

April 2019

# Church of Jesus Christ

*Mount Ayr Restoration Branch*

# NEWSLETTER

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*“I Am the resurrection.”*



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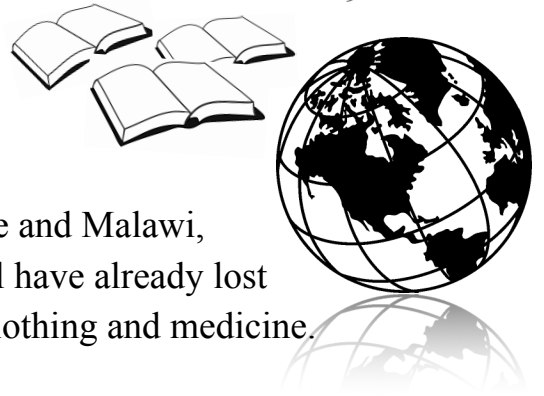


## News & Notes

This month the congregation will send delegates to the JCRB General Conference held in Independence. Brother and High Priest Sherman Phipps will be presiding over the Conference has has asked explicitly that before and during the conference, all humble themselves and pray that the Lord’s will is done. This is the Lord’s church and much like the story of Joshua, it is not the Lord who is to be on our side, but we to be found in alignment with Him and His will [Joshua

5:13-15]. You are encouraged to pray not only for this conference, but for all the conferences that are held at this time of year among the various restoration fractions. We look forward to the day when we may be brought again in fellowship one with another as God melts and molds us into obedient servants in one body.

**Reminder that Easter Breakfast is at 9:30 on April 21st at MARB. Patriarch Ron Smith will be speaking on the resurrection.**



# SAINTS MINISTERING ELSEWHERE

Please pray for the Saints, especially in Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Malawi, who have all been impacted by the storms and flooding. Several have already lost their lives and survivors are in desperate need of shelter, food, clothing and medicine.



## THE STRANGE CALL TO CHRISTIANITY

**High Priest Joel Loving**  
*Lamoni, Iowa*  
**February 10, 2019**

The theme I have chosen today to speak about is a little bit different. I've entitled it "The Strange Call to Christianity," strange because in our culture we look to convenience and ease, what is fun. Yet as I investigate this gospel message, the story of Jesus, and understand Christianity there is this call to the inconvenience of

Christianity. Christianity is inconvenient and life is hard and life is difficult and if anyone can embrace it squarely in a straight forward encouraging manner, it should be a Christian.

I recently read a book The Road to Wigan Pier by George Orwell. You know George Orwell as the one who wrote 1984. Of course, that book was about the difficulty of World War II and political things. He wrote a book before that called The Road to Wigan Pier. It's not the most interesting book but it's about a town in England around the mid 1930s. It is a coal mining town. He went there and interviewed some people and stayed in different places, and he describes the conditions of those people. It is rather amazing. I didn't know a lot about coal miners. I heard some of the stories about mines in Tennessee and other places in this country but I had never heard the depth of what life was like as a coal miner.

Men and women, even pregnant women, would walk to work with their lunch pails, get on an elevator that would go down a quarter of a mile, maybe a third of a mile into the earth. They would get off the elevator and begin walking into what would amount to be very dark caves or tunnels. They would be crouching in the beginning, really leaning over when it was about four feet and even crawling when the ceilings became so low that's all they could do. They would crawl two to three miles horizontally in the earth to reach their destination where on their knees they could shovel and pick coal, put it on wagons, pull it out so that the world, as it was becoming industrialized could have heat. Coal burns very well, very hot and very long.

They would shovel up to two tons of coal per hour for eight hours. Their day of work didn't start with pay until they reached their destination. Those miles of crawling and creeping weren't on the clock. I can't imagine pregnant women doing this. I can't even imagine men doing this. Of course, you understand the conditions of their lungs and their bodies, the sacrifices that they went through. As Christians we need to be





genuinely honest to the very core to talk about the difficulties of life.

I've been through an amazing twelve to thirteen months of my life. I had a heart attack a year ago last December and in the month of March I'm about to enter my fourth job. We've had to pay for a number of different things and we've been helped. Yet in spite of the hardships of this last year, which some people might say have been really difficult for me, it's been one of the most blessed experiences of my entire life. I read these stories of people who have gone through hardships and I think about this balance of hardship and blessing and how to really grasp the fuller meaning of life, embracing the hardships that are inevitably going to occur whether you are a Christian or not. How, even Jesus, in the story of the gospel calls us not to a life of ease, not really even to retirement. I am not suggesting you should not retire. You may have already retired. You may be looking forward to retirement. What I am suggesting is you will not be called to retirement from the Christian lifestyle.

The call to Christianity is not a call to convenience or ease, rather it's a call to inconvenience and difficulties, of endurance in a world full of sin and selfishness. While the world tells us to naturally seek pleasure, money and power and maybe retire early and avoid the real struggles of life, the way of Christ is counter intuitive and calls us to repentance and sacrifice and humility with a broken heart and a contrite spirit. This call isn't to ease but to embrace the struggles and hardships with fortitude and with faith in the Lord. There is simply no such thing as retirement from Christian work and there never should be in this life.

How many of you have prayed for the spiritual gifts? How many of you have prayed for long suffering? Long suffering means what it says. It's a spiritual gift and is listed in Galatians with the others. This spiritual gift is the ability to endure and overcome by your faith and by your fortitude in the Lord. It is an attribute that I think we need to put in its proper place and even be prepared as we look to the future and what is ahead. I am not saying we seek a sadistic lifestyle or the pain and anguish that life brings. I am just saying that we should understand that the Lord will be with us through absolutely everything, in our darkest hour, our bleakest moments, the unexpected heart attack.

I've thanked Gordon (Winkler) a number of times and I hope you don't take that for granted, Gordon. I called him on a morning and said, 'I've had a little bit of pain in my forearm.' I thought he was going to say, 'Schedule an appointment with your doctor and you probably need to get it checked out.' He said, 'You might be having a heart attack. Come into the hospital.'

Do you remember that? You might be having a heart attack. I went in and they told me my troponin was at 17 which is thousands of times more than it's supposed to be. It means muscle wall has died and is not getting oxygen and putting off this byproduct which is troponin. I don't know how much more time I would have had. They were ready to rush me by helicopter to Des Moines. I think of how that visit changed my life and I ponder what might have been. Yet I think through all of that I was blessed immeasurably. Gordon, I stand here today partially because you saved my life because of the kind of person you are and the Christian person you are.

I want to talk a little bit about long suffering. This scripture comes from Mosiah 2:20. *Even so I would that ye should remember, and always retain in remembrance, the greatness of God, and your own nothingness, and his goodness and long suffering towards you unworthy creatures.* I believe this is King Benjamin talking to his subjects in Zarahemla. Then again in Alma 5:39 it says, *And now I would that ye should be humble, and be submissive, and gentle; easy to be entreated; full of patience and long suffering; being temperate in all things; being diligent in keeping the commandments of God at all times.* So there is this honesty and integrity about facing the difficulty of life and having the qualities and the spiritual gifts that can allow us to overcome them so that we can experience life to its fullest and have fullness of joy.

It's a little long but Hebrews 11:32-40 says, *And what shall I say more? for the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthah; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets; Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again; and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance (they could have avoided torture if they denied Christ); that they might obtain the first resurrection; And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment; They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword; they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; Of whom the world was not worthy; they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the*



*promises* (of a good and easy convenient life here on earth); *God having provided some better things for them through their sufferings, for without sufferings they could not be made perfect.* There is this amazing insight about the things we have had to endure in life that brings us a fulfillment and appreciation of who we are.

I want to talk about the inconvenience and hardship of understanding the Book of Mormon. I am often asked, especially when I talk to younger people, about what is the purpose of the Book of Mormon. I've gone through some very difficult times and considerable struggle for years trying to understand this book and what its purpose is. This book is so unique but what is its place? The most important and central answer is this: the Book of Mormon is a testimony of Jesus Christ. And it is. It is. But for me that's not what really differentiates it from other scripture. Why is the Book of Mormon uniquely important in Christianity? There are many people who read the Bible and believe in Jesus. They don't need a second testimony. They're convinced with the first testimony of the divinity of Christ and who He is. They believe the gospel message. Do we just need to repeat it over and over and over? That's the purpose? It partly is the purpose to repeat it but there's something more unique and powerful about the Book of Mormon.

I am often asked, 'Well, what does the Book of Mormon mean? What is its divine purpose?' It's a little bit like asking what is the view from the top of Mt. Everest. We could take a helicopter ride to the top and have you view the world below from its peak and you would gain an appreciation of what that would look like. Right? I could also say climb it and when you get to the top I think you'll have a keener insight of what the view is. You see it is not about the convenient quick answer. It's not about googling it. What's the purpose of the Book of Mormon? It is a hardship journey of knowledge, of learning, of gaining through climbing the slopes and the peaks and the difficulty of understanding that book. When you do that, knowledge and enlightenment and fulfillment and joy come. This is my testimony. It doesn't have to be yours. The purpose of the Book of Mormon is to bring us to a knowledge of the covenants, of those that went before, even those who knew Christ before He was born that we must join in covenant in order to fulfill the conditions which will bring about Zion and the return of heaven and earth together.

Earlier today Gordon read from John about the women at the well. Jesus was talking to the woman who came to the well. She was an outcast. She came in the middle of the day when nobody else was going to be there and she and Jesus had this interaction about getting

the living water from Christ. He said that salvation came by the Jews. Did you know that? Salvation comes by Christ but in the plan of salvation God has included man to play a role and the Jews are owed deep gratitude in this. We're indebted to them in spite of the fact that many of them did not believe in the divinity of Christ at His coming. It is still that family, that tribe, that group that were faithful enough that God chose them to be born through and to arrive through.

It is by their example that we have the story of Jesus, the life of Jesus through God's choosing. We are to be grateful to them and join with them in covenant. One of the last things that Jesus said at His crucifixion was, 'Forgive them for they know what they do.' They are killing Him and He's saying, 'Lord, don't hold this against them. They don't know what they are doing.' Now this statement is not just an accurate statement of those there at that time. It's not just a focus on the ones who did it. It's really a broad brush statement against mankind in many ways. Forgive them, Lord, they really don't know what they're doing. That's a fairly accurate statement of all of mankind as a whole. Is it not?

At any rate here's the dilemma. If we don't really know what we're doing how is God going to include us by our own free will and choice in doing and establishing righteousness in the Kingdom of God? He's going to pick people who don't know what they're doing? How's that going to happen? It's the way of covenant. Listen carefully here. God knows the truth and His truth as we know stems from Him. Moroni 10:4-5 is all about this kernel of truth that comes from Christ and we have to come to an understanding of what that truth is because we're prone to error. The natural default is to go our own sensual way and sin and so God has made this way, this map really for us to figure out how to negotiate not only salvation through His grace but the ultimate dream of the Kingdom of God, of Him returning back to this earth. It's the way of covenant.

The way of covenant is this: we pray to understand the will of God and to agree with Him about what should be done. Through that agreement He agrees with us and we agree with Him the promise, the covenant, the holy thing is made. You've made covenants: baptism and marriage. Those are holy covenants and when you agree with God you will not be prone to making mistakes because now you've understood what He wants and you've agreed that you can do this together. The Book of Mormon brings us to a knowledge of these covenants that were made with men and God has chosen that when these covenants are fulfilled Heaven will return.

So the Book of Mormon plays this amazing





powerful role. In spite of its criticism by most of the world, it is this second testimony of Jesus Christ but it also connects us in a very holy and sacred way with those who have gone before who testified of Him even before He was born that the story that He is bringing about might be fulfilled and the fulfillment of those covenants brings about the return of Heaven on earth. I've said this many times, the understanding of this comes by the journey up Mt. Everest not the helicopter ride, not the quick easy answer, not the, 'just ask Rob' or some other smart person what the answer is, the struggle of coming to understand what that means. This is what it means to me. I'll just give you one scripture out of it: 3rd Nephi 10:1-2. This is Christ speaking when He comes to the Americas. *But if they will repent, and hearken unto my words, and harden not their hearts, I will establish my church among them, and they shall come in unto the covenant, and be numbered among this the remnant of Jacob, unto whom I have given this land for their inheritance, and they shall assist my people, the remnant of Jacob. And also, as many of the house of Israel as shall come, that they may build a city, which shall be called the New Jerusalem.*

Folks, with whom do we covenant? The Lord? Christ alone? No and that is the powerful thing here. Whom are you called to love? The Lord. The Lord and second, everybody else. Whom is the covenant with? The Lord and everybody else. This covenant connects you to Moses, to Lehi, to Moroni, to the ancients and to the mothers and to the women, of course, to great and holy people. So what's the purpose of the Book of Mormon? It is not a simple answer. It's not, 'I'll give you the easy, convenient thing to say.' There is simply no such thing as retirement from the Christian work, understanding the meaning of scripture and there never should be.

I've prayed about something in this congregation. I feel it. I have prayed for foresight, whether I have received it or not you can agree or disagree, but when you see something that others don't see that has a tendency to set you apart. I believe there is a call, a unique and strange call, an inconvenient call to the restoration branch here at Mount Ayr. It has to do with bearing children and looking after our children of all ages. I fear in some respects we've adopted the cultural understanding of bearing children. Those of us who are older have done it and we've retired from bearing those children. We feel like it's somebody else's job now. We don't have to do it. To Josh, to Ryder, to Ike, to Leo, to Ian, to Mikaela, to Chris we are called to bear the responsibility even inconveniently of helping to surround them with love. I am absolutely convinced the

future of this congregation is about embracing all of God's children but particularly the younger children that we have a tendency at our age to kind of think we have retired from. Brandon and Maggie Bell had a baby blessing of their daughter Brooklyn a week ago. I hunger. I thirst that we can be more supportive to that family. Or even Steve (Trullinger) who is this wonderful, great guy who has married Sue and has the blessing of that but we need to nurture him spiritually and to bless his soul in a way that's powerful. It doesn't have to be just the young people but I think we're called. I think we have a special calling that is unique and inconvenient to reach out to our friends and our neighbors in this time.

I want to tell you about a couple of stories from the Book of Mormon. I'm going to do a little bit of skipping around here about how this plays itself out, this call to inconvenience of Christianity. I want to talk about the sons of Mosiah and Alma. Alma is the son of Alma who was the religious leader, the high priest. The sons of Mosiah are the sons of the king. *Now the sons of Mosiah were numbered among the unbelievers; and also one of the sons of Alma was numbered among them, he being called Alma, after his father; nevertheless he became a very wicked man and an idolatrous man. And he was a man of many words, and did speak much flattery to the people: therefore he led many of the people to do after the manner of his iniquities. And he became a great hinderment to the prosperity of the church of God; stealing away the hearts of the people, causing much dissension among the people; giving a chance for the enemy of God to exercise his power over them. And now it came to pass that while he was going about to destroy the church of God: for he did go about secretly with the sons of Mosiah, seeking to destroy the church, and to lead astray the people of the Lord, contrary to the commandments of God, or even the king; And as I said unto you, as they were going about rebelling against God, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto them; and he descended as it were in a cloud; and he spake as it were with a voice of thunder, which caused the earth to shake upon which they stood; And so great was their astonishment, that they fell to the earth, and understood not the words which he spake unto them. Nevertheless he cried again, saying, Alma, arise, and stand forth, for why persecuteth thou the church of God? For the Lord hath said, This is my church, and I will establish it; and nothing shall overthrow it, save it is the transgression of my people. And again, the angel said, Behold, the Lord hath heard the prayers of his people, and also the prayers of his servant Alma, who is thy father: For he*



has prayed with much faith concerning thee, that thou mightest be brought to the knowledge of the truth; Therefore for this purpose have I come to convince thee of the power and authority of God, that the prayers of his servants might be answered according to their faith. (Mosiah 11:159-169) I won't go any further into that particular part of it. But it was the cleansing, the emptying of their pitcher and as they were emptied and cleansed and repented they responded. Now it's interesting to me that when you talk about some of the great Christians who have really been active in their fervent testimony of Jesus Christ, they were among the most wicked and among the worst of us before their conversion.

A little bit later in this 11<sup>th</sup> chapter that I am reading from it says that after their experience they were so afraid and fearful of those who were not believing because they knew what the consequences for them were. They had to do something so they went about and began preaching. *And now it came to pass that Alma began from this time forward, to teach the people, and those who were with Alma at the time the angel appeared unto them: Traveling round about through all the land, publishing to all the people the things which they had heard and seen, and preaching the word of God in much tribulation, being greatly persecuted by those who were unbelievers, being smitten by many of them; But notwithstanding all this, they did impart much consolation to the church, confirming their faith, and exhorting them with longsuffering and much travail, to keep the commandments of God. And four of them were the sons of Mosiah; and their names were Ammon, and Aaron, and Omner; and Himni. . . And they traveled throughout all the land of Zarahemla. . . Confessing all their sins, and publishing all the things which they had seen, and explaining the prophecies and the scriptures to all who desired to hear them.* (Mosiah 11:200-205)

Do you remember what happens to them next? They retired to ease and went to the lake house and fished. No, they embraced one of the most difficult climbs going to their enemies who were sworn to kill them so that they could share the saving grace of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Easy? Convenient? Simple? No, tremendously difficult but worth it.

I have another story that I won't go into the depths of either for the sake of time but this is from 3<sup>rd</sup> Nephi 13 which is about the story of the Three Nephites. Listen to this. This is part of your legacy, part of your inheritance as being part of this movement in the Restoration. This is your story. It's in your spiritual DNA. *And it came to pass that when Jesus had ended these sayings, he saith unto his disciples, Enter ye in at*

*the strait gate; for strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leads to life, and few there be that find it, but wide is the gate, and broad the way which leads to death, and many there be that travel therein, until the night cometh, wherein no man can work. And it came to pass when Jesus had said these words, he spake unto his disciples, one by one, (so He's going down the line and asking them) What is it that ye desire of me after that I am gone to the Father? And they all spake (they all line up and they tell Him what they want), . . . We desire that after we have lived unto the age of man, that our ministry, wherein thou hast called us, may have an end, that we may speedily come unto thee, in thy kingdom. And he said unto them, Blessed are ye, because ye desire this thing of me; therefore after that ye are seventy and two years old, ye shall come unto me in my kingdom, and with me ye shall find rest.* (3<sup>rd</sup> Nephi 13:11-14)

Then He turns to the three (I would like to think that this is all of us together) and they are afraid because they've just realized these other nine were blessed in their answer and they didn't want that blessing. Uh oh! No, Lord, I don't want that blessing. They don't know what the reaction is going to be I suspect at this point. *And they sorrowed in their hearts, for they durst not speak unto him the thing which they desired. And he said unto them, Behold, I know your thoughts, and ye have desired the thing which John, my beloved, who was with me in my ministry, before that I was lifted up by the Jews, desired of me; Therefore more blessed are ye, for ye shall never taste of death, but ye shall live to behold all the doings of the Father, unto the children of men, even until all things shall be fulfilled, according to the will of the Father, when I shall come in my glory, with the powers of heaven; And ye shall never endure the pains of death; but when I shall come in my glory, ye shall be changed in the twinkling of an eye, from mortality to immortality; and then shall ye be blessed in the kingdom of my Father. And again, (Listen to this carefully. This is no call to ease. This is no red carpet ride. Miracle, miracle, miracle easy life for these three Nephites.) ye shall not have pain while ye shall dwell in the flesh, neither sorrow, save it be for the sins of the world.* (3<sup>rd</sup> Nephi 13:16-20)

I want you to think about someone who has met the Christ, who has had this amazing miraculous experience, what their discernment would be about the sins of the world. I suspect and I would like to challenge us to think that that would probably be a pretty great overwhelming thing to comprehend the sins of the world and what that meant and the pain of that realization and knowledge. It's not easy but that's what the Lord gave them, the difficulty and the completely



inconvenient gift of that. . . . *and for this cause ye shall have fullness of joy; and ye shall sit down in the kingdom of my Father; Yea, your joy shall be full, even as the Father hath given me fullness of joy; and ye shall be even as I am, and I am even as the Father; and the Father and I are one; And the Holy Ghost beareth record of the Father and me; and the Father giveth the Holy Ghost unto the children of men, because of me.* (3<sup>rd</sup> Nephi 13:21-23) Do you see how embracing the hardship in a loving, kind way, in the Jesus way brings about the joy and the happiness that we seek?

I've read the book that Cheryl (Phipps) has talked a little bit about, The Miracle Morning by Hal Elrod and The Slight Edge by Jeff Olsen which I suspect some of you are going to be embracing and looking at. I think those books are really good books especially maybe even only with the Jesus outlook as an overlay. Just in the cultural world I am not so big on the message but with the Jesus overlay on top of it, it does make a lot of sense to me. One of the things you realize is "greatness is in the moment of the decision." In order to do great things in the moment you have that opportunity, simply make the decision to move that direction. It's in a moment you can make that decision. Fate is also in the moment of the decision. In the book The Slight Edge it says be happy and the reason will appear. That's interesting isn't it? I think the counter is also true. Be unhappy and the reason will appear. Which are you going to be?

I'm asking you to embrace hardship and challenges and even ask for long suffering but I want you to know I want you to be happy. The reason I am asking you to do those things is in order to have the fullness of joy that the Lord talks about. I know it is a hard message. I know it's inconvenient. I know it's a strange call to be a Christian but it's a powerful life transforming one. I have been blessed by amazing miracles in this congregation and by you as some of the biggest hardships of my life have occurred since I've moved to Iowa. Yet when I look at it, it all changes because of the fulfillment of the spirit which is among you and in you and in your backbone and in your spiritual DNA. I am amazingly happy in spite of the hardships that I have been called to endure because of friends like Gordon who said a simple sentence that probably saved my life.

So I believe this strange call to Christianity is to put Christ at the very heart of your life. He is always going to be central. The call is to follow Him no matter the inconvenience or difficulty or what the culture might say or do. It's to embrace the noble and greatest challenge of being a true Christian, willing to die for another and for Christ and the wondrous joy and fulfillment that will

follow.

I want to close with 2<sup>nd</sup> Nephi 13:29-31. *Wherefore, ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men. Wherefore, if ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life. And now behold, my beloved brethren, this is the way; and there is none other way nor name given under heaven, whereby man can be saved in the kingdom of God.* I pray that you will not only hear but accept the call, the strange call to Christianity that comes from the Lord.







## DON'T LOOK BACK

**Elder Michael Jordison**

*Lamoni, Iowa*

**February 24, 2019**

For a scripture I would like to use Doctrine & Covenants 83:24. *And verily I say unto you, the rest of my servants, Go ye forth as your circumstances shall permit, in your several callings, unto the great and notable cities and villages, reprovng the world in righteousness, of all their unrighteous and ungodly deeds, setting forth clearly and understandingly the desolation of abomination in the last days; for with you, saith the Lord Almighty, I will rend their kingdoms; I will not only shake the earth, but the starry heavens shall tremble; for I, the Lord, have put forth my hand to exert the powers of heaven; ye can not see it now, yet a little while and ye shall see it, and know that I am, and that I will come and reign with my people. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. Amen.*

Brothers and sisters, I greet you in the name of Jesus. What I'd like to share this morning is probably not going to be anything profound to any of you. It's not any huge revelation and maybe it's not even really for you, but as Julia and I have been reading the Old

Testament together of late, one of the stories jumped out at me. One of the lessons I've learned from this study is what I want to share. Quite honestly as I was preparing for today I don't think I really understood this lesson until this morning so hopefully it will make sense to you. I have been reading from the book of Genesis and I want to tell you a little about a man named Lot. You've probably heard of Lot before. There's not a *lot* in the scriptures about Lot, you might say [chuckle], but I think what is there can be profound so that's why I want to share.

What we get from the scriptures isn't just a history lesson. It's not just something that we read and think 'Oh, yeah, that happened to somebody.' What we find in the scriptures is there to teach us. Timothy says that it's for our profit, for our benefit, for our gain, for our understanding. If we turn to Timothy we'll see it says *And all scripture given by inspiration of God, is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, (this is the part that I want to highlight) for instruction in righteousness; That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.* (2 Timothy 3:16-17) I think that's kind of interesting. It says the reason why we have these scriptures is so that we can become righteous, that we can become perfect unto all good works so that all the things that we do are of a Divine influence.

Let me say though that I think a perfect person is a person who is filled with the love of Jesus Christ. That's what really qualifies us to be perfect. In 1st Nephi we find the dream of Lehi where his family travels to the paradise of God and they find the tree of life. It says they obtained the fruit from that tree and ate it and it was most joyous to their soul; it being the love of God, which is as a robe of righteousness.

I haven't studied the story of Lot in full detail like I would like to but I can't help but feel that there's more to this story between the lines. I think there's a *type* for what's to happen in our day but that's not what I'm sharing today. If you don't already know Lot was the nephew of Abraham. Do you remember who Abraham was? Abraham was the father of Isaac who was the father of Jacob. Jacob had a revelation or experience with the Lord and because of that his name was change to Israel. Israel had 12 sons and from them came all of the tribes or peoples that we call the Jews today. They are God's chosen people. Through Abraham was the beginning of a special covenant that God made with the people who eventually came to be called Israel.

Lot and Abraham came out of a place called Ur and from there they ended up settling in the land of Canaan. Lot was a righteous man we are told and though he has a



very small part in the story of the scriptures, I think he has an important part. In the 18th chapter of Genesis we find that God sent angels to Abraham for a couple of reasons. One of the reasons was that He wanted Abraham to know that he was going to have a son even though he was old and his wife was past the years of giving birth. The Lord promised that he would have a son born to him and that he would become the father of many nations. Then the angel turned to Abraham and said I'm also sent to destroy the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. The sins of the people have become so great and they are so wicked that the Lord cannot any longer allow them to remain upon the face of the earth.

Now Abraham knew his nephew lived in the city Sodom and he was concerned. As the angels left to destroy Sodom, we read this, *And the angels which were holy men, and were sent forth after the order of God, turned their faces from thence and went toward Sodom. But Abraham stood yet before the Lord, remembering the things which had been told him. And Abraham drew near to Sodom, and said unto the Lord, calling upon his name, saying, Wilt thou destroy the righteous with the wicked? Wilt thou not spare them? Peradventure there may be fifty righteous within the city, wilt thou also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that may be therein? O may that be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked; and that the righteous should be as the wicked. O God, may that be far from thee, for shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? And the Lord said unto Abraham, If thou findest in Sodom, fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes.* (Genesis 18:23-29)

If we continue to read in that passage we'll see how Abraham negotiates with the Lord. He said, 'OK what about 45. Will you save the city for 45 righteous people?' The Lord says, 'OK.' Then Abraham says how about 40 or 35? They go back and forth in this dialogue until they get down to the number 10 and Abraham says, *And Abraham said unto the Lord, O, let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak yet but this once, peradventure ten shall be found there? [will you spare the City] And the Lord said, I will not destroy them for ten's sake. And the Lord ceased speaking with Abraham.* (Genesis 18:39-40) And at this point God's done negotiating. If you find 10 righteous people in the city it will be saved.

The angels left and went toward Sodom and in the next chapter we read, *And it came to pass, that there came three angels to Sodom in the evening; and Lot sat in the door of his house, in the city of Sodom. And Lot, seeing the angels, rose up to meet them; and he bowed himself with his face toward the ground; And he said,*

*Behold now, my lords, turn in, I pray you, into your servant's house, and tarry all night, and wash your feet, and ye shall rise up early, and go on your ways. And they said, Nay; but we will abide in the street all night. And he pressed upon them greatly; and they turned in unto him, and entered into his house; and he made them a feast, and did bake unleavened bread, and they did eat. But before they lay down to rest, the men of the city of Sodom compassed the house round, even men which were both old and young, even the people from every quarter; And they called unto Lot, and said unto him, Where are the men which came in unto thee this night? bring them out unto us, that we may know them. And Lot went out of the door, unto them, and shut the door after him, and said, I pray you, brethren, do not so wickedly.* (Genesis 19:1-8)

The crowd outside his door became angry with Lot. Now these were some pretty wicked individuals and they wanted to do all kinds of evil and wicked things to these angels that had come and entered into the house. I'm guessing they saw them as they went by and they thought, 'Wow these are really special men.' But Lot wouldn't let them in and so they became angry saying, 'If you don't let us come in we're going to break the door down. We're going to have these men anyway and we're going to have your daughters who we know are in your house as well.' At that statement the door opens and the angels reach out and grab ahold of Lot's cloak and yank him inside and shut the door, locking it.

It says that these angels smote the crowd with blindness so that they could not find the way to the door. Eventually, lost and confused the crowd dispersed. As Lot sat there with these angels and his family the angels explained to him what was going on. They said that they had been sent there by the Lord to destroy the city Sodom and if he had any other family he needed to warn them to leave.

That night Lot went outside and he found his family and explained to them what was to happen; how the Lord had sent angels to destroy the city because of its wickedness and that they were called to flee out of the city. The family did not listen and laughed at him. They thought he was just a crazy old man, probably a lot like the people in in Jerusalem when Lehi warned them of destruction.

Lot returned back to his house and the next morning the angels took hold of him, his wife and his two daughters that were in the house with him and carried them outside the city to escape the destruction. I don't know if that means they just flew through the air or they passed through on the road or how they went. But the scripture says they set them down without the city walls



and told them to flee quickly so that judgment could begin on the wicked cities.

That why I say Lot evidently was a righteous man because the Lord led him out. It was unfortunate that there weren't 10 in the city but I have this feeling, this is kind of a sidebar, that even if there were 10 or 50 found in the city that were righteous the Lord might have led them out as well and continued on with His judgment of destruction.

Lot fled to the city Zoar and, *when Lot had entered into Zoar, the Lord rained upon Sodom, and upon Gomorrah; for the angels called upon the name of the Lord for brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven.* (Now if I understand brimstone correctly it is burning sulphur which burns a lot hotter than regular fire. When it rained brimstone everything was decimated.) *And thus they overthrew those cities and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground.* (There wasn't anything left.) *But it came to pass, when Lot fled, his wife looked back from behind him, and became a pillar of salt. And Abraham got up early in the morning to the place where he stood before the Lord; and he looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the plain, and behold, lo, the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace.* (And you can guess right now he's thinking, 'Oh my goodness, my family, my nephew) *And it came to pass, when God had destroyed the cities of the plain, that God spake unto Abraham, saying, I have remembered Lot, and sent him out of the midst of the overthrow, that thy brother might not be destroyed, when I overthrew the city in the which thy brother Lot dwelt.* (Genesis 19:31-35) The Lord preserved the righteous man and his family even as Abraham had negotiated with Him.

Now for me the part of this story that always confused me as a child was this passage in verse 33: *But it came to pass, when Lot fled, his wife looked back from behind him, and became a pillar of salt.* This didn't really make sense to me. I remember a coloring book and in that book there was a scene with a pile of salt in the shape of a woman and the city burning in the background. I always wondered why God turned Lot's wife into salt for just turning around and looking at the destruction. I think some modern translations or maybe our interpretations are that Lot's wife was killed because she saw the great destruction of God and it was so spectacular that she couldn't bear it and it consumed her as well. Kind of like when Moses came down off Mount Sinai where he had just spent 40 days with the Lord and his own countenance shone so much with the glory of God that the people couldn't even look upon him. Maybe it was some kind of experience like that

and she withered away. I don't think that's really what it means at all. I don't know for certain what the idiom means but I think that when they were told to flee the city and to warn their family, his wife wasn't happy with leaving them behind. I think she either wanted to return to them or she wanted to go and plead again with them to leave. I could see her questioning, 'Did Lot really go over there and tell our family that this was going to happen?'

In either case, because she returned after having been warned and carried outside the city, she was allowed to suffer the same fate as the rest of the people. And even though she may have been one of the righteous, her actions to return to the city meant that she would suffer the same physical outcome as the others. I don't think she turned into an actual pillar of salt for just turning around and looking. I believe it's an idiom - maybe lost to us, but it is an illustration for us today to understand that when God warns us of danger and leads us safety then we have no promise of deliverance if we turn back and ignore his warnings - no matter how noble we might think our intentions are - no matter how righteous we may be.

I think the lesson for myself here is that he He will not preserve us from destruction if we turn back to those sinful ways and the impending trouble. If we turn back to it we have no promise of deliverance. We have no promise that He's going to take care of us. He says he causes the rain to fall upon the just and the unjust so His judgments are going to fall upon the just and the unjust as well if you align yourself with the unjust. I think that's what Lot's wife had done.

The Lord has told us that His ways are not our ways. I believe this means that even with the best of our intentions we are still not as wise as God and we haven't the same understanding that He has and don't always see the bigger picture. As I look at our culture today, what's considered morally right almost seems to change daily in some respects. Down through history cultures have changed. Nations and the way people have looked at God and what's moral are evolving. It seems like recently it is changing at a faster rate. We're just on a fast track to destruction.

I don't think our society really understands what's truly moral any more. The reason for that is because I don't think we really understand who God is. We really don't know Him or have a relationship with Him. I should say the world doesn't have a relationship with the Lord where they can trust that He knows better and that the reasons why He has given us laws are for our protection. They are for our benefit but because we are wise in our own eyes, we set aside His counsel. We say,





‘Ok, what this person over here is saying sounds good. It seems to make sense to me and is probably the way things should be regarding morality’, and we forget about what God has already stated. Faith in Christ equates to accepting His word and obeying it as truth. When we have faith in Christ then what we are saying in essence is ‘Lord, I’m going to do what you have commanded or what you have asked me to do because You know better than I.’

A couple of weeks ago in Rob's class I had a kind of epiphany for myself with this idea of faith. I think I even made the comment then that I understood faith in a different way than I had in the past. Faith is keeping the commandments. We read in James that faith without works is dead. So in other words if we don't have good fruit or we're not doing something positive then that's a reflection that our faith is weak or we have a lack of faith. I think I understand it differently now. It's not if you do these things then you *have* faith. But rather, it's that *when* you act out trusting in God and believing in His word and what He said, then *that is faith*. Maybe I'm picking the words apart or just looking at it differently but it just clicked in my head in a new way because I'd been thinking that *if* I have faith in Christ *then* I'll do these things. But I've turned it around in my understanding and said that I don't have faith in Christ unless I'm doing these things. *If* I'm obedient to the commandments of God, *then* I have faith. Now we might argue that really it's the same thing ultimately but sometimes a different perspective can help with comprehension. Because if I believe that faith is "believing" something - in Christ or the scriptures, His promises, etc - then I will act on it. But maybe if I change my view slightly to this idea that faith comes *after* I keep God's commandments, then maybe I won't deceive myself in saying that I have faith in Christ, while at the same time I don't obey Him. Does that make sense to you?

What I take from this story of Lot and the destruction of Sodom are these six things:

1. **Prepare yourself to be righteous.** If you are righteous then you have the promise that God will preserve you and deliver you. If Lot had not been righteous he would not have been taken out of the city before its destruction. As I look at myself, I need to think, “Michael, you’ve got to prepare yourself and become righteous because it doesn’t matter if you are in this church or part of this organization or that group. If you are not right within yourself and aligned with God, you are not going to be preserved, either in this life or the next.”

2. **Invite the servants of God into your home,** whether it be His ministers, His angels, or His presence by the manifestation of His Spirit. This comes through not only the gift of the Holy Ghost within us but I think the Spirit comes when we make our homes habitable for Him. (I know we've been working on this study material called Righteous Habitations of the Home) but the reality is if our homes aren't a place where God can come and dwell then He can't be there with us. If He's not there in our homes, how can He be found even in us?.

Years ago we attended a reunion out in northern Nebraska. The sister that was with us had struggled with some things, some addictions. She had gone to this church reunion with us and through the week she was in a fog, just kind of babbling and bumbling around. She just wasn't always coherent. There was something wrong with her. I was pretty young at the time so I wasn't privy to all of the things that were going on but I do remember this. Finally, they said that this woman needed to be healed. She needed to be administered to and whatever had possessed her needed to be cast out. While the elders laid their hands on her head she continued fidgeting and mumbling, what you would expect from someone who was possessed. They laid their hands on her head and prayed and rebuked that spirit and cast it out. From that moment her entire countenance changed. The color came back to her skin and she was calm. She wasn't mumbling and she went through the rest of the reunion.

After the administration one of the ministers took her aside and said, ‘Look you need to understand that the things that you are engaging in, the kinds of music that you listen to, the places that you choose to visit, the environments and substances you take in are allowing these evil spirits to come into your body (your habitation). If you don't want that to continue you've got to make some changes in your life. You need to change your environment and what you take in so that these evil influences don't come as well.’

I think that is true of our homes. What we take into our homes, what we see on TV, what we read in books, who we invite over, what we do, what we say, is a reflection of the character of our home. It's the culture of our home. That's one of the reasons why our homes are in complete disarray in so many parts of the world and yes, in the church. It's not that we don't have the scriptures nor that we don't read them, it's all the other things that we are not really keeping in mind. When we live in contradiction: saying we serve God, but at the same time allowing the devil to enter in, all the good we



do gets lost in the confusion and our righteousness is counted but a filthy rag.

3. **We have the responsibility to protect our family and preserve those whom we have authority over.** Children are given to their parents as a stewardship. The stewardship requires that we give them over to the Lord and leave them in His care when they've arrived to the years of maturity. It's why we present them to the elders to be blessed when they are young. It's why we pray over them, why we teach them about baptism, about a covenant with Christ so that when they grow to maturity they can be brought before the Lord and He can continue to inhabit them and grow with them in their own life.

In the Old Testament Hannah wanted a son. She wanted a son so badly but she was barren. Finally, the Lord relented and said, 'Yes, I will give you a son.' She said, 'Thank you, Lord, I'm going to give him back to you.' We find out from that story that she named her son Samuel which means 'asked of God.' When Samuel was mature enough and weaned she brought him back to the temple and gave him to Eli, the high Priest, and Samuel spent his life in service to God. I'm not saying that we should do that with our children (give them to the Priesthood to raise) but we should present them before the Lord so that they become His.

But is a way the Priesthood should be presented our children to raise them us spiritually. And not just the children, but all the Saints who are the children of God; and we as ministers have a responsibility to protect and preserve and to care for them. That is one of the things that we need to be focused on; from the smallest or the least to the greatest or oldest in our branches. The weak and the strong.

4. **Listen to the voice of warning.** *Hearken, O ye people of my church, saith the voice of him who dwells on high, and whose eyes are upon all men; yea, verily I say, Hearken ye people from afar, and ye that are upon the islands of the sea, listen together; for verily the voice of the Lord is unto all men, and there is none to escape, and there is no eye that shall not see, neither ear that shall not hear, neither heart that shall not be penetrated; and the rebellious shall be pierced with much sorrow, for their iniquities shall be spoken upon the housetops, and their secret acts shall be revealed; and the voice of warning shall be unto all people, by the mouths of my disciples, whom I have chosen in these last days, and they shall go forth and none shall stay them, for I the Lord have commanded them.* (Doctrine & Covenants 1:1)

*Wherefore I the Lord, knowing the calamity which should come upon the inhabitants of the earth, called upon my servant Joseph Smith, Jr., and spake unto him from heaven, and gave him commandments, and also gave commandments to others, that they should proclaim these things unto the world; and all this that it might be fulfilled, which was written by the prophets; the weak things of the world shall come forth and break down the mighty and strong ones, that man should not counsel his fellow man, neither trust in the arm of flesh, but that every man might speak in the name of God the Lord, even the Savior of the world; that faith also might increase in the earth; that mine everlasting covenant might be established; that the fullness of my gospel might be proclaimed by the weak and the simple. . .* (Doctrine & Covenants 1:4) This is found in the preface to the D&C - and it is to be a voice of warning. The elders are to go forth and be the voice of warning unto the inhabitants of the earth from the days of Joseph Jr. even unto this day. We need to be prepared to hear the Lord when He speaks and prepared to obey as He warns us. Otherwise we have no promise of deliverance.

5. **You may have to leave your family or friends and your riches behind** in order to follow the Lord's commandments. That might not be an easy thing to do for many of us; especially leaving our family. I can leave my things behind, no problem I think, but it would be tough to leave my family, to leave my spouse or my children. But the axe is laid to the root of every tree and each one is given their agency to choose and act for their self and will be accountable for their own actions.

6. **Don't look back.** Old habits die hard. I think this goes beyond just pining for the things of the past, for the things that we used to do. Not looking back is a call to not return to our former sinful ways. It's a call to refrain from putting ourselves in situations that can lead to temptation which puts us dangerously close to falling back into that sin.

For whatever reason, Lot's wife looked back to the City. She neglected to heed the counsel of the Lord to flee and because of that she was destroyed along with those embedded in gross sin. Sometimes our sin affects those whom we love just as much as ourselves. If her family hadn't been unwilling to leave maybe Lot's wife would have lived. Maybe she wouldn't have been destroyed. We don't really know her motives. But this is the point that really kind of struck me this morning as I was thinking about sharing these things. **To not look back also means not to dwell on past mistakes.**



Myself- I have battled with depression and I struggle with certain things as I've looked back over my life and some of the things that I have done. Sometimes this causes me to revert back into my shell, so to speak, and lie in the darkness and to not be engaging. Basically - dwelling on the past opens me up to listen to the lies the devil tells me. And that's what he wants. He wants to paralyze us. He wants to freeze us up so that we can't move forward and get out of his reach. It's not that we necessarily shouldn't remember the things that we've done so that avoid them or the snares that pull us into them, but when we look back and  *dwell*  on those things is when we really get stuck in that rut.

I think that the lesson that God wants me to understand, to know that it's time to move forward. Out of the darkness and into the light. You have to let the past be the past. That's what repentance is for. That's what forgiveness is for. All of us have done things that we regret, things that we are sorrowful for but the promise is that if we will come to the Lord contrite and humble, He will be quick to forgive us and help us to move forward. He'll grab ahold of us and pull us back up out of the pit.

Lot's wife was in despair so she went back for her family. If we are in despair then it's because we have no hope. We find this in Moroni 10:15, 16. *Wherefore, there must be faith; and if there must be faith, there must also be hope; and if there must be hope, there must also be charity; and except ye have charity, ye can in no wise be saved in the kingdom of God; Neither can ye be saved in the kingdom of God, if ye have not faith; neither can ye if ye have no hope; and if ye have no hope, ye must needs be in despair; and despair cometh because of iniquity.* It's a package deal that if you have faith you'll have hope and if you have hope then you'll have charity. It's also a package deal with keeping the commandments. Rob (Rolfe) made a comment the other night about maybe it's time for us to really focus on Zion and what it takes to get there. I think that the first step in that is starting to keep the commandments, to make our homes a place that's habitable for the Spirit of God to come in and dwell so that He can be there. He can be our teacher and we can quit relying on the arm of flesh and the counsel of men to teach us and to lead the church. That's why the churches all seem to go up and down on the spiritual plane because we're kind of relying on one another. And we do need to do that to a certain degree but really we need to be relying on the Lord *first* so that we can move forward with Him on His level.

Some friends stopped in yesterday and I had a nice visit with them. Without going into much detail they

have been discouraged about some of what's going on in the church along with me. I said, 'You know I had some discussions with Ray Treat years ago. In his teachings he talked about the four levels of response to the word of God. Really the only level that produced any fruit was what Ray called the Celestial Level or the top level. I feel like that for many times in my life (and maybe yours too) we've been operating on a level of love, a level of understanding of the gospel that's below where God wants us to be - below the Celestial level. He wants us to understand love as He does. Our willingness to keep the commandments is because we willingly want to keep His commandments, not because if we don't we're going to be in trouble or because it's become a habit, or just because that's what I was taught to do. No, we keep His commandments because His nature has become a part of us and we desire to keep the commandments to have Him in us - because we love Him. That's what He desires so naturally we desire that when He's one with us. Maybe we just aren't understanding love the right way.

I found a video online weeks or months ago that I thought was really good. I thought it would be really neat to play for you but I'm not going to be able to. So I wrote out the monologue from the video and I'll share that. I don't know if his real name is Prince Ea or if that's his online personae but here are his words. I hope it speaks to you like it spoke to me when I heard it.

### Stop Saying I Love You

by Prince Ea

**Stop saying, "I love you".**

**Seriously, it's the most mis-used phrase on earth.**

**It's a nice thing to say to somebody. But tell me, do you mean it?**

**A lot of people say it because it's convenient, but tell me, do you - really - mean it?**

**A reporter asked an elderly couple, "How did you manage to stay together for 65 years?" The women's reply blew me away.**

**She said, "We were born in a time, when if something was broken, we would fix it. Not just throw it away."**

**Hearing her words made me pause for a second.**

**No, no more than just a second, 'cause it made me realize that what most people call "love" today, isn't love at all.**





**It's possession.**

**And not to be a cynic, but I feel most people in our generation just don't know the difference. So if you're confused, then stop saying, "I love you." Don't even fix your lips to make the sound. You want to know the difference between love and possession? Well stay tuned as I break it down.**

**Contrary to popular belief, true love is not blind. It has 20/20 vision.**

**And a loving relationship is not 50/50 either. It's 100/100 - a total commitment.**

**It's not a trade or a balancing act. It is all chips on the table, your whole heart - and that's that.**

**Do not fall into the trappings.**

**Love says, "I want you to be happy."**

**Possession says, "I want you to make me happy."**

**Cause Possession is actually the opposite of Love. It's other name is "addiction."**

**Love has an alias too. It goes by "understanding" and "commitment."**

**See, while Possession says, "Me," Love says, "We."**

**Possession is a cage.**

**Love is the sea.**

**Possession wants to control.**

**Love wants to free.**

**Possession wants to become.**

**Love wants to be.**

**Possession keeps receipts, to remember its good deeds.**

**Love does not keep score, but remembers- we are on the same team.**

**Possession hardens the heart.**

**Love softens it.**

**Possession picks a flower out of the ground. But**

**Love.....waters it.**

**Possession wants to hide.**

**Love is vulnerable and exposed.**

**Possession sees the body.**

**Love sees the soul.**

**Love trusts the process.**

**Possession controls the direction.**

**Possession wants to win the argument.**

**Love desires to win... a connection.**

**Possession is filled with darkness.**

**Love, with sunlight.**

**Possession says, "Who's right?"**

**Love says "What's right?"**

**Love is not sweaty palms or a pounding heart.**

**No it's more of a calm explosion.**

**Possession destroys those who touch it.**

**Love heals all...who hold it.**

**Possession is counterfeit.**

**Love is the only truth.**

**Possession fades away.**

**Love is forever.... because it-is-absolute.**

**But look, nothing is perfect. Even love needs to be fed.**

**A daily dose of forgiveness...understanding... not just those empty words said.**

**So, are you willing to persevere through tough times? To choose Love every single day?**

**Are you willing to fix things that are broken?**

**Not just throw...them away?**

**If you said, "Yes," then I promise your love will last a lifetime. And every day will feel brand new.**

**Just do me one favor. Please respect the word, "Love."**

**And say it only to those you truly do.**

It's time for the rubber to meet the road. If we say we love God, then we had better mean it. Maybe it's time to stop *going* to church, and time we started *being* the church. Our time on earth is short. Just ask anyone with grey hair, 'Is time short? Is your lifetime short?' It flashes and it's gone. Is Zion real? Do you really believe it? Then ask yourself, 'Are you prepared to be in it?' That's what I'm asking. Don't look back. Look ahead.





# REPENT, BELIEVE, FOLLOW

**Elder Tony Crandell**

*Lamoni, Iowa*

**March 3, 2019**

For a scripture reading Brother Crandell shared Doctrine & Covenants 6:4b. *Say nothing but repentance unto this generation: keep my commandments and assist to bring forth my work according to my commandments, and you shall be blessed.*

I have said many times in the past that since our church doesn't publish a calendar of preaching topics, the topics I pick for my sermons generally answer questions that I have been pondering myself. I think that I am becoming more and more Amish-like in the fact that I do not watch any television. Zero television, as Sandra will testify. I do read the headlines on the Drudge report, but only the headlines and none of the details. I listen to only a few minutes of news on the radio and then I have to shut it off. Why? Because of all the political gamesmanship that is going on. Our partisan government is totally involved in winning at any cost and if it means lying or distorting the truth, that is OK. I must turn it off as the reporting very quickly

becomes offensive to my point of view. I then start to feel a great dislike for the other person's view point. Sometimes it even progresses beyond that; I start to wish bad things on the offender. Soon I am at the point that I want to get even; maybe not me personally, but I want somebody to get even. When I think I am right, I want to teach the other viewpoint a lesson.

But I wonder if that is what Christ taught? How am I to act when I feel my viewpoint is being persecuted? In pondering that question, here are the words of Paul in Thessalonians 1:6-9. I am going to read it from the IV first, and from the amplified bible second.

Inspired Version *Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; Who shall be punished with destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his everlasting power.*

Amplified Bible: *For after all it is only just for God to repay with distress those who distress you, and to give relief to you who are so distressed and to us as well when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in a flame of fire, dealing out [full and complete] vengeance to those who do not [seek to] know God and to those who ignore and refuse to obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus [by choosing not to respond to Him]. These people will pay the penalty and endure the punishment of everlasting destruction, banished from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power.*

Paul is dealing with those who are/were persecuting the Thessalonians. What caught my eye was the little glimpse of "hell" that Paul describes in verse nine: *These people will pay the penalty and endure the punishment of everlasting destruction, banished from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power.* Who are they? We are told in verse eight that they are the ones who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now the good news this morning is my sermon is not going to be about hell. But, this begs the question. So, if you want to be delivered or "saved" from that unspeakable eternity; if you want to be on the inside with the light and the joy in the presence of those redeemed by Jesus Christ, what must you do? Paul says: The one thing you must do, the thing that will determine your eternity is that you must obey the gospel of Jesus Christ. You must! This one thing matters more than anything else in your life. It is more pressing and has more consequence than anything else you can imagine in this world. Please note that it speaks about obeying the gospel. Think with me. If it had said "those that do not obey the law will endure this everlasting punishment and are excluded from the presence of the Lord forever.



If it had said that those who don't obey the law are outside with this everlasting punishment. That's all of us isn't it? All of us have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. If I had to keep the law in order to get in, I don't get in. No one short of Christ has ever been able to do that; no one! What we are learning in this verse is that Salvation does not come by obeying the law, which is impossible for us to do. But salvation comes by obeying the gospel, which by God's grace we can do.

What does it mean to obey the gospel? - Jesus made it so clear in just three words. The first word was the word repent. God commands all people everywhere to repent. Jesus came preaching and calling people to repent. What does repent mean? Repentance is a decisive turning away from all that God calls sin in order that you might offer yourself and all that you are to Jesus Christ. You ask how can I do that? I know myself, I know my habits, I know my own stubbornness, I know how difficult it is to change, How am I going to do this repenting?

The second word and the answer to the previous question is that you must believe. You must believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. There must be a real personal relationship develop between you and Christ. That relationship is formed by faith. What does faith mean? It means you trust that Jesus is the Son of God. It means you trust His death for He has paid for your sins. And you trust that the power of His life will enable you to change. You trust that His grace and power is sufficient for everything you will face in your life now, in the future and even in death and into eternity. You trust Christ. That is how this life is to be lived. That is how this change is accomplished. You trust Christ! You trust Christ because Christ is altogether worthy of your trust. No one deserves your trust more than Christ.

Here is the third thing, Follow! Follow! Salvation is not only a gift, it is a calling; it is a vocation for life. It begins when we respond to the words of the Lord Jesus. He says to every one of us today, follow me! Follow me!

### ***Repent, Believe, Follow - Obey the Gospel.***

**YOU** may have been saying to yourself for some time, well, you know, one of these days I know I will have to start thinking about salvation. I would say to you, don't dawdle around about this. I am reminded of the words of Alma who said.... *For behold, this life is the time for men to prepare to meet God: yea, behold, the day of this life is the day for men to perform their labors. And now as I said unto you before, as ye have had so many witnesses, therefore I beseech of you, that ye do not procrastinate the day of your repentance until the end; For after this day of life, which is given us to*

*prepare for eternity, behold, if we do not improve our time while in this life, then cometh the night of darkness, wherein there can be no labor performed. Ye cannot say, when ye are brought to that awful crisis, that I will repent, that I will return to my God. (Alma 16: 228 – 231)*

Eternity hangs on this act, your Eternity rests on your decision...God is calling you through His words, these very words you are hearing today. He is speaking to you through these words. He is calling you. He is calling you!

Repent – Believe in His Son – and become a follower of Jesus Christ. You might say, “Wait a minute. Are you trying to scare me into salvation?” Yes, I'll do anything to bring you to the point that you will begin to face the reality of eternity and the limited time you have to prepare.

I turn 78 this year. My days are numbered. I am the oldest Crandell in my branch of the tree. I think about eternity a lot. Am I ready? The Bible says the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. It is not everything, but at least it is the beginning and if you are moved by thinking about this reality towards a greater faith and knowledge of Jesus Christ, Thank God for it!

In this hectic life of distractions, something must get our attention, or we are all just going to drift through life then into eternity. I look around at all the people who are doing just that. They are procrastinating. Sports have become their new religion. My hope this morning is that my words will motivate you to align yourself with the life of Jesus Christ and to continue to seek and obey the gospel. Repent, Believe, Follow, and obey the gospel.

I say all of this this morning to deepen your joy and appreciation for the mercy of God. More about that in just a minute. In preparing for this morning and reading the scripture earlier this week, a point never occurred to me. Think about the man who is writing these words to the Thessalonians who said: God is Just – He will repay those who persecute the church with an everlasting destruction. Didn't the man who wrote these words once persecute the church, himself? Didn't He? The Apostle Paul!

Saul of Tarsus was his name then. And he was the terror of the early church. A man of violence, a man arranging murders. The book of Acts tells us he was so intense about all this that he was “breathing fire and slaughter.” He was on his way to a place called Damascus, where he was going to carry out a campaign of violence and persecute Christian believers there.

You all know the story. Jesus Christ stopped him in his tracks. The ascended Lord blinded him with a bright light and in an audible voice said “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?” (Saul was persecuting the church.) Do you see the point the Lord was saying to him? “So, you think your struggle is with Christians? You think that your battle is with the church? I'm telling you, Saul,





your real fight, the fight that is going on in your soul right now, is a fight against me!” Saul of Tarsus kneels right there in the dust of the road and he repents, he believes, and he becomes a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. He takes a new name because the change in his life is so radical and Saul of Tarsus becomes the Apostle Paul.

Here he is years later, and the spirit of God is now upon him and giving him these words to write to the Thessalonians. Try to put yourself inside Paul’s head as he wrote these verses. How do you think he felt when he wrote this? He had to be thinking “I was that blasphemer, I was that persecutor, I was a violent man! I deserve this everlasting judgement. I deserve to be shut out for ever and ever. But I have been shown mercy! And it has transformed my life!”

Folks, that is the mercy and the power of the gospel, that is the gospel by which we are saved, it is the gospel by which we take our stand, and the gospel for which we live. It is the gospel we believe, it is the gospel we proclaim, and it is GOOD NEWS! Not only for all of us here, but for every person in this work.

As you come to the communion table this morning, remember these three admonitions:

**Repent** – If He can transform Paul, he can transform you!

**Believe** – That Christ has the power and authority to save you

**Follow** – After Jesus Christ and proclaim the Good News!

Jesus Christ’s grace was sufficient to cover and erase all of the sins of Saul. It is also still sufficient to cover and erase yours.



# PREPARATION FOR THE KINGDOM

**Priest Jim Barber**  
*Bethany, Missouri*  
**March 10, 2019**

I’d like to talk about the Kingdom. I don’t know that much about what the Kingdom is going to be like but I think I do know what we need to do to prepare to be a part of the Kingdom. There are 10 things I would like to talk about this morning. We talked about a lot of these things this morning in our Sunday School class.

1: **Repentance and have faith.** The first thing that I was thinking about was repenting and having faith which we talked about this morning. What little I know about the kingdom is that you can’t be there if you are not clean. No unclean thing can dwell in the Kingdom of God so repentance is very, very important. I have several scriptures here about faith and repentance both. I think one of the greatest scriptures on faith is from 7<sup>th</sup> chapter of Genesis, verses 15-17. *And so great was the faith of Enoch, that he led the people of God, and their enemies came to battle against them, and he spake the word of*



*the Lord, and the earth trembled, and the mountains fled, even according to his command. And the rivers of water were turned out of their course, and the roar of the lions was heard out of the wilderness. And all nations feared greatly, so powerful was the word of Enoch, and so great was the power of the language which God had given him.* If we have the faith of God we can do many things. We can move mountains. Like this scripture says, the rivers will change their courses. I think it's well that I don't have that kind of faith because if I moved a mountain somebody probably wouldn't like where I moved it to. Yet, I think that power is there and if God wants the mountain to be moved and He speaks through us it will happen. Moses struck a rock and water poured out of it because God commanded him to do that. It's not what we want but it's what God wants us to do. We have the power if we have the faith to do the things which God asks us to do.

In Romans 5:1-2 you will find another scripture on faith. *Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.* When I am preparing for a sermon, I am not at peace. It bothers me. In the first place I don't like to stand in front of people. I never have but I guess I'm getting a little more use to it or maybe my faith is increasing a little bit. If I rely upon God and have the faith that God will be here, it's not quite as bad. I am still nervous but at least I can get through the sermon and hopefully I am saying the things which God would have me say. My biggest concern is that I don't want my sermons to be about me but I want it to be God's word.

There are a lot of scriptures about faith and we need to look at them but I'll let you look at most of them on your own. In 2<sup>nd</sup> Nephi 5:30-32 it says, *And blessed are the Gentiles, they of whom the prophet has written: For behold, if it so be that they shall repent and fight not against Zion, and do not unite themselves to that great and abominable church, they shall be saved: For the Lord God will fulfill his covenants which he has made unto his children: and for this cause the prophet has written these things.* All of the scriptures that we have are there for our use to guide us and to direct us. We need to know the scriptures and to repent and cast out the things which are keeping us from being close to God.

In Matthew 3:27-28 it says, *And in those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, And saying, Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.* Again, we cannot get into the Kingdom of Heaven unless we come repenting and renewing our life and

asking God to forgive us. We also have to have faith that God is forgiving us. Matthew 4:16 says, *From that time, Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.* Again, we have to repent.

2: **Love our neighbors and share the gospel with them.** There are all kinds of scriptures about love also. Some of these I have paraphrased but in 2<sup>nd</sup> Nephi 13:29 it says *Wherefore, ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men.* John 13:35 says *By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.* In John 14:15 it says *If ye love me, keep my commandments.*

I'll share a few experiences I have had this winter. It's not been an easy winter. We were really spoiled until this year. I knew that someday we were going to get this and that someday was this winter and we have dealt with it. I'm not trying to pat myself on the back. I'm just glad I was able to help but I had one neighbor that his hay was two miles east of him and I lived between him and where his hay was so there were a few times that he had to call me because he was stuck trying to get to this hay. One particular time he called and asked me to bring some bales over to him because he couldn't get there. The road was drifted full. I went south of my house and got to the curve and there was a lady that was stuck on the curve so I pulled her out once and got her headed towards Bethany and then I had to go on east and as I was following her I knew she was not going to make it because she was driving about 2 miles an hour. She was scared to death. She had almost slid into the ditch once.

Well, she got to the next curve south of me and started up the hill and got about two thirds of the way up and got stuck again so I hooked on to her and pulled her on up the hill. She said, 'Well, maybe I can make it now because it's a straight shot.' I told her, 'You're not going to make it unless you drive faster than what you are driving now.' She said, 'I know but I'm scared to death.' I said, 'You need to drive faster or you're not going to make it.' I don't know if she did or not because I wasn't going any further.

Any way I went on over and got some hay for my neighbor and took it over to him. The road was drifted so bad I couldn't hardly get through it with the tractor so I decided I would just go home. I put the blade on the tractor and bladed his road. Our township road grader is operated by a man who is only halfway running it and he doesn't do a very good job. He had never gotten to my neighbor's road that time and he never did get to it. I cleaned it out four or five times before he finally got there.



You know these are things that I can do to help others. Sometimes I feel like my main goal in life is to help others. A lot of people do all the magnificent things that I can't do but this is one thing that I can do. I was just thankful that I had a tractor that had a cab with heat and air and it is a four-wheel drive tractor and I could do it. This is something that I was able to do and I was thankful to God that I could do that.

I didn't really know this young lady that I pulled off the corner. I did ask her her name and then I forgot it. I'm not good at remembering names. I told her my name and she said, 'I know who you are because I called back to where I spent the night and told them there was a guy with a blue tractor that was pulling me out and they said, 'Oh, that's Jim Barber.'" At least people know who I am and I'm thankful for that.

Another time I had gone to town and I got a phone call. I didn't recognize the number but I called them back and it was Grundy Electric. They had called me because they had their truck stuck over on the road in a snow drift. I told him that I was in town and that it would probably be an hour and a half to two hours before I could get back. I told them I would be glad to pull them out if I was home but that I wasn't. He said, 'Well, I got your number from my brother-in-law.' He was one of the guys that helped build my house. There again, people seem to know how to get a hold of me when they need help so I guess that's a good thing. I'm thankful that I can help.

I didn't know this young lady that I was talking about very well but I got to asking around about her situation and who she was. Well, her situation wasn't very good. She's got a couple of kids, is divorced, on drugs and an alcoholic. I got to thinking would that have made any difference if I would have known those things about her. I hope not. I hope that I would have still helped her. We never know who we are going to help or what comes from helping somebody. I hope we can all remember to help each other.

Mark 16:14 says, *And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.* Now this is Jesus telling His disciples to go into the world and preach the gospel. Matthew 4:22 says, *And Jesus went about all Galilee teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom; and healing all manner of sickness, and all manner of diseases among the people which believed on his name.* Romans 1:16 says, *For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.*

In 3<sup>rd</sup> Nephi 9:69 He's telling His disciples here on

this earth, *And it shall come to pass that the time cometh, when the fullness of my gospel shall be preached unto them, and they shall believe in me, that I am Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and shall pray unto the Father in my name.* He is saying that we need to be taking the gospel to the Lamanites. In 3<sup>rd</sup> Nephi 12:33-34 it says, *Now this is the commandment, Repent, all ye ends of the earth, and come unto me and be baptized in my name, that ye may be sanctified by the reception of the Holy Ghost, that ye may stand spotless before me at the last day. Verily, verily I say unto you, This is my gospel; and ye know the things that ye must do in my church; for the works which ye have seen me do, that shall ye also do.* 2<sup>nd</sup> Nephi 12:82 says, *And the gospel of Jesus Christ shall be declared among them; wherefore, they shall be restored unto the knowledge of their fathers, and also to the knowledge of Jesus Christ, which was had among their fathers.*

Sometimes I feel like we have not done what we should have been doing. There was one question that I wanted to ask in Sunday School class but I didn't do it because time was running out, but I'm going to ask it now. Why do the Jews still look for a Messiah? In Doctrine & Covenants 18:3c it says, *which is my word to the Gentiles, that soon it may go to the Jew, of whom the Lamanites are a remnant, that they may believe the gospel, and look not for a Messiah to come who has already come.* Are the Jews still looking for a Messiah? We haven't done our job have we? We were supposed to take the Book of Mormon to the Jews, to the Gentiles and to the Lamanites. I think there are some Jews who do believe in Christ but as a nation they do not.

3: **Love and praise God.** In 1<sup>st</sup> Nephi 5:199 it says that after Nephi's brothers loosed his bonds he was sore but did not complain but praised God all the day long. I paraphrased that quite a little bit. Remember in the story when they got on the ship and started towards the Promised Land that Laman and Lemuel again tried to make a big stir and bound Nephi and what happened? They about wrecked didn't they? Then they released him and Nephi didn't complain but he praised God because He showed the power through him as Nephi was released and the waters became calm and they were safe once again.

In 2<sup>nd</sup> Nephi 3:50 we find, *Rejoice, O my heart, and cry unto the Lord, and say, O Lord, I will praise thee for ever; yea, my soul will rejoice in thee, my God, and the rock of my salvation.* In Alma 14:92 it says, *Yea, I know that I am nothing; as to my strength, I am weak; therefore I will not boast of myself, but I will boast of my God; for in his strength I can do all things; yea, behold,*





many mighty miracles we have wrought in this land, for which we will praise his name for ever. We need to stop once in a while and praise God for all that we have and for the beauty of the earth.

The book of Psalms is full of scriptures about praise. In Psalms 34:1-3 it says *I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul shall make her boast in the Lord; the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad. O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together.* Psalms 66:1-2, 4 says *Make a joyful noise unto God, all ye lands; Sing forth the honor of his name; make his praise glorious. All the earth shall worship thee, and shall sing unto thee; they shall sing to thy name.*

4: **Thank God for all things.** I was reading a fictional book a while back about a minister in the town of Mitford, NC. Talking about thanking God one day he asked, ‘What if God took away everything that we didn’t thank Him for?’ What do you think about that? What would we have left? How many of us thank God that we have two arms or two legs or that we have eyes to see with or ears to hear? For that matter, what about the air that we breathe? All of it comes from God and we need to thank Him for those things. In 1<sup>st</sup> Chronicles 29:13-14 it says, *Now therefore, our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name. But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee.* In Ephesians Paul told them to give thanks in all things in the name of Jesus Christ. In the book of Daniel 6:10 it says that he kneeled three times a day on and gave thanks before God. He was supposed to be bowing to other gods but he didn’t. He kneeled and thanked God three times a day. Where did it get him? He got thrown into the lions’ den but it didn’t bother him did it because God was there. God answered his prayers.

In Ether 3:11 *the Brother of Jared did sing praises unto the Lord, and he did thank and praise the Lord all the day long; and when the night came, they did not cease to praise the Lord.*

The Doctrine and Covenants says that we should walk uprightly before the Lord and do all things with prayer and thanksgiving that we might not be deceived, and seek always for the best gifts. We need to thank God for so many things. I found a little story here on the Lord’s Prayer.

I cannot say *Our* if my religion has no room for others and their needs.

I cannot say *Father* if I do not demonstrate this

relationship in my daily living.

I cannot say *Who Art in Heaven* if all my interest and pursuits are in earthly things.

I cannot say *Hallowed be Thy Name* if I who am called by His name am not holy.

I cannot say *Thy Kingdom Come* if I’m not willing to give up my own sovereignty and accept the righteous reign of God.

I cannot say *Thy Will be Done* if I am unwilling or resentful of having it in my life.

I cannot say *Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread* without expending honest effort for it or by ignoring the genuine needs of my fellowman.

I cannot say *Forgive Us Our Trespases* and *We Forgive Those Who Trespass Against Us* if I continue to harbor a grudge against anyone.

I cannot say *Suffer Us Not to be Led Into Temptation* if I deliberately chose to remain in a situation where I am likely to be tempted.

I cannot say *Deliver Us From Evil* if I am not prepared to fight in a spiritual realm with the weapon of prayer.

I cannot say *Thine is the Kingdom* if I do not give the King the disciplined obedience of a loyal subject.

I cannot say *Thine is the Power* if I fear what my neighbors and friends may say or do.

I cannot say *Thine is the Glory* if I am seeking my own glory first.

I cannot say *Forever* if I am too anxious about each day’s affairs and

I cannot say *Amen* unless I honestly say cost what it may this is my prayer.

5: **We need to seek God’s Spirit.** Linda found a story on Facebook the other day but we didn’t write it down so I hope I can remember kind of what it was. It was about a little boy that asked his father, ‘How big is God?’ The father didn’t really know how to answer but finally he looked up in the sky and saw this airplane that was going across the sky. He asked the little boy, ‘How big is that airplane?’ The boy replied that it wasn’t very big. It’s pretty small. Then he took him to the airport and this airplane was on the ground and he said, ‘Now how big is the airplane?’ ‘It’s really big.’ The father said, ‘That’s the way God is. The closer you are to Him the bigger He is.’ We need to be close to God’s Spirit so that we will know Him and know His power and His greatness.

In 1<sup>st</sup> Nephi 7:3-4 it says, *And I, Nephi, said unto them, Behold, they were made manifest unto the prophet, by the voice of the Spirit: For by the Spirit are all things made known unto the prophets, which shall come upon the children of men according to the flesh.* Mosiah 9:41



says *Now I say unto you, If this be the desire of your hearts, what have you against being baptized in the name of the Lord, as a witness before him that ye have entered into a covenant with him that ye will serve him and keep his commandments, that he may pour out his Spirit more abundantly upon you?*

In Mosiah 7:14 it say, *For behold, the Spirit of Christ is given to every man, that they may know good from evil; wherefore I shew unto you the way to judge: for everything which inviteth to do good, and to persuade to believe in Christ, is sent forth by the power and gift of Christ. John 6:63 says It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing; the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life. 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 2:10-12 says But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, except he has the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. If I'm reading and studying the scriptures they are made plainer to me if I ask God to be with me and for the Spirit to guide me in the things that I read and say and do.*

6: **Pray without ceasing.** In 2<sup>nd</sup> Nephi 6:103 it says . . . *pray unto him continually by day, and give thanks unto his holy name by night. 2<sup>nd</sup> Nephi 14:11 says For if ye would hearken unto the spirit which teacheth a man to pray, ye would know that ye must pray: for the evil spirit teacheth not a man to pray, but teacheth him that he must not pray.* There are many scriptures that tell us that we need to pray unceasingly. Sometimes that's hard for me to do. I guess if I sat down and prayed all day I would probably fall asleep but we need to discipline ourselves more so that we don't do these things, that when I need to pray I will just stop whatever I am doing and pray. There have been many testimonies that I have heard of people that have done this and the miraculous things that have happened because they stopped and took time to pray. We need to be praying every day.

7: **Pay our tithing.** In 3<sup>rd</sup> Nephi 11:13 they were told to bring their tithes and the windows of heaven would open and the blessings would pour forth, so many that there would not be room to receive them. Rob talked about that this morning. That one time when he and Lynda paid their tithing that in just a few weeks or a month later they had received 10 times what they had

paid. There are many testimonies about how God will work with you if you will pay your tithing. One of Di Smith's favorite sayings is that you can't out give the Lord. I think that's true. There have been times when I felt like that I couldn't pay my tithing. Back in the 80s when I was bankrupt and didn't really know, paying 18% interest at the bank, I didn't have anything. But yet we filled out our tithing statements and even though we didn't owe very much, we paid it and were blessed because of that. Doctrine & Covenants 94:3a-b says *Verily I say unto you, that it is my will that an house should be built unto me in the land of Zion, like unto the pattern which I have given you; yea, let it be built speedily by the tithing of my people: behold, this is the tithing and the sacrifice which I, the Lord, require at their hands, that there may be an house built unto me for the salvation of Zion.* In Deuteronomy 14:22 it says *Thou shalt truly tithe all the increase of thy seed, that the field bringeth forth year by year.* We are even supposed to tithe our crops and everything that we have. Everything that we have belongs to God. We need to give back a portion of that.

8: **Study the scriptures daily.** In Doctrine & Covenants 10:10, we talked about this several weeks ago now I guess, it says . . . *study my word which hath gone forth among the children of men, and also study my word which shall come forth among the children of men, or that which is now translating; yea, until you have obtained all which I shall grant unto the children of men in this generation; and then shall all things be added thereunto.* If you don't know the word of God how are you going to share it? In this scripture that he was talking about here the Book of Mormon had not been translated yet. It was in the process of being translated but he is telling us to study the words that we already have and then to study the words which are coming forth so that we will know and can share the gospel with other people.

Alma 12:4 says *For they were men of a sound understanding, and they had searched the scriptures diligently, that they might know the word of God.* In John 5:40 it says *Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of me.* All of the words in the scriptures testify of Jesus Christ, even in the Old Testament. A lot of people don't like to read the Old Testament because it is past but if you read and study the testimonies in there that Jesus is coming, you wonder why the Jews rejected Christ. Did they not know what the prophets said? Did they not understand? Because it testifies that Jesus was coming and that He will come again.



9: **Keep the Sabbath Day holy.** In Mosiah 7:116-118 it says, *Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work; but the seventh day, the Sabbath of the Lord thy God, thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man servant, nor thy maid servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and the sea and all that in them is: wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.* I used to be a dairy farmer. It was kind of hard to miss a Sunday of milking. If you did your cattle would be ruined. That's not what this scripture is saying. It's saying that we need to do the things which we have to do but not do anything more. Take a day of rest. Take a day to worship Christ, to come to church, to keep the Sabbath Day holy. I think you can keep the day holy even if you are milking cows if you are in communion with God. When I was called to the office of Deacon years ago, I remember that one day I was milking cows and I said, 'God, if you want me to do something, you have to let me know.' That very week Bob Ramsey who was pastor of our congregation said that I had been called to the office of Deacon and wanted to know if I would accept it. It scared me to death because I knew I would have to stand up in front of people but I knew that was an answer to prayer, that God did call me.

Doctrine & Covenants 68:4d says *And the inhabitants of Zion shall also observe the sabbath day to keep it holy.* If you want to be in God's Kingdom, in Zion you have to keep the Sabbath holy. This one is very severe but it's there in Exodus 31:14. *Ye shall keep the sabbath therefore; for it is holy unto you. Every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death; for whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people.* That's pretty severe. It must be very important that we keep the Sabbath Day holy.

There are a lot of things we need to be doing to prepare for the Kingdom. These are just the things that I came up with.

10: **Look for Christ's coming.** I'm going to read from Genesis 7:67-73 which is basically the same as Doctrine & Covenants 36:12. I really enjoy this scripture. *And the Lord said unto Enoch, As I live, even so will I come in the last days, in the days of wickedness and vengeance, to fulfill the oath which I made unto you concerning the children of Noah. And the day shall come that the earth shall rest. But before that day the heavens shall be darkened, and a veil of darkness shall cover the earth; and the heavens shall shake, and also the earth.*

*And great tribulations shall be among the children of men, but my people will I preserve; and righteousness will I send down out of heaven, and truth will I send forth out of the earth, to bear testimony of mine Only Begotten; his resurrection from the dead; yea, and also the resurrection of all men. And righteousness and truth will I cause to sweep the earth as with a flood, to gather out mine own elect from the four quarters of the earth, unto a place which I shall prepare; an holy city, that my people may gird up their loins, and be looking forth for the time of my coming; for there shall be my tabernacle, and it shall be called Zion; a New Jerusalem. And the Lord said unto Enoch, Then shalt thou and all thy city meet them there; and we will receive them into our bosom; and they shall see us, and we will fall upon their necks, and they shall fall upon our necks, and we will kiss each other; And there shall be mine abode, and it shall be Zion, which shall come forth out of all the creations which I have made; and for the space of a thousand years shall the earth rest. And it came to pass, that Enoch saw the day of the coming of the Son of Man, in the last days, to dwell on the earth, in righteousness, for the space of a thousand years. What a beautiful day that is going to be when we will be united with Christ and with the city of Enoch and it's a day that we need to be looking forward to.*

I have one last thing that I want to share with you. Again, this is something that Linda found on Facebook. I don't do Facebook but she reads the stuff to me. This is something that she saw and read.

*When I woke up this morning I asked myself: What are the secrets of success in life? I found the answer right there in my room. The Fan said: Be cool, The Roof said: Aim high, The Window said: See the world, The Clock said: every minute is precious, the Mirror said: Reflect before you act, The Door said: Push hard for your Goals, And don't forget, the Carpet said: Kneel down and Pray.*

We need to seek God's Kingdom in our lives.







# RIGHTEOUS HABITATIONS

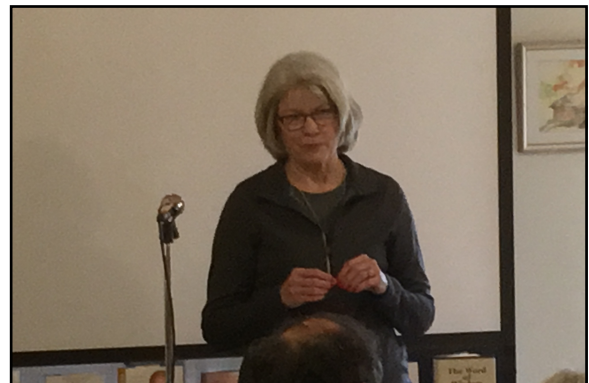
March 23-24, 2019

Forty-four past and current members of the Mount Ayr, Osceola and Keosauqua Restoration branches and family gathered at the Wesley Woods Camp & Retreat Center outside Indianola, Iowa for our first congregational retreat of 2019. Campers were divided between three main lodges for overnights and we had ample dining facilities and a staff cook providing good food. It turned out to be a wonderful weekend as we drew closer to each other and focused on some personal goals to strive for in our daily lives.

Friday night saw us gather together for an inside campfire, where kids and adults alike were challenged to sing loud, master tongue-twisters and keep up with some of the speedier camp songs. Sister Cara Smith shared a testimony of one of her experiences in leading the camp, Walk the Talk, where teens were challenged to actually do something with their faith, as they learned to serve others. It was a camp of action, right on the streets of KC.

Three classes were taught with two sessions each on Saturday. The first was taught by Ron Smith, Righteous Habitations. This class took the booklet prepared by the Mount Ayr Priesthood, "Habitations of a Righteous Home" and discussed

the ways in which members can work on becoming a righteous home by incorporating good habits and practices every day. Several topics such as, Keeping the Sabbath Holy, Sanctity of Marriage, Prayer, etc., were laid out and discussed as habits to create, and as defined in the scriptures. The books are only \$4.00 and can be mailed out or picked up for any interested.



The second class was taught by Sister Linda Winkler on, "The Miracle Morning", a book written by Hal Elrod. The premise of this book is how to make the most of your morning, and therefore your life, by incorporating a 6 simple step routine into your every morning. These steps are life S.A.V.E.R.S. and just require a little consistency and a determined mind. S.ilence A.ffirmations V.isualize E.xercise R.eading S.cribing.

Our third class was taught by Sister Cheryl Phipps on the book, "The Slight Edge", by Jeff Olson. This class taught us that our philosophy is what creates our attitude and actions, which in turn creates results that determine our quality of life.



The slight edge is the narrow margin that when we make the determination to consistently take positive steps in our life we are given that slight “edge” over

solo on her flute and others shared in testimony and song, ending with a video by Alan set to the song, “Beautiful City”, from Godspell. “We can build a



those that don’t do these things and which makes all the difference in creating a fulfilling life. The slight edge is simply doing the right thing, instead of the easy thing.

While the adults participated in the classes upstairs, downstairs at the same lodge, Sisters Valle and Cara Smith led classes for the youngsters, whose ages ranged from a few months to 11 years. The afternoon allowed the youth the freedom of play and discovery under the watchful eye of “youthful” volunteers.

beautiful city.” The evening closed with another campfire led by Ron and Di Smith.

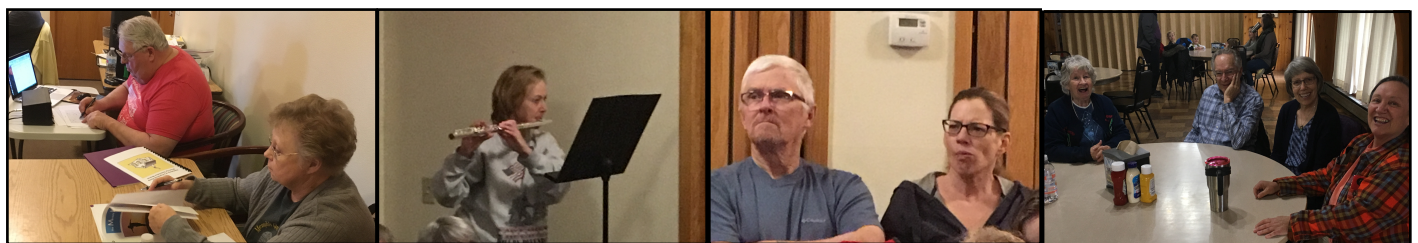
Sunday brought us together for a worship service led by brothers Dave Drummond and Ron Smith. Scriptures were shared with testimonies following pointing us toward a deeper relationship with Christ. The morning was especially touching and emotional as we sang to each person in attendance with the words, “The Lord be with you, and bless you [person’s first name]. The Lord be with [name] and bless you every day.”



Saturday evening the entire group gathered for family affirmations and unity building, led by Brother Joel Loving. The activities culminated with the entire group taping a blank sheet of paper on each one’s back. Then others were asked to write something that they appreciated on the paper on that person’s back. After a short time we were allowed to take the papers off our back and see what all the others had written of what they appreciate about us. Following, Brothers Alan Smith and Michael Jordison led a sharing service where Sister Diane Anderson played a beautiful

For those who couldn’t be with us we will plant to hold these classes again later in the year, along with new ones. Everyone is encouraged to pick up and read the three books that were discussed. Habitations of a Righteous Home, can be picked up from Ron Smith in Lamoni. The Miracle Morning, by Hal Elrod and The Slight Edge, by Jeff Olson can be bought from Amazon or other local bookstore.

Zion begins with a righteous heart, and that can only occur when we nourish and develop righteous habits in our own lives and also in our homes.







# *Affirmations*

## *Seek repentance and humility*

*Offer and seek forgiveness  
Look up to others with dignity and respect  
Be gracious, selfless and grow in gratitude*

## *Strive to be faithful and spiritually wise*

*Follow Jesus and serve Him  
Seek truth, light and hunger for righteousness  
pray, fast, study to obey scripture*

## *Increase in capacity to love God and all creation*

*Offer myself sacrificially to God, caring for the welfare of all souls  
Pursue Kingdom living aimed toward Zion.  
Faithfully embrace generosity and servanthood*

## *Deepen in understanding and responsibility of stewardship*

*Uphold with devotion relationships with family, co-workers, friends and strangers  
Develop talents through habitations, diet, exercise and rest  
Develop financial discipline through accounting each day*

## *Faithfully endure to the end*

*Accept responsibility for life circumstances with integrity and virtue  
Accept hardship with resolve and patience  
Make happiness a companion on this journey of life*



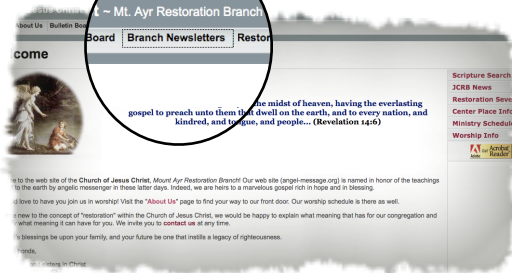


# Church of Jesus Christ Mount Ayr Restoration Branch

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

Have you misplaced your MARB Newsletter?  
Want to read it online or search past issues?  
Visit the Mount Ayr Restoration Branch website  
at:

[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

**Apr 4, 11, 18, 25**

**Doctrine & Covenants Night** - Every Thursday evening in Lamoni at 6:45 PM. Ron & Di Smith's home.

**Apr 13** Men's Breakfast at Pizza Hut 11:00 AM in Lamoni

**Apr 14** Food for Center due

**Apr 15-19** **JCRB Conference** at Good Shepherd Community of Christ in Independence. Brother Sherman Phipps presiding.

**Apr 15-20** **Breakfast with the Master** - 6:30 All week at the Christian Church. MARB will assist on the 18th, meeting early at 6:00 AM

**Apr 21** **Easter Breakfast** - 9:30 AM for breakfast. at MARB.

**May 4** **Ladies Brunch** - Lamoni Community Center. Ladies of the Branch and their friends are invited to brunch and a program.

