

Faith in Christ

Cooper Mountain Ward Sacrament Meeting December 26, 2010

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Intro

- Blessing to speak at Christmas time about Faith in Christ

My background

- First I feel to share a little about my background
- I grew up in the church, my mother a member, my father joined when I was about 5
- I was baptized when I was 8 years old
- I don't ever remember doubting what I was taught
- I had I think typical teenage struggles

- A significant event in my teenage life was being called to be stake missionary during the middle of my junior year in High School
 - I ended up bringing my friends to church and teaching my friends who were baptized, three of which served missions
 - Many faith promoting experiences yet what I remember most is the particular witness I gained of the Book of Mormon
 - In particular Christ's visit to America
 - Holy Ghost spoke to my soul
- Solid grounding that allows me to point and say "there, that is one of the witnesses I received of the divinity of Christ

- I can't remember not planning on going on a mission but this experience deepened my desire to serve a mission
- I served a mission to Sweden. A time that deepened my testimony and faith shaped me for the rest of my life
- I have had many experiences since then but those 4 years are the foundation of my life and testimony

First Principle of the Gospel

- First Principle of the gospel is "Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ"
 - We can and should have faith in many things but Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is central and paramount
- To me Faith in Christ means a belief based on witnesses we each personally have received that Jesus is the Son of God
 - Not just an extraordinary man with great teachings
 - But that he laid down his life and took it up again
 - A belief that he lives
 - A belief that he wrought the atonement which makes all things possible that we hope for
- If that is not the first principle of our faith that is if it is not the central core of our faith the bedrock or grounding then there is something not quite right
 - It is not the same in believing in the teachings of the church

My Hope today

- I have already shared a little about the foundation of my faith in Christ
- I will share my feelings, my testimony, some experiences about my faith and testimony of Christ
- Hope is that where faith is it may be deepened, where desire for faith is it may blossom, where faith is lacking a seed may be planted.

Begin by sharing two verses of scripture

For unto us a child is born – God with us

- Prophets foretold the birth of the Son of God
- Isaiah 9:6
"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace"
- Son of God
 - Mathew 1:18-23 (**Angel to Joseph before birth**)
"fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.
And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.
Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying,
Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, *God with us.*"
- These two verses capture the core of my faith in Christ
 - He is that not just a man, but a God, the only begotten Son of the Father
- My testimony that I share with you today is divinity of Christ. He is the son of God

What does that mean to you and me?

- Let me share some thoughts

We can become clean

- Well, all of us here today to some degree or another have felt the burden of sin
- We all have looked to remove that burden
- Let me share a couple of letters
- Russel M Nelson
"Letter: The guilt and failure I feel make it almost impossible for me to repent. I am losing my faith. The sins were first; the doubts followed. The order is important because sin needed doubt. When I doubted my faith, sins lost their meaning and guilt its bite. Doubting began, then, as a means of anesthesia. It served to diminish the guilt that was literally tearing me apart. Before long, however, the doubts thrived independent of the needs that conceived them. My painful indecisiveness, my tentativeness, my lack of direction, my paralysis of volition, my poverty of confidence have caused suffering and depression. My family, my future, and my faith are at stake. I am losing hope." ("A More Excellent Hope," Ensign, Feb 1997, 60)
- This is what sin can do to us

- Anonymous

"email: ...since you gave a lesson about temptation and dealing with it, I've been contemplating approaching you somehow... Your words have echoed in my mind many times. Every time I fell, I thought I needed to see the bishop, maybe it will really help. But as I pushed out sin, and I avoided it for a period, I felt stronger, I felt distant, I felt even forgiveness. But the recent event...made me realize I need to do more. So with that, here I am, wondering how you'll react, and fretting about the ramifications....

I've contemplated many times if, and how I might approach you. And for some time, I've never had the courage to do so. I don't honestly know if I have more courage now or not really, but I feel pushed, even desperate to move forward... So, here I am, hoping I'll have your ear, fretting, even fearing the outcome, but wanting to move forward with increased peace."

- We all to some degree or another bear such a burden of sin
- We must let our faith not our fears guide our actions and turn to the Savior
 - Because He is the Son of God, He was able to consummate the Atonement
- Isaiah 53:5
 - " But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed"
- TESTIFY that we can turn to him
 - As we exercise our Faith in Christ the atonement works in us so
 - We become pardoned
 - We are cleansed

Let me share another thing Faith in Christ means to me

We will live again

- Three weeks ago my mother-in-law passed away
- I can not say enough about my mother-in-law
 - She was beloved by her family – husband, children, grandchildren and great grandchildren
- As our loved ones die we are brought face to face with what we believe
- I can not imagine contemplating death without the hope provided by Christ's resurrection
- As I watched Nancy and her father and her brothers deal with her mother passing away I was struck how their faith in Christ and the resurrection, the plan of salvation made all the difference in the world
- Contrast with the feelings of some at Grandpa Baird's funeral
- I ended up as a "compromise"
- Strange dichotomy – LDS and Elks lodge
- Those that had faith and those that didn't
- It is my faith in Christ as the Son of God that gives me that hope
- Through the power of the resurrection we can have hope:
 - That we shall live again after we die
 - That we can be reunited with God & loved ones

TESTIFY

Those who are not accountable are redeemed

- Nancy's mother had Alzheimer's and was expected to pass away.
- Sometimes we are faced with tragedy in our lives which again brings us back to our core belief about Christ
- Part of our blood typing is what is called the RH factor. It is either positive (85% people) or negative.
- My Three aunts - Linda, Betty Jean & Barbara Baird
- My nephew Connelly Baird
- Yet in spite of this tragedy there is hope – not only in the resurrection but..
- For those who live and die without Gospel law, understanding or accountability, the Savior's atonement extends mercy unconditionally and the demands of justice are met.
- Through this unconditional extension of mercy we can have hope:
 - Our little children who may have passed away are saved in the kingdom of Heaven
 - Those whom we have known without the mental capacity to understand are saved in the kingdom of heaven
- It is our faith in Christ that can sustain us and which gives us hope

Overcoming sorrow and pain

- Joseph B Wirthlin
"Each of us will have ... those days when the universe itself seems shattered and the shards of our world lie littered about us in pieces. We all will experience those broken times when it seems we can never be put together again. " ("Sunday Will Come," *Ensign*, Nov 2006, 28–30)
 - Many of us through no choice of our own will have such days and times
 - We may have been wronged most horribly by the actions or words of others
 - We may feel this way because of tragedy where no one is to blame
 - The best description of these feelings is by Isaiah when he describes these feeling as ashes
 - There is a great power of healing through Faith in Christ and the power of the Atonement
 - Isaiah prophesied that the Savior, through the atonement would give beauty of ashes
 - Isaiah 61:1-3
". . . to bind up the brokenhearted, . . . to comfort all that mourn;
To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes . . ."
 - How can He do this – First he understands
 - Isaiah 53:2-4
"He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.
Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. . . ."
 - Alma 7:11-12 (Alma)
"And he shall go forth, suffering pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind; and this that the word might be fulfilled which saith he will take upon him the pains and the sicknesses of his people.
. . . and he will take upon him their infirmities, that his bowels may be filled with mercy, according to the flesh, that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities."
 - TESTIFY

- Because he is the Son of God, as we turn to Him in faith the Savior can give us beauty for the ashes in our lives

Making up the gap (grace) – attaining divine perfection

- There are those of us who despair because we feel caught between the understanding that we must become clean and like Christ to dwell with God again and the complete understanding that no matter how hard we try we will fall short
 - It seems in our everyday lives no matter how hard we try we just aren't good enough
 - Sometimes we beat ourselves up over this
 - Sometimes we are trodden down by others to where we believe we are no good
 - We can fall victim to this despair to the point we fall into destructive behaviors
 - Through Faith in Christ we can turn to him
 - 2 Nephi 25:23

"we know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do"

 - Understanding is given by Moroni
 - Moroni 10:32

(THIS is the "all we can do" that Nephi speaks of:)

"Yea, come unto Christ, and be perfected in him, and deny yourselves of all ungodliness; and if ye shall deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and love God with all your might, mind and strength (rest of the verse describes the "by grace we are saved" part), then is his grace sufficient for you, that by his grace ye may be perfect in Christ;"
 - We no longer need despair – we can look forward with hope, doing these things, doing the very best we can
- TESTIFY
- By exercising our Faith in Christ we can look forward with hope instead of dread both day to day and into the eternities

Closing

- I'm sure most if not all of you experienced a part of Christmas that is defined with boxes, ribbons, toys, electronics.
 - I know in my home there was excitement about some of these things
- I truly hope that you also experienced the Christ side of Christmas, the part you can't buy with money
- Prophet Jacob said this about that – almost like he saw Christmas time in our day:
- 2 Nephi 9:50-51 (Jacob)

"Come, my brethren, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money, come buy and eat; yea, come buy wine and milk without money and without price.
Wherefore, do not spend money for that which is of no worth, nor your labor for that which cannot satisfy. Hearken diligently unto me, and remember the words which I have spoken; and come unto the Holy One of Israel, and feast upon that which perisheth not, neither can be corrupted . . ."
- We can search for happiness and meaning in our lives everywhere but there is only one place we can find true happiness, joy and peace – IT IS IN CHRIST

TESTIFY