

Finding Peace in Christ by Forgiving Others

BOWS Stake Conference

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Finding Peace in Christ by Forgiving Others

- The youth theme this year contains these words of the Savior
- D&C 19:23
Learn of me, and listen to my words; walk in the meekness of my Spirit, and you shall have peace in me.
- What does it mean to walk in the meekness of His spirit?
 - It means to do in meekness and humility as the Savior did when we find ourselves in similar circumstances
- Today I would like to discuss one particular aspect of the Savior's example of meekness
- Peter – referring to the Savior said:
 - Peter 2:23
Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously:
- The Savior himself, while on the cross said:
 - Luke 23:
... Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.
- One of the burdens that we often carry that weighs us down and makes peace elusive is when we do not forgive others their trespasses against us.
- Why is it that unless we forgive others we cannot find peace?
- Part of the answer to that is to understand that it is a sin not to forgive.
- The Lord has made it very clear that we must forgive others else it is a sin and we will not receive forgiveness of our own sins:
- The Savior said:
 - D&C 64:9-10
Wherefore, I say unto you, that ye ought to forgive one another; for he that forgiveth not his brother his trespasses standeth condemned before the Lord; for there remaineth in him the greater sin.

I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men.

- When we have been wronged, offended or hurt by others, this can be a hard doctrine
- Yet, we must forgive to walk in the meekness of Christ's spirit to find peace

"Responsibility - Bitterness" scale

- To aid our understanding let me describe what I call the "Responsibility for Bitterness scale"
 - One end we feel bitterness, broken, hurt because of sins we commit
 - If we don't repent, we won't find peace
 - The other end we feel bitterness, broken, hurt because of the actions of others
 - If we don't forgive, we commit sin and we won't find peace
 - Indeed we only add to our burden if we don't forgive
 - We can end up in a vicious cycle of bitterness where we struggle to find peace, yet we can't let go of the very thing holding us back from finding peace
 - In this cycle we find ourselves figuratively casting our burdens at the Savior's feet, only to find ourselves picking them back up again
 - Carrying them again
 - Perhaps even embracing them
 - Sometimes even wallowing in our misery
 - If we don't get out of this cycle we can spiral downward and end up never finding peace

Beauty for Ashes

- So how can rid ourselves of this burden we carry because we don't forgive?
 - It can seem so hard or even impossible sometimes
- Isaiah (61:1-3) speaks of the power of Christ's atonement with these phrases
 - "bind up the broken hearted"
 - "give unto them beauty for ashes"
- These are metaphors for
 - Exchanging the heartache, sorrow, sadness, and the broken pieces of our lives for peace in Christ
- It doesn't matter what end of the "responsibility scale" our bitterness comes from
 - Exchanging the bitter taste of ashes for the beauty of the Savior's peace comes from the Savior through the power of His Atonement

"Level of Offense" scale

- Before I speak about *how* we seek this exchange I need to make one other point
- There is another scale we could consider
- I call this the "level of offense" scale
 - At the bottom is what we would consider small offenses, things that cause a small hurt
 - The other end, where we have been hurt deeply, seems to scale out of sight
- The Lord doesn't place a threshold on a level of offense that we have to forgive others on.
- Neither are there times where "my case is special" where we are exempt from forgiving
 - No "get out of forgiving others" card we can play with the Lord
- We need to recognize that as part of life we will all be given offenses on this scale, from small to large
- We need to let go and forgive *all* offenses against us, great or small.
- The more we do this the greater the degree of peace in the Savior we will find

How do we do this then?

- If I am struggling with this what do I do?
- How do I let go?
- I know the need to forgive but just can't seem to do it.
- **A First step** is to recognize what it is that is holding us back
- There are a number of stumbling blocks we may have in our path to forgiving others

Pride

- First and typically foremost is pride
- Pride is the antithesis of meekness
- The Lord did not say "Walk in the *pride* of my Spirit" to find peace, yet that is often what we attempt to do

Manifestations of pride

- One manifestation of pride is that we sometimes feel that others must repent before we can forgive them
- Or we sometimes feel that a person must be punished for their sins or crimes before we can forgive them
- We might feel "cheated" because someone was not "punished" like we feel they should have been.
- Brothers and Sisters
 - Our forgiveness of a person has nothing to do with their repentance or with their being punished or not
- We have to recognize this and let it go
- Am I saying that in letting this go we must place ourselves in harm's way again – no that is not the case
- When I served as bishop a member of our ward came to me who was struggling with a very serious offense that happened to this person's child.
 - Person was seeking peace in this matter but couldn't find it
- Let me share anonymously their words as this person came to realize they needed to forgive regardless of the actions of others
- Anonymous:
"Thank you for helping me to realize what it is that I need to do. What you did was empower me. I have been bumping up against a wall time after time because I have wanted others to do what I needed to do myself. I was asking the Lord to change others so I could forgive. When really the only one that I

can really change is MYSELF. I now have the power to really do something because it is MY responsibility, not theirs, but MINE and the Lord's. The Lord will help me let go and He will take this bitterness from me when I have changed my life in the way I need to enable me to let go." (Personal Experience shared in her words, Feb 2004)

- Let me share an experience of my own that was much smaller in offense
- Put down at a business conference by a friend and competitor
 - He was "exalted" and I was "put down"
- I didn't say anything at the time – I let it pass by
- You could say I let it go then
- However, a sign that I didn't really forgive and let it go
 - Was the act that kept playing on the stage of my mind
 - Only in this act the scene was different
 - Things were reversed and through my clever response to him I was "exalted" and he was put down
 - After this sad act played a few times I realized that I had to truly forgive and let this go and I did

Forgo Revenge

- Perhaps worse than stumbling when we want others to be punished or repent is when we feel the need to seek revenge
- We have all read or heard stories of someone who's life was consumed by revenge
- When we seek revenge for wrongdoings we are destroyed spiritually and emotionally

Forgetting is not forgiving

- Sometimes rather than forgiving we deal by putting it out of our mind – pushing it off into some dusty corner that we rarely visit
- We rationalize that since I've put it out of my mind and it doesn't bother me anymore that I've forgiven the offense
- Forgetting alone is not forgiving

Do not be offended – Do not look to be offended

- Sometimes our pride makes us quick to be offended
 - Our pride makes us "touchy"
 - We are quick to "revile when reviled"
 - We "threaten when we suffer"
- Sometimes its as if we seek to be offended
 - In our society it seems like all around us are examples of those who are looking to be "disrespected"
- This is something much easier to see in others than in our selves
 - Our pride blinds us

So what do we do after we recognize the need and our stumbling block?

- How do I let go?
- How do I not get into that cycle of bitterness?
- How do I not get offended?
- Three things for you to consider

1 – Gain understanding

- Russell M Nelson:
"The more we know about the Savior's ministry and mission—the more we understand His doctrine and what He did for us—the more we know that He *can* provide the power that we need for our lives" ("Drawing the Power of Jesus Christ into Our Lives" April 2017 General Conference)
- As we "learn of him" and "listen to his words" we will begin to understand what it means to walk in meekness of His spirit that we might find peace:
 - We learn to not look to be offended
 - We learn to not revile when reviled
 - We learn that "Vengeance is mine saith the Lord"
 - We learn when we suffer to not threaten
 - We learn to turn the other cheek
 - We learn to commit judgment into the Lord's hands
 - We learn that the Savior suffered scoffs, scorns, hurts, pain, loneliness, bitterness for us all
 - Not just for others but for me too

Time

- Learning these things doesn't happen overnight
- It is a process that we go through
- At times we may find ourselves asking:
 - Why do I keep getting upset at this
 - Why do I keep letting this get to me
- The important thing is not how fast I'm going forward but that I am

2 - Believe Him

- Truly believe Christ.
- Believe that He can and will exchange beauty for our ashes
- Believe that He will take upon Him our burdens, so that when we figuratively cast them at his feet we will not pick them back up again
- Truly believe that He can and will bind up our broken heart
- Example of this belief - Rod & Karen Barnes – Death of their son
 - Killed when struck by another car on his motorcycle
 - While not surprised, I was still amazed at the Savior's grace they displayed
 - At times I felt they were lifting up us as ward members instead of the other way around
 - I asked him why he felt this was the case? How was he able to essentially instantly forgive and not go down the path of bitterness?
 1. His understanding that the power of Christ's atonement is for all things and all people, including the driver of the car that struck his son
 2. He truly believed Christ has the power to succor him – there was no instant of doubt

Time

- Over time as we forgive and let go of the small things and receive peace our faith grows such that we can have the faith to forgive and let go of larger things

3 – Reach out in Faith

- It doesn't matter how much of the responsibility is ours or how small or big the hurt
- We have to reach out to the Savior for His power to flow to us
- Do you remember the words of President Nelson in April 2017 conference in describing our reaching up for the Lord's power?
- When he likened our spiritual reaching to the Savior to the physical reaching of the woman who suffered a debilitating problem for 12 years?
- Russell M Nelson:
"When you reach up for the Lord's power in your life with the same intensity that a drowning person has when grasping and gasping for air, power from Jesus Christ will be yours. When the Savior knows you truly want to reach up to Him—when He can feel that the greatest desire of your heart is to draw His power into your life—you will be led by the Holy Ghost to know exactly what you should do. When you spiritually stretch beyond anything you have ever done before, then His power will flow into you." ("Drawing the Power of Jesus Christ into Our Lives" April 2017 General Conference)
 - I find those words both daunting and comforting
 - Yet the Spirit witnesses to me the truth of them

Time

- Letting go and forgiving someone can be a hard thing
- Often it doesn't happen all at once
- Sometimes we may feel its like climbing a slope where we go forward 2 steps and slide backwards one
- When the hurt is deep it can take time to heal
- Often we struggle over a period of time and then in a moment or instant we do feel peace

Testify

- As we learn of Christ, Believe in Him and reach out to Him and walk in the meekness of His spirit then....
 - It doesn't matter what end of the "responsibility scale" your bitterness comes from
 - It doesn't matter how small or big the hurt you have is
 - It doesn't matter what the other person does or doesn't do
 - It doesn't matter what happens to the other person
 - You *can* let it go and find peace through forgiveness
 - You can exchange the bitter taste of ashes for the beauty of the Savior's peace
 - The Lord *will* bind up your broken heart that you may find His peace
- I testify of these things