

Brothers and Sisters,

As I prepared my talk for you, I happened to be watching a religious channel where an elderly gentleman in religious robes got up and read a prepared speech. The presentation, while a little on the dry side, was somewhat interesting .. and as I listened, it occurred to me that, what I was thinking about and experiencing as I listened to him is much like what you must be thinking about and experiencing right now as you are sitting down there, listening to me. I am so sorry .. but that is what I am today – an elderly gentleman in a suit and a tie reading you a prepared speech.

It occurs to me that it wasn't always this way .. I wasn't always this way. There was a time when I was young boy, a happy teenager, a shy young adult .. but now .. this is what you get! It was this month some short thirty six years ago, February 1979, I was a recently returned missionary back in Magrath trying to decide what to do with the rest of my life. A few short months prior, in November 1978 I had returned from the Canada Montreal Mission at the tender age of 21 years and 1 month old. Upon my return to Alberta from my mission field, I happened to secure a job working full time up for several months up in the Arctic .. on the frozen open ice somewhere north of the magnetic pole. That job took me to end of January 1979 and early in February I invited myself to a specific young adult Family Home Evening activity in Lethbridge where I happened to know my future wife would be attending. Later that evening, while helping do the dishes with her, I offered to drive her to her home and invited her on a movie date. Happily she said yes, and so, on the 9th of February we had our first official date. Things seemed to move fairly quickly from that point on .. later that week I drove to Utah, broke up with a former girl friend, returned back to Canada and after a few more fun dates, on the 18th of February we announced our engagement to our surprised family. It's not that I recommend just 9 days to decide who you want to marry, but when it is right, it is right. We were married about three months later in the Cardston Temple on the 2nd of Jun 1979.

One reason I felt to share this story with you was that it was Valentines yesterday. The other reason was that we were reminded of the story as we shared it with our youngest daughter this past week. My wife, Shauna was telling her our story, how we met and got engaged, and that the anniversary of our first date was the 9th of February .. and then stopped, suddenly realizing that we both had forgotten to observe it the day before! And so, another reason for this story, is that my talk today is on remembering and repenting ..

I believe you would all agree with me that everyone occasionally need to repent. Thankfully the blessing of repentance is available to all. [2 Nephi 26:23-28](#) reads:

23 For behold, my beloved brethren, I say unto you that the Lord God worketh not in darkness.

24 He doeth not anything save it be for the benefit of the world; for he loveth the world, even that he layeth down his own life that he may draw all men unto him. Wherefore, he commandeth none that they shall not partake of his salvation.

25 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.

26 Behold, hath he commanded any that they should depart out of the synagogues, or out of the houses of worship? Behold, I say unto you, Nay.

27 Hath he commanded any that they should not partake of his salvation? Behold I say unto you, Nay; but he hath given it free for all men; and he hath commanded his people that they should persuade all men to repentance.

28 Behold, hath the Lord commanded any that they should not partake of his goodness? Behold I say unto you, Nay; but all men are privileged the one like unto the other, and none are forbidden.

This month we have been assigned the topic of the Covenant of Repentance to discuss with you. For those of you who are already perfected, just pass this message on to your children and/or spouse or back on to your parents. Our stake president, Pres McMahan, who knows and loves you, in preparation for this topic taught us, saying: “Our members are good people who want to do good. They want to do what is right and to repent.” Those of you who are here listening are already on that good path .. but the good path is not always an easy path.

Alma speaking of Christ in [Alma 7:11-12](#) said:

11 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.

Christ not only broke the bands of death for each of us, He also knows exactly what you and I have, are now and will have to go through. 'Succor' is a word that means assistance when in need, words with similar meaning include: help, relief, support, and aid. He, Christ, knows 'how to succor' us because of His experiences in the Atonement. He will and can and does, but He also wants us to learn and grow for ourselves.

Alma 7:15 concludes: “Yea, I say unto you come and fear not, and lay aside every sin, which easily doth beset you, which doth bind you down to destruction, yea, come and go forth, and show unto your God that ye are willing to repent of your sins and enter into a covenant with him to keep his commandments ..”

Fear not, take courage – show that you are 'willing to repent' and 'enter into covenants with Him'. The first step to individual growth is faith in Christ and repentance for our sins. After we have been baptized (our first covenant) we receive the Gift of the Holy Ghost, his Spirit, to guide us. If we faithfully follow that guidance, we are lead to look outside of ourselves and learn to love and 'succor' those who are put within our sphere of influence.

Pres McMahan also asked us “to tell you that he loves you [and I] and challenges you [and I], each of us, to do the following three things:

1) Pray daily, get down on your knees, every day and repent as needed. Find a quiet place where you can speak with our Heavenly Father. There is great power in spoken prayer – remember it was Joseph Smith in his [History 1:14](#) who recorded: “So, in accordance with this, my determination to ask of God,

I retired to the woods to make the attempt. It was on the morning of a beautiful, clear day, early in the spring of eighteen hundred and twenty. It was the first time in my life that I had made such an attempt, for amidst all my anxieties I had never as yet made the attempt to pray vocally.” We can pray always, at all times and in all places, but remember, there is extra power in spoken prayers. In the same way, your testimony only really comes to life when it is spoken aloud, prayer spoken out loud to our Father has power.

2) If necessary, talk to your Bishop as part of that repentance – remember, “the keys that your Bishop holds are those same keys used to bless and administer the sacrament here each week, where we renew our baptismal covenants and promise to 'always remember' ...”

aside: the word 'remember' is a verb meaning to 'keep in mind; or to summon into mind' .. I thought this interesting: it is composed of the prefix 're-' meaning 'to do again' as in reread, redo, repent and the second half of the word '-member' is a noun meaning 'to be part of a group' or a 'representative', in this case, perhaps, His group, His church, His family, His child. Always remembering has to do with rejoining with Him, mentally, spiritually, and physically - coming back to him and into full membership with his church. Thinking of it in this way, the word remember and the word repent have similar focus. Repentance is the way we remember our way back to Him ..

3) and finally, remember also: the Atonement is all about Mercy and Love. His mercy and His love for each of us.

It is all just part of His great plan for us. The more I learn and the more I see, the more I realize that with God there are no accidents. Do you think it is just by happy accident that you and I are here today? That we live here in Magrath and are in the families we are in? That fate chooses our neighbors, our friends, our co-workers who surround us? All need our assistance and it is the way of our Father and His Son to move us to where we need to be – the right people at the right time and at the right place.

Alma 37:7 And the Lord God doth work by means to bring about his great and eternal purposes; and by very small means the Lord doth confound the wise and bringeth about the salvation of many souls.

Alma 37:6 Now ye may suppose that this is foolishness in me; but behold I say unto you, that by small and simple things are great things brought to pass; and small means in many instances doth confound the wise.

Alma 37:41 Nevertheless, because those miracles were worked by small means it did show unto them marvelous works. They were slothful, and forgot to exercise their faith and diligence and then those marvelous works ceased, and they did not progress in their journey;

Sometimes I think that we are 'the small and simple things', especially me, that the Lord has to work with. But even if we fail from time to time, or delay our obedience, He knows that too and has prepared another way. We can either be part of his solution or we will be left behind – to our own condemnation. However, if we catch the vision, we have the opportunity to 'always remember' ie to continually return to full membership – to be a true representative of Him. If we repent and let him, he will use us to confound the wise and to show marvelous works through us.

An example: Our stake has set an Indexing goal for 2 million names to be completed this year. Currently we have some 300 active indexers in the stake. If each of those 300 completes 500 names per

month, the 2 million goal numerically will be met. How hard is it to index 500 names in a month? Actually, it turns out to be not that hard. But the other half of the goal is to increase the number of active indexers to 1500. The letter from the stake reads: “Our focus in 2015 is to involve **all** who are able in family history and indexing so that the Spirit of Elijah will spread into our homes and families.”

So, while we are on track to complete the first half of the goal, we need many more 'small and simple' helpers to complete the main objective of the goal. Can we do it? I have faith that we can and that we will.

A second (hypothetical/extreme) example: Suppose your ward decided to achieve 100% home teaching and visiting teaching, but by only assigning one or two couples to do all the teaching for the ward. With about 135 or so families to home teach and 130 sisters to visit, I calculate 2 teams working 3 hours a day 5 days per week could complete six 20 minute visits per day, thereby visiting everyone in your ward every month! 100% goal achieved ..

A third example: Suppose you met your goal of perfection in housekeeping by assigning all the work cleaning to one person in the family, whom we will designate 'cinderella' - all the beds will be made, all the meals cooked to perfection, all the clothes will be folded, neat and clean. I calculate that one person working 48 hours per day for some 20 or 30 years could easily accomplish these tasks ..

I suppose what I am trying to point out here, is that the goals are more for participation and learning and not solely for the achievement of final statistical numbers or percentages, however worthwhile and worthy. How will our children's beds get made after they grow up and (hopefully) move out? They must eventually learn to do it for themselves. How do we learn to love our neighbors? By going out and visiting and serving them ourselves. How will we benefit and be blessed from our stake's indexing efforts? By obeying and doing it ourselves. Our Heavenly Father is powerful enough to find a way to have his work done – in his wisdom, he does both at the same time by helping us as needed and letting us learn for ourselves, by doing it with him and for him, we grow and become eligible for additional blessings along the way. We become more like him as we willingly 'go and do' His work.

Now, a question, why is it so hard to repent? As Pres McMahan has taught us: “Why is our first thought (like Adam and Eve) to go and hide, to run away, to lie or mislead, to try to pass the blame on to others or to otherwise try to justify or cover our sins?” We all do it, even some of the youngest of children. We all want to appear better than we are to our Parents and Peers. Do we not appreciate the magnitude of the Love our Heavenly Father and His Son have for us? How well they know us, how they know exactly what we are thinking and what we have done, and yet still love us and want us to choose to come back, repent, and succeed? And how can we forget that they have already provided the way for us to return to them. Why do we not 're-member' .. what has already been done for us, just waiting for us to accept?

The great missionary Ammon in [Alma 26:35](#) boasts: “Now have we not reason to rejoice? Yea, I say unto you, there never were men [and women] that had so great reason to rejoice as we, since the world began; yea, and my joy is carried away, even unto boasting in my God; for he has all power, all wisdom, and all understanding; he comprehendeth all things, and he is a merciful Being, even unto salvation, to [all] those who will repent and believe on his name.”

The words of Christ from the Book of Mormon, during his visit here ([3 Nephi 11:31-33](#)):

31 Behold, verily, verily, I say unto you, I will declare unto you my doctrine.

32 And this is my doctrine, and it is the doctrine which the Father hath given unto me; and I bear record of the Father, and the Father beareth record of me, and the Holy Ghost beareth record of the Father and me; and I bear record that the Father commandeth all men, everywhere, to repent and believe in me.

33 And whoso believeth in me, and is baptized, the same shall be saved; and they are they who shall inherit the kingdom of God.

We hear these teachings all the time, in conference, in lessons, in reading .. but do we really believe it? For example, some highlighted quotes from Elder Neil L Anderson's Oct 2009 talk entitled: "Repent that I may heal You":

- "the Savior is able and eager to forgive our sins"
- if we are "repentant but unable to feel relief: continue keeping the commandments [...] relief will come [.. but] healing requires time."
- he then encouraged us to ".. not procrastinate the day of [our] repentance"
- "Repentance" he continues "not only changes us but also blesses our families and those we love" .. I agree.

It may have seemed a little strange to start this talk on Repentance with the story about how my/our married life started – but even married couples are not perfect and need to repent and forgive each other, sometimes even daily. May we follow the counsel of our Stake President to: 1) pray daily, 2) repent completely and 3) live to be able accept his grace and love. We need to learn to let the Lord use us, small and simple as we may be, to accomplish His work, because His work is 'us'. Let me conclude with a few pertinent scriptures:

[Alma 42:4](#) And thus we see, that there [is] a time granted unto man to repent, yea, a probationary time, a time to repent and serve God.

[Helaman 14:19](#) Therefore repent ye, repent ye, lest by knowing these things and not doing them ye shall suffer yourselves to come under condemnation ..

That it may be said of us and of you:

[Helaman 4:15](#) And it came to pass that they did repent, and inasmuch as they did repent they did begin to prosper.

Amen.