congregation would present to him later.

The congregation sang, "God forgave my sin in Jesus' name. I have been born again in Jesus' name. And in Jesus' name I come to you to share his love as He told me to. He said, 'Freely, Freely, you have received. Freely give. Go in my name and because you believe, others will know that I live.'"

Louise Gregson's Testimony

Louise Gregson was the guest speaker for the church school hour Sunday, September 18, 2005. All of the church school classes combined for the session in which Sister Gregson told how she came to write her Book of Mormon Stories for children. Since she is of Hawaiian heritage, she began her presentation with the well known Hawaiian greeting, Aloha. She recited the words of the song that tells a number of the things aloha has come to mean - I love you, I greet you, hello, goodbye, and many others. Most important of all, however, she explained, Alo means a gathering such as we had that morning and Ha means breath of God. So originally, the greeting was a blessing invoking the breath of God to be upon those present.

Then she gave her testimony:

When I came to Independence to live with my husband, Albert Gregson, I was in trouble because my oldest brother, who had been such a good friend to me, suddenly was very unhappy for several reasons, one of them being that I didn't want to go to college. Now, at this time, since I had married Albert, he felt that this was an opportune time for me to go to school. I said, "I don't want to do that. I would rather spend that time studying the scriptures." He was very upset. I guess the reason for this was because he was the eldest in the family and I was the second one. He followed the tradition of the oriental race. After the parents are gone, the eldest brother is the leader of the family.

One day in 1970 he came over to my house and scolded me for all the things that I had done wrong. He left after scolding for two hours, and I cried while washing a few dishes, "Lord, why did I ever come to this place? Why didn't I stay in Hawaii where I belonged?" It was then that I heard the voice of the Lord speaking to me. He said, "I have led you every step of the way to bring you to this place." My sorrow turned into joy, and I said, "Lord, since you have led me every step of the way to bring me here, what is it that I can do for You?" He answered, "Write the stories of the Book of Mormon for My children, for the time will shortly come when they will have nothing to study." I said, "Lord, I can't do that. I haven't gone to college. I only have a high school education. I can't do that!" But He didn't listen to me. He just let me stew about it for about a year and a half.

In the meantime, I didn't do anything about writing because I had been very ill. I knew I had cancer. Finally I told Albert that I knew I had cancer and he was very upset that I had not said anything before. But, to make a long story short, the doctor recommended surgery, but after administration I received an instant healing - a miraculous, instant healing. The very next day, I said, "Lord, I'm ready to start writing for You."

Well, that evening I sat down and just started to scribble. I tore up about four or five sheets and tossed them into the waste basket. Then I said, "Lord, this is not the way You want me to write! Tomorrow morning will You meet me in my study at 4:30, and then I will ask You how I should write?" The next morning, I was there at four thirty, and the Lord met me there.

After I got up from my knees in prayer requesting that He show me how to do this work, I sat at my desk and opened a Book of Mormon. It fell to the book of Ether, and immediately the Lord gave me the five titles for the five volumes: The Jaredite Period, The Nephite Migration, the Reign of the Kings, the Reign of the Judges, and Christ in America. So I knew that there would be five books to write to complete the Book of Mormon.

I started right away, and I couldn't write fast enough. I didn't have a type writer, and I didn't have a computer or anything like that. I just wrote in long hand. The stories just seemed to flow. Everything went so well that after the fourth day, I said, "I wonder why someone hasn't done this before. It is so easy to write!" I said that several times that day to myself, and the next day I couldn't write. I struggled all day to write one story while usually I could write four stories or five; and I realized what I had done. I had taken pride to myself. Instead of honoring God and praising Him for giving me the gift of writing, I took that honor to myself. So I learned a very valuable lesson early in the writing. To this day, if anybody says anything about the books, I always tell them to thank God because it was He who asked me to write and it was He who gave me the ability to do so.

One day during my writing, I said, "Lord, is the church going to print this book?" And the Lord said, "No." I said, "Well, who is going to print it?" because I knew I didn't have the money to print the books; but He gave me two names. He impressed on my mind the names of Marian VanFleet and David Sheehy. I went to Marian first and asked her if she wanted to hear some stories that I had written on the Book of Mormon, and she said, "Oh, yes!" And after reading the first story, she said, "Honey, when you get ready to print this book, I will give you a thousand dollars." In 1972 a thousand dollars was a lot of money!

Then David Sheehy told me that he couldn't come over to hear the stories because it was tax time and he and his wife were tax people. They were very busy. I said, "Well, do you take time to eat lunch?" And he said, "Yes." I said, "Well, you come over and while you eat lunch, I will read you the stories." And he said, "But, we can only stay forty five minutes." I said, "That's fine."

When they came over, they ate lunch while I read aloud to them. I had set the alarm. All too soon the alarm went off, and I said, "It's time for you to go." He said, "Never mind. Just read on." And so I did, and he said, "We are going to give you \$500.00 toward the printing of the book, plus, we have a lot of friends and we know they would like to contribute towards the printing; so we are going to have a meeting at my house."

At the appointed time, Albert and I went there, and I was horrified because Bishop DeLapp was present, and I thought, "Now for sure, I am really in trouble!" Bishop DeLapp was holding the manuscript in his hand, and he said, "Our sister has written something here that is of great value, but she says that the Lord told her that the church will not print it. But I say to my sister, 'Give this to the church and let them reject it.'" I thought, "Well, that's a good idea." He further explained that if I went ahead and published it without giving it to the church, the church could always say, "We would have printed it, but she didn't give it to us."

I took it over to Paul Wellington at the Herald House. He looked at it and said to me, "Sister, your work is heavy with doctrine." I said, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ." "Well, I will turn it over to the boys." he said. (That's what he called the First Presidency - "the boys".) They had it for about three weeks, and I thought that was too long. Later I found out that some people waited six years before the Presidency looked at their papers.

I called Maurice Draper and said, "Maurice, you have had my manuscript for three weeks, and I want to know if you are going to do anything about it because, if not, I would like to get it printed." Maurice replied, "Well, Lou, your work is heavy with doctrine." I said, "Yes. I am not ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ, Maurice." And he said, "Well, you know when people like you go ahead and write materials such as this and it is distributed amongst the people, it only causes confusion in their minds because the church did not sanction it." I said, "You are exactly right, Maurice. But there should not be any confusion because I took this work right out of the Book of Mormon." And he said, "Well, I will send it over to Joe Serig anyway and he can look it over." I said, "Why are you sending it to the Christian Education department. I am not writing for Christian Education. I am just writing stories of the Book of Mormon." He said, "Well, the 1970 conference asked that more materials should be published from the Book of Mormon. That is why I am turning it over to them to see if they would approve of it. I will have them look at it right away and we'll let you know tomorrow."

Well, Joe Serig looked at it and he rejected it, of course,

because I talked about angels and I talked about Satan, and I talked about the Lamanites being cursed with a dark skin. He was very upset about that because I was bringing up this old racial problem. I thought, "Why should he be offended. I am the Lamanite, not him!"

I got a call from Paul Wellington, and he said, "I have the manuscript for you. Come down to the Herald House." I went there, and instead of calling me into his office, he came down the hall into the lobby and right in front of the secretary he handed me my manuscript and he said, "The Herald House would never, ever print material such as this." I felt numb as he spat the words at me, but I said, "Thank you, Brother Wellington. Thank you very much!" and he was embarrassed. He turned red and the secretary was very upset. When he walked away, she said, "How rude of him. Why didn't he call you into his office and talk to you about this privately? Why did he do it in front of me?" I said, "It's all right." The Lord had told me that the church wasn't going to publish it, so I knew all about it. I was not really concerned although it really hurt to have the truth confirmed.

When I went home Albert was fixing the automobile. He scooted out from underneath the car and said, "What's the good word?" I said, "Oh, they rejected it." He said, "They what?" I said, "Yes, they did." He said, "What are you going to do now?" I said, "I am going into the house." He said, "What are you going to do there?" I said, "I am going to cry." I said, "I am going to cry because now I really know what a very serious situation the church is in that they would reject work on the Book of Mormon."

I took the manuscript to a woman to type set it. She was busy doing political flyers, and didn't get to it. I went to get the manuscript from her because she had it for several weeks and had not done anything. I took it to a printer in Sugar Creek, and when another printer that we had talked to found out that I had taken it there, he called me and said, "I'm not in the habit of speaking against my fellow business men, but you need to not deal with this man because you will have nothing but grief."

We had left the color separations with the printer, but we had not signed a contract with him. We had just talked about the printing. Albert went early the next morning and picked up the color separations for the pictures, and when the man came in after nine o'clock, he was raving mad. It was true what the other printer had said about him. He told us he was going to sue us because he had ordered paper already. Albert said, "You couldn't have ordered the paper because we talked to you at seven o'clock last night and all businesses would have been closed." He ranted and raved, but we were happy that the Lord had blessed us in helping us to know that he was not the man to do the printing.

I prayed about it. We had already gone to the Herald House where a new employee had quoted us a price of \$8.00 per book. I said, "That is too expensive. Families won't be able to afford that. I only want the book to cost three dollars." Disappointed, we left the Herald House. In praying further about it, I was directed to go back to the Herald House. I said, Lord, we have been there already, and it didn't work out." He said, "Go back to the Herald House." And so I did.

This time Jack Ferguson, who was the manager, looked the manuscript over, checked it out and said, "We can print this book for you. How many copies do you want?" I said, "Five thousand." That was really sticking my neck out to print five thousand copies at one time; but I felt confident that was what I should do. He figured it out, and said, "For five thousand copies, we can do it for you for

\$1.78 a book." And, he said, "This is how we will do it for you. it will cost you that much, and we will buy the books for a dollar apiece. Then we will take care of selling your book, shipping it out and we will do everything to promote your book." I thought, "This is wonderful!"

That is what he did! The books sold really fast. We received twenty cents on every book and five cents on each color book. Before the five thousand books were sold, the second book was ready to be published, and the money that came in from the sale of volume one paid for volume two; and that's how it happened all along.

By the way, I want to say that each of the volumes took six weeks to write, and six weeks to go between the printer and me - back and forth. Because I didn't trust them for proof reading, I would read the galleys again myself; and I would find where they had changed words. They had edited my work, and I edited it right back to the way that I had originally written it. One of the ladies there was very disgusted with me, and she said, "That is wrong!" and I said, "I don't care if you say it's wrong. That's the way it says in the Book of Mormon, and that's the way I want it written."

However, when the manuscript for volume 5 of Stories of the Scriptures of Ancient America was completed in 1976, Jack Ferguson, who was still the manager at the Herald House, reluctantly said that he would be unable to print my book. He explained that he had been "spanked" by the first Presidency as being unethical for printing my material. If you will take note, neither the Herald Publishing House nor the Independence Press names appear in the set of five books, or in the first five Book of Mormon Story and Color Books.

Sad and discouraged I returned home, went to the closet and cried to the Lord. I said, "Father, this is the most important book of all. It's about Your Son and His ministry to the people upon this land. And now, Jack says he cannot print it because his position is being threatened because he has printed this work. What shall I do, and where shall I go to have this last book printed?"

The Lord wiped away my tears when these comforting words were spoken. "These stories of the Book of Mormon shall go into all the world, for all the world must learn about the Book of Mormon. " And my heart was made glad. He softened the heart of Jack who soon called and said, "Bring your manuscript in because I am going to print your last book. I do not care whether I am fired for doing this."

The new curriculum that the church had purchased (from the Methodists, I think) was being sent to all of the reunions to see what the response would be like. Duane Couey came to the Herald House and just happened to pick out the invoice for the Montana Reunion, which was the smallest of all. When he discovered that 80 of my books had been sold as compared to \$2.75 worth of the new curriculum, he was angry at Jack and told him not to send any more of my books to reunions unless the book steward requested them. Perhaps it was in 1980 that an edict was issued and I was one of of six authors notified to come and remove all of my materials from the Herald House. Roy Weldon came to my house to inquire if I had received my orders, too. Both of us shed tears of sadness because the church was going astray and it was so hard to believe. He said that he had to get a large truck to haul his books away. I said that I did not need to do that because the Herald House had purchased all of my work and the head marketer had told me that they were the best sellers. So they were stuck with my books for the next couple of years. The Lord blessed us with that, but in the meantime, after writing the first book, the Lord asked me to write the story in color

books for the little children. I did. Each book took ten days to write, and I wrote five of them; and those sold very well also.

About two weeks after I heard the comforting words that my books would go into all the world, I began to doubt. I thought that I just heard those words so I would be glad. The Lord knew that I would be a doubting Thomas, so He sent me some signs. A woman called and said she had translated a color book into Spanish. Another wanted to know if she could translate the color books into Portugese. Another said he would translate all of the books into Dutch, and another into German. It made me a believer! Some of this work is now in India, in Nepal, Nigeria, Kenya, and on his last trip of this summer, John Mundy said he was taking these books into Uganda and Tanzania. With God, all things are possible!

Before my husband's death on December 3, 1998, his desire was to reprint Volume 5, Christ in America, but we lacked the funds. Later 1000 copies were reprinted as a tribute to his memory. In 1999, a benefactor took it upon himself to reprint 1,500 copies of each of the books, 10 in all at that time, at a cost of \$70,000.00. The Lord said that His work would not be frustrated, even though I get frustrated at times!

But, when I got volume six ready, a Ph.D. looked my work over and said, "I don't know how you have gotten away with this, but you really should not have written these books and put in your own words. You should have quoted verbatim from the scriptures. I said, "Well, then, the thing is that you just take the Book of Mormon and give it to the child and say, "Here. Read it."

I took my work and I put it in the file and I left it there for twenty four years! I felt really bad that I had done that, but I felt that I was a failure, and I didn't want to spend any more time writing stories and publishing.

In the year 2000, in December, I locked myself out of my house - well, I locked myself between my hallway and storage room, and I couldn't get in. I was getting pretty cold. My sister was in Hawaii, and I was alone. I tried to break the door down, but I couldn't do it. I think the door must have been solid wood. Finally I walked up the hill to my neighbors, which I hated to do because I didn't have a coat on and it was really cold. Anyway, I got pneumonia out of that, and became quite ill. I knew I was dying. I was at home. I could feel my spirit ebbing away, and I thought, "This is wonderful! I am going to leave this earth!" But I wasn't as fortunate as that. A friend who was an Elder happened to drop by to see how I was doing, and found that I was ill. He administered to me, and during the administration he had an open vision in which he looked down towards my gate and saw the angel of death standing there looking up at my place trying to decide whether he should come and get me. And then this Elder heard a voice saying to the angel of death, "You may not have her because of her strict obedience to my dietary laws." The vision closed, and I got better. I said, "Lord, You caused me to get better. Thank You, but I thought I was ready to go home!" He (God) said, "No. Your work is not finished." And I said, "I know what it is. I know You want me to finish those Color Book Stories from the Book of Mormon. I am willing to do the work, but Lord, I need three things. I need a donor to pay for the publication. And I need a typist and an artist." In two days those three requests were fulfilled; so I knew that the Lord was very serious about wanting me to finish this work.

Volume six came into being, in a few days. Volume twelve was printed in April, 2005. The next one will be about Christ's visit to the Nephites.

I am very thankful that the Lord has blessed me in this work.

At first I didn't understand all of this. Especially, when I was fifteen years old I received my Patriarchal blessing. In it I was told that I had a mother who loved me very dearly and that her greatest desire for me was that I should study the three books of the church because in so doing others would be blessed. As a fifteen year old, I thought, "How can anybody be blessed because I would study the scriptures?"

After the first book was published, Volume 1, Albert said to me, "I will take a picture of you looking at this book?" As I sat there and looked at the book, the Spirit bore witness to me and said, "This is what was meant when you were told in your Patriarchal Blessing that through your study others will be blessed."

Thank You! (Mahalo) Aloha

Our God Does Not Change!

Elder Jon Barney of the Decatur City Restoration branch of the Church of Jesus Christ read a passage from the book of Malachi (Malachi 3:6-7) asking the congregation to, "Listen closely. Herein lies the underlying message of the hour." "For I am the Lord. I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed. Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto me and I will return unto you, saith the Lord of hosts."

Beth Knotts sang, "Jesus, name above all names. Beautiful Savior. Glorious Lord." and Alan Smith, presiding over the meeting, introduced Elder Barney and his wife to the congregation. Jon spoke:

I wouldn't be here this morning if I didn't believe what is written in the book of Malachi, specifically that we understand that God is not changeable. His character is fundamental. It is unchanging, and the logic that implies toward us and our conduct today is far reaching.

Most all of us have seen at some point or other in time - we turn on the TV set and we see the very popular evangelist Billy Graham. Billy Graham has affected thousands and thousands of people in his crusades. Often times his people will go in and do sociological polling to find the people in large cities and areas to come and see the message. Did you ever notice that the message is always kind of short, but very poignant. I think it is really cool that he can make his point quickly. They say in public speaking, if you can't make your point in seven minutes, people are going to start thinking and drifting and concentrating on other things, and you are going to have to do something, move around a little bit or do something to redirect their attention. I believe that's true.

One time Billy Graham went to Shay Stadium. People were packed in there. It is hard for us who live in small communities in Southern Iowa or maybe in Northern Missouri, to imagine a congregation of thirty thousand people coming together in one place. In an experience there, as I heard the story, at the end of his sermon, Billy invites the people who have heard the message to come down - people call it an altar call - have a prayer with Billy and receive some literature. One of the fellows who was in the audience was a well known, notable mobster in the New York area. He came down. He had a prayer with Billy, he put his hands in the air, and it would seem by all onlookers that something really marvelous and

wonderful had taken place in the life of someone who had been a notorious mobster. What this must have been was someone who took part in the trafficking of narcotics; someone who practiced extortion; a person who is ruthless in his business dealings and wouldn't be beyond giving his competition a pair of cement shoes and throwing them in the East River. So, many people were marveling at this to see him come down and accept the Christ apparently in this way. They watched in the days and months that followed and observed that this man was still doing the racketeering. This man was still doing extortion. This man was still trafficking in narcotics; and this man was still giving people cement shoes and throwing them in the river. As the story goes, one brave soul went up to him and said, "We noticed that you were at the Crusade. We noticed that you went down and had a prayer, but it would seem that your conduct has not changed. You are receptive of the fact that obviously what you did might imply that you have accepted Christ." He said, "Oh, yes. But that is my religion. This is my job!" He segregated what he did for a living from who he was with God. I heard this and I thought, "Is my walk of life getting in the way of my spiritual health? Are there things that I am doing causing me to act a certain way, behave a certain way, say certain things." It's hard, isn't it, especially when you are in a demanding situation, to be able to get it done right, in this for the Lord. And still, yet, we know that this all powerful God that we worship does not change and requires something of us; because if He expects us to act thousands of years ago as people, and He is not changing, and His character isn't drifting from one point to the next, can we not infer that He expects the same things of us that He has expected of other people.

Yesterday morning I got up kind of early at our house. We turned on the TV and were watching Public Television. We were kind of waking up in the morning, and they had a telecourse on, and they were talking about sociology. That was what I majored in when I was in college. They were talking about a phenomenon called ethnocentricity. It's a big word, isn't it? What it means is that if you are ethnocentric you really do a poor job of accepting cultural and behavioral differences in other people. You could use that as a kind of a tough word to describe somebody who is narrow minded and not accepting. The thing about it is, though, that you have got to be kind of careful in the discerning of spirits. Accepting everything that comes down the pike may not be acceptable, not consistent with what your Heavenly Father wants you to do.

Consider this for a minute. Let's look at Joshua 24:15. It says, "And if it seems evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose ye this day whom you will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." That's a good message to hear if you have just been confirmed. Make sure this day that you are going to make sure that every day that follows you are going to serve the Lord. You know, In a way, that's a stern warning, isn't it? We are dealing with someone who doesn't change. His expectations of us are undiminished.

We see all kinds of things happening in the world around us that would try to keep us from walking every day in the Spirit in our everyday walk of life; from giving too much time to doing other things to come to prayer service on Wednesday night, too many other things in this world that would keep us from coming to church on Sunday morning, or even walking in the Spirit as you go to work and doing those things in the normal walk of life. There is a conspiracy

in the evil side of this universe to keep people like us - people like you - from taking that time and walking in the Spirit and being in the Spirit as you go through your daily life. The question is, "Which voice are we going to believe? Who are we going to serve?"

Who Are The Rechabites?

I want to ask you - I want to just poll this audience - "How many of you have ever heard of a people called Rechabites. (There was no response.) Nobody has heard of the Rechabites. This is a good day. Oftentimes I find when I come to church, and today is no exception, by the way, that the good Spirit will give a continuum of the message. From the early morning worship, through the class and the eleven o'clock hour, there's a continuum of the message. I find it here today.

The Rechabites are an interesting group of people. They are a covenant people. That is, they are linked to the house of Israel. Their story is written in the book of Jeremiah. Jeremiah chapter 35 tells you a little bit about who these people are. They are a covenant people, and if you want to prove to yourself that they are a covenant people, you can look in a number of places - Amos 6:54-57; 2 King 10:31; Judges 1:16; 1 Chronicles 2:55 and Exodus 3:1. You will see proof positive in those scriptures that these people called the Rechabites are related to Jethro who is the Father-in-law of Moses. They have got another patriarch in their family, and I am not talking about a priesthood office patriarch. I am talking about a father figure in their family who gave them a commandment to do. He told these Rechabite people, "Now folks, I am going to require you and your children and your children's children, to do something that other people are not required to do. Here is what it is. You will not ever build yourselves a house, a permanent structure." That would be tough, wouldn't it? Most of us live in homes. But you know, they lived in the Holy Land, a Mediterranean climate. And he says, "You are not going to try to undertake any kind of permanent agriculture. Instead, you are going to be a nomadic people. You are going to keep flocks, and you are going to live away from society and the civilized life."

You are not going to be able to stay in the big city. First of all, you are not living in a house. And here's the other thing. You can't drink wine. No strong drink for you. These people did this faithfully, and I think it lasted for two hundred years. Think about that. That's fantastic that they would be willing to stay inside this righteous tradition that their forefather, his name is Jonadab, by the way, told them to do. Jonadab said, "OK. Don't build yourself any houses - don't have any permanent structures - and don't drink any wine - strong drink. Stay out of trouble!" And they did. And not only did they do it, but the heads in the households and the families, and all of these people, without failure, practiced these principles in their lives for years and years, after years, and never varied from any principles in these tenets. Unquestioning. Maybe they understood what it meant just exactly, but I think Jonadab, by giving this to them as a requirement and a commandment for his children and their children understood that there would be influences in the big cities that would corrupt them, and if they were involved in the celebrations that went along with that, they also would be corrupted. But every time God gives a commandment there is also a powerful blessing that will bless them if they are consistent in walking in obedience to the commandment.

So we are going to find out what that wonderful blessing is to the Rechabite people. It says in the scripture, "The word which came unto Jeremiah from the Lord, in the days of Jehoiakim, the son of Josiah king of Judah, saying, Go unto the house of the Rechabites,

and speak unto them, and bring them into the house of the Lord, into one of the chambers, and give them wine to drink.” It talks about some of the names of some of the male heads of households and their brethren and all their older sons and says, “Bring the whole house of Rechabites.”

Now, just hold on a minute! Who was it who called them into the temple into one of the chambers to have a drink of wine? Jeremiah was the one who called them in. Who is Jeremiah? Jeremiah, we talk about him in a high school court room phrase today - you know the term geremandering. It comes from the name of the prophet Jeremiah. He’s the prophet. He is a base guy. He doesn’t ride around in a new Oldsmobile. He doesn’t prophesy every two years on the first or second week of April. He is a base character and he is very strict and he is very stern in what goes on. And the Lord has told him to go down there and put the Rechabites to task. And so he does. He goes out there and calls the guys into the temple, and he goes down and gets these people and brings them all into the temple and sets them down in the chamber and sets them down and puts cups in front of them, pours wine into the cups and says, “Now you drink.”

Now folks, you have got to consider the context that these people are in. They have been faithfully keeping this tradition, this commandment, and they have been doing it right for many, many years. Now, who called them in? The prophet called them in! Where did he call them to go? He called them to go into the temple - into the house of the Lord, didn’t he? And he asked them to do something that probably was culturally accepted in that time. He tells them to drink wine.

Now folks, if God is unchanging and He would ask such a thing of the Rechabites, would He not ask something consistent with that in your eyes? Let me ask you, how many of you, if you were summoned by the prophet today to go to the temple and told to sit down and to do something you had been told not to do, what then? Would you do it?

I will tell you what happened to the Rechabites. When they came in, they didn’t waste a minute. They stood up, and they told that guy, “We are not going to do it! We have been told that this is the wrong thing to do concerning us, and we are not going to waste any time letting you know that it is not going to happen.” Moreover they said this (Jeremiah 35:14-15): “The words of Jonadab the son of Rechab, that he commanded his sons not to drink wine, are performed; for unto this day they drink none, but obey their father’s commandment; notwithstanding I have spoken unto you, commanding you to rise early, and speaking to you, but ye hearkened not unto me. I have sent also unto you all my servants the prophets, commanding them to rise up early, and sending them, saying, Return ye now every man from his evil way, and amend your doings, and go not after other gods to serve them, and ye shall dwell in the land which I have given to you and to your fathers;” (Folks, this promise is no different for you in the United States by way of the Book of Mormon than it was to the Rechabites in the Holy Land. (Jeremiah 35:15.) “But ye have not inclined your ear, nor have ye hearkened unto me. (Jeremiah 35:16-17). “Because the sons of Jonadab the son of Rechab have performed the commandment of their father, which he commanded them; but this people hath not hearkened unto me;”(He is speaking to Israel.) “Therefore thus saith the Lord God of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold I will bring upon Judah and upon all the inhabitants of Jerusaem all the evil that I have pronounced against them; because I have spoken unto them, but they have not heard; and I have called unto them, but they have

not answered. (Jeremiah 35:16-19). “And Jeremiah said unto the house of the Rechabites, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; Because ye have obeyed the commandment of Jonadab your father, and kept all his precepts, and done according unto all that he hath commanded you; Therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not want a man to stand before me forever.”

Now, the interesting thing about it is that God did just exactly what He said He was going to do to the house of Israel. He brought them into captivity. I would submit to you that it was more than just not keeping the seventh year fallow that put them into captivity. There are at least two reasons that they went there. And there are at least two times that they went there. Intrestingly enough, these people are blessed because they kept the commansment of the Lord. They continue to keep it, by the way and when Babylon comes to Israel to lead them away captive ----- . We see it today, don’t we? We see it in Iraq. Where do soldiers go? They go to populated areas and take them out first. And the Babylonians came to Jerusalem and took it out! They came to the other cities and towns and took them out! They spoiled their wealth. They took their flocks, and hauled them back to Babylon. And when the Assyrians came, the space of time between Babylon and the Assyrian overthrow, you know, hundreds of years are passing and these people are still keeping the word. They are out there living in nomadic places, living in tents made out of black goats hair. They don’t have anything that anybody wants, but their spiritual condition is good, isn’t it? They don’t have to want for anything. They have their needs met. Babylon wasn’t interested in them. Asyria wasn’t interested in them, and guess what. They occupied the promised land throughout all those different periods of time. While others were slaves in Babylon, these people were living in the promised land. They weren’t swept off of it. These people had the nerve to stand up for the right thing in a moment of pressure. Not only that, but they were consistent with what they were able to do for a period of many many years; and they were blessed and blessed again because they were able to abide in that commandment.

You know, when I think about it, we see all kinds of different trends. Wake up just a minute here and think about the changes that are happening in the world right around you. I was watching Public Television and they said, “We don’t think rodeo is going to be able to exist in its present form.” It’s interesting that they picked on something like that. They said, “We think that the effects of modern life on rodeo are going to reduce the rodeo down to some kind of a situation where it’s going to be kind of like stock car racing. Everybody is going to have a bunch of emblems on their cars that this is their sponsor and this is their sponsor, and they are going to come together in a big corporate arena, and the kind of rural life that brings about the rodeo is going to vanish from the face of the earth. That’s what they think the modern trend is.

You could say the same thing. If you think country music doesn’t sound like the banjo picking of Ernest Tubb. Or maybe you are not hearing that bluegrass sound like Ricky Skags is turning out, or maybe you would appreciate something else, and you might say, “Country music isn’t the same as it used to be.” And truly it is not the same as it used to be unless you listen to Ricky Staggs. So all of these trends are taking place. Does it matter what happens to rodeo in the stroke of righteousness? I don’t know. What happens to country music? Is it getting any more righteous? Probably not. I don’t know. Some of it is good. A lot of it isn’t. Good and bad. I am just talking about social trends, you know.

Trends Of Which To Be Aware

There was a social trend back in the Book of Mormon. And history repeats itself. Just like that clock on the wall, pretty soon it is going to be dead up twelve o'clock. It happens all of the time. Society is like that, too. History repeats itself unless we can get bright enough to learn how to cope with affluence without corrupting ourselves. And the only way we can do that is to walk in the Spirit. We have to evaluate ourselves and walk in that Spirit or we are never going to have Zion. It is not going to happen. You can't build it. You can establish the cause of it, but you are not going to establish the cause of it unless you are able to walk in the Spirit daily. And if you want to walk in the Spirit daily, you have to keep the commandments. When you take the Sacrament - remember that from last week - what do you have to do? The promise is in the Sacrament prayers, that you will always have His Spirit to be with you. And if you want those things, you have to take upon you the name of Christ and keep His commandments. Pretty simple, isn't it? Do you want the Spirit, or do you want to be like so many others out in the world where the Lord doesn't always strive with man? But you can have it every day and every minute. Why? Because you are keeping the commandments, walking in the Spirit every day.

Consider this. (You nudge the people next to you. Kind of wake them up. I have lost three or four of you already. Eyes are shut out there. Wake them up.) How many of you have ever heard about a group of people called Zoramites of the Book of Mormon? These people got caught up in a social trend, and it wasn't such a good thing. Let me tell you about the Zoramites. (Alma 16:88-94) "Now when they had come into the land, behold, to their astonishment, they found that the Zoramites had built synagogues, and that they did gather themselves together on one day of the week, which day they did call the day of the Lord; And they did worship after a manner which Alma and his brethren had never beheld; for they had a place built up in the center of their synagogue, a place for standing, which was high above the head; and the top thereof would only admit one person.

"Therefore, whosoever desired to worship, must go forth and stand upon the top thereof, and stretch forth his hands towards heaven; and cry with a loud voice, saying: Holy, holy, God; we believe that thou art God, and we believe that thou art holy, and that thou wast a spirit, and that thou art a spirit, and that thou wilt be a spirit for ever.

"Holy God, we believe that thou hast separated us from our brethren; and we do not believe in the tradition of our brethren, which was handed down to them by the childishness of their fathers; but we believe that thou hast elected us to be thy holy children;" (Isn't that marvelous that God picked them out to do that?) "And also thou hast made it known unto us that there shall be no Christ; but thou art the same, yesterday, to-day, and for ever; and thou hast elected us, that we shall be saved, whilst all around us are elected to be cast by thy wrath down to hell; for the which holiness, O God, we thank thee; And we also thank thee, that thou hast elected us, that we may not be led away after the foolish traditions of our brethren, which doth bind them down to a belief of Christ, which doth lead their hearts to wander far from thee, our God."

That's rubbish. That's garbage! That's an Anti-Christ sermon if you ever heard one. But, you know, you don't have to go very far to hear that same message in other words today, do you? It is out there, and you don't have to go very far to find it.

The thing about it is - I was watching TV. I guess I watch a lot of TV. I was watching this show called "House, M.D". There was

a man in there suffering and he wasn't wanting to tell the truth about what was the matter with him. Something had bitten him on the leg, and he told the doctor that he had been bitten by a snake. He didn't want to tell the doctor the truth, that he had really been bitten by his pet dog. This man was in trouble. He was dying. You see, when you are bitten by a snake, your doctor calls up that poison control center on the hot line number. In this case Dr. House said he had a patient who says he has been bitten by a timber rattler out on his farm, and asked, "I want you to tell me what antivenom I should administer so this man can live." They get the antivenom, stick it in his arm, and he has an antiphylactic reaction to it. He codes. His heart stops. They have to get the paddles and the AMBU bag out and they have to restart it. They are still thinking that this problem comes from a snake bite! Finally the man realizes he is going to die and asks, "What is going to happen to my dog?" They test the dog and find his mouth filled with virulent bacterias, treat for the bacteria and the man lives.

In Second Nephi 12:10-11 we read that the devil will say to the people, "Don't fear the devil, for I am none!" right? You don't have to worry about him. He doesn't exist! And he cheats their hearts and turns them away with his eternal chains as he laughs in his dark state, right? Yeah! And he would lead us to think that we could lie a little, cheat a little, dig a pit for our neighbor. It matters not. At the last day, the day of judgment, the Lord will beat us with a few stripes and we will put on the white garments and walk into Celestial glory and all be saved! It is not true! Some of the falacy is that we believe because of this situation that we are in of agency, we can choose whether it is right or whether it is wrong, and our chances are fifty fifty. Right, because we have got a little gremlin over here and we've got a little angel over here saying, "Don't you do it. that's a bad thing!" But the gremlin says, "Aw, go ahead and do it. You like it!" You remember those little eyes we used to watch with Warner Brothers, this conflict. We think the odds are fifty fifty and if we listen to the right side, we will be OK. But folks, it is not that way! It's not that way! It is like the sick man that Dr. House is trying to treat. He is dying. For the very least he is going to lose his leg, they are thinking for awhile. How many odds are there that they could get the right thing into this man and save his life. The odds are not fifty fifty! There is only one chance that this patient had to survive, and that was the truth - the right application for what he needed. And finally the man who is thinking he is going to die - Dr. House comes in and says, "You are going to die. You are dying now!" He says, "What will happen to my dog?" He knew if he said something about the dog there is a high risk that the dog is at least going to be quarantined and maybe put down permanently, and he loved his dog. He loved his dog enough that he really was not wanting to own up to the fact that this dog had a really terrible bacillus in his mouth - a flesh eating bacteria that was causing this man to die. Once they sent a couple of his underlings out there to swab the mouth of the vicious dog and found out what kind of bacteria was in there, they could treat the patient. And they saved his life, didn't they? They saved his life, but they had to know what the cause was. He didn't have a fifty fifty chance of making it. He had only one alternative to making it.

You in the adult class have been put to task. Your question for next week is, "How many roads in this gospel message lead to Christ?" I could answer it for you. You get out that book of Malachi, and moreover, Ricky, if you have got the original quote that the angel gives to Joseph Smith, you read it that way. To answer the question for you, because it is going to turn the hearts to the

promises that were made to the children. That tells you one thing, doesn't it? It doesn't matter where you live in the past, in the present, or in the future. They're all connected, and what is in the center of it is Jesus. Isn't it? We can't escape it.

Salvation Comes Only Through Jesus, The Spirit of Truth

When we consider the point of our salvation, you can't work out the terms of your salvation with the devil! There is only one name which is going to get you in at the door, and it is not a fifty fifty proposition. It comes by Christ Jesus. The things that come naturally in the scope of our human existence are not enough to get us there. There comes a point where we really have to depart from what the rest of people and other voices in this world are telling us, and be consistent with that thing - what is right, what is truth before almighty God. If you open up your Doctrine and Covenants it will tell you that truth isn't manufactured. It isn't created and turned out in a machine. It exists independently in a sphere by itself, and you cannot bury it!

Let me give you an example of how truth is like my grandma's first attempt at baking bread in Oklahoma. My Grandma got married when she was sixteen, and she thought that she would impress my grandfather - just like chocolate cake - by going out and making some of the most useable bread you have ever seen. So she got out the recipe and she got the oven all preheated, and she thought, "I'll put in this amount of flour, and I want to make sure it rises, because I really don't want unleavened bread. So I will just add a little extra yeast." It was probably by culture back in the day that this happened, so she put in a bunch of it! She lived in Oklahoma. It gets hot down there in Oklahoma, and you know what? It's like adding too many suds to your laundry machine. This stuff began to grow, and it began to grow, and it began to grow, and she punched it down and it started growing, and it started growing. And it got worse and worse, and she said, "I am just going to have to give up on this project, because this stuff isn't going to behave long enough for me to get it baked in the oven." So she went out to the chicken coop and she dug a hole in the chicken coop. It's hot in a chicken coop in Oklahoma. She buried this batch and covered it up with that red Oklahoma dirt. My grandfather came through on his way back from the field, and he noticed that the chickens were into all this dough, because chickens can't leave anything alone in their coop. But, you know what? That bread dough is like the truth, isn't it? You can't hide it! It's coming up. It's going to manifest itself in your life!

And so it goes with the Holy Spirit. I am going to divide this thing, too. The Holy Spirit calls us in an omnipresent way, but the Holy Ghost is a specific gift to you. It is a gift! It is His good pleasure to give it to you! And you know what? If you can walk in that Spirit, you will never be deceived. You will always know the truth because the Holy Ghost leads those who have received it always to the truth. It is the Spirit of truth where it takes you. If we can learn to walk in the Spirit daily, we will never be deceived. We will be the people that maybe get to participate in the statement, "The cause of Zion - the catalyst of Zion".

God Wants You to Talk To Him!

High Priest Sherman Phipps began his sermon by reading a scripture which he said he felt was important for us to hear. The

reading was from the book of Ether 1:28-35. It is talking about the people the Lord was leading away from the great tower. Brother Phipps read, "And it came to pass that they did travel in the wilderness, and did build barges, in which they did cross many waters, being directed continually by the hand of the Lord. And the Lord would not suffer that they should stop beyond the sea in the wilderness, but he would that they should come forth even unto the land of promise, which was choice above all other lands, which the Lord God had preserved for a righteous people; And he had sworn in his wrath unto the Brother of Jared, that whoso should possess this land of promise, from that time henceforth and forever, should serve him, the true and only God, or they should be swept off when the fullness of his wrath should come upon them.

"And now we can behold the decrees of God concerning this land, that it is a land of promise, and whatsoever nation shall possess it, shall serve God, or they shall be swept off when the fullness of his wrath shall come upon them. And the fullness of his wrath cometh upon them when they are ripened in iniquity; for behold, this is a land which is choice above all other lands; wherefore he that doth possess it shall serve God, or shall be swept off; for it is the everlasting decree of God. And it is not until the fullness of iniquity among the children of the land, that they are swept off. And this cometh unto you, O ye Gentiles, that ye may know the decrees of God, that ye may repent, and not continue in your iniquities until the fullness come, that ye may not bring down the fullness of the wrath of God upon you, as the inhabitants of the land have hitherto done. "Behold, this is a choice land, and whatsoever nation shall possess it, shall be free from bondage, and from captivity, and from all other nations under heaven, if they will but serve the God of the land, who is Jesus Christ ."

I think everybody who was here for the last service really appreciated Sister Gregson's testimony. (Louise Gregson had spoken during the church school hour. Her testimony is found in another part of this Newsletter.) It encouraged me because the message that I felt I was supposed to share with you this morning was underscored by that testimony.

Please, Talk To Me!

As I stand here this morning, I had something that was shared with me about a month and a half ago, and I have been waiting for the opportunity to pass this along. I don't know if you have ever had your spouse say to you, or have said to your spouse - you see that something is struggling them but you don't know what it is; so you say, "Talk to me! We need to talk!" Have you had that experience, maybe one or two of you? Or maybe it has been with the children. You have watched your children and they are struggling with things. If they are young, you put your hand down and maybe get them by the chin gently - not one of those times when you are angry - but gently and say, "Talk to me! Please, talk to me!" Or maybe it's with a friend. You watch them and you know that they are struggling with something. you go to them and say, "Talk to me! Please, talk to me. We need to talk!"

That's what I think the Lord wants to say to you this morning. He wants us to talk to Him. And I thought it was really interesting in the testimony this morning that she basically said to the Lord, "I need to talk to You. I will be in a certain place at a certain time." That's the kind of faith that will allow you to speak to the Lord, and He wants us to talk to Him!

I think it is very interesting when you look at the scriptures how this has come up in other situation and other times. I want to make reference to a couple of them to just give us an idea of how real this

thing is. I don't know about anybody else. I am just kind of talking about myself. I feel like I talk to the Lord some. I pray - that sort of thing - but this needs to be more. He really wants us to talk to Him. I was looking through the scriptures trying to find people who had really talked to Him, and there are a number of examples. I won't go into each of the stories. You already know them.

I thought it was interesting with Moses. You know Moses was walking along. He saw the burning bush, only it wasn't being consumed. And there is a little thing I don't know if I had noticed before. It says, when he saw it he stopped and turned aside. I don't remember reading that before. It says he stopped and turned aside and looked at it. It is my impression that it is partly because he took time to stop and notice what was going on. He turned aside to see what was going on. It was partly because of that that the Lord worked with him like He did. Because Moses was attracted when he saw that there was something unusual here, and I think he recognized that this had to be by the power of God. When he recognized that it had to be from God, instead of saying "Hummm! That's interesting!" and walking on about his business, he was willing to stop and take time to visit with the Lord and to hear what the Lord had to say to him as well.

We have the story of the Brother of Jared. The scripture says he bowed down before the Lord and spake before the Lord. When he took time to do this, the Lord talked to him and he recorded it, saying that God talked to him even as a man "talketh one with another face to face". I don't want to get too scattered here this morning, but I thought it was interesting when I went back and read that story, too, when he took time to speak to the Lord, and then to listen to what the Lord had to say to him, eventually, at some point, remember that the Lord said something to the effect that never has man had such faith as you? If I remember right, that came after the Brother of Jared saw the finger of God and saw that it was flesh and blood, and God knew that he had seen it and acknowledged his faith. But the thing I thought was interesting about that was after the Brother of Jared recognized that God had a flesh and blood body, God had a discussion with him about that. It was not a long discussion, but He had a discussion about that. After he recognized that God had this flesh and blood body, God went ahead and talked to him about how He had created all things spiritually first and that eventually He would take upon Himself flesh and blood and come to the earth in the form of His Son, Jesus Christ. Then he told the Brother of Jared more. "And the Lord saw that the Brother of Jared had fallen to the earth; and the Lord said unto him, Arise, why hast thou fallen? And he saith unto the Lord, I saw the finger of the Lord, and I feared lest he should smite me; for I knew not that the Lord had flesh and blood. And the Lord said unto him, Because of thy faith thou hast seen that I shall take upon me flesh and blood; and never has man come before me with such exceeding faith as thou hast; for were it not so, ye could not have seen my finger. Sawest thou more than this?"

"And he answered, Nay, Lord, shew thyself unto me. And the Lord said unto him, Believest thou the words which I shall speak? And he answered, Yea, Lord, I know that thou speakest the truth, for thou art a God of truth, and canst not lie. And when he had said these words, behold the Lord shewed himself unto him, and said, Because thou knowest these things, ye are redeemed from the fall; therefore ye are brought back into my presence; therefore I shew myself unto you."

I recognize that just as God was able to show Himself to the Brother of Jared in a flesh and blood form before He took upon

Himself flesh and blood and came to the earth in the form of His Son, Jesus Christ, so also we have an existence that transcends this thing we call life here. Even though we lay this physical form, this body down, we still have a unique, individual form that comes into the presence of God. When we end this probationary state and do what we call die - which is a kind of a misleading term, I think - but when that happens to us we don't become some nebulous thing. We continue. We still have that flesh and blood form just as Christ did. Then He went ahead and told the Brother of Jared, "Behold this body, which ye now behold, is the body of my spirit; and man have I created after the body of my spirit; and even as I appear unto thee to be in the spirit, will I appear unto my people in the flesh." So also, when we leave this life, we shall come back and stand before Him in the spirit, but that spirit is not in another form. We will still have our form. We will still be the individuals that He created us to be even after we have been reunited with Him.

A Special Message About Death

I didn't really want to get off on that this morning, but maybe while I am talking about that it is a good time to speak of something else I wanted to be sure that I shared with you this morning; and then I will try to get back to where I was.

I think most of the people here probably know my mother. She is coming to the end of her probationary state and will soon have the opportunity to return into the presence of Christ and His Father. She and I talked about that a couple of weeks ago. One of the things she wanted me to be sure and tell everybody - I think she wants me to do this at her funeral, but I don't know if I can - one of the things she wanted me to be sure and share with everybody is, what a blessing death is. We talked about the story of creation and how God created all of these things and gave them to man for his use. Two of the trees that were in the garden were, of course, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and the other the tree of eternal life. After man sinned and partook of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, which, by the way, the Lord had told him, "Don't do this, but I am giving you your agency. It's up to you whether you do it or not."

After he had done that, the thing that God did in response to that was to put up, was it an angel or angels, cherubim, so that man could not partake of the tree of eternal life. He did that as a gift to man so that man would not have to live forever. As a result, I think it is fair to say, that death in physical form is a great blessing. And my mother believes that, and she wanted me to be sure and share that with other people. This thing we call death is a great, great gift! It is the thing that allows us to come back into the presence of our Creator.

God Talks to Those Who talk to Him

I got a little distracted from what I started to share with you, and maybe I don't need to say anymore about what I started to say. Maybe you just needed to hear that God wants you to speak to Him. There are examples of that through the scriptures. Maybe you can go read those for yourself, and maybe I don't need to go through those this morning. I do think that it's interesting that when people really take time to talk to the Lord, they have these very personal experiences. I mean, the Lord really shares with them. He does talk to us. It isn't just some theoretical thing.

One of the things I really like about the Brother of Jared and the story we have about him is the way that conversation progressed. Sometimes I think I am inclined to pray about something and then kind of just quit because I'm thinking, "The Lord already knows all about that. He doesn't need me to talk to Him about it. He already knows what the solutions are, and He has already prepared a way

Sermon Missing

On September 25, while the congregation was split, with part of us in the South Iowa Retreat at Jerico Hills, and the rest at worship on Mount Ayr, Elder Alan Smith preached to those remaining in Mount Ayr.

He opened his sermon with Doctrine and Covenants 90:6b-6d: "Every spirit of man was innocent in the beginning, and God having redeemed man from the fall, men became again in their infant state, innocent before God. And that wicked one cometh and taketh away light and truth, through disobedience, from the children of men, and because of the tradition of their fathers. But I have commanded you to bring up your children in light and truth,"

Then the tape failed. Even the small wisp of the song that Sue Beck sang so beautifully, which was on the tape at first, disappeared before it could be transcribed. Since your reporter was at the retreat, there was no one in Mount Ayr taking notes to report the service. Sorry about that! We have ordered better quality tapes!

for these things to be dealt with. I'm kind of wasting His time. But friendly. They kind of pushed him, but before it could escalate, we had already gotten to the alley. I stopped and got out of the car. (I don't think Cheryl wanted me to get out of the car, if I remember correctly.). I got out and walked across the street and confronted these people. And, long story short, I basically kind of told them to cool it and told this young man who had been walking down the street to get going; and he did. They stood there and looked at me and nobody really said much. Then I turned around and started to go back across the street to get into my car, and there was a bunch of them on the other side of the street who had come out of the other side of the alley. I don't remember now how many, but there were a number of them, and I realized, "I am in the middle of two groups of people who are obviously here for unfriendly reasons, and I could be in trouble. But I felt like I had done the right thing by stopping, and I really wasn't that concerned about it, I guess because the Lord has always been really good to me. I just looked at them, walked across the street, got back into my car and left. And I don't know that this is true, but I was thinking about that experience the other night and I was very impressed with the idea that when I walked out there that night and turned around and came back, I did not go alone. And there have been times in my life that I thought it would be really neat to have the opportunity to meet and visit with some of those who have gone before that we have a record of in the scriptures - Moroni, Alma, Lehi, Nephi, but I have never physically visually done that. But I was very impressed with the fact that they have accompanied me on a lot of different occasions.

And just as they have done that, at the Lord's direction, they will be there for you. If you will speak to Him and listen to what He has to say in return - if you will go forth for Him, He will provide you with everything you need whether it is accompaniment of other persons - other ministers. No matter what you need, He is the one who is going to provide it. It is His work. He is going to do it. He is going to accomplish it.

I read the scripture when I first started about this being a choice land, it is, but pretty much we have rejected God. (I don't mean you people sitting here.) And so there are things coming that will require of us assistance far beyond what we have of our own. When it gets there, if you will look to the Lord and be faithful unto the Lord, He will fulfill every promise that He has made through His prophets throughout the ages. You will see that, and you will have an opportunity to be a part of that.

Ron Smith, in charge of the service, asked, "Did you hear the word of the Lord just now? May God bless you all. Let's sing, "Jesus Calls Us" and listen for His call".

Testimony

On Wednesday evening prayer service October 31, 2005, Norman Nelson bore a testimony from his Nigerian experience that George Knotts, who was in charge of the service, asked to be written down. It follows:

Norman and Bill Barrett were in Nigeria. An evangelist asked Norman why Christ sinned in Gesthemane. Norman said, "He did not!" but beyond that he had not a clue. But the Lord said, "You thought I sweat blood because I was afraid to die. You are wrong. It was the pain I knew I would experience when I was separated from My Father in order to take on Me all of your sins that caused Me to sweat blood from every pore!"

CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST
Mount Ayr Restoration Branch
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News and Notes

Baptismal Service Held

Gable Galusha was baptized September 10 at the Galusha farm southwest of Lamoni. Gable's grandfather, Elder Vernon Kent, conducted the service and his Great Uncle, Elder Wayne Kent, baptized him. The congregation gathered at the Galusha home for a pot luck dinner following the service. See details in the report of services.

Officers for 2005-2006 Chosen

The annual election of officers was held at the Mt. Ayr church on Wednesday evening, September 7. H. Alan Smith was elected Pastor for the coming year. He will bring his proposal for counselors before the congregation for approval at a later date.

Other officers include Coordinators for: Caring - Diane Anderson; Christian Education - Barbra Jordison; Evangelism - Michael Jordison; Fellowship - Di Smith; Stewardship - Gerald Bolingbroke; Worship - Pat Bolingbroke; Worship Center - Sue Beck; Junior/Senior High Youth Ministries - Gordon and Linda Winkler; Junior and ages under Youth Ministries - Valle Smith; Facilities - Tim Mitchell.

Congregational Secretary - Cathy Akers; Recorder - Harold and Cathy Akers; Historian - Mildred Smith; Newsletter Editor - Alan Smith; Building Committee - Gordon Winkler, Jim Barber, Cheryl Phipps, Jan Jordison, Rob Rolfe; Women's Leader - Cathy Nelson.

The treasurer's report was read, but all business related to the budget will be held in December since the budget year runs from January to December.

Outgoing Pastor Honored

The 11 a.m. service of September 18, 2005 opened with the presentation of a plaque honoring our outgoing Pastor, Robert Rolfe, for eight years of faithful service. Seventy George Knotts, a

well known artist, created the bronze Lion and Lamb sculpture mounted on a walnut plaque. The inscription, engraved on metal by Jim Johnson, reads, "In appreciation to Robert Rolfe for his faithful leadership Of the Church of Jesus Christ, Mount Ayr Restoration Branch." The piece is made so it can be set on a desk or hung on a wall. Seventy Ronald Smith, in charge of the service, made the presentation.

Brother Rolfe accepted the plaque and stated briefly that the church operates with volunteers. "The church works only as well as the volunteers who serve, and we need more volunteers." He spoke of the current need for more help in the church school and commented that many fail to volunteer because they do not feel they can do the work well. He assured us, "You can do it, but you cannot do it by yourself." And he closed with the admonition, "Keep the faith! The Lord will be here soon!"

Church School Director Offers Challenge

Following the testimony of Louise Gregson concerning her assignment by the Lord, Barbra Jordison, who had planned the combined class meeting in which it was given, challenged the congregation: "Is there a work that the Lord has placed upon your heart? Do you have time? Do you have talents?" She spoke of a recent conversation with Eric Odida of Kenya and learned of the disappointment of the African Saints when they see how many educational and other resources we have and compare them with the meager resources with which they struggle.

She said, "We have got a lot, as Louise just demonstrated - things that are just a prayer or two away - that the Lord wants to bless us with so that we can give back to others." She asked us to look deep within ourselves to see what time we have that can be freed up and what gifts and blessings the Lord has given us that we can use to bless others and allow them to be a blessing to us.