

October 2018

# Church of Jesus Christ

*Mount Ayr Restoration Branch*

# NEWSLETTER

2320 State Highway 2, Mount Ayr, IA 50854  
Robert Rolfe, Pastor Lamoni Iowa

[www.gospelrestored.org](http://www.gospelrestored.org)  
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*For with God, all things  
are possible.*



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## **News & Notes**

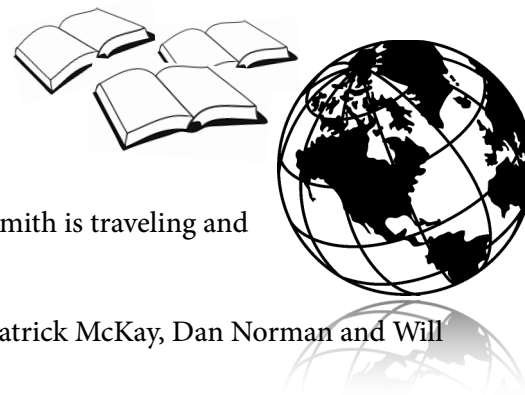
### Women's Retreat – Sitting at the Feet of Jesus

On September 15, six women, Diane Anderson, Sandy Crandell, Linda Winkler, Linda Boswell, Linda Barber and Di Smith, met at Linda Barber's for a one-day retreat. We sang together, ate together, and studied together. The topic of the day was Jesus's three recorded visits to the home of Mary and Martha at Bethany and learning why Jesus loved to be with them. We then discussed how we can make our homes more inviting to Him and to others. It was a lovely day, hosted

by Linda Barber. Although few in number, we were greatly blessed.

Joe and Anna Mickelson welcomed their new son, Ian, on September 4th, weighing in at 8 lbs and 10 oz. The congregation is overjoyed to welcome this new edition to our family. We hope and pray for God's choicest blessing for the Mickelsons.

On October 7th, the Barbers will once again host the congregation at their farm Northwest of Bethany, Missouri. Meet at their home at 4:00 for a hayride, followed by singing and games before the campfire and BBQ.



# SAINTS MINISTERING ELSEWHERE

Steven Smith has assumed the role of Temporary Pastor of Osceola while Ron Smith is traveling and giving Patriarchal ministry through the Fall.

September-October Brothers Ron Smith and Michael Jordison will be joining Patrick McKay, Dan Norman and Will Howen on a mission trip to Tahiti and the islands of French Polynesia.

## WE NEED THE SPIRIT OF REVELATION

**Elder Jon Barney**  
**Lamoni, Iowa**  
**May 13, 2018**

As a Call to Worship Brother Sherman Phipps read Alma 24:76-77; 26:103-104; 26:56. *And they were all young men, and they were exceeding valiant for courage, and also for strength and activity; but behold, this was not all: they were men who were true at all times in whatsoever thing they were entrusted; Yea, they were men of truth and soberness, for they had been taught to keep the commandments of God, and to walk uprightly before him. (76-77) And we do justly ascribe it to the miraculous power of God, because of their exceeding faith in that which they had been taught to believe, that there was a just God; and whosoever did not doubt, that they should be preserved by his marvelous power. Now this was the faith of these of whom I have spoken; they are young, and their minds are firm; and they do put their trust in God continually. (103-104) Now they never had fought, yet they did not fear death: and they did think more upon the liberty of their fathers, than they did upon their lives; yea, they had been taught by their mothers, that if they did not doubt, that God would deliver them. (56)*

I'd like to share a scripture from the prophet Jeremiah in chapter 31. *Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah; Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was a husband unto them, saith the Lord;*

*But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more. (31-34)*

I want to greet you in the name of the Lord and our Savior Christ Jesus this morning. Sometimes I see people occupy the pulpit who bring laminated pages and they turn them and read. Sometimes I have been able to sit behind and looked in the margins and saw 'read with exclamation and sincerity.' How good could that be? I wonder how many times the people have heard this sermon and how many times it's gone around. I want to tell you that I went to the Lord. You know you can mess up in your worship and in your life by denying God place in your heart and in your mind. I think that if we had a theme for what would be said today it would be that we need the Spirit of Revelation in the Church of Christ Jesus.

I want to ask you a question to start with. It's a true or false question. This (holds up the scriptures) is the word of God. True or false? It's a trick question. It's a trick question because most of us want to know that God's word has been recorded in these pages of scripture. As near as I can tell the fullness of the gospel is contained in these leather covers of that book but it is a record of God's word. I want to split the hair with you and tell you that for the purpose of answering the question accurately, the answer is false. This is a record of God's word. God's word is revealed by the Holy Spirit. It's fresh. I believe in a God that doesn't change. I really believe what it says in Malachi. Brothers and sisters, I would not be here today if I thought something else. It all boils down to that little sentence that says *For I am the Lord God. I change not.* If that is inferred, that's given to us by the Lord to understand. He talked to man in the past and He talks to man today. He wants to interact with us.

I listened to a recording one time of a sermon that was



given by Arthur Oakman in 1966. He was at the Stone Church talking to a group of priesthood members. The point that he wanted to make was that mankind throughout the centuries, throughout all of the writings that man has made has seemingly depicted a search that man has to find God. He said the truth of the matter was that it couldn't be more opposite. He said, 'What we really have here is an intelligent being, a loving God that is in search of us.' Isn't that true?

I'd like to begin by using a very familiar scripture that is written in Matthew in the 16<sup>th</sup> chapter. *And when Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I, the Son of Man, am? And they said, Some say John the Baptist; some Elias; and others Jeremias; or one of the prophets. He said unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven. (14-20)* It doesn't really describe to us what the experience was that Peter had there when Jesus asked that very important question.

Now for years I have heard it argued in the church that the rock that Jesus was talking about is the rock of revelation. There's nothing wrong with that. Can I ask you though what the question was? Jesus asked this question. He said whom say you that I am and the correct answer is thou art the Christ the Son of the living God. That is the revealed answer. It's the foundation that we need to build our lives on.

About 4 o'clock in the afternoon on Thursday all my work in the office was done. I like to keep busy. I've heard it said that if you want to change the future you have to make an action. You have to move something so if I want these glasses to end up over here, I'm going to have to pick them up and move them and I have changed the future by doing that. So I went to the back where the switch gear are in the light plant and got out a broom and swept up all the mud that the outdoor crew had tracked in the place. Then I got out a mop and began to clean the floor. I like the looks of the floor when it is clean. It gives me a sense of satisfaction.

As I petitioned the Lord about what I should bring as a testimony on Sunday this hymn from the old gray hymnal ran through my mind again and again. It is 290 in the gray hymnal. It will sound familiar to you if you haven't heard it in a while.

*Fountain of all revelation, Grant us thy life-giving power;  
Without thee no sure salvation Will deliver us this hour.  
May no veil of man's tradition Mask the light that comes from*

*thee!*

*Let not pride nor low ambition Waste the strength that sets us free.*

*God, our rock of revelation. We would build our lives on thee;*

*For without thy sure foundation None can find stability.*

(This here's the part that really hit me right between the eyes.

It really shook me when I thought about it.)

*We will order not thy wisdom To some cherished form or mold,*

*But will search for truths not hidden As we live by those we hold.*

When I was four years old I can remember in California hearing that and it didn't make a lot of sense to a four-year old. I tried to understand it. I knew about the fountain. That's where you got a drink and for years I thought that was how the fountain of revelation worked. Later in life I began to understand a little bit more about what revelation really was. But in our day and time and in my lifetime, man has ordered the wisdom of God into a cherished form and to a cherished mold. I blew right through this last line that says we search for truth not hidden as we live by those we hold. I thought, 'What does that mean?' I really couldn't understand what that meant. Really what it is trying to say is that we're searching for the word of God, the fresh revealed word of God. Brothers and sisters, He hasn't stopped talking. What He wants from us more than anything else is our love and our communication.

Have you ever had a friend who you talked to all the time and suddenly they stopped and you wondered what you had done to offend them. Where did they go? I talk with my finger in Morse Code by radio to another Christian friend of mine in Waterloo, Iowa two or three times a week. I can tell if it's Dave that is on the other end of it. I can tell by the words and the way he sends. If an imposter sets in there to set up with the key and tries to tell me something else I'll know it's not Dave because of the way he sends and what he says. The Lord is looking for that kind of communication with us.

My wife and I like to watch this Christian show. It's on the TCT network. We get it on air television, digital television. I suppose you could probably find it in the TCT network also on cable. On Sunday night Dr. John Tweedie comes on there and talks about revelation and scripture prophesy fulfilled. It's neat to watch Dr. Tweedie because he goes to the holy land and all of his explanations of these Old Testament prophesies are given in the outdoors. He's always fighting to keep the pages of his bible on top. You can see all the places. You can see Armageddon when he goes there. You can see the Temple Mount, all these interesting places in the holy land. But you know something he began to read from his Bible. He reads from a new age Bible of some kind. I



don't know what version it is but he was talking about here we are where the transfiguration should have taken place. He is showing us the spot. Jesus is there. The Apostles are there. He goes on to explain.

Now put your guard up everybody. Do you have your guard up, your spiritual armor on? Here's another choice but I'm going to give you a distractor. Here is the distractor Brother Tweedie comes on there and he says, 'On the mount of transfiguration Jesus comes in contact with the shimmering spiritual entities of Moses and Elijah and to hear from on high the voice of the Father saying, this is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased. Here ye Him. How is that different than your scriptures? Did you catch it because if you look in the Inspired Version you are going to see that the other person other than Moses is Elias or John the Baptist. Now Brother Tweedie went on to make this point. He said, 'In the time that Jesus walked the earth there were people that didn't believe in the resurrection and argued about it. There were people that wanted to say that the Mosaic Law was it and there was nothing else and wanted to argue about it. They had scripture police that were running around, you can call them Pharisees or whatever you want, to say that they were. They also didn't believe the prophets. Can you believe that? Running around in the time of Jesus they didn't want to give any credence to the prophecies that were made by the Old Testament prophets. Jesus advocates in all of His preaching and His ministry for them and validates and fulfills those prophecies that they made.

What Brother Tweedie is trying to say is here are two representatives, Moses of the Mosaic Law, on one side and here you have this other prophet that is appearing there with Christ who represents the prophets. Christ is coming together to validate the two of them. That might be one conclusion that you could make. Another conclusion that you might make is if that is John the Baptist and that is Moses there representing the Melchisedec Order and the Aaronic Order, Christ also in His ministry validates the Aaronic Priesthood in being baptized at the hand of John fulfilling all righteousness in that.

Yesterday I kind of wore myself out. I got up early. Actually my new pet got me up early. We lost our dog last fall. It was very sad. Piper died of a rare form of melanoma and it took us a long time to get back in the swing of things. Our son brought us a replacement dog. He's a German Shepherd. He's a puppy who weighs over 90 pounds. Buddy woke me up early so I got up and got around. Saturdays is his day for outings particularly with me. We went out and got gas and went to the bank and drove to church and cleaned the church and came back and went to the airport and let him run all over the airport. He got into a little bit of trouble there. We came back home and I set out in the afternoon to mow a lot of grass. Do you have any grass that you have to cut? This one orchard area across town is over an acre and a quarter

and then there is the stuff at the house. It takes two hours at the orchard and another 40 minutes at the house. I came in and got a drink and laid down and lost consciousness and fell asleep. Public television was on and when I came to Jocelyn said, 'You just missed Ray Stevens.'

On the afternoon of public television Ray Stevens has a little 30 minute show. She said that it was really interesting. Now how many of you remember back in the 60s and the 70s what we used to do? When I was a youngster we used to listen to WHB radio in Kansas City to listen to popular music or KIOA in Des Moines. They had all kinds of things on there. Tony might remember that WHB would play little excerpts of a comedy routine called 'Chicken Man.' They had funny songs on there and Jim Stafford used to write funny songs about streakers, spiders and snakes.

Ray Stevens wrote one about a Mississippi squirrel. It's about the day that the squirrel went berserk in the First Self-Righteous Church of Pascagoula, MS. There's a point to this so go with me. Jocelyn was telling me yesterday about the reaction that Ray Stevens had to this very popular song. He said that people would call in and let him know about their varmint experiences at church. How many of you have had a varmint experience at church? At Decatur City we had an invasion of honey bees for a while. I don't know why but they would always come and get me. "The bees are back. Do something, Jon." So why am I telling you about the bees getting back. Well they were back too. They were up in the ceiling and made a sticky mess. They are hard to get rid of because the little rascals can smell and they come back year after year.

A home in Decatur City had an infestation of bats in their chimney and so they got rid of the infestation. They put these check valves on the chimney and got rid of them. Eight hundred bats were loose in Decatur City looking for a place to live. Guess where they came? They wanted to come to church. We even had things on the roof where the flashing would come over. Guess who gets to get up on the roof? So I'm up there with a stick and picking the bats out of outcropping there. I thought one of them would come. I could hear them squeaking and crawling around in there. How would you like that in your worship? Twenty-four of them came out, big ones, great big ones.

So people were calling in to Ray Stevens and telling him their real-life experiences about what had happened in their church. Now I want to tell you about the song first of all. I got on the internet. Isn't technology wonderful? I got on You Tube and looked at the song. There's a music video of Ray Stevens rendition of the day that this squirrel got loose in the First Self-Righteous Church of Pascagoula, MS. The first thing Ray tells you is, 'Many years ago when I was a kid they used to send me to relatives house down in Pascagoula, MS.' He got to spend the summers there. He was 8-10 years old. You know how little boys get into trouble sometimes? They



keep themselves amused when nobody really has anything for them to do in the summertime. He said he was up in a tree and captured a squirrel. It must have been on Saturday because he brought the squirrel along with his relatives to church the next morning at the First Self-Righteous Church of Pascagoula, MS.

The video explains about how he put the squirrel in an old shoe box, punched holes in the top with a pencil and brought the squirrel to church. Well, he's a rotten kid. I was a rotten kid once and liked to pull those kind of pranks but I never did anything like this. He pulled the lid loose in the church. Now I can tell you I've seen the reactions of some of the people that I go to church with if they see a little mouse on the floor. They are up on the ceiling. Irrespective of their own stature and size they would be trying to get away from the mouse.

I am pretty sure that Ray Stevens was a First Baptist by his own involvement in the way everything looked. Stay with me here. There's a point to this. The squirrel gets loose and in the music video the first place he goes is to one brother and gets ahold of his leg. The guy jumps up and says, 'Something's got ahold on me!' Now in this good Baptist setting we're heading to revival country. The next place that the camera takes you is into a pew on the right hand side where there is a gal with a persnickety look on her face. She is Sister Bertha Better Than You who has been really enjoying all this chaos that's going on in the sanctuary. It says she's guilty of sedition in the church and backbiting and gossip spreading.

Sister Bertha is enjoying all of this until she is visited by the squirrel who crawls up under her dress and begins to make laps around the inside of her dress. She begins to cry and then to confess to sins that would make a sailor blush with shame. As the squirrel continues his rotation she begins to reveal all of her sins and iniquities to the congregation. She bears it all including her love life and starts naming names. The camera goes to other people that are blushing because they've been involved in this iniquity. As a result of all of this, these people now have had an experience that makes them change their outward behavior. Twenty-five people pop up and volunteer for missions in the Congo on the spot. All the people are re-baptized and make dedications. At the end of it Ray comes back and says, 'Don't you think it's interesting how the Lord used a little squirrel to put a church of 500 back on the straight and narrow.'

This is fiction. It never happens like that. It could I suppose but this is the point. The people of the First Self-Righteous Church didn't know the difference between the Holy Ghost and a squirrel. I want us all to know the difference between the Holy Spirit and our own intellect. We need to know the difference and be familiar with the voice of the Master. I can even tell without the spoken word when it's Dave Kelly at the other end of the key. We should be able to

know the voice of our Savior because of what He says and because of how very important it is for us to be able to recognize His voice. *My sheep know my voice.*

The all important thing is we need the Spirit of revelation. Folks, we can study the word of God all day long. We can know it inside and out. I remember it wasn't too long after we'd been married that Jocelyn said to me, 'I want you to teach me the scriptures like you know them.' I said, 'I can't! You must invoke the Holy Ghost to reveal these truths to you as you read them.' It's like the guys who used to argue with Jesus. They said they had the Code of Moses they didn't need anything else.

When I came into the light plant by the bathroom by the switch gear, I could hear a familiar voice. It was a guy I knew from high school. I am not going to reveal his true character to you but he's big and he's brash and he's loud. He doesn't repent for anything he says. He is kind of like some of our politicians. He makes statements that offend people and doesn't repent of it. He doesn't care how it goes. 'That's the way I am so put up with it!' He brought his little girl in there. He was in there on business and said, 'Jon, do you know who this is?' I said, 'Well yeah that's your girl.' He said, 'Well how did you know that?' I replied, 'One afternoon I was invited to the Baptist Church for a motorcycle ride. They had a potluck and I went over and had potluck with the Baptists and then we went around town on the motorcycles. I said, 'Your daughter was there. I met her.' He began to tell me about how he goes to church someplace else. That's sad to hear about any congregation that's having any kind of a problem. He told me, 'I'm going someplace else now but my wife is a devout Baptist.' He grew up in the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. Although I really can't remember him being there growing up that is his orientation.

He says, 'Jon, I don't believe in the Doctrine and Covenants and the Book of Mormon but I believe in the Bible. We can agree on that much can't we? I believe on the WORD Jon, the WORD.' I thought, friend, you probably haven't read either of those one, two or three documents to know. I said, 'I suppose it's great that your wife is getting you to church but you know that the word of God is recorded in all three of those books and the revelation of God is ongoing. The revelation of God is ongoing. We're probably missing the boat now because we're finding that God still works in our lives. He still speaks to us and we're probably not writing it down so that it can become a part of the record that God has for other people to study.

My point here this morning is there's so much more to look at in the scriptures that I might have brought, but I'm going to shrink this for you. In the Old Testament there was the Ark of the Covenant. God spoke up on Mount Horeb and Moses came down and found the people having a riot. They were misbehaving. They were having an orgy down there. He



wrote that first Ten and he had to go back after he cleaned up all of the mess and brought another Ten down but there was something missing from the second Ten and that was the outline for the Melchisedec priesthood. That is in your Inspired Version. That Melchisedec Order wasn't found in Judah very well as an order from that time forth until the coming of Christ.

I think back to the story which is kind of a mother's day thing where Simeon is the priest on duty in the temple the day they bring in little Jesus for the right of circumcision. Somebody else should have been there. It should have been the father of John the Baptist, Zachariah who was on duty that day but he was killed by Herod's soldiers. This was brought out by the writings of Jesus that Zachariah was slain near the altar because he wouldn't reveal the location of where his son was at which saved his son's life as an infant. Being filled with the Holy Spirit Simeon looked and said, 'Now, Lord, my life is complete.' His old dim eyes had seen the Lord's Christ. 'I can depart now in peace,' he said. This is the Mother's Day part about this. Prophetically it had been told to Simeon that he wouldn't die until he had seen the Master. He says, 'Now the hearts of many will be revealed.' Looking into the mother of Jesus' eyes he said that even though a spear would pierce His side to the wounding of her soul also that the hearts of many might be revealed in Israel. Boy, how could you take that?

Mark Lowry wrote a song that I heard Ron Smith sing one time, 'Mary, Did You Know?' Of course Mary knew. She knew since the time the angel approached her and pondered those things in her heart. It must have been tough to be the mother of Jesus, especially when He was told, 'Your mother is outside and your brethren and they call for you.' He said, 'Who is my mother and who is my brethren because you are all my family.' It must have been tough. It must have been tough at Golgotha when she has to see her son upon the cross, yet to be glad that the salvation of us all was taking place.

God's word is going to be refit for all of us. All of us human beings are fallible. We make mistakes. We have to repent. We have to get back on with righteousness for the Lord. God is going to give Israel another opportunity. If you read Ezekiel it talks about this object that they reach through the wall and take at God's command and put it on their shoulder and carry it with their hands down to the mountain. Could it be that this old set of Ten, because the covenant was broken just like we read in the opening scripture as being removed, but God is going to make a new covenant and you can hear the very same thing as it was in the beginning of our worship this morning.

Let's read from Hebrews 8:1-13. *Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum; we have such a high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true*

*tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man. For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices; wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer. Therefore while he was on the earth, he offered for a sacrifice his own life for the sins of the people. Now every priest under the law, must needs offer gifts, or sacrifices, according to the law. Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle; for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern showed to thee in the mount. But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah; Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people; And they shall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more. In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away.*

I heard on television one time a highway patrol sergeant speaking who was a public information officer. He was somebody I knew. His name was Frank Fisher. Frank was on public television and he was taking an interview. He said this, 'Without voluntary compliance to our law, (in order words we willingly keep the laws. He's talking about the laws of the State of Iowa.) we are getting nowhere.' We can keep the laws just like the young man that came to Jesus and said I've kept them from my youth. Jesus asked of him something more. The one thing more is that we keep the distraction of this world away from our purview, that we love the Lord our God with all our heart, might, mind and strength, and that we are a people that have our ears open to the Good Spirit. When we yield to the enticing of the Holy Ghost, the problems that we find besetting the churches and the things we see around us that are of concern, will instantly vanish away.





# TRUST AND OBEY

**Priest Joe Mickelson**

**Lamoni, Iowa**

**May 27, 2018**

For a scripture reading this morning I am going to read from Ezekiel 36:17, 19-36. *Son of man, when the house of Israel dwelt in their own land, they defiled it by their own way and by their doings... and I scattered them among the heathen, and they were dispersed through the countries; according to their way and according to their doings I judged them. And when they entered unto the heathen, whither they went, they profaned my holy name, when they said to them, These are the people of the Lord, and are gone forth out of his land.*

*But I had pity for mine holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the heathen, whither they went. Therefore, say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord God; I do not this for your sakes... but for mine holy name's sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen.*

*And I will sanctify my great name, which was profaned among the heathen, which ye have profaned in the midst of them; and the heathen shall know that I am the Lord... when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes. For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you.*

*A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them.*

*And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God. I will save you from all your uncleanness... Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations.*

*Not for your sakes do I this, saith the Lord God, be it known unto you; be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel. Thus saith the Lord God; In the day that I shall have cleansed you from all your iniquities I will also cause you to dwell in the cities, and the wastes shall be builded. And the desolate land shall be tilled, whereas it lay desolate in the sight of all that passed by. And they shall say, This land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden; and the waste and desolate and ruined cities are*

*become fenced, and are inhabited.*

*Then the heathen that are left round about you shall know that I the Lord build the ruined places, and plant that which was desolate; I the Lord have spoken it, and I will do it.*

The scripture reading that I shared with you all this morning is meaningful and relevant on both a personal and a “corporate” level. The Lord gave these words to Ezekiel to share with the people of Israel who were in Babylonian captivity. But, as is the case nearly every time the Lord speaks, His words don’t just transcend the needs of one particular people during one moment in time. Those words pertain to the church today, as well, as we seek to assist in the cause of building Zion in the midst of modern-day Babylon. And, perhaps most importantly, these words from the book of Ezekiel describe in great detail the process of salvation for each and every one of us as individuals.

As I read through these verses, I am overwhelmed by the striking correlations I can draw between the words given to the house of Israel and my own journey over the last several years. The Lord starts out by declaring that the house of Israel, when given the opportunity to live in the promised land, defiled that gift by profaning the name of the Lord and seeking their own way. They were, therefore, scattered among the heathen and dispersed throughout the countries. As they entered into these countries to dwell with the gentiles, the holy name of the Lord was profaned. The gentiles would say amongst themselves, “These are supposed to be the people of the God of Abraham, and look at how they live! Some God he must be!”

I was blessed beyond measure to have been born into the Mickelson family 28 years ago. I was placed in a home with loving, humble, righteous family members who have always done everything in their power to ensure that I am cared for and set up to succeed. I was born into a family that had the fullness of the gospel and the keys to the priesthood. Simply put, I, like the Israelites, was born into the promised land.

As I entered my late teenage years and early twenties, however, I began to “profane the name of the Lord,” just as the children of Jacob did. The idols I worshipped were not made of gold, but they were idols, nonetheless. I allowed worldly vices and desires to consume me, and to dictate my behavior. The Israelites had become so accustomed to life in the promised land that they began to assume that life would always be good, no matter what. Their relationship with their God and their obedience to His commandments were not, in their minds, necessary to sustain the standard of living to which they’d grown accustomed. Similarly, in my youth, I assumed that my life would always continue to chug along the same track it always had, and that it really wasn’t necessary for me to sacrifice much for the Lord’s sake.

As I began my freshman year of college, I had become fully entangled in worldly lusts. As a younger child and teenager, I rarely did anything even remotely close to



breaking the rules. My fellow students often accused me of being a teacher's pet, but the reality was that I simply had a greater fear of consequences for bad decisions than most children my age seemed to have. However, one bad decision without negative consequences can be like a small snowball that begins to slowly tumble down the side of a snowy hillside, eventually setting off an avalanche. The more times you make bad choices without seeing the immediate consequences of those decisions, the easier it becomes to make the next bad choice, and the next one, until those bad choices become bad habits that are engrained in your everyday lifestyle.

Coming into my freshman year at Graceland I felt "at ease in Zion." Things had gone well for me for so long, that I started to assume they always would. However, within a span of a few short months, my parents informed my brothers and I that they would be getting divorced, and my grandfather, a man I looked up to as much as anyone, passed away. These two events in succession should have enticed me to come to Christ, but they didn't. Instead, I turned to the vices and the worldly lusts that I had allowed to become my idols.

Brother Rob has been kind enough not to remind me of this since I started attending this branch, but it was during this same time period when I found myself face to face with Rob Rolfe, the judge. I had been out at a college party and gotten behind the wheel of a vehicle when I shouldn't have. Fortunately, the police picked me up before anyone had the chance to get hurt. I waited around in a county jail cell the next day until Rob came, allowing me to leave. Even an experience like that, which should have humbled me to the point of repentance, had very little impact on my state of being, but perhaps even pushed me further into the deceptive arms of my worldly idols.

Returning to the passage from Ezekiel, the Lord goes on to say that He had pity for His holy name, which had been profaned by His people. Therefore, for His name's sake, not for theirs, He promises to sanctify His great name, saying, "*I will be sanctified in you before their eyes.*" The Lord says he will cleanse the people of Israel from all their filthiness and from all their idols. He promises to replace their heart of stone with a new heart of flesh, and to place His spirit within them. Then, with the revelation of the Holy Spirit in their lives, He will cause them to walk in obedience, and in accordance with the will of God.

Looking back, I have caught at least a glimpse of how hard God has worked throughout my life to bring me back to Him in repentance. Knowing my own faults and limitations, I have often wondered why God would work so hard to bring someone like me into His church and into the priesthood. This passage brings with it the realization that it has nothing to do with me, my capabilities, or who I am. God is continuously working, usually without us ever realizing it, in order to bring each and every one of us to repentance so that

His holy name might be glorified and honored for all to see. Each time a sinner hits his knees and opens his heart to Christ, the name of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is glorified more greatly than ever before.

One of the first instances in which, looking back, I can recognize God working to redirect my path came in the middle of all the turmoil of that first year at Graceland. My brother and my dad had decided to go with the Outreach International group on campus to Nicaragua over winter term. Initially, I had very little interest in going on that trip. I really don't recall now what it was that caused me to change my mind, but I ended up going to Nicaragua with them. During that trip, I met Anna. That single event probably has more to do with me being here today than any other.

I've been able to trace the hand of God at work in my life in other instances, as well. After graduating from Graceland, I was at a loss for what I should do for a career, so I decided to stall a while and to continue my education by moving to Anna's neck of the woods in southern Illinois. While there, I applied for countless jobs with countless employers. I had several job offers, but struggled to find a position that I thought would interest and motivate me. However, being an unemployed newlywed with fresh college loans beginning to stack up, I decided I had better not be so picky, and just start working somewhere where I'd be surrounded by good people. So, I began working in an industry in which I had absolutely zero experience, and very little interest at first – pork production. I took a job with The Maschhoffs, a southern Illinois-based, family-owned pork producer that is filled to the brim with talented and high-character employees. I fell in love with the company, the industry, and the work. That decision has since opened the doors to relationships with the folks in Leon who built the hog barn that I now manage, raising pigs that are owned by my first ever "real" employer – The Maschhoffs. God led me to that company and that place, knowing that it would open the doors to being able to move back to Iowa and re-join the Mickelson family farming operation. More importantly, it has taken care of the temporal necessities that were needed in order that I might find my way to the Mt. Ayr Restoration Branch on a Sunday in January of 2017, where the Lord would finally convince me to repent and come unto Him.

Last week, Michael spoke to us about the necessity of humility in the formula for faith, hope, and charity. I believe that the only reason that I was able to feel the Holy Spirit with such power during that experience is that, for the first time in my life, I had humbled myself before God. I had always professed to believe in God. I had even prayed quite often during my years of iniquity. But, I had also always put my own will in front of His. By submitting myself to the prompting of the Spirit to come forth and be administered to, I chose to allow God's will to reign supreme, even if only for a moment – for a mere moment is all God needs to manifest





Himself to us.

There are still times, daily, in which I choose my own will over God's. But now, after having His spirit placed within me, just as He promised to do in the book of Ezekiel, I have been given a new heart made of flesh rather than stone. The scripture states that God will cause Israel to walk in His statutes and keep His judgments. This doesn't mean that God is redacting the agency of the people of Israel. It means that, once the Holy Spirit is allowed to dwell within someone, that person is eternally changed. They will continue to sin from time to time, but, if the Holy Spirit is truly present, that sin will cause loathing and lamentation, as the scripture goes on to say in the next few verses. It causes repentance, which, in turn, causes us to seek to walk within God's judgements at all times. Without repentance, salvation cannot be claimed.

Paul Washer states that, "Before the foundation of the world, God's great purpose for you was to be conformed to the image of His son... that's what He's working on, even though you may be working on something else." Throughout my life, I have been working on everything except becoming conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. Despite that fact, God has worked harder than I can ever know to accomplish in me what He accomplished on the cross at Calvary.

The Apostle Paul wrote in the 8th chapter of Romans: *For we are saved by hope; but hope that is seen is not hope, for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then with patience we do wait for it. Likewise, the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.*

*And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to his own image, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover, him whom he did predestinate, him he also called; and him whom he called, him he also sanctified; and him whom he sanctified, him he also glorified.*

*What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can prevail against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?*

*Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither*

*death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

I have lived much of my life in a state of selfish sin. Now, I try to make sure that each and every day I offer a prayer of thanksgiving to the Lord for His longsuffering with me, and for the many ways He has worked, and continues to work, in order that my eyes might be opened and I might fall on my knees in repentance. I have gone through some things that, at the time, didn't seem to be too good. I know that all of you have gone through much more than myself, and that, at times, those things don't seem to be good. But whenever I take a step back and look at the big picture, I am reminded that indeed all things do work together for good to them that love God and are called to His purpose, which would entail each one of us here today. When taken individually, the bad events of our lives may be just that – bad. But together, when viewed through the lens of the Cross, even those bad events are being orchestrated by our Creator in ways to bring us to greater and greater revelations of Him in our lives.

In the gospel of John, we are given the account of a conversation between Jesus and his disciples that sheds a little bit of light on this topic. *And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth. And his disciples asked him saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents; but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.*

The man was not born blind as a punishment of sorts, but rather because his condition would bring glory and honor to the God of Israel through the Lord Jesus. All of us, no matter our condition, are created so that we might bring glory and honor to the name of the God of Israel, through his Son, the Christ. This is made clear way back in the 4th chapter of Exodus in a conversation between an insecure Moses and the Lord: *And Moses said unto the Lord, O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant; but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue. And the Lord said unto him, Who hath made man's mouth? Or maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? Have not I the Lord? Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say.*

*Who has created the deaf and the blind, along with the seeing? The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob has created all things with purpose and intent, promising to work in the lives of that creation in order that it might bring glory and honor to His name through repentance, which repentance is our keystone for our claim to becoming heirs of the Kingdom, through the atoning blood of Christ Jesus.*

So, when the doctors tell me that our next child has a 90% chance of being born with Down Syndrome, the words of the Psalmist cry out from the chambers of my heart: O



*Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! Who hast set thy glory above the heavens. Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength... O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!*

I have witnessed firsthand that God is working behind the scenes in all things to bring about His purposes, which purposes will not be frustrated. Therefore, I am supremely confident in my Lord that the life of my child will bring glory to his creator, no matter how he has been fashioned in the womb. For that fashioning has been done with the careful and tender hands of the master carpenter and supreme ruler of all creation in heaven and earth.

It is easy to become frustrated when we are unable to discern the hand of God at work in our lives. It may seem as though progress has become halted and stagnant for a period of time. It may seem as though our prayers are going unanswered and ignored. When we look back at the history of the restoration, especially the recent history of the church, it may seem as though the work of the building of Zion has become stagnant and motionless. It may seem as though we've lost the momentum necessary to fulfill that work. However, I am supremely confident that God has never ceased His work, perhaps behind the scenes at times, to bring to pass the building of the kingdom on earth. Our task, as Michael shared with us last week, is to humble ourselves and repent of our iniquity, so that we might be able to assist in the work. It will move forward, with or without us. As it is with the atonement on the cross, so it is with the building of the kingdom of Zion - It is only through repentance that we can claim our share of the victory.

The Lord instructed us long ago through the prophet Jeremiah: *Ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.* We must seek God with all our heart, individually first – then collectively as a church, in order to find Him. And when we do find Him, I know that we will find Him already hard at work in the process of the building of the kingdom, a task that seems so overwhelming and, at times, unreachable in our day. It is attainable because God has never ceased working to that end, despite the shortcomings of His church and His people. It is for His name that Zion will be built. It is for His honor and glory that He works so diligently to bring that kingdom to fruition. Therefore, we can be assured that it will not fail. We simply must choose whether to assist in the work, or stand aside for another people to pick up the shovel and build alongside the Lord.

In Section 6 of the Doctrine of Covenants, the Lord asks us to assist to bring forth His work according to His commandments. We are instructed to be diligent in keeping the commandments of God, which will yield the promise of being encircled in the arms of His love. We are instructed to say nothing but repentance to this generation, and, finally, we are given the following words of instruction, encouragement

and hope: *Therefore fear not, little flock, do good, let earth and hell combine against you, for if ye are built upon my Rock, they cannot prevail. Behold, I do not condemn you, go your ways and sin no more: perform with soberness the work which I have commanded you; look unto me in every thought, doubt not, fear not: behold the wounds which pierced my side, and also the prints of the nails in my hands and feet; be faithful, keep my commandments, and ye shall inherit the kingdom of heaven.*

At times, it may feel as though the gates of hell are knocking on our door. When the doctor informs you that you'll be facing a battle with cancer; when your beloved spouse passes on to be with the Lord; when your body is physically broken and you are debilitated; when the temptations of the world are crushing your own will power; when your boss informs you that you're position has been terminated; when you're told your child will likely be born with a disability. It is in these moments when we must rely upon that rock that is our foundation. It is in these moments when we must trust that God is at work in order that His name might be glorified through our situation, and our obedience.

Helaman urges us to: Remember the words which King Benjamin spake unto his people... *that there is no other way nor means whereby man can be saved, only through the atoning blood of Jesus Christ, who shall come; yea remember that he cometh to redeem the world.* And remember also, the words which Amulek spake... *that the Lord surely should come to redeem his people; but that he should not come to redeem them in their sins, but to redeem them from their sins. And he hath power given unto him from the Father, to redeem them from their sins, because of repentance; therefore he hath sent his angels to declare the tidings of the conditions of repentance, which bringeth unto the power of the Redeemer, unto the salvation of their souls.*

*And now, my sons, remember, remember that it is upon the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God, that ye must build your foundation, that when the devil shall send forth his mighty winds; yea his shafts in the whirlwind; Yea, when all his hail and his mighty storm shall beat upon you, it shall have no power over you, to drag you down to the gulf of misery and endless wo, because of the rock upon which ye are built, which is a sure foundation, a foundation whereon if men build, they can not fall.*

The Lord has been working in my life in an attempt to bring me back into His loving arms for far longer and with much greater effort than I will ever fully realize. He has carefully orchestrated each step in an attempt to provide for me temporally and spiritually in ways that would open my eyes and my heart to the truth. It took far longer than it should have, but, eventually, I responded to His beckoning call. Since that time, my eyes have been opened, at least in part, to God's hand at work around me. I have discovered that



you'll never see God working in your life if you aren't looking for Him. He had been working in my life for so long without me realizing it, simply because I failed to stop and take notice. He is working in each of your lives in the same way. He is working in the lives of our loved ones who are not here, but who we pray for over and over again in hopes that they'll someday come to an understanding of the truth. He is working in the lives of every creature that has been designed and formed in His bosom with perfect craftsmanship. He works because He is no respecter of persons. He loves us, and He desires for us to be with Him for eternity. He works in order that His name might be glorified for all to see – glorified in the way that we, the body of Christ, live our lives in submission to His will, with humility, and with sacrificial and unconditional love.

I recently had my Patriarchal blessing, given by my cousin, Ed Slauter. I would like to share a small portion of that blessing which I feel pertains to us all: *(God's) Spirit will give you guidance when that guidance is most needed. The Spirit of God that never sleeps and never ceases to speak as it moves in and through all creation. Put your trust in God's Holy Spirit and step out in faith. God's promises are sure and He will never lead you astray. Call upon your Heavenly Father in the depths of humility. There will be times you will look back on your ministry and feel that there is so much to be done. At times you will feel you have fallen short of the calling God has placed in your life. In those times, continue on this journey one day at a time, placing your full trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. (Amen)*

*When we walk with the Lord,  
In the light of His word,  
What a glory He sheds on our way!  
Let us do His good will;  
He abides with us still,  
And with all who will trust and obey.  
Trust and obey, for there's no other way  
To be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.*



# I CAN ONLY IMAGINE!

**Priest Rodney Bastow**  
*Mount Ayr, Iowa*  
**April 29, 2018**

Joel was apologizing before we came up because there weren't going to be very many people here. I told him a story about a preacher who went to speak one time at a church. There was just he and the pastor there. There might have been one other person. He said, 'Pastor, what do I do? Do you want me to go ahead and give my message with just a few people here?' The pastor said, 'Well, when I go out to hay the cows if there is only one or two there, I still feed them.' The preacher said, 'OK.' So he got into his sermon and just went on and on and on and finally finished. He asked the pastor, 'How did I do?' The pastor told him, 'I forgot to tell you when there is only two there I don't give them the whole load.' Maybe today will be one of those days when you don't get the whole load. We'll see.

I remember sitting here last Sunday listening to the class thinking I don't know anything. I'm scheduled to preach next Sunday. What can I say? What is there that I can say to these people that they don't already know? Lord, you are really going to have to help me with this one. I pray that you will guide my thoughts and that I'll be able to speak to them next Sunday. I hope He has done that today. I hope that the direction I felt like He was giving me this week will be the words that He wants me to give you this morning. I am thankful for this opportunity and I pray that the Lord will bless our time together that we might be able to thank Him and give Him all the honor and glory.

Last Sunday, if you heard our family worship service, you heard me talk about the problems that I've had this winter out on the farm trying to save calves. It's been quite a challenge and very frustrating, very depressing. I had a really tough time. I got my first heifer when I was ten so it's been 57 years since I had one of my own. I have seen a lot of different things. I've seen them die for a lot of different reasons. Sometimes it just seems like they want to die and they do. I had some different birth complications this year. I've had them before but they haven't come within 30 minutes of each other.

A lot of the calves this year just didn't seem like they wanted to live. When they were born some of them might be kind of chilled and they struggled. Some of them seemed to be fine for a few days and then a week later you'd find them



one morning and they were about gone. I had several calves whose legs were buckled under this year. I don't like that when that happens because they can't get up and nurse. This year I had one that did that with his back legs. I'd never seen that before. It was tough.

There were several calves that I worked with pretty hard to try to save. I gave them medicine. I would use a tube to pour the milk into their tummy. I think I was doing all the right things. I would give them the medicines that I have always given them to bring them around but that didn't work. It kind of got to me a little bit.

The other night I went to the track meet to watch Josh run. All those different heats of the 400 and I should have been looking for you because you would have stood out. I did see Ryder run twice. I'll do better seeing Josh and Ryder the next time and so will you? Anyway I am at the track meet and I'm talking to Sherm and Cheryl and we're talking about all the problems that I have been having. Cheryl says, 'How many cows do you have?' I started to think, started to count – there's this many in this pasture and this many in that pasture. I said, 'Over 70.' She said, 'Wow, that's a lot.' I said, 'Yeah it is a lot but I was supposed to have 90.' It did make me think though they didn't all die. This week when I went out to check I saw this calf and it's one where its feet went under and I had to get in and stand it up so it could nurse it's mother. Now it is running and playing and doing well and it's growing. We've got a pet up to the barn that I found out in the cornfield one day, just all alone right out in the cornfield away from all the other cows. We call him Brutus and he's kind of like a pet now. He's doing really well.

I've got a pair of twins that I found one morning when it was only 20 degrees out. They were stiff. I pulled them into the pickup and they started bawling that bawl that they bawl right before they die. I don't know if you have ever heard that. I thought well I slept too long this morning. I drove them around in the pickup and turned up the heater and gave them some milk and one of them started running around so I took it out and put it with its momma. Then a little bit later I came back and here's the other one getting up and I put him with his momma and they are still alive and doing well.

So I realized that I have a lot to be thankful for. I have a lot that I can be glad about. Sometimes I wonder what God thinks about His creation. What does He think about how the world is going right now? Is He happy right now with what He sees in the world? Is He joyful or is He somewhat depressed? It's hard to turn on the TV anymore and listen to the news because you are going to hear about some shooting or some scandal. There are a lot of things going on anymore that I can't think that God is pleased with. He created us. He sent His Son to show us how to live. We were supposed to follow His example. His Son died to save us. It just seems like there is so much disobedience to the Lord.

I have a scripture that I know that I have shared with you

before but it really sums up what I'm trying to say here. It's from 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 3:1-5 (NLT) *You should know this, Timothy, that in the last days there will be very difficult times. For people will love only themselves and their money. They will be boastful and proud, scoffing at God, disobedient to their parents, and ungrateful. They will consider nothing sacred. They will be unloving and unforgiving; they will slander others (Do you know what this means? It means that you say something bad about somebody that is not true. Have you ever heard anyone talk about President Trump? Normally they are slandering him.) and have no self-control. They will be cruel and hate what is good. They will betray their friends, be reckless, be puffed up with pride, and love pleasure rather than God. They will act religious, but they will reject the power that could make them godly.* Roger, stay away from people like that. It amazes me. That scripture was given after the death of Christ so long ago and it's so true today. If we dwell on those bad things, if we dwell on the things that are going on it is depressing but there are positives.

We're here together today. We're worshipping together. God has to be pleased with that. How many were at the women's brunch that Sandy organized? There were 46. Not all of them were from this church. They were from different churches. God had to have been pleased with that. That was a good thing to do. I went to Breakfast with the Master and Gordon went to. There were 90 to a 100 people there every morning. There was great fellowship and a great time. I enjoyed that. I saw that Maynard needed help getting back from the hospital in Des Moines the other day. Sandy sent out the email for this and there were people who responded. Michael Jordison picked him up and took him close to Diane Anderson's house. She met them and took him on to his home. That's just some isolated examples. There have been other times. I know there have been times when Sandy has gone and gotten people or taken them to a doctor's appointment. Diane has done that a lot of times too. There are others here that have done that. God has to be pleased with that. That has to make Him feel good.

We went to a benefit last night for a guy here in Mount Ayr who has cancer. There was a large crowd. The firehouse was full. I asked him about it and he said it was kind of overwhelming that this many people would care for him this much. That had to have been pleasing to God. There are those that are trying to do God's will. There are those that have repented of their sins and are trying to do what's right. We are not perfect but we're trying.

A couple of weeks ago, I hope she wrote this down because it doesn't happen very often, I took Debbie to the movies. The movie 'I Can Only Imagine' was showing. Have most of you seen that? Folks, you have to see that movie. It is a great movie. Now Debbie didn't like it very well. I did. I really liked the movie. I love that song. If I had known that Tony was going to be here today with his machine I would



have let him know and he could have played that song for us today. This movie was about faith. It was about repentance and about forgiveness. I never realized all those things went in to writing that song. It doesn't really tell how Bart Millard, the man the movie is about, got converted or why he started singing Christian music but somehow God touched him after he was abused all his life to turn to Him. Let me read you some of those lyrics:

I can only imagine what it will be like  
When I walk, by your side  
I can only imagine what my eyes will see  
When your face is before me  
I can only imagine

Surrounded by Your glory  
What will my heart feel  
Will I dance for you, Jesus  
Or in awe of You be still  
Will I stand in your presence  
Or to my knees will I fall  
Will I sing hallelujah  
Will I be able to speak at all  
I can only imagine

I can only imagine when that day comes  
When I find myself standing in the Son  
I can only imagine when all I would do is forever  
Forever worship You  
I can only imagine

Surrounded by Your glory  
What will my heart feel  
Will I dance for you, Jesus  
Or in awe of You be still  
Will I stand in your presence  
Or to my knees will I fall  
Will I sing hallelujah  
Will I be able to speak at all  
I can only imagine

I can only imagine when all I will do  
Is forever, forever worship You  
I can only imagine

This winter we've lost a lot of good people. We've lost Lynda. We've lost George, Brad Carr, Donella Drake. You probably didn't know her but Ann Ferguson passed away just recently, a lot of good people. These are people that were strong in the church, good workers for Jesus. These people are now able to see Jesus face to face. Can you imagine the joy that they must feel? Just thinking about George, I don't know if he's dancing or not but I am sure He has something

to say.

The situation in Brazil fascinates me. Do you know what has happened in Brazil, Roger? There are some people in Brazil that have received the gold plates. Do you know the gold plates that the Book of Mormon was written on, remember we've talked about them? The angel Moroni gave those plates to them. There was part of the Book of Mormon that was sealed and now the sealed portion is being unsealed and being translated. Some people say this might not be true. It might be a hoax but yet there have been several witnesses to these plates. To me it is really exciting. Can you imagine? Can you imagine seeing those gold plates? Can you imagine holding them and feeling them? This one witness talked about even smelling the gold plates. I wouldn't think they would have a smell. Wouldn't that be something? Can you imagine seeing the angel Moroni? Can you imagine speaking to him, hearing the words from the sealed part of the Book of Mormon? Regardless of whether you believe this or not, you have to know that Jesus will soon be returning. He is soon going to be here again. He tells us this from John 14:1-4, *Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And when I go, I will prepare a place for you, and come again and receive you unto myself; that where I am, ye may be also. And whither I go ye know; and the way ye know.*

We have to decide to prepare for His return. We have to decide to get well spiritually. The Lord has done all He can for us. We must love God with all our heart, mind and soul. We have to reach out to our neighbors. We need to get to know them better so that we can share our testimony of Jesus Christ and help them to know Him as we do. We need to repent of our sins and bring others to repentance.

One thing that I take from this experience in Brazil is that all peoples form a church and we'll be united. That's my understanding. When this happens then all of the different divisions of the Restoration Church, the Latter Day Saint Church, the Community of Christ Church will be united. I think that will be amazing. Won't that be something to have us all worshipping together, all joined together? In Alma 5:44 I find these words: *And now, may the peace of God rest upon you, and upon your houses and lands, and upon your flocks and herds, and all that you possess; your women and your children, according to your faith and good works, from this time forth and for ever. And thus I have spoken. Amen.*





# BUILDING ZION - ARE WE EVEN TRYING?

**H.P. Robert Rolfe**  
*Lamoni, Iowa*  
**August 5, 2018**

Our church started when an angel came to earth. Many say angels don't come to earth today. But in the Bible, from Genesis through the New Testament, angels kept appearing and providing ministry. If God doesn't change, and I don't believe He does...the Bible says He doesn't change...then if angels came once, they will keep coming. Angels were active in the account in Acts 10. I'd glad they were or we may not be Christians today.

Our communion prayers keep repeating, so we can have his Spirit to be with us. Do you feel his spirit with you this morning? Didn't you eat his body and drink his blood last month? Has it had any effect? It is supposed to if we are doing it right. It gives us life, according to Jesus.

Lynda's birthday is April 29th. Remember Lynda. The most beautiful woman I ever saw who married me. At our wedding my side of the family kept asking, how did he get her to marry him? She never told. The truth is, she gave me a test. She had written out all of the questions she wanted me to answer. I didn't know this, but to win the prize, (that being Lynda) I had to answer every question accurately. Accurately means that I gave the answer for which she was seeking. I got a 100% on the test and wedding bells soon followed.

Two hundred and twenty-nine years ago on April 29, George Washington was being inaugurated with his hand on the Bible. Afterward America's first government closed the day by gathering in prayer to dedicate the nation's future to God. **Would that happen today?** The fact is America **was founded** on the Bible. And over the decades to follow, America's biblical foundation was affirmed and reaffirmed over and over again by its leaders, from the Pilgrims of the Mayflower, to the Puritans of Massachusetts Bay, to the leaders of the first American colonies who declared publicly and in writing that the new Commonwealth had come into existence solely for the glory and purposes of God.

Rabbi Jonathan Cahn stated in his final warning to America: *No historian can rewrite that fact. No president can expunge it. And if a thousand angels swore on a thousand Bibles that this was not the case, it would in no way alter the fact that this American civilization was conceived,*

*established, dedicated, and founded on a biblical cornerstone—America was brought into existence for the will and purpose of God.* The book of Mormon confirms that view.

On Lynda's birthday, over two hundred years ago, George Washington held in his hand the first ever presidential address. In that address was a prophetic warning. Did you know that George Washington was a prophet? This is the prophecy: *"The propitious smiles of Heaven can never be expected on a nation that disregards the eternal rules of Order and Right which Heaven itself hath ordained."* In other words, if America should ever turn away from God and His ways, if it should ever disregard His eternal rules of Order and Right, then His blessings, the smiles of Heaven, would be removed from the land. Do you believe this? Has it happened?

This warning wasn't new when George gave it. It was an ancient warning. It had been given in Hebrew words by the prophets to the kingdom of Israel. But Israel turned away from God and disregarded His eternal rules of Order and Right.

They drove God out of: their government, their public squares, their culture, the lives of their children. They worshiped idols and served other gods. They celebrated immorality and they persecuted the righteous. They lifted up their children on the altars of foreign gods. And the blessings of God were removed from the land and replaced by judgment.

Have we in the restoration made the same mistake as Israel did. Have we, too, turned away from God? Have we, too, driven Him out of the government, out of our public square, out of our culture, out of the lives of our children. Have we too, profaned the sacred and sanctified the profane. Have we, too, killed our most innocent—over fifty-five million of our unborn children—Yes we have!! At least some of us have. What we were warned never to do, we now have done.

We have become a civilization in spiritual schizophrenia, a nation at war against its own foundation. The Supreme Court opens its sessions with the words: "God save the United States and this Honorable Court." But if then—if this honorable court should overrule the word of God and strike down the eternal rules of Order and Right that Heaven itself hath ordained, how then will God save it? Choosing new members of the Supreme Court is going on right now. For several years, our senators have been approving judges that promise to support the constitution and when sworn in, rewrite that same constitution.

Can our Supreme Court Justices judge the ways of God? Can the Supreme Court overrule the eternal laws of God? There is another court, and there is another Judge. And before Him, all men and all judges will give account. If a nation's high court should pass judgment on the Almighty, **should you then be surprised** if the Almighty should pass judgment



on that court and that nation?

In the Book of Jeremiah, it is written: *Has a nation ever exchanged its gods? Yet my people have exchanged their glory for that which cannot help them.* Let us not pretend as to what we are now doing. We are doing that which Israel did on the altars of Baal. We are exchanging our God for idols, our light for darkness, and our glory for that which cannot save us. Are we ready **to risk that which comes on the other side of that exchange**, the day when the blessings of Heaven are removed from the land?

What happens if one assumes the presidency by placing his left hand on the Word of God, and then, with his right hand, enacts laws that war against the very same Word of God on which he laid his hand? Such an act invokes the judgment of the Almighty. To swear an Oath on the Word of God in which it is written “Defend the weak” and “Do not murder,” and then to not defend the weak, to not protect the unborn, but, instead, to advance their murder, is to invoke the judgment of the Almighty.

To swear an Oath on the Word of God, in which its written, *Do not cause your brother to stumble*, and then seek to force those who uphold the Word of God to transgress the Word of God, by partaking in the killing of the unborn and the celebration of sin, is to invoke the judgment of the Almighty.

And to swear an Oath on the Word of God, in which its written, *Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people*,” and then to take part in the leading of a nation away from “the eternal rules of Order and Right that Heaven itself hath ordained,” and against the very Word of God on which the President lays his hand, is to invoke the judgment of the Almighty.

When the leaders of ancient Israel turned away from God, when they abolished His precepts, and broke His covenant, they did so in the shadow of Moses, whose voice cried out to them in warning.

Call upon the President, and the Supreme Court—tell them when you are ruling the nation, look above the Supreme Court and you will see a face—the only full visage in that wall—looking back at you. It is the face of Moses. And if that face could speak, it would say this: “No man can overrule the laws of God, no order can annul the order of God, and no judgment of man **can stand against** the judgments of God. Invoke not His judgment, but choose life. Lead in the way of repentance. Invoke the grace of God, that He might have mercy on this land.”

We have come to a most critical moment. As Elijah stood on top of Mount Carmel and cried out to Israel in its hour of decision, in between two altars and two gods, his voice now cries out to us and says: *Choose you this day whom you will serve.* About seventy years ago, the Chaplain of the United States Senate cried out in the same voice, and said to this nation, *If the Lord be God, then follow Him! But if Baal, then follow him and go to hell!* America did not pay attention

then.

Who is our God? Is it Baal? Is it Moloch? Is it the government? Is it money? Is it power? Is it pleasure? Is it political correctness? To what will we bow the knee? The truth is there is only one God. It is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He is the God of Israel and of all nations. He alone is the Rock upon which this nation has come into existence. For some trust in chariots, and some trust in princes, some trust in supreme courts, some trust in White Houses, some trust in governments, some trust in Wall Street, some trust in powers, and some trust in idols. But we should trust in the name of the Lord our God, the name above all names, above all kings, above all powers. We should trust in the only name given by which we can be saved.

We must trust in the name of Yeshua HaMashiach, Jesus the Messiah, the King of all kings, the Lord of all lords, the Judge of all judges, the Light of the World, the Glory of Israel, the Foundation Stone upon which this nation came into existence, and the **only** answer, the **only** chance, and the **only** hope America has, that it might once again shine with the light of the fire of the presence of the glory of the Living God, and not go to hell, so help us, God. You may likely remember what the book of Mormon says will happen to us if we don’t serve the God of this land.

Our scriptures tell us we should build Zion? How are we doing, after 188 years from the beginning of the Restoration? Are we like Israel? Have we, too, turned away from God? Have we, too, driven Him out of the government, out of our public square, out of our culture, out of the lives of our children. Have we too, profaned the sacred and sanctified the profane. Have we, too, killed our most innocent—over fifty-five million of our unborn children—**For what** have we traded Zion? What have we given up in place of having Zion?

Doug Smith gave a wonderful sermon on Zion in Independence recently. You can find it on the web on Garland Schnack’s website. It calls us to repentance and to the task of building Zion. If one group of men and women could build Zion in the past, another group can do it today. Enoch’s people were able to build Zion. So much for “nobody’s perfect.” Gen 7:77 says *And Enoch and all his people walked with God, and he dwelt in the midst of Zion. That is what we give up each day that we don’t establish Zion*, the ability to walk and talk with God here and now. Is this the only time that God indicated he wanted to live with his people? No it was not!

When Israel left Egypt, Moses led them to Mount Sinai. There the Lord told the people to wash their clothes and sanctify themselves and that he would appear at the end of three days. In Ex. 25:8 he told the people that he **wanted to dwell with them**. But, Israel would not. They said, ‘Moses, you talk to God and let him tell you what to do and we will do it.’ But they didn’t do what God said.

Most Christians claim to believe that Jesus is coming



again. Why is he coming? **He plans on living with us.** When He comes, He will bring Zion with him. Some today have misinterpreted that idea to mean we don't have to do anything today to bring Zion, as God will take care of it and bring Zion. The Zion talked about in this passage is the Zion that was taken to heaven. Those people will be returning to earth with Him. Hence, He will bring "Zion" with him.

Are we today like the people of Israel? God tells us to sanctify ourselves and get ready to meet him but we won't and don't-- do it. In my view, if Zion is going to occur, it has to start in the homes of committed saints who will conduct their lives at home in a zionic, or celestial manner. We cannot build Zion if we act like heathens at home. This encompasses how we talk to each other and how we treat each other, and what we do each day to spiritually prepare ourselves to live in Zion. Zion will never just "happen," like pulling a rabbit out of the hat. We have to live more and more like Daniel, Nephi, the brother of Jared, and so forth. Aristotle said, *You are, what you repeatedly do.* Our habits produce our character.

The priesthood of this branch have prepared several writings on some of the important concepts necessary to build Zion. We need to start building Zion in our homes. If it doesn't happen in our homes first, it will not happen. Perhaps, we are more like the children of Israel than we would ever admit. We simply don't **want** God to live with us, probably for all of the same reasons. In Zion though, we will be judged by the Holy Ghost. We won't be able to lie to the Holy Ghost. Like Ananias and Sapphira, we will find that lying to the Holy Ghost is an immediate death sentence.

The following is a testimony of Zion's Redemption by Elder A. White, taken from Infallible Proofs. It connects the Holy Ghost to the establishment of Zion.

*During the summer of 1885 my mind was very much exercised about the manner of the redemption of Zion, which was caused by the manifestation of the Spirit, both in tongues and in prophecy, given at several different times though the summer and through several different persons and all agreeing that the redemption of Zion was very near at hand, and some saying of it as "even at the door."*

*I had been thinking of Z. H. Gurley and J. W. Briggs, and what they had done for the cause; and after all they had fallen, although they had occupied such high positions. This caused me to wonder how the weak ones of the church could stand, if men who had received and borne such great testimony could be so shaken in their faith with regard to tithing, the doctrine of gathering and the redemption of Zion, as I knew that the church had accepted these doctrines, as well as the Book of Doctrine and Covenants, in which they taught. I had understood from reading section 63, paragraph 8, of the Book of Doctrine and Covenants, that the redemption of Zion would be by purchase.*

*These things caused me to doubt whether the before-mentioned gifts were of God or not, as it appeared to me to*

*be an utter impossibility for the Saints to purchase this land anywhere in the near future, because of the very high and rapidly advancing prices of all real estate in this region of country.*

*These things were a very great trial to my faith, because of the seeming impossibility for the land of Zion to be redeemed in the short time indicated through the gifts, without the intervention of the power of God.*

*These thoughts caused me to exclaim, "Oh, Lord, why suffer thy people to be tried so severely in this matter? Why not reveal unto thy people that which will relieve them of this great trial and let them know how the redemption of Zion shall be," when I heard a voice (which I understood to be the voice of God) saying, "The time was when my people might have redeemed Zion, if they had kept my counsel, but now it has passed out of their power. I will redeem Zion in its time, and I will do it in this way." Then I saw a narrow and very bright red ring, which enclosed Independence and a portion of the surrounding country, the center of which seemed to be a little southwest of where I was standing, on a high spot of ground.*

*Then he said, "Do you see that ring?"*

*I said, "Yes."*

*Then he said, "I have sanctified all of the ground inside of this ring, and I will not suffer any person to live inside of this ring except those who keep the celestial law. Now mine elders shall receive an endowment, and it shall be the same endowment that Peter had when he judged Ananias and Sapphira." I was given to understand that only such elders received this endowment as were chosen by the Holy Ghost at this time. "Now all written law ceases on the inside of this ring, but on the outside it shall continue as it is. Now my judgment commences inside of this ring which is the judgment of the Holy Ghost, that no sin may escape. By the written law and the judgments of men, many guilty ones go unpunished and many of the innocent suffer. You read in my word that Zion shall be redeemed by judgment. Many of my elders misrepresent me in regard to my judgment. They say it is storms, pestilence, earthquakes, etc., but this is not what I mean. I mean the judgment of the Holy Ghost, and as you see Peter yonder judging Ananias and Sapphira by the Holy Ghost, so shall the judgment be here. Death is laid at the feet of every person.*

*Then the vision opened to a very great distance, where I saw Peter judging Ananias and Sapphira by the Holy Ghost. Then looking back to near the center of the ring, I saw the judgment going on, yet at sufficient distance to prevent me from knowing anyone engaged in it. There were about ten or twelve men standing with their backs toward me, and about four or five feet to their right stood a man judging some person who was in front of them, yet hid from my sight by the other men. Immediately there was a very great excitement around where the judgement was going on, which soon extended to all parts within the circle, all seeming to know*





that every one must immediately get out of the ring or come up and be judged by the Holy Ghost, which proved fatal to all whose consciences did not hold them guiltless; and I saw many hastening to get outside the ring. Some ran, some walked and others went in wagons, one of whom I noticed more particularly. After he had driven over the ring he turned toward me, so that I could see the tears running down his cheeks, and I was enabled to hear what he was saying to himself. He said, "Now I have lost this great blessing because I have not lived up to my privilege." I was also given to understand that he could soon return and be able to abide the judgment, which he immediately sought to do.

I also noticed another one, on foot, who did not care for, or know, what he had lost, but seemed to be glad he had escaped the judgment, and showed no signs of repentance. I understood that both of these were Saints. I looked back to where the judgment had been going on, but it had all vanished. Then I asked to know what degree of perfection would have to be attained to enable one to abide the judgment, and to have it manifested by pointing out someone that I knew. This he refused to do, but would tell me what kind of a character could abide the judgment and what kind of character would have to go out.

He said all those whose words had been just and true, all those in whose hearts there was not guile or deceit, can abide judgment. He also told me that the following characters could not abide the judgment: All those that forgive with their lips, but not with their hearts; all those who have not spoken the true sentiments of their own hearts.

I had formerly believed that the land of Zion would comprise a great portion of America, which caused me to say, "If this is all the land of Zion, it is a failure, as I understand it."

Then He said, "It is wisdom in me to sanctify but a small portion at a time, for you saw that many went out, and if I had sanctified a large portion there would so many have gone out that it would have left a great part of the land desolate and waste; but by sanctifying a small portion at a time there will enough remain on the inside with those who are on the outside who are prepared, who will be invited to come in immediately to build up and occupy the places that are going to waste; and when all of the land on the inside is filled up, I will move out the line and sanctify another portion as you read in my word, 'The borders of Zion shall be enlarged.' This is what I mean. It is wisdom in me to prepare my Saints in this way for my coming. If I did not prepare them, they could not abide my presence. If I should come unto them in their present condition, my glory would destroy them." I was given to understand that the time had now come that the gospel should go forth from this place to every nation, kindred, tongue and people, with signs following; and it should go forth by those who received this endowment and that they had power given them to smite the earth with all the plagues,

earthquakes, etc.

After I saw the foregoing vision I was very much exercised in my mind over it, as it was so different from anything I had ever thought of. I commenced reading and studying the Book of Doctrine and Covenants to see if it would corroborate any such idea, and immediately after I had finished it, which took about six months, I dreamed that I was telling the vision to some person, and told it all right until I came down to where I saw the judgement going on, and I said he laid death at the door of every house.

Then I heard the same voice that I heard in the vision saying to me in an emphasized tone, "Tell it as I told it to you. You have misrepresented me. I told you I would put death to the feet of every person."

I said, "I see I have misrepresented a little, but I thought it would not make any difference."

He said, "It does make a difference, for this belongs to the vision I gave you and it is part of it."

I awoke immediately after this. I never told the vision until I received the above dream.



## ARE WE RUNNING OUT OF TIME?

High Priest Sherman Phipps

Lamoni, Iowa

August 19, 2018

As a Call to Worship Brother Robert Rolfe read Matthew 16:16-19. He said unto them, *But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*

For a scripture reading Brother Phipps read from Mark 7:6-9, 13. *And the Pharisees and scribes asked him, Why*



*walk not thy disciples according to the traditions of the elders, but eat bread with unwashen hands? He answered and said unto them, Well hath Isaiah prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written This people honoreth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. Howbeit, in vain do they worship me, teaching the doctrines and commandments of men. For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men; the washing of pots and of cups; and many other such like things ye do. And he said unto them, Yea, altogether ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition. . . .making the word of God of none effect through your tradition...*

I need to get a couple of little things out of the road here. First of all when I was up here earlier before we went in the back room I thought, I wonder if I could get Lucas\* to preach. He was expounding up here. He is so enthusiastic. I would like to follow his example this morning. I don't think I probably have as much energy as he does. I am hoping that someday that he will, indeed, be as enthusiastic about the gospel as he is about whatever he and Josh were talking about.

It's always interesting to me how the Lord works. You know I've been thinking about what I should try to share this morning and, of course, I am always really sensitive to the fact that unless what is shared comes by the Spirit it really has no value to any of us. I would like, when I have these opportunities like this, to be directed by the Spirit so that it has real meaning and it isn't just an 11 o'clock service where somebody says something and then we go home.

So as I've thought about being here this morning there were certain things that stood out to me. If you had been here and heard what Steve and Sue shared in the family worship you would have heard what I think I've been impressed with all week. Then Rob told a little story in the back room to Joel and I. I don't know why he told it to us but it really kind of brought home the things that have been impressed upon me this week too.

I think what I heard in the family worship was we need in our lives to always be aware that no matter what talents and skills the Lord might have given us, no matter what abilities we have, in the end it's His power and His strength whether He uses us to bring that forth or whether He has to step in and kind of finish the project for us. It's really always God's power that accomplishes His work. If we are fortunate, like in the story Sue shared, and humble ourselves and become like a little child then He will allow us to assist and there will be a lot of joy in that for both us and others. But it is always God's power that we are dependant on.

That kind of nailed what I have been feeling all week. We as a people have got to learn to look to God and let Him direct in our lives. That's what the scripture, I think, (that I read) was talking about. It sounded a little negative maybe but we've got to quit having one foot, or maybe both feet, in

Babylon. We've got to quit abiding by the traditions of men and somehow humble ourselves to the point that the Lord will, as Rob was mentioning earlier, speak to us. It might even be an audible voice or it may just be to our minds or hearts. But if we will listen He will speak to us, and we will actually know what it is He wants of us. We will know what the people around us need and when they need it if they are to be brought to him. I'm not talking about going out and proselyting just so we have more numbers. I'm talking about their souls, the salvation of their souls which is what Christ came and sacrificed His life for.

Rob mentioned our sign out front that says Church of Jesus Christ. What would make us the Church of Jesus Christ? After all the church is the people. It's not the building. It's not the organization. We all know that. It's us. It's whether or not we live our lives according to God's will.

We live in a day and age, I think, when all of the things that have been prophesied are coming to a head. We need to be sensitive to that. We need to understand that we cannot continue to regulate our lives, to order our lives according to the Babylonian way. Babylon is going to fall but if we are God's people, if we really are His people then whatever takes place in all that won't be so important. What is important is the salvation of the souls of our brothers and sisters, as well as our own.

I have been reading a little bit from this book, The Light and the Glory. There is a chapter that deals with the Pilgrims and the Puritans coming to this country. They were the original people to come here as residents not as explorers. There were a lot of people that came and explored and stole gold and such and took it back to Europe. But the Pilgrims and Puritans came to stay. I'm not going to try to get into all of the reasons they did that. As I read the chapter there was a simple message in it and yet it is one that I think we need to be constantly reminded of. The first group, the Pilgrims, landed in Jamestown, Virginia. They had a terrible time. Everything went wrong. Most of them died and yet when they came they professed to be coming to do God's will. They professed that they were coming to share the gospel of Jesus Christ with the people in this country who they considered to be savages. What would have happened if they had come to learn instead of teach? So their stated purposes were really good. If you had been there and heard all the things that went on as they prepared to come to this country and heard their stated reasons, as a Christian you surely would have been supportive of them.

The history of it is that when they got here they lost sight of what they had set out to do originally. They didn't support one another in a Christian manner. They didn't take the message of Christ to those around them. There may have been some in the group who really tried hard to do that but generally speaking they didn't. They just had a terrible time and it seemed to be apparent that the Lord was not with them.



On the other hand the Puritans who ended up in Massachusetts came with many of the same stated purposes. They came professing to want to bring the message of Christ to this new country. If you read the story, from the very beginning they actually left Holland where they had been. They had been kind of run out of England and were in Holland. They had quite a time getting here. They dealt with a lot of difficulties but in all of those difficulties the difference seemed to be that instead of bickering and fighting and trying to gain control, the Puritans when they had difficulties went to their knees and they prayed and they asked the Lord for guidance. They stayed pretty united as a body. When they got here they had their difficulties but the Lord blessed them richly and they prospered.

So what am I trying to get at with this? Section 2 in the Doctrine and Covenants paragraph 2a which was given by Joseph Smith, Jr. says *Remember, remember, that it is not the work of God that is frustrated, but the work of men.* Now I want you to think about that. If this is all you remember from this morning and you think about this this week that will be good. When God speaks and says this is going to happen then it happens. When His servants speak and say this is going to happen it happens. So as a people do we sometimes feel frustrated? I do sometimes. Often I almost get to the point of saying, 'What's the point?' What I want to say next is hard for me to talk about. It requires me to talk about things that normally I don't like to talk about. For instance, I don't think when you are fasting you ought to talk about it. I think the scriptures are pretty clear on that. Don't go out and stand on the street corner and try to make sure everybody knows you're fasting but fasting is important. We know it is from reading the scriptures. I try to do that some but probably not as much as I should. Some days I say to myself, when I am in the midst of fasting, 'Why am I doing this? Why don't I just have a good time like everybody else.' Of course, that is the adversary. He would like very much for us to think that somehow the Lord's work can be frustrated and that we should give up. That is not so. It will never happen. We have the Lord's word that His work is never frustrated as I shared in the previous scripture from the Doctrine & Covenants 2:2a: *Remember, remember, that it is not the work of God that is frustrated, but the work of men.*

Inasmuch as I find myself frustrated I think I need to stop and reevaluate and say, 'Apparently you are not doing this God's way.' That doesn't mean that you won't struggle when you do things God's way but if it appears that we're really not going anywhere, we're really not accomplishing what the Lord would have us accomplish, then that might be the first thing. We need to go ask Him, 'What is it you want of us?' Maybe nobody else does this. I think I am bad about going and asking the Lord, 'What do you want me to be doing?' and then I stand up and say, 'I didn't hear anything.' I guess I'll take it upon myself to pick the direction instead of

waiting and being patient and saying, 'What do you want me to do, Lord?' Because He will answer and unless He answers we will probably end up like these Pharisees and Scribes He was talking to just following our own traditions and our own ways.

How willing are we individually and as a body, to take time out from the way we've always done things and to really listen to the Lord and find out what He wants for us and from us. It gets a little scary when we try to do that because we are used to having everything planned and organized. As I say that I am sure there's some people sitting here saying, 'What are you talking about because this group doesn't have anything organized.' Not being organized is really frustrating for some people. There's not anything wrong with being organized. I'm glad somebody is into that. Cheryl likes to be organized and it's a good thing she does because otherwise there wouldn't be any organization in our family. At the same time how willing are we to really step back and let the Lord direct? Listen to Him. What I'm trying to suggest is that if we don't, if we don't we'll spend our whole lives maybe doing what appears to be good works, maybe what we thought was helpful but unless the Lord is the architect of what we're doing we're not going to build the Kingdom that He wants. He has to be the one in charge if we're going to accomplish what He wants. That's true even here this morning. Unless the Spirit of the Lord works, unless He carries His message into your hearts, you'll get nothing from me.

I'm just trying to share with you this morning. I'm not trying to be a great speaker obviously but along these lines I was ordained a high priest 45 years ago. What should God's people have been able to expect from that. Surely far more than what they have received. I struggle with the fact that the flock seems to have been so scattered. Where were those who were called to be shepherds? I look at myself when I say that. Today as we sit here are we willing to be led by the Lord and by the shepherds He has placed in our midst?

I'm going to risk saying this this morning. You are my family but I'm going to risk suggesting to us that we've not been listening to the Lord. He has struggled and struggled with us. He has stood before us with His arms wide open and pleaded with us to let Him be our shepherd. At times we are willing especially when things aren't going well and we need His help but in many, many ways we've ignored Him. We've done things the same way the rest of the world does. Even in our church services often I fear that we have adopted the ways of world in how we approach these things. But are we really willing, brothers and sisters, to take time to read these scriptures, to know what's in them, to know what the Lord taught? If you don't do anything else as a start just read what Jesus taught in the New Testament and in the Book of Mormon. Start there. See what He taught and then look at your life and see how we compare with that. He is going to do His work. His work will not be frustrated but will we be



His people? Who will be His people? I think He's asking us that question today. Who will be His people? It isn't a matter of taking one specific group's name upon us. It's a matter of taking Christ's name upon us. Are we really willing to do that?

I mentioned that maybe I would tell you Rob's story. Maybe this is a good place to tell it. Maybe I should have Rob tell it because I might have forgotten it. He tells it as a joke but it's serious.

Rob shared: When the JCRB met and were considering ordaining Seventies, for some people that was really a serious thing. So I told this story before that meeting. I said there was a fellow that was sitting at a light behind a lady that was talking on her cell phone. He just had the feeling that when the light changed she was not going to go. She was so busy talking that she wouldn't notice that the light had changed and would just sit there. Sure enough that was what happened. He just went ballistic. He was screaming his head off, beating on the steering wheel with his fists just making a fool of himself.

All of a sudden he looks up and here's an officer with his gun on him saying, 'Get out of the car.' The man said, 'What are you doing.' The officer said, 'You are under arrest. Get into the car.' The man said, 'You can't arrest me.' The officer said again, 'You are under arrest. Get into my car peacefully or I'll have to put cuffs on you.'

They took him downtown. A couple of hours later the officer came back in and said, 'Well, you are free to go.' The man said, 'I'm glad you came to your senses. Why did you arrest me?' The officer said, 'Well I saw at the light when I was sitting behind you and that this lady in front of you was talking on her cell phone and that she probably was not going to be paying attention and she didn't. When the light turned green you went almost off your rocker. You were screaming, hollering and beating on the steering wheel. I looked at your car and you had a crucifix hanging from the mirror. You had a fish symbol on one side of the bumper and a "Honk if you love Jesus" on the other side so I just concluded that couldn't be your car that you had stolen it.

The point I made was if we're going to be Christians we need to act like we are Christians when we are out in the world, not let those frustrations take us down that kind of path. I don't know if you have ever been in that boat and talked to the dash, yelled at the other drivers, etc. If you do I think there are some people who notice that.

Rob probably pretty much summed up what I was hoping to be able to say somehow this morning in that story. If we are going to proclaim that we are His people and go before the world with that claim then they're going to watch and see whether we really are or not. But I'm also asking if we are going to stand before God and say we're His people and expect Him to accept us if we do not obey His words, if we do not totally put our trust in Him no matter what the

challenge.

I hope you, my brothers and sisters, will not think somehow I am giving you a bad time today but I am impressed that we are running out of time. We need to take the covenant that we've made with Christ to have the name of Jesus upon us. We need to take that seriously. We need to determine that the traditions of men will not guide us but that we need the word of God in our lives. We've got these scriptures that sit on our shelves. Many don't read them. Some of you do. Maybe everybody here does. I hope you do. I am sure that if we read the scriptures and that if we begin to obey these commandments, we'll start feeling the Spirit move in our midst. We do from time to time and I'm grateful for that. You know from time to time I also hear people say, 'I would sure like to hear God speak to us today.' Well, you know what? He does in different ways, lots of ways. I like something else that Steve shared with me this morning. We have to somehow have the faith to listen, to see His hand at work whether things are going the way we want them to or some other way. We have to be willing to trust him and say, 'Well, I know His words are true. The things that He has said will come to pass will happen. He will provide for us as He knows we have need. That doesn't mean we're all going to be rich and have everything we want. If you look at the story of the Puritans my goodness they subsided on nothing for the first whole year at least but they always got just enough to survive and then when they continued to look to God and to thank Him and be grateful to Him in spite of all the hardships He poured out His blessings upon them.

That's what I'm hoping for you today. That we will turn away from Babylon, really truly turn away from Babylon. We'll quit living our lives the way everybody else does. We will look to the Lord and find out from Him what it is He wants and be willing to do it. I started to say a minute ago if you want to hear the word of the Lord and you don't feel like you've done that lately I have some documents here that I consider to be revelations that have been presented to the JCRB. His word, I believe, is in those revelations just as it is in these scriptures. (The three books)

Again, I hope I don't sound like I'm giving you a bad time because when it's all said and done I also hope you will remember the story of Hezekiah. Remember how Hezekiah and his people were under siege by Sennacherib who had come against them. Sennacherib was telling them he was going to destroy them if they didn't submit themselves to him. He had a huge army. I don't know what that would be like to be totally surrounded by the enemy. As I remember the story, from a human standpoint when Hezekiah and his people looked out it would have looked impossible for them to fight against this army and to survive. But Hezekiah had tried hard to obey the Lord even though his father before him had not been obedient. Somehow Hezekiah was turned around. So he says to the people as he stands and looks out at



this army that surrounds his city, 'Be strong.' Today we might not have a physical army like that out around us but there's an army fighting against us, fighting against God and His works but Hezekiah says to the people, *Be strong and courageous, be not afraid nor dismayed for the king of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him; for there be more with us than with him. With him is an arm of flesh; but with us is the Lord our God to help us, and to fight our battles. And the people rested themselves upon the words of Hezekiah king of Judah.* (2 Chronicles 32:7-8) It's true. No matter what forces might mount up against you, no matter how discouraged you might be at times, no matter how impossible it seems that Zion might be or whatever other part of God's work you're concerned about. No matter how impossible it might seem, it's not impossible. Turn, put your faith upon the Lord. When I say put your faith upon the Lord I equate faith with obedience. I think you can tell what people's faith really is in by what standard they adopt; how they conduct their lives.

I'm asking you to please look to the Lord for your strength. Rely upon Him. Obey His words and know that His work will be fulfilled in our lives if we truly elect to be His people

\*Bob and Liz Bell's grandson and Brandon and Maggie Bell's son who is 4 years old.




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Once all villagers decided to pray for rain.

On the day of prayer all the people gathered,

but only one boy came with an umbrella.

**That's FAITH .**

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## 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)

*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)*

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Oct 4, 11, 18, 25**

**Book of Mormon Night.** Every Thursday evening in Lamoni at 6:45 PM. Ron & Di Smith's home.

**Oct 7** Hayride/Cookout at the Barber's 4:00 PM

**Oct 11-13** JCRB National Conference

**Oct 13** Men's Breakfast at Pizza Hut 11:00 AM

**Oct 21** Food for Center due

