

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

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The Choice on the Cross

The scriptures tell us that Jesus was crucified between two thieves. That's the way he entered into his kingdom.

One wonders if James' mother remembered this when she asked that her sons James and John be on Jesus' right hand and left hand when he entered into his kingdom. Jesus asked them if they could drink the bitter cup he would drink and they chimed right in "yes." They didn't know what they were asking, but Jesus said they truly would later.

One of the thieves joined the people gathered around the cross who were mocking Jesus. Everyone else was doing it and it seemed the thing to do.

The other thief rebuked the first, however, and with him the other people mocking, and recognized that Jesus was the Christ. "We are receiving the reward for our deeds, but this man is just and hasn't sinned," he told the other thief.

One wonders how the second thief came to know Jesus. Surely it wasn't just from the time on the cross. Somewhere he must have encountered Jesus to recognize him as the Son of God. Whatever the story, he came repentant to Jesus.

Then he asked him "Lord, remember me when you come into your Kingdom."

We remember Jesus' response: "Verily I say unto thee, today shalt thou be with me in Paradise."

What will our response to Christ this Easter season? Will we decide that Jesus is not who he says he is and mock him with our choices? Or will we recognize who he is, our own sin, and ask to become part of his kingdom? The choice is ours.

TESTIMONIES AND SERMON NOTES

Secrets

After greeting the congregation and thanking them for their support during the many Sundays he and Valle had been away because of Valle's father's illness and death, Elder Alan Smith introduced his subject for this Communion service.

"Today, I would like to talk a little bit about secrets. We live in a world where we are told over and over that what we do in secret doesn't matter. Sometimes we begin to believe it. We hide things from others and even, sometimes, try to hide them from ourselves. "It's not that bad!" we tell ourselves trying to rationalize away some of the things that we do that we know we shouldn't do.

What got me thinking about this is a series of commercials on television, Maybe you don't watch television enough to see them, but there are some commercials out there for the city of Las Vegas. The tag line is, "What happens here, stays here". One of the commercials shows people going around giving their names to each other. It's kind of cute. You know they are saying, "My name is Fred Flintstone" and "My name is Lucy" substituting names off television shows and movies for their own so no one would really know who they are. Then what they do there won't ever be reflecting back on the person who it really is. We can be somebody else, and it will stay a secret. We can do something and no one will know, so there won't be any consequences.

We live in a world where people are more worried about the consequences of being caught than about committing a sin. We don't worry that we may be doing something against the commandments of God. We are more worried about getting caught. If we can delude ourselves that we are doing it in secret, we think that we can somehow elude the consequences. But the scriptures tell us that, "Wickedness never was happiness." (Alma 19:74). Somehow we want to believe that was written for someone else and not for us.

Over and over on the television we see the lives of celebrities who are spinning out of control with every miscue trumpeted from the housetops as they make the self destructive choices that bring ruin to many lives. It becomes very public, that they don't seem to notice.

At this Communion service today, I want us to remember that we have no secrets from our Heavenly Father. We recognize that He knows everything that we think and do. It is better for us to come clean to Him so He can make us clean

indeed instead of trying to hide our sins somewhere down in the depths of our hearts in a corner in which we don't want to allow His light to shine. When we come repentant for the things that we have done, we are sorry for our sins. If we wait until we are caught, we can slip into the problems of just being unhappy that we are caught.

Have you had a relationship with someone else where you have done something that you know would be hurtful to them and then tried to hide it? When that person eventually finds out what happened, would it have been harder for them for you to come to them and tell them right up and say you are sorry? Or is it harder for you to compound the hurt with losing trust because you tried to hide it because you knew that it was wrong? We can't hide things from our Heavenly Father, but we continually try to delude ourselves that we can.

I remember the story of my good friend Arvid Huisman, from the Iowa Newspaper Foundation. He used to be the publisher at Creston newspaper years ago now. He stands about six foot eight, so you can't miss him in crowd. He and his wife were in New York City one time on a trip. They were down in Times Square before Times Square was cleaned up. There were all these triple X rated movie houses. Of course, this was back at a time when all that stuff didn't come into our houses on cable and the internet, so maybe the story is a little different then. But Arvid and his wife thought for a moment, "We have never seen one of these movies. What would it be like? Maybe we should just slip in and see one."

So they are standing out in the street in front of one of the houses trying to decide if they really should go in and someone yells, "Arvid. Is that you?" Here was friend from Sioux City, where they lived at the time, who just happened to be in New York City and just happened to walk down that street and just happened to be right there at that moment. And Arvid said, "Hmm!" They didn't go to see the triple X movie to say the least, because they would be embarrassed if it was known that they did. But when they didn't think anyone would know, they thought maybe they should try it!

The problem is that even though someone we know may not be watching us, someone is watching and sees our actions. We don't function in a void. And the things that we do and the things that we say and the ways that we act are a testimony to someone whether we know it or not. Most importantly, we know what we are doing, and this choice registers in our memory - in our souls.

No Secrets From God

The scriptures are pretty plain that we can't keep a secret from our Heavenly Father. David says in Psalm 45: 21, "Shall not God search this out? for he knoweth the secrets of the heart." Not just the secrets of our actions, He knows the secrets of our hearts.

And David says in Psalm 90:8 "Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance." The light of His countenance can see even our secrets - the ones that we want to hide.

Another illustration, I guess, of this power of God being able to see and know the things that we do and say is the story of Daniel and King Nebuchadnezzar. Remember that story? Nebuchadnezzar, the king, had a dream but he couldn't remember it. He wanted the people to come to tell him what he dreamed and what it meant. All of the people who came wanted him to tell them what he had dreamed and then they would tell him what it meant. All of his soothsayers, all of his wise men and everybody in his kingdom were having a real problem because they couldn't know what he had dreamed to begin with, so how could they tell him what it all meant?

Daniel was called before him, and Daniel told Nebuchadnezzar, (Daniel 2:28) "There is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days." Daniel shared the reason that God was revealing the dream and interpretation to him. It was not because he was something special but because the Lord wanted the people of the future to know what King Nebuchadnezzar's dream was about; and also the king could know that God knew the thoughts of his heart, the scriptures tell us. And after Daniel shared the dream and its interpretation. King Nebuchadnezzar said, (Daniel 2::47) "Of a truth it is, that your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, seeing thou couldst reveal this secret."

When Jesus was ministering here on earth, as recorded in Mark, he talked about the parable of putting a candle under a bushel, and said, "There is nothing hid which shall not be manifested, neither was anything kept secret but that it should in due time come abroad. If any man have ears, let him hear." (Mark 4:19). There is nothing kept secret that will not in due time come abroad or be made known.

Or Paul in Romans 2:16 tells us, God will "judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to the gospel."

Nephi picked up on the same thought when he was talking about all nations being known. He said, (2 Nephi 12:97-99) "There is nothing which is secret, save it shall be revealed; there is no work of darkness, save it shall be made manifest in the light; and there is nothing which is sealed upon the earth, save it shall be loosed. Wherefore, all things which have been revealed unto the children of men, shall at that day be revealed; And Satan shall have power over the hearts of the children of men no more, for a long time."

Secrets and Satan

Did you catch that about Satan? When all the secrets are revealed -- when we put our secrets behind us, he doesn't have any power. When we don't think we are keeping secrets -- when we know everything is out in the open, then Satan doesn't have any power over us! We can see right through his lies. We know it is a lie when he says, "It's okay. No one will know!"

You know about the story of Cain and Abel - what happened there. In the Book of Mormon, Helaman is talking about the Gadianton robbers who were a secret society that had secret oaths and did all these things in secret. And he said that they were taught that by Satan, who from the beginning of time taught people that they should do things in secret. Helaman says (Helaman 2:151) they were taught that by Satan, "yea, the same being who did plot with Cain, that if he would murder his brother Abel, it should not be known unto the world." That's a part of the way that he works. He says, "Go ahead and do this. No one will know! I'll keep it a secret! We'll keep it a secret!"

Helaman continues (Helaman 2:156) "And behold, it is he who is the author of all sin. And behold, he doth carry on his works of darkness and secret murder, and doth hand down their plots, and their oaths, and their covenants, and their plans of awful wickedness from generation to generation, according as he can get hold upon the hearts of the children of men." It's the big lie that we can sin and no one will know. And as soon as all of our secrets are out in the open, Satan loses his power.

As Moroni tells us in Ether 3:93, "The Lord worketh not in secret combinations, neither doth he will that man should shed blood, but in all things hath forbidden it, from the beginning of man."

Secret Actions God Wants

Now there are some secret actions that God wants us to take, He says. We can pray secretly. We can fast in a way that we don't show off to the world that we are fasting. We can give our alms to the poor - we can help other people without taking credit - without making a big show. But that's as far as the scriptures tell us we are to do things in secret, at least the ones I could find. The scriptures tell us that when we do these things in secret, the Lord will reward us openly.

I don't know how the Lord is going to do it, but the scriptures over and over again talk about at the last day our secrets being shared from the roof tops or the housetops. Mormon 2:35-36 is just one example. "But I, knowing that these things must surely be made known, and that all things which are hid must be revealed upon the house tops."

I've always wondered in these days whether that meant our internet or our phone connection or TV. It seems like a lot of people's sins these days are being shared over the television screen or the internet. Every time some politician makes a bad turn of a phrase or every time some person goes out and cuts their hair off, it's shown all over the world. I'm sure the Lord isn't talking about that exactly this way, but its interesting to see what is being shared from the housetops today.

Jesus, in Luke 12:2-3 said, "There is nothing covered which shall not be revealed; neither hid which shall not be known. Therefore, whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness, shall be heard in the light, and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets, shall be proclaimed upon the housetops." Something that you whispered in somebody's ear as you were hidden away in a closet will be known."

If we know this -- if we believe in a God who doesn't have secrets, who doesn't want us to sin and think we can keep it a secret and someday all of these things will be spoken from the housetops, isn't better for us to come and say, "Lord, You know my sin anyway. Please take it away. Please let that light of Your countenance shine into my heart."

The Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants share the same message, that there will be a time when all the secrets will be done away. In the first section of the Doctrine and Covenants it says, "for verily the voice of the Lord is unto all men, and there is none to escape, and there is no eye that shall not see, neither ear that shall not hear, neither heart that shall not be penetrated; and the rebellious shall be pierced with much sorrow, for their iniquities shall be spoken upon the housetops, and their secret acts shall be revealed;" We could be pierced with sorrow before it has to be spoken out from the housetops, if we come to the Lord repentant.

Section 85:34-35b says, when the angels are sounding their trumpets, "the secret acts of men, and the mighty works of God" will be shared for every thousand years of time.

As we come to the table this morning, may our secret acts be those of prayer, fasting and helping those who are less fortunate and not listening to the whisperings of the devil who says, "What you do here stays here! You can hide! Keep it secret. No one will ever know!"

We can rejoice in allowing the light of Christ to shine in our secret places of sin and make us clean and whole. That's why we are here this morning. Satan wants us to hide our sin -- stay in the darkness. The light of Christ lets us not be afraid of our secrets being shared because we can praise the Lord that He has washed that secret clean by the gift of His death and life for each of us. And we can proclaim that He will do it for everyone else.

May you not try to keep any secrets before your Lord this morning as you come to Him for a blessing.

Success - Following Our Savior's Example

For his sermon Sunday, March 11, Priest Rodney Bastow chose John 15:4-16: "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.

"As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you; continue ye in my love. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full. This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.

"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth; but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you. Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit; and that your fruit should remain; that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you." The reading of the Scripture was followed by Robert Rolfe singing, quite appropriately, the story of Cain and Able with God's warning, "Satan wants to have you, so be strong!"

After explaining his consternation on finding his name in the Mount Ayr Record-News as the speaker for last Sunday, his relief on finding it was a misprint, and the coincidence of the fact that the last time daylight saving time was changed, he was the speaker, Brother Bastow greeted the congregation and especially commented on his appreciation for the presence of Debbie's sister Janet and her husband John, Joni Renth and Alan Force. Then he said, "It is good to be here. I do appreciate this opportunity and pray that we will be blessed today and will remember where that blessing comes from."

Several weeks ago, our school nurse started a wellness program for the school. The staff is divided into teams, and we get points for doing things to keep us healthy. The program includes weight loss, exercise, eating fruits and vegetables, drinking water, taking vitamins, doctor visits, blood pressure checks, using seat belts, with 50 points for having a colonoscopy and 50 points for not smoking, and extra points sometimes just being nice to one another - like complimenting the wife! The team with the most points gets a prize.

I had been thinking about dieting for some time, so this program gives me the motivation to commit to losing weight. I've got to say I was pretty dedicated the first few weeks. I started walking 30 minutes or more a day. I ate less, cut down on my sweets, drank more water. I was really doing it right! I lost a few pounds, and that fired me up to keep doing it. My biggest problem was the weekend when I was away from the group. I didn't exercise, Debbie likes to bake, and I was more

tempted to eat. Week before last, we had three snow days, and that was a real set back for me because I couldn't get out of the house to walk, and I didn't have a lot to do. When I am sitting around the house all day, I eat!

But this week I got back with it, and I hope to continue until I reach my goal. I know it won't always be easy. There will be temptations. I may become discouraged, but I know it is important and I am determined!

Our Spiritual Program

Last Sunday we renewed a commitment that we have made, some of us a long time ago. We have taken on the name of Jesus Christ, and our goal is to be more Christ-like. We asked His forgiveness and declared to ourselves and to our

Lord that we would do better. So, how did it go?

Did we spend more time in prayer and fasting?

Did we study the scriptures to know God's plan for us?

Did we read or watch things that would inspire us to do better?

Did we?

I diet, I weigh myself a lot. It helps to see if I am making any progress. Sometimes I keep track of the points for the food I eat so I will eat less. I also wear a pedometer to see how many steps I take in a day to see if I need to walk more, Maybe I should keep points to see if I am doing what God wants. How about you? Did we show kindness to someone this week. Did we give a compliment, word of encouragement, a hug, maybe even show a picture of your granddaughter, that would uplift their spirits? Did you visit the lonely, send a card to cheer someone. Were you a happy person that others enjoyed being around? Did you love those who are hard to love? Did your good deeds outweigh the times you got angry or said something unkind or spread a rumor? If we kept track of our spiritual progress, how did we do? Was it a good week, or did we have setbacks?

Sometimes it is harder to stay close to God when things are good than when we are in need. I found a quote that says, "Everyone has noticed how hard it is to turn our thoughts to God when everything is going well with us. 'We have all we want!' is a regrettable saying when all does not include God." For me, this week I was motivated to do good, to follow Christ, because I had a need. I knew that without God's blessing I wouldn't be able to here today. What about the days ahead? Can we stay on track through the good times and the bad?

I've had a pretty good year so far. My new principal has been good to get along with. He is well liked. In fact, I think he is coming back for another year, which tells you something. My classes are good. I have enjoyed my students. Being a grandparent has been a joy, although I don't get to see Sophia enough, but seeing her picture and hearing about her has been indescribable! Cattle prices were good when I sold the calves. Grain prices are really good. We have had plenty of moisture for next year's crops and hay. I have been blessed. It is important that I thank God for those blessings. I need to remember to stay close to God, and to remember how much I need Him in my life. This is where I need to do better because it is working.

I was reminded his week of other times on my life when I didn't think things were going so well. I remember times when I was depressed and discouraged and didn't think God was answering my prayers. I remember thinking life doesn't seem fair. But I know now that God was always there for me, and through his love I was able to get through those times. We can't give up even during the tough times. God answers our prayers. He knows what is best for us.

My oldest sister's husband was recently diagnosed with cancer of the pancreas. His condition is terminal. Their goal is for him to make it one more year with as little pain as possible. I hope you will include Phyllis and Dick in your prayers, and the rest of us, my brothers and sisters, as we deal with this.

An Appropriate Observation

I received this E-mail this week: "Malachi 3:3 says: 'And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver,' this verse puzzled some women in a Bible study and they wondered what this statement meant about the character and nature of God. One of the women offered to find out the process of refining silver and get back to the group at their next Bible study.

"That week, the woman called a silversmith and made an appointment to watch him at work. She didn't mention anything about the reason for her interest beyond her curiosity about the process of refining silver.

"As she watched the silversmith, he held a piece of silver over the fire and let it heat up. He explained that in refining silver, one needed to hold the silver in the middle of the fire where the flames were the hottest as to burn away all impurities.

"The woman thought about God holding us in such a hot spot, then she thought again about the verse that says, 'He sits as a refiner and purifier of silver'. She asked the silversmith if it was true that he had to sit there. The man answered that, yes, he not only has to sit there holding the silver, but he had to keep his eyes on the silver the entire time it was in the fire. If the silver was left a moment too long in the flames, it would be destroyed.

"The woman was silent for a moment. Then she asked the silversmith, 'How do you know when the silver is fully refined?' He smiled at her and answered, 'Oh, that's easy--when I see my image in it.'

"If today you are feeling the heat of the fire, remember that God has His eye on you and will keep watching you until He sees His image in you.

"You may want to pass this on. There may be someone who needs to know that God is watching over them, and whatever they are going through, they'll be a better person in the end. You can spend life anyway you wish, but you can only spend it once."

The Value of the Group

God is watching over us all. He wants us to reach our goal. One thing that helps with my diet is there is a group of us doing it. It's easier to walk when you see others walk or you have others to walk with you. We are fortunate that we have a church group to meet with that strengthens us and helps us to continue toward our goal. We have love for one another and for our Heavenly Father. We have temptations and struggles, but as we worship together our love grows and we are able to face the world and share our love with others. There is a TV program that is popular with kids. Recently there was an episode about the Mormons. They had just moved into town and their son was new at school. The other kids got together and chose one who was to beat him up. When the chosen one approached the Mormon kid and announced his intention, the Mormon kid just said, "Go ahead, but then why don't you come to my house for supper?" The one who came to beat him up did go to his house for supper. There he found everyone happy. There was no fighting even among the kids. When he asked for the reason, they replied, "We are Mormons. Do you want to hear the story of the angel visit to Joseph Smith? And they told him

about Joseph Smith, the Book of Mormon, the Lost Manuscript and all.

When the father of the youngster heard from his son what he had been told, he was very angry and went to set the Mormons straight. Instead of getting a fight, he too was invited in for supper. There he received the same treatment as that his son had experienced, even to being told the story of Joseph Smith and his work. The father, like the boy, went away thinking even though they were Mormons, they must have done something right. They were different. They were happy and they loved one another.

We are members of the Church of Jesus Christ. What do others say about us?

There is a teacher at school who has lost close to one hundred pounds. It's incredible. Kyle really inspires me to lose weight. I see him and I think, "I can do this!" We have a Savior who set an example for us. Jesus showed us how to live, how to be happy, how to love each other. If we will do the things He has asked us to do and follow His ways, we can be successful also. Then others will see that I am happy and anxious to share the gospel, too. I hope in the days ahead, others can see a change in me. I hope they can tell that I am happier and that I am more Christlike.

I want to leave you with 1 John 3:21-24. "Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then we have confidence toward God. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight. And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment. And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us."

All Things A Compound In One

The morning service March 18 was graced by two Center Place Restoration School choirs with the ministry of preaching offered by Elder Steve Fertig of Excelsior Springs, Missouri, one of the driver - chaperones of the group. The Women's Chamber Choir sang the text from Psalm 121, "Lift Thine Eyes", as our introit. The mixed Chamber Choir sang "To the Evening Service" during the offertory and "For the Beauty of the Earth following the reading of the morning scripture. The women's Chamber Choir sang "The Music of Thy Name" in response to the morning message. Dr. Nathan Smith, the choir director, was also their accompanist and the pianist for the morning service

Our speaker introduced himself to the congregation saying: I do extensive traveling. In fact, when people ask me. "How often are you on the road?" I say, Every day of every week of the year except for the three weeks vacation I get, and I am gone even then on the road. But I appreciate the opportunity to come up and share some thoughts with you that the Lord has placed on my heart, and I hope that you can receive some ministry from that as well this morning.

Our Pastor had just announced a Priesthood meeting at which the plans for ministry to the little congregation at Arkoe, Missouri, during the month of April were to be finalized. Brother Fertig commented on the announcement expressing appreciation for the assistance the Mount Ayr congregation is giving the Arkoe Restoration Branch. Excel-

sior Springs congregation, of which Elder Fertig is a member, helped establish that little branch, but it's about two and one half hours away from them. They appreciate that others are still striving to keep the ministry going in that little town.

Lehi's Counsel Validated

Brother Fertig chose 2 Nephi 1:80-94 for his opening scripture and introduced it by setting the stage for it. The group that has left Jerusalem has arrived in the new world, and Lehi has gathered his family together to share some insight and wisdom because he realizes that his final days are coming in this stage of probation. So he is sharing with his family, and at this particular point he is sharing with his oldest son, Jacob, who was born in the wilderness, and speaking of the trials they experienced. He has been sharing with him a little bit, and I am picking up at verse 80 because he is talking about some things that Jacob needs to be aware of. And he says, "Wherefore, the ends of the law which the Holy One hath given us, unto the inflicting of the punishment which is affixed, which punishment that is affixed is in opposition to that of the happiness which is affixed, to answer the ends of the atonement; For it must needs be, that there is an opposition in all things. If not so, my first born in the wilderness, righteousness could not be brought to pass; neither wickedness; neither holiness nor misery; neither good nor bad.

"Wherefore, all things must needs be a compound in one; Wherefore, if it should be one body, it must needs remain as dead, having no life, neither death nor corruption, nor incorruption, happiness nor misery, neither sense nor insensibility. Wherefore, it must needs have been created for a purpose of naught; Wherefore, there would have been no purpose in the end of its creation. Wherefore, this thing must needs destroy the wisdom of God, and his eternal purposes; and also, the power, and the mercy, and the justice of God. "And if ye shall say there is no law, ye shall also say there is no sin. And if ye shall say there is no sin, ye shall also say there is no righteousness. And if there be no righteousness, there be no happiness. And if there be no righteousness nor happiness, there be no punishment nor misery. And if these things are not, there is no God. And if there is no God, we are not, neither the earth, for there could have been no creation of things, neither to act nor to be acted upon; wherefore, all things must have vanished away.

"And now, my son, I speak unto you these things, for your profit and learning:"

I brought this scripture for you this morning because it talks about opposition, and I know sometimes when we are kids we ask questions, and as parents our kids probably share those same things. Our kids say, "Why are there bad things going on in the world?" And we find in the scriptures, both in the Book of Mormon and in the New Testament, that Christ shared with us the wisdom that there is opposition in all things. It's especially in the story in the Book of Mormon when we see that when Lehi and his family, and the other families that came with them, came to a new land, it looks like here's an opportunity that God could say, "We could cut that evil right off here and send it away, and we don't have to deal with it anymore." But it was for the purpose that we can make choices that He has for us that He allowed both the good and the bad to come together.

According to modern theory, most elementary particles of matter possess charge, either positive or negative. Two particles with like charges - both positive or both negative, repel each other, while two particles with unlike charges are attracted to each other. The electric force between two charged particles is much greater than the gravitational force

between those particles. The negatively charged electrons in an atom are held near the nucleus because of their attraction for the positively charged protons in the nucleus.

Probably the easiest way to think about this, and I apologize. I didn't bring any magnets, but most everybody has played with two magnets. Especially in this community, you probably have heard of the cow magnets. They are about yea big (our speaker demonstrated with his hands) and about the size of your thumb. One end is positively charged and one end is negative. When you try to put the two positive ends together, they push against each other so you can't get them to stick together. But if you switch them so a negative and a positive are together, they would come and stick together. Some of you have also dealt with batteries in a diesel engine. There are usually two batteries, and when you hook the two batteries together so they work, you actually hook one battery to the other from the negative to the positive charge, so you have that same principle there.

The planets Uranus, Neptune and Pluto were discovered because scientists could tell when those planets came close to each other there was a little pull that actually pulled them out of their normal orbital swing.

Hippocrates, the father of medicine reported that by opposites, opposites are cured. We think of the antidote and antibiotics that give us opportunities for curing.

Paul, in Romans 7:25-26, stated this fact of life. He says, "My members are warring against the law of my mind and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. And if I subdue not the sin which is in me, but with the flesh serve the law of sin, oh wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of death?"

Struggles Justified

A radio minister shared this thought. "Now and then someone writes to tell me of his battle with evil thought. Some people, in fact, seem to be driven to distraction with their problem. They testify that no matter how hard they try to dispel unwanted thought, they persist. They say they have prayed and prayed but to no avail. Truthfully these people are pitiful in their battle with profanity, obscenity and other moral and spiritual impediments. Perhaps a little knowledge of psychology, the science of the human mind and its operation, powers and functions will be helpful in understanding that the harder one tries to keep a thought out of his mind, the deeper it is driven. Prayer doesn't help because these people have not learned to put a big YES in their prayers. Their thoughts are centered on their problems, sickness and anxiety or whatever, and they say, "Lord, see how sick I am. Lord, deliver me from this awful burden!" And what happens? They just pray themselves deeper into their problems.

"You see, we must think in terms of the positive attributes of God, His power, His goodness and His love. Perfect love casteth out fear, as said in John (1 John 4:18). Our hearts and minds must be fixed on the affirmative."

In another address, the same minister says, "God has no intention of letting man escape the consequences of sin, for remember, the big struggle is retribution for human disobedience. However, the situation is not all bad. Morality requires a resisting medium, and as I said before, we are made for a contest with opposing forces. Without temptation, there can be no virtue. If character is, as some have said, the sum of all we have struggled against, then we need trouble if we are to demonstrate true virtue. Greatness is not predicated upon how little resistance a person encounters but on how great an amount he meets and overcomes. As someone has said, what a saint is is what he does with a temptation to sin.

Eliminate struggle and you exhaust life of its vitality and much of its meaning.

And finally, Brother Con, in his reflections observes, "How frequently we hear adults say, 'I don't want my children to have, the hardships I had when I was young.' Who is speaking? A successful person. Right? He wants his children to be successful but without the rigors he knew. It doesn't work that way. Muscles of steel are not accidents of nature. They are made. Nor is character an accident. It is the result of confrontation with life in the raw plus a determination to win over the obstacles. It is this principle that underlies the sufferings associated with the Christian life, the persecution, the loneliness, the lack of acceptance and the constant expenditure. If the successful athlete needs continual workouts in which his stamina is tested to the breaking point, those of us whose citizenship is in heaven should not retreat from situations that try our patience and threaten our dedication; for it is only as we overcome when meeting that stiff challenge that we are built up in faith and are made capable of assuming a position of authority in the world to come."

One of the things that is shared with me and a part of my job is to visit Ford and Lincoln Mercury dealers to evaluate their certified premium programs. Many times when I go into the dealership, I meet the one who was the original owner of the store. Many times he is an older gentleman who started this business forty or fifty years ago. A lot of times he has a young man, his son, that also is participating in the business or his son has taken over the business. Sometimes I will even find the grandsons that were participating in the business. One day one gentleman told me, "The issue comes down, if the grandfather starts the business, the next one in succession is usually successful in keeping that business going. It's usually the third generation who lets the business go to pot. It is because that struggle has been taken away."

I read an article the other day in The USA Today about the struggles that college students have. It was talking about the kids who are struggling when they get to college because they are realizing that they have failures. They are getting bad grades or struggling with their studies. And I wonder if it is because in the education system today, before they go to college, we can't tell our kids that they got the answer wrong. I wonder if we are letting our kids realize that just because you feel good about the answer doesn't mean it is right or wrong. If it is wrong, we have to let them know that it.

We have struggles every day. Many of us have struggles in keeping our weight down. Getting an education is difficult. Completing basic training is hard. Some of the struggles we face today are very difficult. My son is a manager for Wal Mart in Independence, Missouri. When he started out with Wal Mart he was in Excelsior Springs. Excelsior Springs is a small little town and it doesn't have the demand that a big store has; so he didn't have the struggles that he now faces. He has been in Excelsior Springs and Richmond and Leavenworth. They were small little stores. Of course, there was some stress, I would say, but not the stress he is facing each day in Independence. And it's been a struggle for him because the demand has been there, not only from the boss but for the requirements for the store. So it has been difficult for him; and I want to share with him that, because they are difficult, I think the outcome depends on how he faces those struggles. It's not so much that we struggle, but it's how we face those struggles.

Opposition In All Things

I want to continue with my reading. I want to pick it up again with Second Nephi by starting with verse 95. "For there is a God, and He hath created all things, both the heavens and

the earth, and all things that in them is, both things to act and things to be acted upon; and to bring about his eternal purposes in the end of man, after he had created our first parents and the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air, and, in fine, all things which are created, it must needs be that there was an opposition; even the forbidden fruit in opposition to the Tree of life; the one being sweet and the other bitter. Wherefore, the Lord God gave unto man, that he should act for himself. Wherefore, man could not act for himself, save it should be that he was enticed by one or the other.”

Orlando Smith remarks, “Evil exists in the balance of natural forces. It is also the background of good, the incentive to good and the trial of good, but that which good cannot be. That the virtue of courage cannot exist without the evil of danger and that the virtue of sympathy cannot exist without the evil of suffering, so no one virtue could exist without its corresponding evil. In a world without evil, if such a world can really be conceived, all men would have perfect health, perfect intelligence, and perfect morals. The temperature would stand forever at 70 degrees, both heat and cold being evil.”

All right, here’s a question for the kids. I’ll open it up for participation. That’s okay. Are you all familiar with a cocoon? A larvae makes the cocoon. It’s getting ready to become a butterfly. What would happen if we cut that cocoon open and assisted that butterfly to get out? It would die, wouldn’t it? It would die, because it is that struggle of getting out of that cocoon that makes it possible for it to fly. The same thing would happen with a baby chick. If we helped it break that shell it was coming out of, would it survive? No, because it’s that initial struggle that chick has to have to get out of that shell that gives it the strength to face each day. So if we stood around and assisted butterflies, we wouldn’t have any butterflies left. They would all die.

In a college economics course we used a graphic representing that same thought. On one side of the chart we had butter. On the other side we had guns. It was representing that you have to give up one thing to have the other. We could make all guns, but we wouldn’t have any butter. Or vice versa. We could make all butter but we wouldn’t have any guns. There’s a common balance between the two; and it goes with a lot of things for which we have to find that balance.

If we go into our system of government, we can see that same balance was created as well. There are three branches of the government, the executive branch, which is held by the president and his cabinet. Then you have the legislative branch, which is your House and your Senate. Then, of course, there is the judicial branch that’s designed, not to make legislation, but is designed to make sure that the legislation that is created abides by the constitution of the United States. So they all three work together, but they are also in checks and balances to make sure that they all do what their job is.

James 1:2-4 says, “My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into many afflictions; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.” It’s not just the facing of the trials that we have experienced. It’s how we react to them.

Personal Testimony

Years ago, when I finished college, Vicki and I moved back to Missouri. We met each other at Park College and got married in Missouri. We moved back to Boise, and that’s where I finished my education. When we got finished there, we moved back to Missouri. Vicki’s mom was dying of

cancer, so we came back. I started out with one job. Then I moved to a sales job with a company that was strictly commission. And if you have never been in sales where you work strictly for commission, well, it’s not good to have a family when you do that! You struggle with that and you also struggle with the job.

I was struggling with trying to make appointments, trying to provide an income for my family. Vicki was working at the time, and we had a lot of debt because of school and some other things that we did. So it was a struggle for both of us, and I didn’t realize how much of a struggle it was until one day Vicki and I sat down and talked about it. She was sharing with me that she had shared with the girls at the office the struggle that she was facing because she felt that she was carrying the weight of the financial responsibilities. What was ironic, I think to both of us, was that the ladies at the office didn’t necessarily encourage Vicki to kind of kick me in the butt to get me going. They said that she should leave me! I was thinking that was ironic, and so I realized that - I think we both realized- that it was time for me to do something.

So we looked at the options, and one day I came back and said, “What about the military?” She kind of gives me this funny look - well, I don’t know! That wasn’t something she had really thought about or was interested in. But I went to the recruiter. My Dad says, “Don’t join the marines”. After I have been in the military, I think maybe the marines was probably a good option; but they still feel that if they were gong to give you a wife, they would issue you one! I don’t know if that philosophy has changed or not. But I went to the army recruiter, sat down with him and told him I was thinking of enlisting. He asked about my education and I told him I had already completed college. Normally when he talked to a recruit, he would have them take a pretest. He didn’t ask me to do that. He just said, “Come on and sit down.” So I spent probably an hour and a half or two hours with him just talking, asking him questions and visiting with him. When I went home that afternoon and told Vicki about the experience, there was a smile on her face. She got pretty excited because of the benefits that they would offer for us and the family. So she went in and probably fired similar questions back at the recruiter as well. So it kind of changed that outlook.

And the military was a blessing to us. I will be honest about that because it was. In fact, we spent twelve years in the army. I started out as an enlisted person. Because I had college, I got a little bit higher ranking - not much, but a little. It was a blessing to us because I think it changed my outlook on how I responded to people. It gave me a little more confidence, a little more assurance. I realized that there were things that I could do - things I had never done before. It was an experience that, would I do some of those things again? Probably not, but it was an experience to know that I could do them.

One of those tasks I did that I will share with you folks was that I went to Ranger school. Ranger school is nine weeks. One of the things that Ranger school is to teach you is leadership skills, and they teach you leadership under the most stress that they can give you. In a combat situation, they teach you that you are being shot at with live bullets. That’s a lot of stress. In the military in peace time, they can’t do that. They can’t shoot live bullets at you. So what they do to determine how much stress you can be under is that they take away your sleep and your food. It puts you in a different position to see what you can accomplish. By that stress and that experience it allowed me to see that, yes, I can do some things. I don’t have to be afraid to step out of my comfort zone

and try to accomplish them.

Being in the military, one of the heroes that a lot of the military guys have is John Wayne, and some guys will have his picture on the wall. They determine him to be a kind of all American guy, and he stands for that all American thing that we have grown up with. John Wayne says, "Courage is being scared to death but saddling up anyway!" I thought that was pretty appropriate for this morning, for sometimes we have to face struggles. We are not to be afraid of them, but just get in the saddle and go forward with them. If we rely upon our Heavenly Father, that's the thing we are supposed to do. He says. "I will not give you anything that you cannot do, because I will be there for you."

Attitude Gives Value to Struggles

When we face struggles, do we look for the good in them, or do we just wish they would go away? I think sometimes as a society, we step away from those. We have a hesitancy to step out of our comfort zone and to pick a task, to pick a struggle, to pick a project or something we can just stand by and really dedicate our lives to and do so, not just in the church but also outside the church and be involved in our community. If we are involved in a situation that is difficult, and we desire the support of our family, friends and colleagues, do we remain honest in our dealings, or do we change some of story to get a better support for our cause?

A lot of times in my travels I see those signs, you know you see those pictures and they talk about leadership and courage and things like that. One of the ones I saw said, "The highest courage is to dare to be yourself in the face of adversity, choosing right over wrong, ethics over convenience, truth over popularity. These are the choices that measure your life. Travel the path of integrity without looking back, for there is never a wrong time to do the right thing." Do we also face our struggles with thanksgiving? Do we praise the Lord for them because, as James just said a little bit ago, our "patience worketh to make us perfect". Do we wish it was all easy? Why did God elect to make life a battle rather than a breeze? Should we reassess our petitions to God when we are confronted with those trials and sickness, handicaps and great difficulty?

There was a pitcher, I think he pitched for the Kansas City Royals, who had brain cancer. People would ask him if he had ever thought, "Why me?" He said, "I did not ever ask that question, 'Why me, God?'" He said, "Why not me?" Why not me to be an example to those around me? Why not use me for that example?

Do we face those trials and difficulties with love? Do we really do so? Christ faced His greatest challenge with courage and love. Sure, in the Garden He asked that if it was possible that God would remove this cup from Him, but in the end, Christ said, "Not My will, but Thine."

"And after Adam and Eve," I am picking backup at verse 105 (2 Nephi 1:105-128) from the same passage. "And after Adam and Eve, had partaken of the forbidden fruit, they were driven out of the garden of Eden, to till the earth. And they have brought forth children; yea, even the family of all the earth. And the days of the children of men were prolonged, according to the will of God, that they might repent while in the flesh; Wherefore, their state became a state of probation, and their time was lengthened, according to the commandments which the Lord God gave unto the children of men. For he gave commandment that all men must repent; for he shewed unto all men that they were lost, because of the transgression of their parents.

"And now, behold, if Adam had not transgressed, he would not have fallen, but would have remained in the garden

of Eden. And all things which were created, must have remained in that same state which they were, after they were created; and they must have remained forever, and had no end. And they would have had no children; wherefore they would have remained in a state of innocence, having no joy, for they knew no misery; doing no good, for they new no sin. But, behold, all things have been done in the wisdom of Him who knoweth all things. Adam fell, that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy. And the Messiah cometh in the fullness of time, that He may redeem the children of men from the fall. And because that they are redeemed from the fall, they have become free for ever, knowing good from evil; to act for themselves, and not to be acted upon, save it be by the punishment of the Lord, at the great and last day, according to the commandments that God has given. Wherefore, men are free according to the flesh; and all things are given them which are expedient unto man. And they are free to choose liberty and eternal life, through the great mediation of all men, or to choose captivity and death, according to the captivity and power of the devil; for he seeketh that all men might be miserable like unto himself.

"And now, my sons, I would that ye should look to the great Mediator, and hearken unto his great commandments; and be faithful unto his words, and choose eternal life, according to the will of His Holy Spirit, and not choose eternal death, according to the will of the flesh and the evil which is therein."

One of my favorite quotes comes from Dr. Swindall. I used to share it with some of the soldiers I had under my command back in the army. I think it is an important quote. I won't be able to share it all with you, but he talks about the attitude. "An attitude in response is ten percent of what we face and ninety percent how we react to it." I think that's with us today, that we can face our adversity with joy, thanksgiving and praise to our Heavenly Father for giving us that because it will make us a better person - make us a better servant of Him.

The Women's Chamber choir responded to Brother Fertig's ministry singing, "The Music Of Thy Name". Elder Alan Smith pronounced the benediction. "Our kind and loving heavenly Father, We are very blessed this morning by Your Spirit, by the beautiful music, by the words of our brother through You. Be with us as we go through the rest of this day and this week. May we truly say Hallelujah in our hearts in whatever we face knowing you are with us wherever we are, whoever we are around, wherever we may be. Guide and direct us, then, that we may always have Your name on our lips. Help us to face the challenges and the temptations which we face, knowing that Your Spirit will rest with us and guide us and help us at each step of the way. We pray these things in gratitude for the gifts and talents which You give us and which are shared this morning. We pray these things in the name of Your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen."

Three Steps to Zion

After commenting on the absence of a number of regular attendees because of the spring break in the school systems represented in our congregation and telling us of his invitation to speak to the Leon Senior class and finding the day was Senior Skip day, High Priest Sherman Phipps asserted his belief that those of us who were present were there because we like and want to be there. He then read portion of Doctrine and Covenants 28 1a-2b: "Listen to the voice of Jesus Christ, your Redeemer, the great I AM, whose arm of mercy hath

atoned for your sins, who will gather his people even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, even as many as will hearken to my voice, and humble themselves before me, and call upon me in mighty prayer. remember to sin no more, lest perils shall come upon you... . Lift up your hearts and be glad, for I am in your midst, and am your advocate with the Father; and it is His good will to give you the kingdom ” Alan Smith sang, “Softly and Tenderly, Jesus is calling; calling, ‘Oh sinner, come home.’” and Brother Phipps resumed addressing us.

I went back recently and started reading the Old Testament through again. I imagine it makes no difference how many times I read it, I will never understand it like Rob does. I’m just not that sharp! But even though I don’t have the understanding that others may have, I still always get something out of it. I guess you get something out of reading whichever scriptures you read. I am always interested in, and kind of amazed, when I read the story of other people’s lives and their experiences with God. It makes me stop and look at my own life and wonder what I need to do differently so I can have a closer association with God.

I was reading the story of Moses. It starts out with his experience with the burning bush, a story with which everybody here is probably familiar. And this won’t be a new idea to you either; but when I read that, I thought, “There is Moses”. (I like to think of it in terms of real life, not something far off that is just in a story somewhere.) But I thought, “There is Moses. He was walking along out there, watching the sheep for his Father-in-law. He’s out there in the middle of nowhere, and he sees this burning bush, and it is not being consumed. That catches his attention, as it probably would any of us. The scripture says he turns aside and goes over toward it. Then he engages in conversation with God. If you go through the scriptures, we have all kinds of places where there is a record of people, engaging in conversation with God.

That’s amazing! And I think we probably have people right here in the congregation who have had the privilege of doing that. I like to think about that. What would that be like? You are going about your daily activities - this is another thing that strikes me. Most of the time when people have these experiences, it isn’t a matter that they have just been beating themselves up trying to communicate with God and saying, “I need to do something different!” I don’t know if this makes sense to you, but sometimes I think we get so concerned about having an experience that we go off on a tangent. God is trying to talk to us, but He can’t get through to us because we are so busy trying to figure out how to get to Him when He’s right with us all the time.

Moses Turns Aside

Here was Moses. He is just going along, doing his daily duties. He may have been praying about things. I don’t know, but it doesn’t say that. And the Lord speaks to him. I wondered, what would it take to get our attention - to get us to turn aside and realize the Lord is speaking to us? What would it take? I don’t know. Of course, all I can do is think about my own life and what it would take for me. I am going up and down the highway every day, going here and going there, just doing the job. What would have to happen for me on the way to court some morning, knowing that people are waiting there and that there is business to be done to just pull off the highway and take time and listen to the Lord? I am sure He would speak to me if it was Him calling me and I took time to stop. He’d speak to me! I wonder how many times I just don’t stop. I wonder how many times He tries to get my

attention. Well, that’s a thought. Some of the rest of you might want to think about it, too; and we might want to be cautious that we are not overlooking those times when the Lord tries to get us to stop, turn aside and let Him talk to us. I know everybody here has read all about this. I am not telling you anything new. I am just trying to think about how it relates to our lives. I think it’s interesting, too, that even after an experience like that where the Lord actually spoke to him, shortly after that happened, the next thing we have recorded - of course, I don’t know how much time passed in between, but the next thing we have recorded is God’s frustrated with Moses. God’s telling him, “I’ve got a job for you. I want you to go and do something for me. And Moses is coming up with all these reasons that he can’t do it!

I don’t really like movies, but did anybody here see the original Blues Brothers’ Movie? There is one scene that always sticks with me. The guy is in the sewer - it’s one of these big sewers that he is running through. He is trying to escape and around the corner comes an ex girlfriend apparently. They run right into each other. Remember that scene? She comes around the corner, they run into each other and, Without any further ado, he immediately says, “Oh, I ran out of gas,” and he rattles off 400 different excuses why he didn’t get back to her - just one right after another. That’s the whole conversation. Anyhow, I thought of that when I was thinking about Moses. I don’t know that he was quite that bad, but he certainly started coming up with excuses. I guess the one we always remember is, “I can’t speak! I wouldn’t be able to do that.” And, of course, he keeps saying, also, “They’re not going to believe me, Lord. They are just not going to believe me if I go to them.”

That one really kind of hits home with me because I wonder how many times do I feel prompted to share something with people at work, or just people I associate with in all kinds of different settings, when I feel like, “Well, they don’t want to hear that!” or “They’re not going to believe me!” So I don’t go ahead and follow up on the prompting.

Anyhow, God ended up being pretty angry with Moses. Another thing He got angry with him for was that after all these experiences and after all that God had showed him, Moses still wasn’t being obedient. Now, that’s another problem I have. Remember the story? I am sure you do. It says, God was angry enough with Moses that He was ready to kill him, and if his wife hadn’t bailed him out, God was going to kill him! His wife knew where they had been disobedient, and she took care of the problem. She corrected it! That probably happens with me a lot, too.

I like these stories because these people become so real. Then it becomes easier for me to relate to them. I think it’s interesting the way Moses reacted, also, when he was saying, “They are not going to believe me. Who am I?” and God said, “Well, I’ll take care of that for you.” God said, “Take your staff and throw it down on the ground.” Moses did, and you know what happened. It turned into a snake, and Moses ran from it. (If that had been me, I would probably have been so far away I couldn’t have gotten hold of the staff again.) But God said, “Now pick it up.” And Moses grabbed it by the tail, picked it up and it was a staff again. Then God began to tell him the things that he would do for him, and Moses still was hesitant to go. You know, I think I have been that way in my life. The Lord has done just one thing after another, and still, I am slow to respond.

I won’t ask you to raise your hands and share anything this morning. You can if you want to - if you feel the need to. But I just wondered, what kinds of things has God done for us

to convince us that He's there, He's gone before us, and whatever He has asked us to do, we can do. Then we have said, "Well, I don't know!"

Well, I don't want to pick on Moses. You could, if you just read that story. You could say, "What's wrong with this guy?" On the other hand, when I look at things, I understand that I'm probably worse than Moses and slower than Moses to respond. And that's probably why the Lord went ahead and used Moses the way He did; and He's still waiting on some of us. So my first question is, "What would it take to get us to turn aside and pay attention?" And the second is, if the Lord did speak to us, how responsive would we be?

Then There Is Solomon

Another fellow that I read about again is Solomon. It says of Solomon, if you remember, that he went up to the tabernacle and was making offerings to the Lord. After he had done that, in the night - I want to read this (2 Chronicles, 1:7-12) - "In that night did God appear unto Solomon, and said unto him, Ask what I shall give thee. And Solomon said unto God, Thou hast showed great mercy unto David my father and hast made me to reign in his stead. Now, O Lord God, let thy promise unto David, my father be established; for thou hast made me a king over a people like the dust of the earth in multitude. Give me now wisdom and knowledge, that I may go out and come in before this people; for who can judge this thy people, that is so great?"

"And God said to Solomon, Because this was in thine heart, and thou has not asked riches, wealth or honor, nor the life of thine enemies, neither yet has asked long life; but hast asked wisdom and knowledge for thyself, that thou mayest judge my people over whom I have made thee king; Wisdom and knowledge is granted unto thee; and I will give thee riches and wealth and honor such as none of the kings have had that have been before thee, neither shall there any after thee have the like."

So what if we did hear the voice of the Lord, and He were to ask us, or tell us, as He did Solomon, "Ask what you will, and I will give it unto you." What would we ask for? We talk about Zion. Would that be one of the first things to come into our mind if the Lord were to tell us, "Ask what you want and I will give it to you." And you know, He has done that. That's what He has told us. "Ask and ye shall receive." If you go through the Scriptures, you'll find any number of places where He has said it. But I was thinking about the Doctrine and Covenants where He says over and over, "Ask and you will receive. In as much as you really seek these things, they will be given unto you."

"So what does that say? Have we not been asking? Or have we been asking for the wrong things? I don't pretend that I have the answer for that. I am just asking you to think about it because I am convinced that if we truly want Zion, the Lord will give it to us. It's His to give, and He's going to give it, but He'd like to have, I think, as many people as possible participate in it."

I don't know if this story will exactly fit. Maybe it will. Sometimes I can get to feeling like, "Well, I know God's word is sure. I know what He said He will do - He is going to do. Why are we waiting around so long?" I don't know if anybody else has ever felt that way. But I had a little experience last summer that kind of reminded me that God is on His own time table. That is a really great thing because He knows exactly what's going on and what's happening. He's the only one who can really make the decisions in such a way as to be of benefit to all of us. If He were to leave time tables and that up to me, somebody would be in trouble and

probably me most of all. I went on a motorcycle trip last summer. Mike and Bob Bjorland were with me. There were a number of others, but on the way home there were just the three of us. The rest of them had cut off and gone other places or come home early. It was really hot. It was in the summertime, so it stays light late. As we were coming across Nebraska that day, we stopped to buy gas, said something to the guy at the counter about it being so hot today, and he said, "Yeah. It is 107 here!"

Our intention had been to ride that day and then ride again the next day, but as evening came, it was beginning to cool off. About nine or nine thirty we decided that instead of stopping, it would be a nice time to keep riding and try to get home and not have to get up the next day and ride in the heat again. So we decided to just come straight on through. I think we rode about seven hundred miles that day. Anyhow, we took off again from Lincoln, Nebraska. By then it was real dark and we decided to come on home.

As we got into Iowa, I was in the back of the three. We were on a divided four lane road, and I thought I saw something come off of Mike's bike. The other two went on, and I stopped. I shouldn't tell you this part. Without thinking, I just turned around and started riding the other direction. Then it dawned on me. This is a one way. These lanes are both going one way, and I am going the wrong way!. But I was started then, so I went ahead and went back to where I thought I had seen this item come off Mike's bike. I turned around and stopped. His tent, (he had a pup tent he was carrying with him) was lying on the side of the road. I was trying to figure out how to strap it onto my bike because I hadn't come prepared to strap any thing on, but I eventually thought I had it on.

By now, they were gone, so I took off to try and catch up. I went just a short way, when I saw something out of the corner of my eye and realized that that tent had come off again. So I stopped, and this time I didn't turn around and go back the wrong way. I got off the bike and walked back up the highway. In the meantime, I am thinking, "I'm never going to catch up with those guys, but I knew eventually they were going to be wondering what had happened to me!" So I got the tent again, strapped it on better tis time and started to go again when I met, I think it was Mike, coming back on the other side of the highway. So I stopped again and waited for him to find a place to turn around. Of course, we had to talk about what had happened.

The whole time this is going on I am thinking, "We are never going to get home tonight at this rate!" And I was getting frustrated about it. I didn't hear a voice, but I heard a message very clearly in my mind, (I won't be able to quote words or anything) and I knew there was reason for that delay, and I should just relax and be grateful. This was just another place where the Lord was in charge.

We rode for several hours. We came through Mt. Ayr and got over closer to Kellerton. By now, I was in the front. As we were approaching a hill over here, you could see all these bright lights on the other side of the hill. I couldn't figure it out. I thought somebody had had a wreck or something, but the lights were so bright that I couldn't figure it out. And because I didn't know what it was, I slowed way down probably to ten or fifteen miles an hour coming over the crest of that hill, and the other guys slowed down, too.

As we came over the crest of the hill, there was a guy standing in the middle of the road waving a flag and there were all these big light set up on both sides of the road running off of generators. I stopped and asked him what was going on, and he said, "Well, the pavement has buckled up here." And

you could see it from where we were. "Somebody called it in and and we just now got out here and got our lights turned on."

Obviously, if we had come over that hill in the dark, a minute or even seconds earlier, he would not have been out there. He had just gotten there, according to him. I was sitting on the bike thinking, "Thanks, Lord. I'm sure glad that tent came off, not once but twice and slowed us up so we didn't get here until they were out here to stop us, warn us and direct us off onto the shoulder."

I tell you that story this morning because I think there are lots of times when I need to kind of relax and realize the Lord's in charge. It might not look real good today for right this moment. Things maybe are not going the way I had planned or thought they would be, but that's a good thing, because the Lord knows everything, and He's in charge. We just need to turn ourselves over to Him to give ourselves over to Him, and we need to give our energies to being obedient, humble and repentant as He has told us to do. He is, in fact, the great I AM. I don't know what that means to other people. I have tried to think about it, and it's kind of beyond my comprehension, I think. But He is that He is, and He is the only being that can say that. He is the creator of everything else.

I had a thought about that this week. You know the adversary is always out there, trying to discourage us. Like my bike thing. He would have liked to have stirred me up and made me mad and had me - I don't know what I do when I get mad - hit the bike, kick the bike, snap at somebody else, yelled about why we are not making better time or whatever. The adversary is always there trying to discourage and distract us, and cause us to give up. It's kind of interesting, if you think about it, because Satan knows he cannot win, and if he were successful in his battle against God, he wouldn't exist! I mean, he can't win no matter what, so it has got to be frustrating for him. Of course, he is going to try to get us to give up, to become discouraged and to decide that all of those things that we knew about the Lord and all those things the Lord told us we need to be doing in our life, they don't matter. They're not important. Of course, he wants us to believe that because he doesn't want us, through the sacrifice of Christ, to be brought back to the great I AM knowing that he was there and turned away, gave it up and lost that. But that's still there for us. We still have that opportunity.

Enoch Moved As The Lord Told Him

Another thing that struck me as I was reading back through some of his Old Testament - I guess it was actually section 36 I was reading when I read this. (You know section 36 is the one that talks about Enoch and his conversation with God. I think it is interesting that when it starts out, it says that these words are being given to us because they were lost, how does it say it, they were lost through wickedness and evil designs? (See the preface to the first edition of the Inspired Version of the Bible. Section 36 is also a part of Genesis 7 in the Inspired Version.) This is one of those little things that might not catch anybody else at all, but it caught me. The Lord is speaking to Enoch, and what was one of the first things He told him? "You need to go from the mountain where you are over to here, and then I have a message for you." And you are like, "Well, why couldn't the Lord just tell him what He had to say while He was there?" But the Lord had a purpose. I don't know what that was. He had some reason for telling him, "You need to go from here over to here, and then I have a message for you."

That's another one of those things where I wonder, how

many times does the Lord say to us, "If you'll go from here over to there, I have a message for you? If you will do this thing that I have asked you to do, I have more for you." And how many times do I go, "Well. If He's got something for me, He could give it to me here!" instead of saying, "You know what. If the Lord wants me to go from here to there, I'm going to go!" And that, again, I guess, reflects on how really serious we are about being involved in the Lord's work - that we would be willing to just do it His way and not try to act like we have a better way, or that we shouldn't be required to put some effort into it.

So, I would encourage you to think about that, too, and consider, are you willing to go from where you are to where He has asked us to be, knowing that if we do that, He has more for us; and that He will, in fact, give us all that He has promised?

I want to read something to you from section 36. Beginning at paragraph 12, and I want to read this, with some of what I have already mentioned here today, with the understanding and the idea that the Lord is trying to get our attention. He does have a plan. He never varies, and that plan will be fulfilled. And He's asking us to change. I said, go from one place to the other, but in our case, maybe it is a matter of asking us to change our life style. And I will have to leave it up to you as to what it is that He wants you to change or what you know that needs to be changed.

Here's one of the promises. Here is what I hope each of you can live to see. When I say that and then read you this scripture, you may wonder why I would want you to see that, but the end is good. "And the Lord said unto Enoch, As I live, even so will I come in the last day - in the days of wickedness and vengeance, to fulfill the oath which I made unto you, concerning the children of Noah; and the day shall come that the earth shall rest, but before that day, shall the heavens be darkened, and the veil of darkness shall cover the earth;" I want to tell you, that that part, I think, has already happened. There may be more, (I will digress and then come back and finish reading this to you.)

I was somewhere last night. There were Junior High kids there. I wasn't there for the activity. I was there doing manual labor. I watched what they were doing and how they were dressed. There is a veil of darkness that covers us, and our children are being sacrificed to it, and our grandchildren. We need for them to know the Lord so they will not be lost in that darkness.

The scripture then goes on and says, "And the heavens shall shake, and also the earth; and great tribulations shall be among the children of men, but my people will I preserve; and righteousness will I send down out of heaven; and truth will I send out of the earth, to bear testimony of my Only Begotten; his resurrection from the dead; yea, and also the resurrection of all men; and righteousness and truth will I cause to sweep the earth as with a flood, to gather out my own elect from the four quarters of the earth unto a place which I shall prepare; a holy city, that my people may gird up their loins, and be looking forth for the time of my coming; for there shall be my tabernacle, and it shall be called Zion, a New Jerusalem.

"And the Lord said unto Enoch, Then shall you and all your city meet them there, and we will receive them into our bosoms, and they shall see us and we will fall upon their necks, and they shall fall upon our necks, and we will kiss each other, and there shall be my abode, and it shall be Zion which shall come forth out of all the creations which I have made; and for the space of a thousand years shall the earth rest."

That's the part I want you to see. And I think if you, every day will be conscious of the Great I AM and choose His way every moment - (all the little decisions that you have to make) - and be willing to go from where you are to where He has called us to be, then we will have an opportunity to be a part of that Zion. I know for myself and for my children and grandchildren, there could not be anything greater than that!

News & Notes

Movie Night Uplifting

"Fighting the Giants" was the title of the movie chosen for Saturday evening viewing, March 17. The congregation assembled at the home of Ron and Di Smith for a light supper and the film showing. The movie was inspiring! The food was good! The fellowship delightful.

Congregation Hosts CPRS Choirs

Sunday, March 18, the Mount . Ayr congregation received the ministry of two of Center Place Restoration School's choirs in their Sunday services.

The group of twenty-seven singers, accompanied by their director, Dr. Nathan Smith, and four adult chaperones came to Lamoni to attend the Saturday evening concert of "THree Men and a Tenor" at Graceland University and to perform their own concert at Cheville Chapel on Graceland's campus Sunday afternoon. Lamoni members of the congregation housed them Saturday night, Alan and Valle Smith fed them breakfast at the church Sunday morning, and the congregation provided food in the form of a congregational pot luck Sunday noon.

The occasion set the record in attendance since the Saints have met in our present home. Previous records had been in the low seventies. This day we counted a minimum of one hundred worshippers assembled.

Delegates Chosen For CORB

Delegates were chosen for the Conference of Restoration Branches to convene in Independence, Missouri April 4-7. Alan Smith, delegate by right of being Pastor of the congregation, Yvonne Galusha, Gordon Winkler and Mildred Smith were chosen delegates with Pat or Gerry Bolingbroke and Michael Jordison alternates. Under the rules of this conference, all who are registered are permitted one vote. The delegates represent 25 votes each. Others expected to attend and vote include the two Seventy in our congregation, Ronald Smith and George Knotts.

Priesthood Schedule Ministry at Arkoe

Mount Ayr Priesthood are preparing to give ministry at Arkoe all through the month of April. High Priest Robert Rolfe will be serving the Communion and giving the Palm Sunday preaching ministry on April 1. Elder Alan Smith will follow with the Easter service, April 8. High Priest Sherman Phipps will minister April 25, Elder Norman Nelson, April 22 and Seventy Ronald Smith April 29.

Fasting Weekend Observed

March 23-25 was observed as our quarterly fasting weekend. Friday evening we met at the Norman Nelson home for prayers at the dinner hour, Saturday at the church in

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Center Place Restoration School Chamber Choirs visit branch





News & Notes

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Mount Ayr for the breakfast hour, again at the Nelson home for the dinner hour and completed the fast Sunday morning at the church services. The occasion is dedicated to prayers for those who know not God with the intent that we are led to do whatever is possible to share our knowledge of God's love and plan with them.

Viewing Dead Sea Scrolls on Agenda

Saturday, May 5 has been set for the congregational visit to Kansas City, Missouri to view the Dead Sea Scrolls exhibit. Tickets are being purchased by Cheryl Phipps, Event Chairman for the congregation

South Iowa Retreat Planned

The weekend beginning September 21 was chosen for the fall retreat for South Iowa Restoration branches at the meeting held March 24 at Ottumwa. The next meeting of the group is to be at Mount Ayr, April 21.

Everyone is invited to attend all the South Iowa monthly meetings. They consist of a prayer and testimony service that begins at 9:30, a class presently taught by David Drummond, a lunch provided by the host congregation and a planning session in the afternoon. Details of the Retreat will be further explored at the April meeting.

Easter Activities

Sunday, April 1 -- Palm Sunday

Regular Services with Easter Potluck following morning service..

Monday through Saturday, April 2-7

Breakfast With the Master at First Christian Church in Mount Ayr, 6:30 a.m.

Friday, April 6 is the morning for our church group to help with cleanup.

Wednesday, April 4

Prayer service at 7 p.m at Gloria Slayton's home in Lamoni

Sunday, April 8 -- Easter Sunday

Easter Sunday services on regular schedule