

Finding Peace through Christ

BOWS Stake Conference

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Introduction – Easter Weekend - #BecauseofHim

- This Easter on the church’s website there is a video entitled “We can overcome All things, #BecauseofHim”
 - The video lists a number of things that #BecauseofHim can and will be overcome
 - Fear, pain, loneliness, despair, sadness, sickness, disability, deformity, darkness, anxiety, hatred and death
- We know that we will experience some of these things in our lives because “tasting the bitter” is a deliberate part of the Plan of Happiness (Moses 6:55)
- We know that there “must needs be, opposition in all things” else there would be no “happiness” in the plan of Happiness. (2 Nephi 2:11)
- We should expect then that life will happen to us
- Elder Neal Maxwell put it this way
- Neal Maxwell:

" It follows, then, that you and I cannot really expect to glide through life, coolly air-conditioned, while naively petitioning: "Lord, give me experience but not grief, a deeper appreciation of happiness but not deeper sorrow, joy in comfort but not in pain, more capacity to overcome but not more opposition; and please do not let me ever feel perplexed while on thine errand. Then let me come quickly and dwell with thee and fully share thy joy." ("If thou endure it well", pg 4)
- Elder Joseph B Wirthlin described how all of us will experience hard things
- 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)

Bitterness Cycle

- Sometimes in life “in tasting the bitter” we will find ourselves inside what I call the bitterness box. Here we feel things like:
 - pain, guilt, embarrassment, lack of self esteem, sorrow, despair, anger, depression, misery, unhappiness
- There are many ways that we “taste the bitter” and fall into the bitterness box
- Ranging from sin on one end of the scale to adversity on the other
- In between there are unwise choices, hasty judgments, mistakes and disappointments
- It is all too easy when we do to become “stuck” there
- When in this bitterness box we can fall into a cycle of negative reinforcement by
 - Not forgiving others (the “greater sin”)
 - Letting our pride govern our actions
 - Having angry and hateful thoughts toward others
 - Feeling resentment or anger toward God at the circumstances we find ourselves in
 - Sometimes we even wallow in our misery
- We long to move from this box of bitterness, this cycle we find ourselves in, to where there is joy, happiness, hope, comfort, peace
- Sometimes we figuratively cast our burden at the Savior’s feet – only to pick them up again
- We know #BecauseofHim we can change and escape, *but how?*

Power to heal

- Let me talk about 3 things to understand and do to find peace
- **First** we must believe that Christ has the power to heal
- Alma 7:11-12 (Alma the Younger)

"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.
12 And he will take upon him death, that he may loose the bands of death which bind 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."
- I testify that Christ has the power to heal whatever the source of our pain
- **Second**, we must believe healing is not something that is reserved for only a select few of us or that healing is for everyone else but me
 - It is a trap of Satan to believe that I am not worthy of the Savior's Love and that there is no hope for me
- Listen to this visualization of Gethsemane spoken of by Elder Merrill J Batemen:
- Elder Merrill J Bateman

"For years I envisioned the Garden of Gethsemane and the cross as places where an infinite mass of sin and pain were heaped upon the Savior. Thanks to Alma and Abinadi, it is no longer an infinite mass, but an infinite stream of people with whom the Savior became intimately acquainted as he suffered our sins, pains, and afflictions"
- In this visualization you and I are in that infinite stream of people with whom the Savior is intimately acquainted with
- I testify that the gifts of the Saviors atonement are for all

How?

- **Third** - Elder Renlund's April 2019 Conference talk "Abound with Blessings" gives us a key concept to guide us on this third point
- He said:
- Elder Dale Renlund (April 2019, Abound with Blessings)
"...you do not earn a blessing—that notion is false—but you do have to qualify for."

Gifts of Christ's Atonement

- It is the same for the gifts of Christ's Atonement
- We don't earn them, we qualify to receive them
- Nephi explained it this way quoting in part Isaiah
- 2 Nephi 26:25 (Nephi)
Behold, doth he cry unto any, saying: Depart from me? Behold, I say unto you, Nay; but he saith: Come unto me all ye ends of the earth, buy milk and honey, without money and without price."
- Take for example: Forgiveness of sins
 - We cannot "earn" forgiveness of our sins
 - It is a gift, bought and paid for by the Savior, that is freely given – there is no price we can pay to *buy* forgiveness
 - It is a gift bestowed upon all those who qualify to receive it
- This tells me that no matter how hard I try I cannot "earn" my way out of bitterness
- I can't white knuckle it
- In contrast to sports metaphors where we are taught to "dig a little deeper" or "give 110%", or "where is your pride?", the gifts of Christ's atonement are received by yielding, letting go of pride and other things that are hindering us, accepting that we can't do it alone.

Difference between earning and qualifying

- So, what is the difference between earning and qualifying then?
- I equate “earning” with “buying” or “purchasing”
 - There is no price, it is free, so we cannot buy it
- I equate “qualifying” with a state of being
- Here we can look to something Elder Oaks has taught us
- In his talk a number of years ago titled “The challenge to become” he taught:
 - Final judgment is not a set of scales where good and bad deeds are weighed off against each other
 - It is about who we are, who we have become – the state of our being
- We *do* that we might become, not to rack up points on a heavenly account
- We serve, we forgive, we love, we lift
- We pray, we study the scriptures, we follow the prophet
- These very acts of doing lift us and change us
- In this doing we change, becoming more like the savior

Qualifying in the context of other than forgiveness

- How do we qualify then to receive peace, comfort or happiness to replace fears, heartache, loneliness and so forth?
- We can look at receiving forgiveness of sins and learn from that
- In speaking of “qualifying” for forgiveness of sins Lehi said this
 - 2nd Nephi 2:7
 - ” Behold, he offereth himself a sacrifice for sin, to answer the ends of the law, unto all those who have a broken heart and a contrite spirit; and unto none else can the ends of the law be answered.
- Qualification or the state of being to be forgiven of our sins is to have a broken heart and a contrite spirit
- But wait you might say: “You have to repent to be forgiven, isn’t that earning forgiveness”
 - No!
 - When we sin, our state of being is we have a hard heart, we are prideful, we have enmity with God
 - In the process of repentance, of doing, we are changed:
 - From heart hardened by sin - to a broken heart
 - From a prideful spirit – to a contrite spirit
 - from enmity to Love of God
 - In this like other things we do that we might become – become qualified to receive the Savior’s gift of Him answering the ends of the law
 - Please note that this is a process not an event we are describing

What then?

- What do we do then to become that we might qualify for these gifts?
- Here is what the Savior says:
- 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."
- Matt 11:28
"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest....learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls"
- What do those words tell us we need to do to qualify for peace?
- We learn of him, come to him and walk in the meekness of His Spirit
- That all sounds very similar to forgiveness of sins doesn't it?
- The Savior said:
 - 2 Nephi 31:12 (Nephi)
"...wherefore, follow me, and do the things which ye have seen me do"
- When we "Learn, listen and come unto Him" we will learn of him and do as He did
- As we do as the Savior did – Serve, lift, listen, forgive, love, bless, we change
- We can become meek and lowly in heart, having a contrite spirit and thus qualify for peace that only can be received #BecauseofHim

Jennifer

- I would like to share something from our daughter Jennifer, that illustrates perfectly this process I'm speaking of
- Some of you may know our daughter Jennifer – she grew up in the Cooper Mt ward
- Jennifer – 39 years old, married for ~17 years
- I share this with her permission, she has also made this public – it is posted on her blog.
- This is about her struggle with infertility
- 8 years ago, her bishop, with tears in his eyes knowing what a hard thing he was asking of her, yet feeling prompted by the Spirit, asked her to speak and share her experiences with this struggle on Mother's day, yes Mother's day Here is her talk:

Having a doctor tell you that there is a zero percent chance of getting pregnant on your own is devastating. And devastated is what I have been for so long. After surgeries and crazy menopausal drugs and knowing that in the end it didn't matter, we decided to try in vitro. We were so blessed to have it work our first try. But after the next two rounds failed, I was still a girl who couldn't have kids.

Last Mother's Day was that lowest moment, when not even having my daughter Ivy made me happy. I remember being at the park about a month after Mother's Day and watching a mom with 3 little boys. I watched her and I got mad. When she put Coke in her little boys bottle, I was angry. Why could this mom who wasn't doing a good job, get to have kids and I didn't? Didn't I deserve it more than she did? I was a way better mom than that. It wasn't fair.

Right after that I had a big long talk with my Grandma Baird at a Family reunion. After talking about how life isn't perfect, and that life is hard she told me... If we were all to hang our troubles out on the line, you would pick yours and I would pick mine. And that was from the lady that was dying from cancer.

Sometime after that I started making a conscious effort to be happy. I decided to be thankful and grateful for the things I did

have. I finally realized after all those years of praying for things to be different, for God to help our family grow and to just make it so I could have kids, that I had been praying for the wrong thing. I started praying for peace. Peace for my heart to accept the circumstances I had been given. I also started praying more for others and wishing peace for so many others struggling with hard things. And as I opened my heart to others and tried to lift people up instead of worrying about my own trials, my burden became so much lighter.

I don't think there are many girls that imagine growing up and not being able to have children. And I think that is why Mothers' Day was so hard for me last year. I was hanging on to that life I imagined. The one that wasn't there. I wasn't moving forward or accepting the one I had. But I decided at the beginning of the year that I was going to *BE*. I chose to *BE* but that means I have to *DO*. I have to move forward and enjoy and trust in the life that is waiting for me.

As I thought about what I was going to say, I remembered what my sweet Grandma had said about the laundry line. I realize I have learned another lesson from that little quote. And I think now I fully understood how much I have grown in one year. I know that I would gladly take my trials down off the line, so that the lady at the park, or anyone else wouldn't have to face the same heartache I have.

Mothers Day is hard for so many reasons to so many different people. But I've learned over this past year that if we serve others, that if we let God really be a part of our lives and if we choose to be happy that eventually we will be.

- Three years later at Easter 2014 as part of the Church's #BecauseofHim campaign the Friday before Easter Jennifer posted this:
“#becauseofhim I can be a better me. Getting to the other side of heartache is difficult. But once I got there, I realized how strong I really am. But I also recognize that I didn't do it alone. The Savior was and is with me every step of the way. #infertility #movingon

- “Because of Him” my daughter was able to find peace
- Does that mean all has been sweet and lovely for her since?
- No, her life has been full of joy *and* really hard things
- Gaining an understanding of how she could find Peace in the Savior has given her the faith, understanding and strength to deal with other hard things

Graven upon the palms of his hands

- In closing, today, on Easter Sunday as we contemplate the resurrection of the Savior with the prints of the nails in his hands and in his feet, remember these, His words from Isaiah:
 - Isaiah 49:16
"Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget; yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands;"