

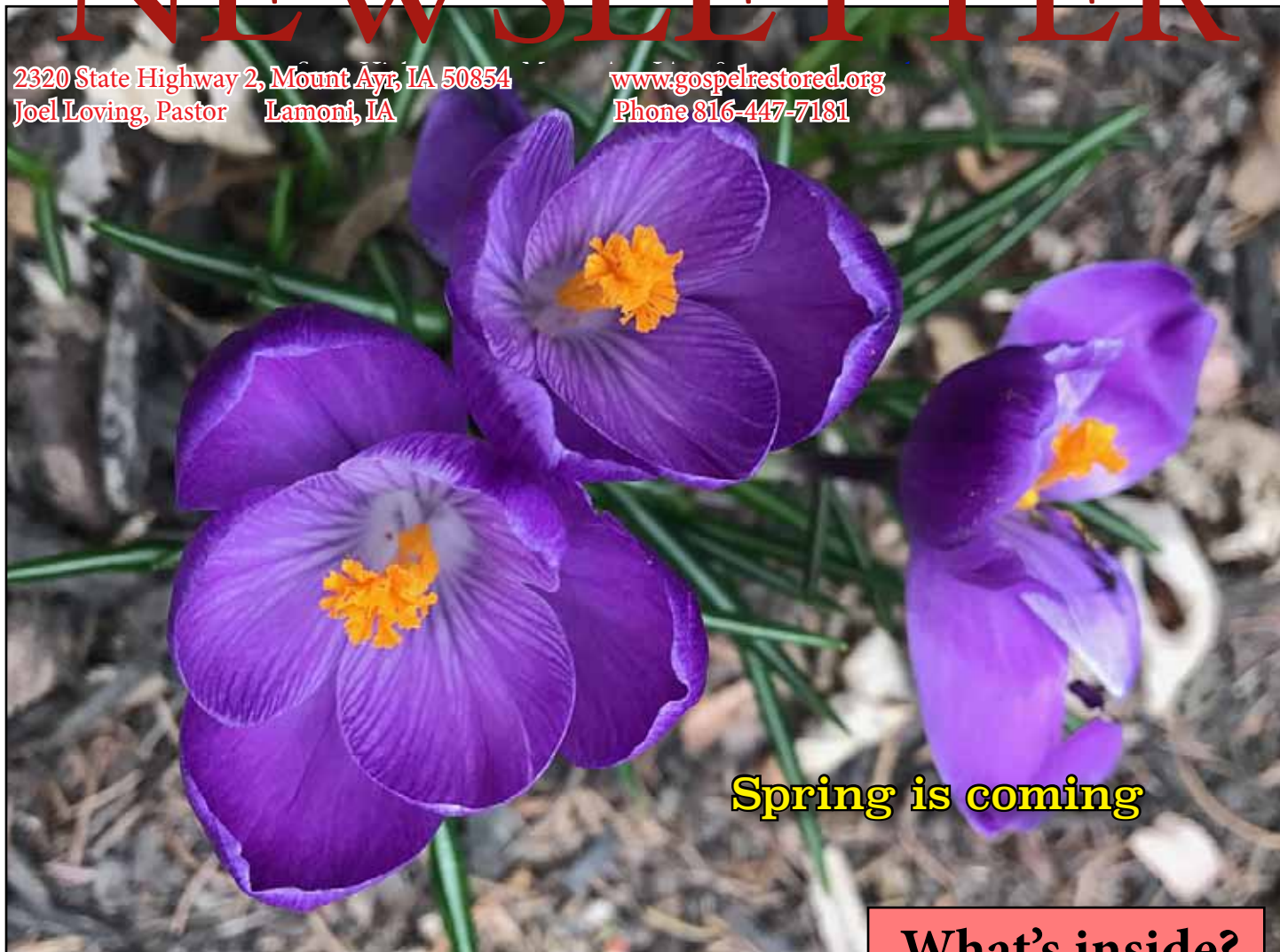
# Church of Jesus Christ

*Mount Ayr Restoration Branch*

# NEWSLETTER

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**Spring is coming**

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## News & Notes

### Valentine's fun

A special Valentine's evening was held Sunday, Feb. 12, sponsored by the youth of the branch.

There was an evening of fellowship, Italian cuisine and music, held in the basement of the Lamoni Community of Christ church from 6 to 8 p.m.



# KEPT BLAMELESS

**Elder Tony Crandel**  
**Lamoni, Iowa**  
**February 5, 2016**

My scripture today is from 1Thes-salonians 5:23-4. *And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you who also will do it.*

**B**ack in October I spoke about the reason that Jesus gave for repentance. I am going to repeat a couple of my opening paragraphs as background for the message today.

“Repent!” He says, “For the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!” (Matthew 4:16) Repent – for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.

He didn’t come saying repent so you will avoid God’s wrath, although that probably will be the outcome for the wicked. He came and said repent so that you can participate in something wonderful with Him, such as eternal life, Zion, heaven on earth.

We commit a common error in this modern day by saying “I don’t want to do bad things, and I want to make sure I don’t have to suffer the bad consequences of doing bad things.” So - will I keep on just trying not to do bad things? Our fear is of the consequences, not the joy and opportunity that God offers us. Repentance is turning from something to something else, or rather Someone else.

Sometimes after we are baptized, we have covenanted with Christ and He has forgiven my sins, I seem to be only getting worse, sinning more frequently.

You’re not getting worse. Your conscious is becoming more sensitized, which is how it should be. You thought “I have made my commitment at the waters of baptism and all my sins were forgiven.” “Ten years now as a member but it seems as if things are worse, my sin debt is larger than it has ever been... what gives?”

And if you remember, I closed that sermon with the following exhortation: “It was never the purpose of God that you should spend the rest of your time looking back in regret. No, repentance turns us around and by His grace He says “Look at the joy that can be yours!” So, when we sin or turn back to God, how do we reconcile our sinfulness with God’s grace?

Well, first there is the problem of transgression, our breaking of God’s law. Second is the problem of sin which is our falling short of God’s standard. The reason for these two things, is what the Bible calls iniquity, the flaw in our very nature that gives rise to our sin and our transgression.

Let’s take a look at this problem through a real life example. The Exxon Valdez oil spill occurred in Prince William Sound, Alaska, on Good Friday, March 24, 1989, when Exxon Valdez, an oil tanker owned by Exxon Shipping Company, bound for Long Beach, California, struck Prince William Sound’s Bligh Reef at 12:04 am local time and spilled 11 million US gallons of crude oil over the next few days. It is considered to be one of the most devastating human-caused environmental disasters. Prince William Sound’s remote location, accessible only by helicopter, plane, or boat, made government and industry response efforts difficult and severely taxed existing plans for response.

According to official reports, the ship was carrying approximately 54 million US gallons of oil. A figure of 11 million US gallons is a commonly accepted estimate of the spill’s volume. The volume of the spill was calculated by subtracting the volume of material removed from the vessel’s tanks after the spill from the volume of the original cargo. As of December 15, 2009, Exxon paid all the owed \$507.5 million dollars in punitive damages, including lawsuit costs, plus interest, which were further distributed to thousands of plaintiffs. Exxon says it spent about \$2.1 billion on the cleanup effort.

As a result of this event we remember there was a problem in the courts, there was a problem on the beaches, and with 43 million gallons of oil still in the ship, there was yet a remaining problem in the hull. The problem in the courts was the issue of justice, a price to be paid for this disaster. The problem on the beaches was the problem of pollution. There was a cleanup job to do and it was going to be expensive and it was not going to be easy. There was a problem in the hull. If they did not deal with the source of this leaking crude, then the problem was only going to get worse in the future.

And we see these same issues, as we come as a sinner to God. He deals with us at each of these levels. We see there are at least four issues of concern here.

1-Justice - There is a price to be paid – (paid by the sacrifice of Christ)

2-Pollution - The consequences of our sin. A clean up job to do...

3-Confession and 4-Repentance – The problem that is yet remaining in the hull, (iniquity in the heart), which, if we don’t do something about admitting the flaw (confession) and fixing that (repentance), the problem will only resurface again.

There are two common mythical responses to these four levels:

Myth #1- Attempting to do penance. What works can we offer that will make up for what we have done wrong? The more you struggle with your confession, the more examples of sin you’ll remember, you will never catch up! Remember last time I talked about Martin Luther; the more he tried to recall all of his sins, the more he uncovered.

Myth #2 - God is only looking for one thing from a sinner, that he is sorry, truly sorry! Repentance is being sorry for your sin, so sorry that you will never commit that act again. Being sorry will never change the source problem in the hull, (your heart.) Being sorry is not enough to change the direction of a man’s life. Being sorry doesn’t begin to address the root habits in our heart that



causes our day-to-day actions. Being sorry is an inadequate solution.

What are the three most flippant, insincere words we hear every day? "Sorry about that." Those three words immediately dismiss everyone's responsibility and never address the four issues.

Again, it was never the purpose of God that you should spend the rest of your time looking back in regret. No, repentance turns us around to a different direction.

We came this morning to this communion service to remember our sins, to confess our sins and to offer our hearts to Christ that he might empty the hull (our heart) and fill it with His Holy Spirit.

But Tony, you say, I haven't heard any Aha! moments yet this morning. OK!

I come every first Sunday of the month, to commune and ask for forgiveness of my sins, but what would happen three weeks from now if I got run over by a truck. I have accumulated three more weeks of sin. Communion is still a week away. Am I doomed? How do I bridge the gap?

If something would happen and you would enter in to heaven on that day it is not because you are without sin...but because of Jesus Christ you are without blame. If God wanted to bring charges against any of us as Christian believers, there are a multitude of charges He could bring at any moment of our life. He chooses not to do that. And why does He not do that? Because these things have already been charged to Jesus Christ. So even though we may come to the end of our Christian life, whether it be timely or untimely, and be a long way from what our Christian life should have been, God does not blame us. There are no charges, therefore there is no condemnation. We are not sinless but we are blameless because He is not bringing an accusation against us and laying it to our charge.

That is the mercy of God, and that can only be due to the sacrifice and mercy of Jesus Christ. That is why it is so important to keep coming back each Communion Sunday to that blessing of

forgiveness that is ours in Jesus Christ. By doing that, we are justified, we have peace with God in and through Jesus Christ because of everything He did on the cross.

How many times in your Christian life have you looked at yourself and looked back at all the years you have tried to be a "good" Christian, and said to yourself, I am still so far from what God called me to be. You know, looking back like that is not a bad thing.

Anyone who looks into the brightness of the glory of Christ will feel like that, and when he looks back at himself and his life, it will look quite dark. You will feel that way about yourself as you reflect on your Christian walk, "I think I am still so far from what Jesus Christ called me to be."

**I**n our scripture, Paul is saying "Be encouraged." Because God, by His Spirit, did begin a work in your life, He will complete it! There will be a unique and complete and wonderful reflection of the Lord Jesus Christ completed in you. God will take all of the good things in your life and even the bad things in your life as well, and out of it will shine a reflection of His glory that will be for His honor and for your ever-increasing joy. Remember, it is God who brought you into this relationship with Jesus Christ. He will be faithful and He will do it. He will not abandon His own work in you, half-way done. He will bring it to completion.

So, if I get run over by a truck a week ahead of next Communion Sunday, I will still enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, blameless, but not sinless. If it were not this way, the only way you could enter in to Heaven sinless, is to die right after you took the wine in this morning's communion service.

Aha!

It says in 1 Thessalonians 5:19-24: *Quench not the Spirit; Despise not prophesyings; Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil; And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is He*

*that calleth you, who also will do it.*

Paul says, I know God who called you is faithful, and He will do it. He will finish His work in you if you endure to the end. There will be a perfect complete reflection of the glory of Jesus Christ in you and it will be the work of God and it will be your everlasting joy.

I want you to notice Paul's second request, May your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved (kept) blameless unto (at) the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

### "Kept Blameless"

Now look carefully at what Paul says: he didn't say "may God make you blameless," he says "may your whole soul and body be kept blameless," implying that is the position you are already in! (Kept Blameless!)

You say, 'Well, I don't think that could be said for me, I am so far from being a perfect Christian, how can that be said of me? Tony, I am confused.'

Well let's look at what he says again, he doesn't say "may you be kept sinless...You and I are very far from being sinless...why, that's exactly why we are here today; we came to confess, and



Tony Crandell



to repent, because we all sin in many ways continuously, and continually. He doesn't say, may you be kept sinless, he says "may you be kept blameless." What does that mean?

Let's look at the word blame in the dictionary. Here is what it says: To find fault with for an offense; to fix responsibility on or to hold a person responsible.

Now here is the very heart of the Gospel. We all sin in many ways. But in Christ, God has chosen not to fault us over that. He has decided in His endless mercy not to fix responsibility for that on you. How can He do that? Because He put the blame for your sin on His son Jesus Christ. God held and

is holding Christ responsible for your sin; Christ took the blame; God faulted Him!

Christ bore the wrath for you on the cross. And there on the day when you enter into heaven, it is not because you are without sin, but because in Jesus Christ you are without blame. The responsibility, the faulting has been placed on Him! What Paul is saying to us here is that God who placed that blame on Jesus, the God who transferred that guilt, the God who faulted Him, will keep you so at your last day; you will be blameless, not because you are sinless, but because Christ took the blame for you!

God reconciles us to Himself by not

counting mankind's sins against them; that is why Jesus Christ, who never sinned, became sin for us so that in Him we should become the righteousness of God. Now notice again how these two concepts are brought together at the end of Paul's letter.

Scripture: 1Thessalonians 5:23-24 *And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you who also will do it.*

This blessing of blamelessness is only available to those who love Christ, obey His commandments, and endure to the end.



# WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO KNOW GOD?

**Seventy**  
**David Drummond**  
**Farmington, Iowa**  
**February 12, 2017**

As a Call to Worship Brother Jim Barber read Psalms 46:1-5. *God is our refuge and strength, a present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth shall be removed, and though the mountains shall be carried into the midst of the sea; And the waters thereof roar, being troubled, and the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Yet there shall be a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacle of the Most High. For Zion shall come, and God shall be in the midst of her; she shall not be moved; God shall help her right early.*

**O**ur God is an awesome God! The scripture that I've chosen for my scripture reading is the same as our opening Call to Worship. I believe that Jim and I choosing the same scripture is confirmation that the message that the Lord

has given me is really from Him and is not from the mind of Dave Drummond. If you would hear the word of the Lord again, *God is our refuge and strength, a present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth shall be removed, and though the mountains shall be carried into the midst of the sea; And the waters thereof roar, being troubled, and the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Yet there shall be a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacle of the Most High. For Zion shall come, and God shall be in the midst of her.*

I tell you I'm overcome with the Spirit and the way that things have come together for me. I like to tell people when I come to speak what the sermon title is. If we're going to walk with Him I think that really begs the question, 'what does it mean to know God?' So that's my sermon title today. I guess the subplot would be, if we know Him, do we act like Him?

I want to read from Psalm 46:10 to start the sermon. You got to hear the first part of that Psalm twice. Evidently

the Lord wanted to emphasize that. We live in a world that can be so troubled. Yet He is our refuge and Zion is going to return.

There are people here of all different experiences in life and length of time here on the earth. We have little Madelyn here and isn't she beautiful. She's just getting started in life. I can look out here and see a few people that because of the lines on their faces and the color of their hair I recognize that they've got a little more experience in life. Believe me I know that God still has a work for you to do and a purpose to find out. He desires for you to continue to seek to know Him, even better than you have. Verse 10 in Psalm 46 says this. *Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.*

I don't know how you feel about your relationship with Jesus Christ. I hope that you have a powerful, wonderful relationship with Him, but I want to tell you that no matter how good it is, no matter how wonderful it is, no matter how much you feel like you've been led





by Him or not led by Him, He desires to have a closer relationship with you. He desires to be a part of your life and to give to you the blessings that He has prepared for all of His children.

I'm a man that believed in God for a long time. I've been in the priesthood since 1978 and I believed all that time. I can testify to you today I know how much God loves me and how much He loves you and the desires that He has for you to escape the things of the world that would bring you down. If we choose to serve Him and be His children we have the promise that we don't have to fear no matter, what this world throws at us.

The first thing I'd like to talk to you about is some characteristics that I believe that are so important if we're going to be the kind of people that God desires us to be. The first one I hope that you are willing to do, maybe you already have been working on this, but I tell you it says in the scriptures over and over and over again that we have to endure to the end. I'm going to share a couple of testimonies as I talk to you today. I'm not bragging. I haven't endured to the end yet because there's still more before me but we need to be the kind of people that are willing to surrender to God completely.

I remember a country western song a few years ago. Have you ever heard of Carrie Underwood? Do you remember what her first song was? "Jesus Take the Wheel." That was the first song that she released and was out there for public dispersion if you will. That should be the anthem cry of the Latter Day Saints. We should understand that yes we have to do some stuff but that God desires to be behind our life and to share with us the blessings that He's prepared for us individually.

He desires to be a part of each of your lives. He desires to be in control of your life not so that He can boss you around or take you places that you don't want to go, but so that you can be prepared to receive the blessings that He desires for you to have in your life. He does this in spite of the fact that sometimes we're very rebellious.

I told Joel in between Sunday school

and church that Rob had stolen my thunder. You are going to hear some of the same things that you heard in Rob's class this morning, at least the same message again. You were talking in class about the comparison between Israel in the Old Testament and the church today. If we did do what Rob asked us to do and insert the word America in Isaiah 28 instead of Israel how truly would we find that those things really speak to us today and how important the Old Testament is for us to understand and put it in context.

**Y**ou know in Amos it says that God will do nothing unless He first reveals it through the mouth of the prophets. He doesn't leave us out here to guess. He tells us what it is that He wants for us to have in our lives. He tells us what it is that we need to do. This is not an indictment of you any more than it is of me, but too often in my own life I desire to have things work out the way that I hope that they will. That's not generally the case of what happens, and I have to tell you that I am so thankful that that's not the case. Because I know that God has a perfect knowledge of that which has been, which is now and which is to be.

He desires for you to receive that which is prepared for you to meet the challenges that are going to be there in your life and to be able to savor the beauty of the blessings that He has prepared for you whether it be in your family, your friends, or your church relationships. I have to tell you, God has a plan and we don't even recognize that. We need to surrender to Him.

I've been here a few times and I don't know if I've ever shared this testimony but I'd like to just briefly share it. I won't give you all the details but I'd just like to tell you that in December of 1985 I was perfectly and wonderfully employed making really good money working for the Burlington Northern Railroad. I had been out of town working and when I got back into town I went to my Dad's filling station.. As I was filling up my car this man in a police uniform came up and looked at me. I had no idea who he was. He said, 'You

know your Dad told me that you'd like to go to work for me.' I promise you I never said that and I knew that my Dad never said that. My instinct was to say, 'I think you've got the wrong guy.' As I started to turn and say that to him I felt the impress of the Spirit, that still small voice that many of you have experienced in your life where you find yourself in a situation that doesn't even make sense to you. I looked at him and I just knew that I shouldn't let this opportunity go by.

I was the senior carpenter on the bridge and building crew and they wanted me to go on the train service. I was going to be making a lot of money but I just couldn't let this job go by. I just praise God that He speaks when I don't know what to say. Out of my mouth came these words, 'Well, you know I'd really be interested in finding out if you would be a good fit for me and I'd be a good fit for you.' That guy just smiled at me. Looking back I think he was testing me to see if I was an honest person because he knew my Dad never said that either.

Well, I went through the process and got on with the Iowa Department of Transportation Motor Vehicle Enforcement and became a police officer. I served just shy of 25 years. The neat thing is that in April of 2010 I was called to the office of Seventy in the church. I was able to retire in July of 2011. I had a year to get ready to serve in that office. The Lord told me when I was ordained a Seventy that my mission field was here in the United States going from shore to shore. I've been to Maine a couple of times. I've been clear out to Puget Sound and Oregon and most places in between. I've been on Indian reservations. I've been out trying to find the scattered Saints that are the debris, if you will, (I don't say that in a disrespectful way) of what we've allowed to happen to us in the church because we've decided to separate instead of unify.

We've decided that we have a better idea than God does and we haven't been willing to listen. I believe that if we would have listened that would have never happened. We should have fallen



on our knees and asked what's happened in the church. I am not pointing the finger at anybody because I think in the Restoration there's plenty of blame to go around, plenty of folks to point the finger at.

In the Doctrine & Covenants it tells us that there will be just a remnant of the people, just a few who will be what God has called them to be. If He didn't shorten His hand even the very elect would be deceived. You've all heard that before. If you are like me, because I've been guilty of this, you are glad that you are not one of those who will be deceived. Many times I hope I'm in that select group, the ones that have not been deceived.

As I look back on my life I don't know how I ended up right where I am other than God has been in control of my life to help me to end up in the places where He needs me to be.

I know this that God loves each one of you and He desires for you to have the blessings of life. I need to complete my testimony here. I got on with the State as a Motor Vehicle Enforcement Officer and it wasn't through any planning or plan of mine. It turns out after I got in there that at 55 years old with 22 years of service you could retire with a fully vested pension from IPERS Retirement Plan for public State employees. Well, I had 25 years when I hit 55 so I got a little extra. Now I don't have to worry. I do have a little part-time job because I was way too young not to have something to do. God had a plan for me in 1985 and I expect He had a plan for me a lot longer than that.

I want to share another testimony with you. I want to share my conversion experience with you. I will tell you that I was baptized in the river down below Camp Nauvoo when I was 10. Some of you may have known Dick Hettrick. He was a fine man in the church. He was an appointee minister who served in the Nauvoo area. He was in charge of the youth camps the year that I was 10. I went to camp and I learned to love the Book of Mormon. I came from a mixed family. My Dad was a Baptist and my Mom was a Latter Day Saint. My Dad wasn't against the church though. He

wasn't like some Baptists I guess. He loved my Mother and he recognized the qualities that she had so he didn't challenge her when she sent me to church and when I had the opportunity to go to camp.

When I was there I fell in love with the message that's in the Book of Mormon and how God loves and is reaching through time to all peoples. He's not a respecter of persons and He desires for us to have the first fruits and the blessings that He has prepared. I made a decision that week at camp that I would like to join the church. Of course the camp directors called and got permission from my parents and of course, my parents didn't miss my baptism.

**L**ots of people think your conversion experience is when you make the decision to be baptized, but just like we are called to endure to the end I want to tell you that it's incumbent on the oldest of you and the youngest of you to keep looking for the ways that God is moving in your life so that you can surrender to Him. I had a wonderful experience in my baptism and in my confirmation but I was so young it really didn't have the impact on me that it could have had if I had been a little older. But here I was about 21 years old and Kathy and I had been married for about three years and she was pregnant with our child, Keri. I was driving back and forth from Ottumwa, Iowa to Chariton, Iowa.

The guy that I carpooled with was a Baptist lay minister and he was witnessing to me about Christ. Of course, I had told him what church I belonged to but he didn't believe in the Book of Mormon and other things our church believes in. He was really friendly and there were no issues between us.

If any of you are familiar with the road between Albia and Chariton, you will know there isn't a lot out there. There's the corner for Melrose and back in those days there was a little store there where we sometimes got a soda or something on the way back. One particular day we were visiting. Our pattern was that we would visit all the way from Ottumwa about an hour over to Chariton and then we'd work all day. He

happened to be my foreman by the way. He was trying to convince me of the rightness of his doctrine, not because he hated me, but because he loved me. He wanted me to have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

It's amazing to me that I was able to hold my own with him. I hadn't looked at the scriptures for a number of years but God's Spirit was there and I was able to point out some things in the scriptures in a way that he hadn't thought about.

On this particular day that I want to tell you about we had visited for about 25 minutes when he told me that he'd really like to take a 10 or 15 minute nap the rest of the way to work if it was all right with me. He laid his head over against the window and immediately started snoring. I was driving along very happy. We'd had a pleasant conversation. All of a sudden I had a conversion experience. I think you can have more than one. The voice of the Lord which was a voice of power, spoke in a very powerful way and told me that I had been called from before the time that I was born, to serve His people and now was the time that I should respond.

There was a guy named Ray Holloway who was an elder in the church in Ottumwa. The voice of the Lord told me that I was supposed to call Ray as soon as I could and that I was going to be an elder in the church and would bring many people to Christ. I wasn't even going to church. I was kind of an unchurched person at that time.

It's always great to have a second witness when you have an experience. I couldn't wait to call Ray but I had to go on to work. I couldn't just call in sick. I looked over at Al and he wasn't lying over on the window any more but he was sitting straight up in the seat. He looked at me and said, 'Dave, what just happened?' I said, 'The Lord just spoke to me and told me that I'm going to be a minister in His church and I'm going to baptize many and bring many to a relationship with Jesus Christ.' He looked at me and said, 'Dave, I did not hear the voice but I have never in my entire life as a Christian, felt the power and presence of God like I just did.' Never again



did he try to convince me that his way was right. You know the way we call men to the priesthood. We don't choose to be ministers but the Lord chooses us and works through pastors of congregations. When it came time to have a business meeting to consider my call to the Priesthood my friend Al came and bore his testimony about this call to be a minister for Christ.

Immediately when I got home and called Ray. I didn't even tell Kathy. I was so jacked up that I ran into the house and grabbed the phone. I didn't even know Ray's number because I never called him, so I had to look up his phone number to call him. Kathy could tell that something was going on because I'm usually kind of sedentary, steady. She's kind of like a flibbertigibbet. She's everywhere. We're a good match. She makes me move a little faster and I keep her grounded. She said, 'What's going on? What's going on?' I found Ray's number and called him. The phone rang once. I heard the receiver being picked up and before the person on the other end could say anything I said, 'Ray, this is Dave Drummond.' Do you know what he said? 'I know. I've been waiting on you to call.' God wasn't just speaking to me. He was also speaking to Ray.

I want you all to understand that as we surrender our lives to Jesus Christ, He will guide us into places that we never thought that we could be. He will give to us lessons that we never deserved or even knew to desire. I think in many ways in my life there have been times when I've been one of the rankest sinners there could be. Yet God has called me and He's forgiven me and He directs my life and He desires for me to be a part of the vast army of folks that are trying to help bring to pass the Kingdom of God here on earth.

The second thing I'd like to talk to you about is the characteristic of somebody that really knows God because we need to know what it means to experience Him in person. I just told you an experience about that but I'd like to read to you from the Doctrine and Covenants 38:2. But, behold, verily, verily I say unto you, that mine eyes are upon

you: I am in your midst and ye can not see me, but the day soon cometh that ye shall see me and know that I am; for the veil of darkness shall soon be rent, and he that is not purified shall not abide the day: wherefore, gird up your loins and be prepared. Behold, the kingdom is yours and the enemy shall not overcome. How do you feel about that? I don't know what kind of relationships and experiences all of you have but I hope every one of you has had a personal relationship with Him. Some kind of experience that's spoken to your heart and helped you to understand what it means to be His disciple and what it means to feel His love descend and touch you in a very personal way, a way that's just meant for you.

**I** look back at Rodney and what comes to mind? The church is so small. I'll never forget Rodney's Aunt Alice telling me a story. Sometimes in life you never know how things are going to work out and how interrelated you are. She loved to tell me this story. She said one day she was walking to school. Now my Dad grew up on a farm over east of Kellerton about three miles and evidently Alice's family lived pretty close. She was walking to school and saw this Model T coming down the dirt road. It was going from one side of the road clear to the other. She couldn't see anybody using the steering wheel but she saw my Aunt Mary sitting in the back seat. That would be a little scary wouldn't it?

Alice told me she ran down in the grader ditch and got up on the hill so she could be safe. The car pulled up and stopped. She still couldn't see who was driving the car. My Dad had a twin brother. Dad was steering the car and my uncle Wayne was down on the floor working the foot feet. My aunt Mary was in the back seat and asked Alice if she wanted a ride to school! That's a good story and I'll never forget her telling me that.

You see sometimes in life we aren't always able to understand exactly where we're going or how we're going to get there. I'm sure as Alice looked out there on that dirt road and saw that car coming at her and couldn't see anyone

at the wheel, she was probably scared. Especially since the car was going from one side of the road to the other. I guess what kept her from being too scared was she knew my Aunt Mary which gave her some stability.

I don't know what your life's experience has been but I've had a lot of different things happen in life. Most of them have been really good but some of them were really terrible. God wants us to trust in Him. He wants us to have a personal relationship with not only Himself, but His Father. A lot of times our brothers and sisters in other parts of the church talk about getting people to have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ but I want to tell you something.

Having a personal relationship with Christ is where I think the church has been residing for too long. If we just have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and not God, where are we? What kind of life are we living? It's the terrestrial life. What's God desire for us? He desires us to live with Him, in His presence. That requires something of us. When He speaks to us there in Section 38 He says His eyes are upon us. God's eyes are upon us and He desires to be just as much a part of our lives as His Son that He sent to be there for us, to be the ransom for our sins. It's wonderful to be in the presence of Christ but even more wonderful is when you are able to be in the presence of God.

I can't get up and speak to people without sharing testimonies. They are the things that have shaped me and molded me. I'm not special. God wants you to have these same kinds of testimonies. I won't go into all the details but suffice it to say something was going on in my church life that I didn't think was very good and I was very troubled by it. My greatest and most wonderful gift that God has given me is my wife Kathy. I was terribly troubled about this thing that was happening and wondering what I needed to do to get ready for it. We prayed about it together and I went to bed.

I don't care what's going on when it's time for Dave Drummond to go to sleep, I do. I don't have any trouble sleeping. One time when I was on the



railroad I went out and sat down in the walkway with my back up against the motor of a locomotive and went to sleep. Anyway, I went in and went to bed. I didn't know, but my wife came in and knelt down and prayed to God that He would give me the answer that I needed. That He would give me the peace that He promised and help me to understand what it was that I needed to do.

Since I'm such a good sleeper I don't wake up very easily. I'm the kind of person that if I have to be out of the house I need about an hour and a half to get my gears moving. It's gotten worse as I've gotten older. I don't just wake up ready to go. This particular morning at 5 o'clock my eyes came open. I sat up. All my limbs were working correctly. I didn't have to walk around and get limbered up. My mind was thinking clearly and I recognized that the Spirit was there with me. So I went in to the living room. I have this chair, just a La-Z-Boy recliner, but I've encountered God while sitting in that chair. I sat there in that chair and I recognized God and said, 'Yes, God, I recognize you. What do you have for me? Have you got an answer to this thing that's been bothering me?' I asked once. Nothing. I asked twice. Nothing and I asked again the third time and that rascally rabbit God He answered me and said, 'You need to prepare yourself to stand in the judgment of Ananias and Sapphira.'

Do you all know that story? They died! That's a little scary. I started petitioning God with all the power of my soul. How do I do that? What do I do different than I'm already doing? All the questions that any of you can ask I sat there and asked from 5 o'clock until about 7 when Kathy finally got around. She wasn't out there helping me with that part.

She got up and got around and we got busy with the things that were happening in our day and went to bed that night. I almost forgot about that experience I'd had early that morning. I don't know how I could, but I'm a human being and I did. I went to bed and do you know what happened the next day at 5 o'clock in the morning? I was wide

awake again. I jumped out of bed and ran into the chair and sat there and said, 'Yes, Lord, are you going to give me the answer today?' Nothing. I said, 'Lord, I need to know the answer to this. How do I prepare? What more do I need to do?' I started doing what a lot of us do. I started saying, 'Well, you know I go to church every Sunday. I'm a minister and when people call I'm there to help.' Nothing. Finally a third time I said, 'Lord, please hear your servant. Help me know how I am to be faithful to this which you told me to do.'

Most of the people that have been around awhile know what a newsreel is. I saw my life as in a newsreel. You know in the Book of Mormon it talks about judgment and part of that is that we're going to see ourselves as we are seen. I saw my life flash before my eyes as I sat there in that La-Z-Boy recliner in my living room pleading with God to help me understand what it was that I needed to do to prepare myself to stand the judgment of Ananias and Sapphira.

**T**here were some really good things that I was glad to see as that newsreel showed me about my life. But in the sincerity of my heart I have to confess to you, brothers and sisters, that there were some things that broke my heart. I saw some of the decisions that I'd made and some of the choices that I had made, some of the things that I hadn't done that I knew that I should have done. When those things started to come before my eyes I said, 'Yes, Lord, that's who I've been, but I know Jesus and He died for me that I could be free from those things.'

As soon as I said that, the newsreel stopped and I had a peace that I can't even begin to understand or describe to you. I asked the Lord, 'what was that about?' He said, 'you are now ready to stand the judgment of Ananias and Sapphira.' I said, 'But, Lord, I don't understand. I haven't done anything.' He said, 'Most people when confronted with their sin make excuses for it. Blame it on other people. Deny that it happened. You didn't do any of those things. You acknowledged who you are but most importantly you acknowledged whose

you are and you are now ready.'

I'm still a work in progress and I may have been ready that day but I have to work every day of my life to try and be ready so that I can have that kind of a personal relationship with my God and His Son. I believe that He's made it incumbent and He's spoken to me over and over again that when I go out and speak to the Saints that I need to encourage them that God is not dead. The church is not dead. What God has for us is not over but He's waiting for a people that are willing to admit who they are and whose they are. His eyes are upon us.

The next characteristic that I'd like to talk to you about kind of goes along with this testimony that I just shared. To know God means being honest about who we are and where we are in our walk with Him. I don't think God wants us to wallow around because all that does is allow our human thinking to stay where we've been. There are people here in this building right now that can look back on their church experience and they have wonderful memories. I already shared one of mine when I learned to love the Book of Mormon and I made that decision to be baptized. Another experience was when God spoke to me in that car that day and when He prepared me to stand the judgment of Ananias and Sapphira. Maybe you've had similar experiences like these.

I'd like to turn your attention to the Book of Mormon Mosiah 1:117, 119-122. *For behold, he judgeth, and his judgment is just, . . . For the natural man is an enemy to God, and has been, from the fall of Adam, and will be, for ever and ever; But if he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and putteth off the natural man, and becometh a saint, through the atonement of Christ, the Lord, and becometh as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father. And moreover, I say unto you, that the time shall come, when the knowledge of a Savior shall spread throughout every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. And behold, when that time cometh, none shall be*





*found blameless before God, except it be little children, only through repentance and faith on the name of the Lord God Omnipotent.*

Saints, we're in that time. There is no time for us to make excuses. We have to be honest about who we are and what's happened in our life. None of us are without spot and blame for the things that have happened, some to a bigger degree and some to a lesser degree, but God doesn't do degrees, does He? He tells us that all sin causes us to fall short. I don't care what's happened in your life before. If you're honest with yourself, if you're honest with God, you may feel convicted to get up before the church and confess every little thing. If you feel convicted to do something like that, that's up to you, but I'm not telling you that's what you need to do. But you need to be honest with God and He'll be honest with you and then you are a people with promise. In Psalm 46 it says *Zion is going to come. Well, Saints, Zion is going to come and it's not that far off.*

I want to end where I started. I talked to you about the Carrie Underwood song, 'Jesus, Take the Wheel.' Well, my last characteristic for you today is that you are willing to accept God's sovereignty. I'll tell you what I'm thinking about now. How many of you remember the first part of the 4th Book of Nephi when it's talking about the people? Do you remember that?

I hope some of you do. Jesus had been there in the 3rd Book of Nephi. He established His church and the disciples had gone out and carefully responded to things that God had called them to do. The 4th book starts off and names some characteristics of those people. I'm going to read 4th Nephi 1:117-121. *And it came to pass that there was no contention in the land, because of the love of God which did dwell in the hearts of the people. And there were no envyings, nor strifes, nor tumults, nor whoredoms, nor lyings, nor murders, nor any manner of lasciviousness; And surely there could not be a happier people among all the people who had been created by the hand of God: There were no robbers, nor murderers, neither were there Lamanites, nor any manner of ites; but they were in*

*one, the children of Christ, and heirs to the kingdom of God; And how blessed were they, for the Lord did bless them in all their doings; yea, even they were blessed and prospered, until an hundred and ten years had passed away. Another place right there says that there was never a more delightful people.*

Saints, I am tired of being an ite. I can't control what anybody else does. I can only control what Dave Drummond does. I hope that you are tired of being an ite too. Why were they all of these things that I just read? It was because they had a relationship with Jesus Christ and they had recognized His sovereignty and not their own. I think in the Restoration we've been so self-righteous about so many things.

Saints, it's time to be looking to God to lead us in ways that we haven't even understood. He says if we're not one we're not His. I have to tell you I've studied on that a lot and I haven't come up with any solutions on that either. There are things that I think that we can't compromise on, but we can still love. There's going to be continued difficulties, but we can still love.

**I** really feel led to share this. Two weeks ago I was down in Holden, MO and preached. I think the congregation is called Eastgate Restoration Branch. It was a wonderful day. The class went really well and I felt the Lord gave me real liberty of speech. We had a nice carry in dinner afterwards. Look at me, you can tell that I like carry in dinners. Then we had a baptismal service afterwards. Randy Vick's granddaughter and a couple of other girls from the church were going to be baptized and they asked me to stay for that. The folks at the Community of Christ consented to let them use their building for the baptism. Many of the people that were there had been a part of the Community of Christ church before the situations that have happened in the church.

They were tickled to death to be able to use their building. The pastor from the CoC branch was there to run the sound system and make sure everything went all right. The one bad thing was that we tried to use the new hym-

nal there. They had changed the words so much that the guy that was playing the piano started to read and sing and he stopped twice. The reason I tell this isn't to say anything negative about the CoC. It's the fact that it just is a small thing in a way but it reminds me of the fact that we need to be willing to be loving in spite of those things. Randy had gone in and picked out the hymns but he went off the title and didn't read the words. The words were quite different than what we might want to sing but there was still a spirit of love there and there was still the Spirit of God there. My point is I don't know how God is going to work our differences out but I know God and I know that He's going to do it.

One of the things that I love about this branch and about our branch is that we've been open to anybody who wants to come and speak the words of life no matter what ite they are. It is my ultimate goal that we can get to the place where God is able to work in our lives. You know what it says about the church in the last days? How many churches are there going to be? Two and what are they. He says one's going to be His church and one's going to be the church of the devil. That doesn't leave a lot of room for all these other denominations. Denominations are going to fade away.

I had a wonderful time being part of the RLDS Church growing up. I'm here because of the experiences I had. It was wonderful but it wasn't good enough. There was never a happier people than the people I just read about in the 4th Book of Nephi but as wonderful as it was they ended up being overcome by the world. We have been told that if Christ doesn't shorten His hand even the very elect will be deceived.

Saints, if we acknowledge that God is sovereign over our lives we have no fears, we have no worries, we have no issues that have to separate us. There may be some things that we need to love each other through but that's OK. I hope that every one of you is dedicated to not being an ite anymore. I hope that every one of you is dedicated and that the desire of your heart above everything else to be a part of the Church of the First-



born because if we can do that He'll take care of this other stuff. We need to have our hearts and our minds open to His Spirit because He speaks to us. I've shared testimonies with you about the way that He's spoken to me. I tell you I

know that I am nothing special and He desires to speak to you and to lead you into paths of righteousness. So Saints I hope that we can allow our personalities to get out of the way and that we can allow God to lead us into this great adven-

ture of being a part of the return of Zion to the earth. I pray God's richest blessings upon you. I just want you to know how much I love you and I desire to see you all along with me in the Kingdom of God. May God bless you.



# IT'S TIME TO GET TO WORK

## High Priest Sherman Phipps Lamoni, Iowa February 19, 2017

Elder Steven Smith read from 1 Nephi 7:69 as a Call to Worship. *Wherefore, if ye shall be obedient to the commandments, and endure to the end, ye shall be saved at the last day.*

I want to read some bits and pieces from Isaiah 25 and 26 this morning. Isaiah is speaking on behalf of the Lord and he's talking about this mountain. I think he's talking about Jerusalem and I assume probably the New Jerusalem. So he says, *And in this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined. And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth; for the Lord hath spoken it. And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us; this is the Lord; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation. For in this mountain shall the hand of the Lord rest. . . (Isaiah 25:6-10)* Then he goes on and says, *Trust ye in the Lord forever; for in the Lord JEHOVAH is everlasting strength. Come, my people, enter thou*

*into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee; hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. For, behold, the Lord cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity; the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain. (Isaiah 26:4, 20-21)*

I stand in front of you this morning very sensitive to the fact that it's a beautiful day outside and there are a lot of other things you could have been doing but you chose to be here and I appreciate that. I especially appreciate Anna and Joe. Sitting up here thinking about you guys I remembered when Cheryl and I had three little kids. I remember specifically, when I was watching you, that one time I was going to school and I had to do a 10-month internship. They placed me at the Boys' Training School in Eldora, Iowa where boys who had problems were incarcerated.

There weren't any walls around the facility but it was pretty strict. We were very excited about living there because they told us that if we wanted to we could live in one of the condemned buildings on the grounds which meant we wouldn't have any rent for about 10 months. It's kind of strange when you think about getting excited for being allowed to live in a condemned building.

When we went there we had two children at the time. We had Jennifer who was probably a year and a half and Pam who was probably about three then. We lived in this condemned building in the middle of these prison grounds surrounded by young people

who society thought was dangerous. We made the effort to go to church no matter what the weather Sunday mornings and Wednesday nights. I think the closest church was about 45 miles away. So it was a struggle, probably more so for Cheryl than myself, because she had most of the care of the kids. There were weeks when we wondered if we could really afford to go because of the cost of gas. Of course, we were driving older used cars. Our family tried to go every time those doors were open. So I really appreciate the effort that it takes to be here with two little boys.

I want to be sure to tell you this that from my perspective it was worth every minute of it. The Lord has really, really blessed us. I think a lot of times the blessings have come because of those kinds of decisions. Our experience has been for a long time now that when we choose the Lord, He blesses us. I feel really strongly this morning that you can anticipate that too. If you choose Him, He will bless you even though it involves a lot of effort on your part.

There are a couple of things that the Lord has put on my heart for today. To start out I need a little help. Roger, would you be willing to help me this morning by sitting up here on the front row? You can bring Grandma or Rod or whoever you want. I was really hoping that you would be here this morning. Roger, you know you are our newest brother and I guess maybe our youngest brother as far as somebody who has actually just been baptized. Roger, I assume since you chose to get baptized



that you believe there is a God and that you believe He has a Son named Jesus who came and allowed Himself to be crucified and then was resurrected so that we could all have eternal life. This part of our lives here on this earth is just a part of our life.

I wonder how well acquainted you are with this God. If you are like most of us you have to start somewhere and you've done that. You've started out by believing. Then it takes a while sometimes to have experiences and to really get acquainted with God and know how He works in your life.

I wanted to tell you a few experiences this morning that I hope will be of some help to you. When I was probably about your age I was always the smallest guy in my class, the skinniest guy. Because of that, Roger, there were a lot of things that I worried about and a lot of things that I was afraid of. Belonging to this church and saying to my classmates, 'Yeah, I believe there is a God.' didn't always get a really positive reaction like I'd hoped it would. Some of my classmates would pick on me so I didn't particularly like going to school because I knew what was going to happen there.

But there were a lot of other things that worried me too, because I was little and didn't feel like I could take care of myself. I learned early on to take those worries to God and to pray about them and to ask Him for His help. I found out really early in my life that He really does hear our prayers and He really does care about what's going on in our lives and He pays attention to us every day.

As I have grown up through the years I've found out that's always true. He always knows what's going on with you. He hears everything that you're saying. The thing about that I wanted to be sure and mention to all of the adults too is that when we pray to Him, He hears every word. Guess what? He hears every word all the time whether we're praying to Him or not so we need to be careful about our words and be sure that they are acceptable to Him.

I wanted to share a couple of things with you this morning, Roger, about my experiences with God and hope that that these experiences will encourage

you to really develop this relationship with God that you've said you want. I've found out that He can do anything. There's just no limit to what He can do. If you get time eventually you will get to talk to all these people in this congregation and I'm sure all of them could tell you that.

Once upon a time I had an experience that I won't go into fully because everyone else has heard it. This arm got caught between two cars. I could hear it break. By the time I got home it was all swollen up and looked kind of like a grapefruit with little things sticking out of it and boy did it hurt. The short story is that I asked Cheryl if she would pray for me. We knelt down and she prayed and while she prayed I could feel the pain going out of my arm and leaving. When she was done my arm didn't hurt anymore and the swelling was all gone. It was just like it is now. I never did go to the doctor because it was fine. The Lord can do that when He wants to.

**A**nother time I got myself in kind of a jam because I shouldn't have been driving the way I was driving. Real quickly I had to make a decision whether I was going to run into another car or run off in the ditch. I chose to run off into the ditch. Except that when I went to yank the car over all of a sudden there were three lanes of highway instead of two like there had always been before so I just drove down the third lane until I got around everybody and then I pulled back over in my lane.

I went down the road a little ways and thought, 'Wow that third lane has never been there before.' I turned around and went back and sure enough it was just two lanes all the way back to town just like it had always been. He put a third lane for me when I needed it. He can do anything and He's willing to do anything for us if we just ask Him and if we live day-to-day like as though we really do want to be His children.

Another time I was in Texas on my motorcycle and I had one of my grandsons with me who was 16 years old at the time. He was on the back of the motorcycle with me and the real, real short story is that a car pulled in front of us

and stopped and there was no place to go. I was running like 60 miles an hour. We just drove through that car and never touched the car or the driver. We just drove through it and went right on down the road. The Lord knows what's coming up before you do. He knows what you're going to have to deal with and what you're going to need His help with.

One night I was in Des Moines and I was riding my motorcycle. I was going down this street that was three lanes one way. For some reason, I don't know why, that strip of road is really dark. There aren't as many street lights in that area as usual. It was a nice summer night and as I was driving, the Spirit told me to get in the other lane. Without knowing why I felt that really strongly, 'Get in the other lane.' So I swerved over into the other lane and as I did I realized I went right by the corner of a great big hole in the street.

They had apparently been working there because it was like a 4 x 8 hole. I would assume that they had put one of those metal plates across it like they do



*Sherman Phipps*

when they are working and somebody had thought it would be funny to pull the cover out of there. If I had ridden into that hole I would have been injured or killed. But He knows what's coming up and He can tell you, 'Move over or stop or go back.' I've had that happen to me too.

Just two years ago He told me to stop and go back and I did. Then I realized how important that was because it was flooding right ahead of me and I wouldn't have known about the flooding until I ran into it. By then it would have been too late.

I want you, Roger, to know that this God that you've said you are going to serve and worship is very real. There have been times when He's specifically spoken to me and told me, 'Here's what you need to do.' Sometimes it's been for my sake and sometimes it's been for the sake of other people.

One night I went home really late from a church activity. I got home and was just getting ready to go to bed and suddenly felt like I should get back up and go back out to a friend's house out in the country because he needed help. Then I thought, 'That's silly. Where did that thought come from?' I started to go ahead and get into bed and before I could get in bed the phone rang. It was another friend of mine and he said, 'The Spirit just told me our friend needs help.'

I said, 'Well, we need to get out there because the Spirit just told me that too.' So he came and picked me up and we ran out there and sure enough as we went around the corner and headed down his road which is a dead end road there he was down in the ditch surrounded by a bunch of guys who were getting ready to beat him up and rob him. We were able to get him out of there. But the Lord can do that. You are never ever out of His sight and you're never ever where He doesn't know what's going on with you.

When I was about 16 I wanted to get my Patriarchal Blessing. It's a blessing that's available to us that the Patriarchs can provide for us. You can just go and tell them that you want a blessing. It's a good idea to make some real preparation for it I think, some fasting

and prayer. It's a good idea if you are reading the scriptures all the time too. Anyhow I wanted to get my Patriarchal Blessing so I did fast and pray about it. The old fellow who was the Patriarch was a pretty simple guy but he was very spiritual and He loved God's people so I know he made special preparation for my blessing too. I went and he prayed over me and asked the Lord to bless me. He told me a number of things during that prayer. After the blessing is over it is typed up and given to you so that you will have it later so you can reread it and know what was said.

**T**he important thing, Roger, that I wanted to share with you today is that when I got that blessing that Patriarch told me things that I could never ever have guessed. They were so far out of the realm of what I knew that I didn't even understand what he was talking about when he told them to me. They sounded good but I had no idea what it really meant until years later. Many years later I was rereading it again and I realized that this man, under the influence of God, saw my life fifty years down the road from where we were at when I asked for my blessing. The Spirit of the Lord told him here's what's going to happen if this young man will follow Me.

I'm not saying I did a good job all the time but the Lord is really good to us. He knows our weaknesses and the things that we are going to do. He knows what will be difficult for us that we will need to repent of. But He prepares a way for us. Of course, that's what Jesus was all about that we could have a way to repent and keep coming back to God and keep letting Him work in our lives so He could accomplish His work with us and so that we could have joy and hope. Through the years I had a lot of things that I was afraid of but over time the Lord took those fears away from me. I realized I didn't have to be afraid of anything. As long as I was looking to the Lord and doing things His way He would protect me and He has.

One other little thing I'll tell you about is one of the times when he protected me. We'd been to church and we

were going home at night. I saw this young man coming down the street. From where we were he couldn't see but I could see that there were a group of guys waiting in the alley. I didn't know if they were waiting on him or someone else but I saw them so I slowed up to see what was going on. Sure enough when the young man got right to the corner of the building they all jumped out and surrounded him.

I thought, 'Well I can't just drive on by and let them beat him up.' They were already kind of pushing on him so I stopped even though Cheryl and maybe the girls were with me. I stopped and jumped out and of course they were over here in this alleyway. When I stopped I parked across the alleyway on the other side of the street but I didn't look back. I just stopped and jumped out and ran across the street and yelled at them and told them to let this young man go. I looked at the kid and said, 'Take off.' He did. He ran away.

Then I thought I need to get out of here before these guys decide to turn on me. When I turned around I realized there was an even bigger group of guys in the alley on this side of the street. I was in between them and out in the open. But do you know what? I just prayed about it and not a one of them said another word or made another move. I just walked back and got in my car and left. That was the Spirit of the Lord that held them in place until I could leave. He'll do that for you.

I want you to know, Roger, that you have made a good choice and that God is real and so is His Son Jesus. He does have angels and they are very real. They are available to us to help us when we need them. You'll learn this when you read the scriptures but He has certain servants who we call the Three Nephites and there are others such as John the Beloved and the two that were assigned to assist him. We don't know how many others there are on this earth to help us but there are men who when they were here on the earth served God in powerful ways by His power. They've been allowed to remain upon the earth and be available to us for our help if we need them and if we have faith that they are



and that God is. No matter where you go, Roger, you are always going to have this band of brothers and sisters; the ones that are here, but even more powerful the ones like the band that Rob sang about that are available to you.

If you are interested in this story read 2 Kings 6. You might also read 2 Kings 19 which talks about the angel of God destroying 185,000 of the Assyrians to save Jerusalem. You will have struggles and problems. I've had lots of problems and lots of days when I just thought I couldn't keep going but if you keep remembering to look to Him He'll provide a way for you. It might not always be easy. In fact that's the next thing I want to talk about to everybody.

You know before the Lord destroyed the earth with water He spoke to the people over and over and over. He sent His prophets to speak to them to tell them they needed to repent, and if they didn't repent they were going to be destroyed. They didn't repent and they were destroyed, totally wiped out except for Noah and his family who had been obedient. This has happened over and over in history.

It's happened in this country, in this land, to other people. Always He sends His prophets to tell the people they have to repent, humble themselves and obey God's words to submit themselves unto Him. You have to do things His way. Quit trying to be your own god. There's a scripture about that too. How in the last days every man will try to be his own god or think he is. We've got to repent of that. I'm not standing here this morning pretending to be Isaiah or Jeremiah or Ezekiel or Joseph Smith Jr. or any of the other prophets. But I am going to tell you and I hope you can hear this. The Lord has sent His prophets to us, to this generation over and over. We have all these prophecies and they were meant for us.

I don't know how much time you've taken to read Isaiah and Jeremiah and some of these Old Testament prophets but I'll tell you that based on my own experience in reading these, Isaiah and Jeremiah weren't speaking just to the people who lived in Jerusalem at that time. In fact, I think that that's clari-

fied in the scriptures. They say that a lot of these things that the prophets are saying are to their age and to you in the last days too. But these warnings that we have are all right here. We have them but I don't know how much time we spend listening to them. We also have all the Doctrine & Covenants revelations. We have the Book of Mormon which especially, Roger, talks about our land, this land and how the people have to serve God and if they don't He will destroy them. Those who do serve God have wonderful, wonderful promises.

But I felt really impressed this morning to remind you folks that these warnings are real. God has told us in this land you have to obey me and if you don't I will destroy you. I know we don't like to hear that. I'm not saying that to try to scare people, quite the opposite. I'm saying it because I feel like He's impressed on me that somebody has to sound the alarm. Somebody has to give the word and call the people and try to get not just us but all His people to understand that there is an enemy out there, the adversary, who is trying to destroy God's people and His work. He can't do it but he's trying. We need to try very hard to align our lives with God and with His commandments so that we do not fall to this enemy. We need to know that no matter what obstacles seem to be before us the Lord has a way of dealing with those.

**I** don't know how wound up I should get to try to warn you. I wish I was like Isaiah and Jeremiah and could stand up here and speak with great power. I think there is day coming when the priesthood will have that power. I'd like to be able to have that power for the sake of you people so that somehow I could share with you, by the Spirit, (because that's the only way it's going to happen), that we have to repent. We cannot continue to live the way that Babylon lives. We can't do that. We've got to repent and live our lives the way the Lord has directed us.

Of course, you can't do that if you don't know what the directions are so maybe a good place for all of us to start is to spend more time studying

the scriptures. I know some of you do spend a lot of time doing that. Studying the scriptures is very, very important. We've got to learn how to choose His way. We can only choose His way. We can only choose good versus evil and light versus darkness and life versus death when we have the direction of the Spirit. In everything all day we need His direction. As I've thought about that it always comes back to repentance. If we repent we will have His Spirit to be with us. That's what He tells us so we need to repent and quit trying to be our own gods and let Him be God. Like I said I wish I were a more powerful speaker so I could tell you what's coming and how important it is for us to repent and to do it His way.

There was another thing I wanted to share with you this morning and be sure that you understood. I wanted to share with you words from Jeremiah 32. Actually you need to read all of Isaiah and Jeremiah before reading Jeremiah 32 to understand what is going on there. The Lord has sent several prophets to this people and then He sends Jeremiah and Jeremiah really gets into the telling people, 'You're going to be destroyed. God is going to wipe you out.' Of course, the same things have been said to us by other prophets and I think, as I said earlier that the things that Jeremiah and Isaiah said are for us too. They were saying that He was going to wipe out this civilization in this country, these nations if they don't repent. Again, I would suggest to you that Jeremiah's words apply to us today just as much as they did to the people of his day.

After having Jeremiah go and preach to the people over and over about what the Lord was going to do to them if they didn't repent, He told Jeremiah to go buy a piece of property in Jerusalem. Here He's had Jeremiah go and tell all these people that the Lord was going to wipe out Jerusalem and scatter the people. There wasn't going to be anything left of Jerusalem. Then He tells Jeremiah to go buy a piece of property. If you think about that why would He tell Jeremiah to go buy a piece of property in a place that God was going to destroy? Well, because there's more to the





story. He has also promised that those who will be His people will be blessed and be restored to the land; everything that they lost will be restored and will be theirs.

When I read that I thought that's really kind of a strange story. He's condemned these people, condemned this land and then tells Jeremiah that he needs to come up with 17 shekels of silver to buy this land. I wondered where Jeremiah got 17 shekels of silver because he had been a prophet of the Lord that the people hated, chased around and even imprisoned several times. With all that going on he certainly didn't have 17 shekels of silver saved up somewhere.

The reason I mention that is because for him to come up with those 17 shekels of silver and do what the Lord told him must have meant he had to dig deep and come up with everything he had. It couldn't have been easy for him but that's what the Lord is asking us to do.

He's asking us to dig deep and to come up with everything we have that will allow us to obey Him. We need to quit waiting and putting things off. We need to obey His commandments and to trust that He is in fact going to save His people. He's going to build His Kingdom. How many times do we talk about Zion anymore? It gets mentioned here and there but is there anybody left who really believes there is going to be a Zion? I hope there is because Zion will be. He said it so it will be.

I want to read a scripture to you from Jeremiah 32 that I was talking about earlier and then I'll be done. Jeremiah says to the people under the influence of the Lord, speaking first on his own behalf and then on behalf of the Lord to the people. He says, *Ah Lord God! behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched-out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee. (Jeremiah 32:17) I hope you remember those words this morning. There is nothing too hard for the Lord. He says, Thou showest loving-kindness unto thousands. . . The Great, The Mighty God, The Lord of hosts, is his name; Great in counsel, and mighty in work; for thine eyes are open upon all the ways of*

*the sons of men, to give everyone according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings. (18-19) Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh; is there anything too hard for me? (27) There is nothing too hard for the Lord. Then he talks about the people again and he says, And they have turned unto me the back, and not the face; though I taught them, rising up early and teaching them, yet they have not hearkened to receive instruction. But they set their abominations in the house, which is called by my name, to defile it. (33-34)*

**I** didn't mention this earlier but if you read these scriptures you find out a lot of the times that he was saying you've got to repent he was talking to the people who were supposedly in his church. They were supposedly the spiritual leaders at the time. We, in a lot of cases, have not understood His words. Jeremiah said, *Behold, I will gather them out of all countries, whither I have driven them in mine anger, and in my fury, and in great wrath; and I will bring them again unto this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely; And they shall be my people, and I will be their God; And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me forever, for the good of them, and of their children after them; And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, . . . ; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me. Yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land assuredly with my whole heart and with my whole soul. (Jeremiah 32:37-40)*

I think that's what the Lord would want you somehow to hear this morning. He wants you to know that we are living in a dangerous time and that His words are going to be fulfilled even the destruction of many if that's what has to happen if they won't repent. But He wants you to know also that if you will repent and humble yourselves, if you'll study His word and turn to Him consistently in prayer, He will make an everlasting covenant with you. He will not turn away from you but He will do you good and He will not depart from you. He will rejoice over you and He will do

good for you and He will plant you in this land, His land, assuredly with His whole heart and with His whole soul.

Brothers and sisters, you are the reason He sent His Son to die and then to be resurrected. He loves you with His whole heart and His whole soul. Everything He's done has been for us. All of this creation around us is for us. I don't know how I can say that any better. I hope His Spirit will carry that into your hearts that you will know when you leave here today that if you'll just look to Him He will preserve you. He will protect you and He will provide you with what you need. That doesn't mean we won't have to deal with tough times and tough things but He will be our God. He is our God.

I want to share one more thing with you. I talked to a friend of mine on the phone last night. He was telling me about an experience that he had. He used to be a truck driver. He is retired now. He was out in the middle of nowhere one time delivering a load. He was tired so he pulled off and crawled up in the sleeper cab and layed down. He was discouraged and he didn't know how much effort he wanted to put into being a minister. He said the Spirit spoke to him and said, 'Well would you like to die now and go to heaven?' He said, 'I don't care.' That's how discouraged he'd gotten. He said almost immediately he began to lose feeling in his feet and then it worked its way up his body clear up to his head. Then he said it was like his spirit just went out of his body and out through the top of the truck. He could stand and look down at the truck and see his body lying there.

He turned around and there was a stairway that was going up into heaven. He thought, 'Well I guess I'll go up the stairs.' He took the stairs and went for a long time. He got to the top of the stairs and there was a gate there. He said there were clouds on the other side of the gate and he could tell that the Lord was in those clouds. He couldn't see Him but he knew He was there. The Spirit then said to him, 'Now do you want to go on or do you want to go back.' He said he realized 'I don't care' was not a good answer.



He said he was so tempted to just go on and see what it was like but he tried the gate and it wouldn't open. If I remember what he told me there was an angel that appeared to him and told him, 'No, because of your attitude you are not ready to go through that gate at all. You need to go back and get your life in order before you have to deal with this.' He turned around to go back down the stairs and when he did he could

see all of creation and he could see the earth way down below him spinning on its axis. He could see the stars and the planets and he knew that God created all of that and that He created it out of love for His children. He said he was just completely amazed. He went back down the stairs and when he got close to the truck his spirit went back into his body and he woke up. He knew it was time for him to get to work!

That's what I'm hoping for us today. That somehow by the Spirit we will realize it's time for us to quit talking about the gospel and live it. I know some of you are doing that already but we need to try harder. Our work has not yet born the fruit that it needs to bear, which can be born only by our submitting ourselves fully to God.



# PRIDE GOETH BEFORE A FALL

**Elder  
Michael Joridson  
Lamoni, Iowa  
February 26, 2017**

Brother Tony Crandell read Mosiah 2:13-17 as a Call to Worship. *Believe in God; believe that he is, and that he created all things both in heaven and in earth; Believe that he has all wisdom, and all power, both in heaven and in earth; Believe that man doth not comprehend all things which the Lord can comprehend. And again: Believe that ye must repent of your sins and forsake them, and humble yourselves before God; and ask in sincerity of heart that he would forgive you: And now, if you believe all these things, see that ye do them.*

**B**rother Michael Joridson read scripture from 2 Chronicles 7:14 and Isaiah 40:3-14. *If my people which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.*

*The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low; and the crooked shall*

*be made straight, and the rough places plain; And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field; The grass withereth, the flower fadeth; because the Spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it; surely the people is grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth; but the word of our God shall stand forever. O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God! Behold, the Lord God will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him; behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him. He shall feed his flock like a shepherd; he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young. Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance? Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being his counselor hath taught him? With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him*

*knowledge, and showed to him the way of understanding?*

What I have to share with you today comes from something that I have been on my mind the last few months as I've thought about the condition of the church and why we seem to be in this repetitive cycle of divisiveness and contention.

"Pride goeth before the fall." Have you ever heard that saying? Is it scriptural? Is it true? Well according to one of the wisest men who ever lived it was. From Proverbs 16:18 we find that Solomon wrote: *Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.* Now, some might argue that the end result of pride, according to this scripture, is destruction and not a fall, but I would say that really a haughty spirit is one and the same as 'pride' and the two halves of this verse parallel each other so they say basically the same thing. But what I really want to emphasize with you this morning comes from the next verse: (vs. 19) *Better it is to be of an humble spirit with the lowly...*

Solomon gave lots of advice to his children, bits of wisdom to govern their lives to help them stay on the straight and narrow. But isn't it interesting that as wise and wonderful as Solomon was, he couldn't help falling prey to the temptations and their consequences that he warned his children about. Now



Solomon isn't alone in this. We've all found ourselves telling our children in essence, "Do what I say, not what I do." How easy it is sometimes to understand what's right and what's wrong, but another thing to actually do what's right and not what's wrong.

What really got me thinking about this was from my preparations for our adult class several weeks ago. As many of you know, we have been looking at Richard Rupé's latest book, *Book of Mormon Insights, God's Plan of Salvation*. In his text he quotes LDS author and Hebrew Rabbi, Dr. Avraham Gileadi, extensively when discussing the chapters relating to the book of Isaiah. Dr. Gileadi is respected as one of, if not perhaps the world's leading, modern authority on the interpretation of Isaiah.

According to Dr. Gileadi, the book of Isaiah, is one big prophecy for the last days. Isaiah, the major prophet to the kingdom of Judah drew from his knowledge of both history and future prophetic fulfillment for the entire house of Israel, and set out to write in prophecy what he saw in the visions he received from God for the latter days. Jesus himself, said that great were the prophecies of Isaiah. He even went so far as to command the Nephites to search his prophecies.

Third Nephi 10:26-29 says, *And now behold, I say unto you that ye ought to search these things- Yea, a commandment I give unto you that ye search these things diligently, for great are the words of Isaiah, For surely he spake as touching all things concerning the house of Israel; therefore, it must needs be that he must speak also to the Gentiles; And all things that he spake hath been and shall be, even according to the words which he spake.*

Now sometimes we might find ourselves thinking of the words in the scriptures as just some really good advice that we should follow. But when you find the actual words of Jesus commanding you to do something then it's time to prick up your ears and really listen up. Jesus commanded the Nephites to search Isaiah with the express intent that they would also understand the prophecies about the Gentiles - Why,

when there were no Gentiles among them at that time? Because Jesus also commended the Nephites to write the words which would eventually comprise what we know as the Book of Mormon, for the intent that the Book would at a future time come into the hands of Gentiles- Firstly an American boy in upstate New York. And eventually the words would pass from the Gentiles - or the Americans - back into the hands of the house of Israel - for the intent that they may rediscover the covenants that God has in restoring them to their rightful place as heirs to salvation. The Book of Mormon, we've often discussed, is a key that is to unlock many mysteries of the kingdom of God in the latter days - the days in which we are now living.

**S**o with this commandment to search the words of Isaiah with an understanding that he is speaking to us, I read Dr. Gileadi's commentary that Isaiah chapters 28-31 are addressed to the Gentiles - or Ephraimites of our day. Chapter 28, he asserts, is pointedly addressed to the Restoration. (The restoration is what we refer to as those who are a part of the Latter Day Work.) Now, supposing for a moment that he is right in his interpretation, let's read how Isaiah starts off his address to us.

Isaiah 28:1-3 says, *Woe to the crown of pride, to the drunkards of Ephraim, whose glorious beauty is a fading flower, which are on the head of the fat valleys of them that are overcome with wine! Behold, the Lord hath a mighty and strong one, which as a tempest of hail and a destroying storm, as a flood of mighty waters overflowing, shall cast down to the earth with the hand. The crown of pride, the drunkards of Ephraim, shall be trodden under feet.*

He goes on to say in verses 7-8, *But they also have erred through wine, and through strong drink are out of the way; the priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink, they are swallowed up of wine, they are out of the way though strong drink; they err in vision, they stumble in judgment. For all tables are full of vomit and filthiness, so that there is no place clean. The crown of pride. As I read this with an understanding that*

this was addressed to the Restoration, I wondered how this could apply to us, and if it in some way contributed to our fragmented condition that we find ourselves in right now.

It's not my intent to discuss this chapter in detail, but as I read these verses through the filter that they are directed to us in the Restoration I felt as though they were opening up a new understanding to me of our condition. In his book, Rich equates this crown as a garland representing the bestowal of God's covenant upon the latter day Church. When I think of a crown, I think of royalty, of a king or a prince. Through my own experience and testimony I have seen that the Prince of this world would take a leadership role in the Restoration movement. I'm speaking of the Adversary here, not the Prince of Peace.

The principle of first mention states that the first time a concept is brought up in the scriptures then it sets the context for how it is to be understood throughout the rest of scripture. I like to use the 1830 Webster's dictionary to look up the meaning of words because there has been such a change in how words are defined over the last couple hundred years, and also because Noah Webster used a lot of scripture in his definition context.

When we look at the 1830 dictionary for the definition of Pride we find: Inordinate self-esteem; an unreasonable conceit of one's own superiority in talents, beauty, health, accomplishments, rank or elevation in office, which manifests itself in lofty airs, distance, reserve, and often in contempt of others. Now I don't know if you were listening to that, but consider that definition when we look at Genesis chapter 3:1-2. *And I, the Lord God, spake unto Moses, saying, "That Satan whom thou hast commanded in the name of mine Only Begotten, is the same which was from the beginning; And he came before me, saying, 'Behold I, send me, I will be thy Son, and I will redeem all mankind, that one soul shall not be lost, and surely I will do it; wherefore, give me thine honor.' "*

The devil sought to do a work that clearly wasn't his to do. Again, Web-



ster's definition of Pride: Inordinate (excessive) self-esteem; an unreasonable conceit of one's own superiority in talents, beauty, health, accomplishments, rank or elevation in office, which manifests itself in lofty airs, distance, reserve, and often in contempt of others. Is there a better description of the haughty spirit that overtook Satan as he sought the glory of God? I don't think so. Pride is what came before the fall. *Wherefore, because that Satan rebelled against me, and sought to destroy the agency of man, which I, the Lord God, had given him; and also that I should give unto him mine own power; by the power of mine Only Begotten I cause that he should be cast down, and he became Satan. (Gen. 3:4)*

Joseph Smith Jr. and Sidney Rigdon saw this in vision and wrote in D&C 76:3i-j: *And this we saw also, and bear record, that an angel of God, who was in authority in the presence of God, who rebelled against the only begotten Son; whom the Father loved, and who was in the bosom of the Father; and was thrust down from the presence of God and the Son, and was called Perdition; for the heavens wept over him; he was Lucifer, a son of the morning. And we beheld, and lo, he is fallen! is fallen! even a son of the morning.*

Lucifer, who was in a position of authority, fell because of pride and has ever since been tormenting and tempting mankind. This is who he is, it's his nature- being this way from the beginning. And when we are influenced by him through a lack of righteousness, his haughtiness rubs off on us. And especially those in positions of authority are easily swayed and lured into, as Webster put it, "contempt for others". This contempt is often hidden from the view of others, but is a sin imbedded deep within and provides a basis by which a host of decisions and judgments are made and carried out.

Solomon wrote in Proverbs 6:17-19: *These six things doth the Lord hate; yea, seven are an abomination unto him; A proud look, (This is where it begins - pride is conceived in the heart and from then on, if allowed to continue it grows and these other sins easily follow:) a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent*

*blood, A heart that devotes wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among the brethren.*

These sins can all derive from allowing pride to conceive and take root within us. Now obviously, there have been atrocities and evil things done throughout history. In our own times and in our own lives around us today we see some of these sins played out every day. The warning to beware of pride to us isn't just another admonition to avoid sin. It's a DEFCON level 1 warning with dire consequences if not heeded.

**W**here is the devil going to do most of his work? He's not an incapable strategist. He is going to do the most damage where he feels it can hurt his enemy the most. If we could remove ourselves from this world for just a moment and look down from high in the heavens - free of the boundaries of time and of space and see God's plan- we would see this whole tapestry woven around the house of Israel - God's bride. We would see how He is going to bring all things into one - back to Himself. The devil knows where he must attack. It's like a giant chess game of move, then counter move - attack, then counter attack. The Restoration has been tasked and commissioned to assist in this role.

The Restoration isn't "ours". It belongs to God. In Mount Ayr, Lamoni, Independence, Nairobi, Amsterdam, we are merely benefactors to a message that was first delivered to a poor uneducated farm boy as he sat upon his knees in 1820, and which has spread from town to town and region to region for 197 years. We are associated with a movement that holds station of great importance - a position of authority - with a commission to act and perform certain duties and responsibilities that work in concert with the hand of God in restoring the house of Israel. You can bet that the devil will be working hard to destroy any momentum in this movement.

And if we're honest, when we look at the history of the Restoration we can see periods where the saints have been diverted from accomplishing the task

set before them.

The church was established, the Book of Mormon published with the commission to go to the house of Israel, and the call went out for the Saints to build Zion. Then what happened?

Expelled from Independence  
Expelled from Kirtland  
Joseph and Hyrum martyred  
Expelled from Nauvoo  
Division with the Brighamites and other Ites

Supreme Directional control under Fred M. with many leaving for the Temple Lot saints

Division within the Reorganization into the Restoration Branches

And now we find ourselves yet again today dividing and fighting amongst ourselves as the Restoration branches continue to ascertain who's right and who's wrong. Some things never change do they?

I can't help but think of Jesus, when He came to the Nephites and found them contending over things, even the name of the church and how He addressed



Michael Jordison



them. *And there shall be no disputations among you as there hath hitherto been, Neither shall there be disputations among you concerning the points of My doctrine as there hath hitherto been; For verily, verily I say unto you, he that hath the spirit of contention is not of Me, but is of the devil which is the father of contention, And he stirreth up the hearts of men to contend with anger one with another. Behold, this is not My doctrine - to stir up the hearts of men to anger against one another; But this is My doctrine - that such things should be done away. (3 Ne. 5:29-30)*

Can you hear the warnings of our condition in Noah Webster's definition of pride, "...which manifests itself in lofty airs, ...often in contempt of others.?" We are commanded to search Isaiah, for many reasons, but one of which was to heed this warning to the Restoration, and by Restoration I mean Restoration branches which we are one of. Woe to the crown of pride, to the drunkards of Ephraim - when we are in contempt of others we are the drunkards of Ephesians.

The church is rife with pride - not the good kind, where we acknowledge the goodness of God and are glad to be found in association with a power of such noble station - no the church is riddled with "an unreasonable conceit of one's own superiority in accomplishments, in rank or elevation in office". And through this the church has been subject to a contempt for others, all the while bearing a self-righteous standard of "defending the truth as we see it."

There is no doubt in my mind. There are many very well intentioned and intellectually endowed people who know their scriptures and know the doctrine. But this lofty air, which is unseen by many, is not invisible in the fact that God himself warned that there should be NO DISPUTATIONS among you, and that the spirit of contention was of the devil. If we are a part of contentions - no matter how much truth we yield - we are the drunkards of Ephraim who shall be trodden under the feet of those who are coming that will burn up the stubble in the day that the prophet

Malachi has foretold: *For behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble; and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that shall leave them neither root nor branch. (Malachi 4:1)*

The angel that visited young Joseph in 1827 I think ties this message of Isaiah to the Restoration as well, by quoting Malachi as such, *For behold the day cometh that shall burn as an oven, and all the proud yea and all that do wickedly shall burn as stubble, for they that cometh shall burn them saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. The drunkards of Ephraim are those of us who have been anointed as keepers of the covenant, accepted priesthood, who utilize our station to contend over points of doctrine instead of being faithful to the gospel delivered in meekness and love.* Those of us who have allowed pride to enter into our hearts and conceive will be destroyed. Solomon well said, pride goeth before destruction.

**T**o help illustrate this danger that comes from pride let me draw an analogy from Rick Joyner's book, *The Final Quest*. In this book, Joyner shares an allegorical vision that he says he received several years back. The book unfolds a battle between the forces of God and the devil in which he becomes caught up in. He describes in detail the manner in which the enemy would fight against those confessing the name of Christ, and how he would utilize the word of God in combating each attack. In this experience he saw that the armor of God was beautiful. (Ephesians 6)

It was brilliant, clean and shiny in fact, which you would expect if it was God's armor. It was also perfectly designed so that it withstood all the attacks from the enemy. When he reached the point in this battle that he was allowed to don this brilliant armor he found that it was so shiny that it blinded him. The glory of God reflected off this armor so well that he had to squint his eyes to the point that he couldn't see the enemy - when or where he was going to be attacked. He also couldn't see enough to

be able to help defend his comrades who were fighting in the battle with him.

He had finally achieved a position of prominence, and this newfound station allowed him the luxury of resisting temptation. Ah, but pride goeth before the fall. Not only was he ineffective in helping those around him because of his blindness, he also was now in danger of falling from the heights of truth and understanding that he had obtained. With knowledge comes responsibility and a newfound accountability. As he hung precariously to the high ground he sought desperately to maintain, an angelic visitor whom he had come to know as Wisdom came to him bearing a simple gift. The gift was a plain old cloak.

What was he to do with this? All it would do is cover up his beautiful armor that God had given him. How could a cloak protect him from the attacks of the enemy better than the armor that he had? The answer was simple, put it on over the armor. When he did, he found that the armor was still just as effective, but now he was able to open his eyes and see to defend his comrades and could continue to climb to higher ground. When he inquired of Wisdom, "What was this cloak?" the answer was, "humility" ...*God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. (James 4:6)*

Our pride opens the door to a multitude of sins. Pride comes in and breaks down the defenses that we have in protecting against the advancing armies of the devil. It puts holes in strategic areas, all the while giving us a false sense of safety that everything is alright and everything is secure. Pride is more than just thinking more highly of ourselves than we ought. Pride is believing that we are capable of doing more than is within our power or authority.

This dangerous and slippery slope we find ourselves on when we open the door to pride isn't just a sin that the collective church should be wary of, it is a sin that pervades each of us individually. We are all found guilty of it at times and its effects manifest their ugly heads in many ways in our lives that pull us further from communion with God. Pride





keeps us from repentance - it blinds us to the fact that we are in need of it in our defense against our own destruction. And where one sin takes root another will seek to make its home.

This sin is something that holds us back from an endowment of God's power. It is something that hovers over our families - our relationships with our spouses, with our children, with our brothers and sisters in the church; and it prevents us from having a greater relationship with each other - and ultimately, with God. And because of it we are left not realizing the potential that could be ours and finding ourselves in danger of losing out on the privilege that is also ours in the work of the latter day glory.

Charity prevents a multitude of sins we have read. The pure love of Christ can keep us from traveling down the paths of so many sins. How can that be? How many sermons have we heard about love? How many books have we read that discuss the love of God. Why haven't we built Zion? Why do we continue to wallow in fragmentalization? DO WE JUST NOT LOVE ENOUGH? Perhaps it is not so much that we don't understand the value of love, and its importance in becoming a part of who we are inside, but rather, perhaps it's because we have other barriers that do not allow the love of God to fully take root within us. I submit that at least one of these barriers is pride. I struggle with it and I suspect you do too.

Pride doesn't allow for true confession - a requirement of the Gospel. Pride doesn't allow for submission. Pride doesn't allow for meekness - to be lowly of heart. Pride doesn't allow for true faith to fully manifest, but rather restricts it. Pride causes contention - every time.

As Moroni took the sacred record entrusted to him by his father, he "penned" the last chapter of his father's own record, believing that this would be the end of his accounting. He makes an appeal directly to us - to you and to me. He's already seen the book his father compiled, read the prophecies, saw the unfolding of the Brother of Jared's vision, and so he adds this to you and to me, *Behold, I speak unto you as if ye were*

*present, And yet ye are not;*

*But behold, Jesus Christ hath shown you unto me and I know your doing, And I know that ye do walk in the pride of your hearts; And there are none, save a few only, which do not lift themselves up in the pride of their hearts, Unto the wearing of very fine apparel, Unto envyings and strife and malice and persecutions and all manner of iniquity; And your churches, yea, even every one, have become polluted because of the pride of your hearts. (Mormon 4:46-49)*

**M**oroni's not just talking about the old Catholic church here, or to the Protestants and the Reformers. He's not talking about those who practice Islam, or to the Buddhist. We can't point our finger at this group or that group and think for a moment that we are not within the view also of his prophetic sight. We need to understand that he's talking to those of the Restoration - to the people who have been entrusted with this sacred record (Book of Mormon).

And even Moroni pleads with us today to search the prophecies of Isaiah. *Behold I cannot write them. Yea, behold, I say unto you that those saints which have gone before me, which have possessed this land, shall cry - yea, even from the dust will they cry unto the Lord - And as the Lord liveth, He will remember the covenant which he hath made with them. And He knoweth their prayers, that they were in behalf of their brethren; And he knoweth their faith- For in their name could they remove mountains, And in His name could they cause the earth to shake, And by the power of His word did they cause prisons to tumble to the earth, Yea, even the fiery furnace could not harm them- neither wild beasts, nor poisonous serpents- because of the power of His word. And behold, their prayers were also in behalf of him that the Lord should suffer to bring these things forth; And no one need say, 'They shall not come'- For they surely shall, for the Lord hath spoken it! For out of the earth shall they come by the hand of the Lord, And none can stay it. ...Behold, the Lord hath shown unto me great and marvelous things concerning that which must shortly come at that*

*day when these things shall come forth among you. (Mormon 4:27-33 ,45)*

We sit at the apex of the latter day dispensation when God will perform his strange act and restore the house of Israel. Every prophet has sought to see this day, when God will bring all things into one, and verify His word in the eyes of all the nations. You and I are privileged to see this glorious unfolding, and yet here we sit Sunday after Sunday doing the same things over and over again. I can't help but believe that pride has played a part in our complacency. We have an unfounded sense of security in believing that because we are in this church we will be caught up in the marvelous work and wonder... whenever it fully commences.

The marvelous work and wonder is God's work alone work to do and only those individuals whose hearts are clean from guilt and deceit will be permitted to take part. You might say that only those without skeletons in their closet will be permitted to assist in this work in fullness and in power. If pride keeps us from cleaning out our closets and bringing the dark things in our lives to light, then we will be burned like stubble in a field. Freedom is found when we no longer have to hide because of fear - which comes because our pride doesn't want people to see the real me. There is no hiding things from the judgment of the Holy Ghost. And there will be no man, woman or child in Zion that cannot abide this judgment.

I testify to you this day, that we are not free from sin. And if we say that there is no sin found in us then we are liars before God. The only thing that keeps us in a state of audience with God is the grace granted through the blood of Jesus Christ. And grace is ONLY granted to the humble followers of Jesus. We have been warned of pride and are left without excuse if we fail to repent.

There are six days between now and next Sunday, which Sunday is set apart for our communion - for our confessions and a day to show to God that we have repented from our sins. Let us spend this next week asking the Lord to search us out, to illumine our closets




that we might be freed from that which has been plaguing us. A great cloud of witnesses are watching to see if we will be one of the few who are not lifted up in pride, drunk with the deception that we are the chosen ones, all the while defending the truth standing in sandy soil.

As I look at my brothers and sisters and the congregations scattered across this great country, I see the great disappointment in the prophets' eyes. And

I wonder, "How is it we have failed?" There is a great love for Jesus and a strong desire to build up the kingdom in so many of us. How can we be so angry with one another and divided in our purpose and in focus? This is the answer that has come to me as I have asked and I share it with you: Because of our pride. It's time to let it go. As Solomon said, it is better to be of a humble spirit with the meek and lowly.

Here's your care and handling instructions, which I have modified from one of Brother George Knotts' sayings: Do the best you know, in meekness and in love, with regard and deference for your brethren, until you know better. Then repeat. God's grace is sufficient to make up for our honest errors in judgment if we will humble ourselves and grow in truth and understanding.

**HAPPY  
Birthday**

MARCH  
 1 -- Isabel Jordison, Alma Hawley  
 5 -- Kathy White  
 6 -- Barbara Houston  
 11 -- Tanner Rowland  
 20 -- Joshua Crowley  
 and anyone we missed.



**HAPPY ANNIVERSARY!**

MARCH  
 31-- Steve and Elaina Smith  
 and anyone we missed.



# March 2017 Schedule

	5	12	19	26	April 2
<b>Speaking</b>	Gordon Winkler	Rob Rolfe	Tony Newland	Jim Barber	Joel Loving
<b>Presiding</b>	Rob Rolfe	Sherman Phipps	Joel Loving	Gordon Winkler	Michael Jordison
<b>Pianist</b>	Cheryl Phipps	Bonnie Major	Cheryl Phipps	TBD	Bonnie Major
<b>Music Ministry</b>	Jordison family	Sue Beck	Steve Smith	Ardna Walsh	Jim Barber
<b>Family Devotions</b>	Bob /Liz Bell	Jordison family	Rowland family	Rob/Lynda Rolfe	Jim/Bonnie Major
<b>Greeters</b>	Jim/Linda Barber	Dwight/Shirley Edgerton	Ardna/Maynard Walsh	Jordison family	Gordon/Linda Winkler
<b>Custodians</b>	Jordison family	Rowland Family	Joel/Deni Loving	Sherm/Cheryl Phipps	Sue Beck/Joel Beck
<b>SUNDAY EVE 6PM</b>	Linda Boswell	Bob/Jen Rowland's	Steve /Elaina Smith's	Linda Boswell	Ron/Di Smith's
<b>Presider</b>	Steve Smith	Joel Loving	Gordon Winkler	Rob Rolfe	Tony Crandell
<b>Events</b>	<b>Saturday 3/11</b> <b>Men's Fellowship</b> — Pizza Hut 11 AM		<b>Food for Center</b>		<b>JCRB CONFERENCE</b> <b>April 3-8</b>
	<b>Potluck Dinner</b> following service	<b>Thursday evenings – Ringgold Singers</b> practice at church			Thursday evenings 6:45 PM <b>Book of Mormon class.</b> Location – Kacey Courtney's – S. State St, Lamoni
<b>PRAYER SVC. 7 PM</b>	<b>3/8</b>	<b>3/15</b>	<b>3/22</b>	<b>3/29</b>	<b>4/5</b>
<b>Host</b>	Steve Smith	Linda Boswell	Bob/Jen Rowland	Ron/Di Smith	Steve Smith
<b>Presider</b>	Tony Crandell	Jim Major	Michael Jordison	Steve Smith	Jim Barber

**PLEASE REVIEW YOUR ASSIGNMENTS AND LET SANDY CRANDELL KNOW IF THERE IS A CONFLICT. CHECK SCHEDULES AS PRINTED WEEKLY FOR CHANGES.**

Those giving Presiding Ministry, please share your hymns with the assigned pianist prior to Sunday: Music Coordinator: Rob Rolfe - 641-784-6030; text/call 641-442-5894; Musicians: Cheryl Phipps – 641-442-5570, Bonnie Major 6641-289-0535, Ardna Walsh 641-202-2788. Church cleaning should be done prior to Sunday date assigned.

**Family Devotions- 9:30 Preaching Service- 11:00 Sunday evenings – 6:00 PM Wednesday prayer service-7:00**



# Church of Jesus Christ Mount Ayr Restoration Branch

c/o Cheryl Phipps  
15581 270th St  
Lamoni, IA 50140

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[www.gospelrestored.org](http://www.gospelrestored.org)



## CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST - MT AYR RESTORATION BRANCH

*And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come; and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters. (Revelation 14:6-7)*

# News & Notes