

Accessing the Power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ

(A talk given by Mike Stroud in 2005 to a group of assembled Church Education System (CES) men and women during a regional inservice.)

I'm nervous. I don't get nervous, but I'm nervous. This is my last year in CES. I'll retire after this coming year and I'm grateful for the opportunity to talk to you today little bit. But, what I want to talk to you about makes me a little disconcerted. I'm not going to talk to you about theology. You all know the theology of the atonement. And we've read two of the greatest talks you could ever read on that very thing. So, as Ashley gave me this assignment and we talked a little bit about what he wanted me to do, we decided that theology was not the way we wanted to go. Two years ago we had, in this group, we had a presentation on the horse and that horse whisperer. And the theme was on submission and that great example of seeing that horse broken by that trainer is something we can all remember. Can't we Ron? Those of us who've got horses and work with them can really appreciate seeing that. And then we came back after that and we broke off into groups and we were given a packet by our leaders that had numerous quotes by Elder Maxwell and some of the brethren on that topic of submission. And we were told to break off into those groups and look at those quotes and read them, and then come back, like we've done today, and talk about that theme. The thing that I was impressed with then, and I saw again today, is that we understand that we all need to submit. And those quotes just reminded us that, through submission, that opens the door for accessing the power of the atonement. The problem was, then, for me, (and I'm going to only speak for me, and I see the same thing today, as an observation) is that we're told how to do it, we're told that we need to do it, we understand the theology, but we don't know *how* to do it. And so, that becomes... the problem is how do we do that? And I remember in our little group back here in our group under the Pinyon and the juniper trees, we sat back there, (I can still see us in our little group sitting there) and saying, "Yes, I know I need to do this, but how do you do it?" And we went around in circles for that 45 minutes and basically came away understanding the need for it, but not knowing how to do it. And so, in our little group today, we talked about how we need to... the need to have this enabling power is what we talked about in our group. And we defined it and we talked about how great it was and we have a definition of grace, and that was a great revelation. Brother Sam said that when the Bible dictionary came out that was great revelation on grace. And now we have this great talk by Elder Bednar on grace and yet, how do you access that power and that grace? And let's put another word in there. On the blue worksheet was, "How do we access the grace and power of the atonement in our lives?" And I'd like to throw in another word there, and this is the part I'd like to chat with you about today. It is: how do we *consistently*, versus sporadically, access the Savior's atoning power in our lives so that it becomes a consistent force for upward movement and change of our heart, instead of a sporadic thing that comes as a result of circumstances and situations? I'm speaking in my life because all my life my progress in the church has been, at best, sporadic and inconsistent. I've been a great silver bullet shooter and a flash in the pan. I think back on my career now, as I'm finishing up my time and CES, and I have some regrets. All through my experience as a CES professional, there has been a spirit of arrogance and not willing to learn from my peers. And those who have known me over the years, like Bob Wald back there, and Ron Surrel and Brent Bullock, who are getting to be old timers like I, maybe you've observed that there's always been Brother Stroud kind of sitting off in the corner by himself, not really wanting to be a part of what the CES men were doing. Unfortunately, that has been pretty much my history in CES up until last 30 months. I regret that because that's lost opportunity. There's an arrogance there, thinking that you've become knowledgeable and scriptures and somehow you don't need to have the interaction with the men and women who are in the CES family. And so, more often than not I'd be in meetings physically, but not emotionally intellectually, or spiritually. So I'd contribute very little, took a lot, or what I wanted to take, and set the rest off to the side and contributed little to the overall health and well-being and viability of our CES family group.

Now, today, as I'm here with you today, I want you to know my heart is filled with love for the men and women that are in this area. Now, I have not always been able to say that. It comes because of a change that comes because of the atonement of Jesus Christ. Some people have said they see a change in me. It's only happenstance that the change takes place about the same time that I married my third wife. And so, I hear things like, "Oh boy, the best thing that's ever happened to Mike Stroud is Margaret Stroud." You've said that! [audience laughing] The stake president has said it. Bishops have said it. And I'll be the first to admit- she is the greatest thing that's happened, next to Jesus Christ- because the change in my life isn't really Margaret. The change is Jesus Christ. Isn't it interesting – let me share with you some observations. The closer you get to the

Savior, the more relaxed you are in using his name. I find it very easy to speak the name Jesus Christ freely and openly. I've never been able to do that before. As a teacher I've been able to use the name of Christ and Jesus in my teaching and in my classes, but never before have I felt the freedom to use His name, that I do now. What's brought this about? This is the part I feel little concerned about, but I decided I'm going to go ahead and go with it anyway because I think you all love me. And there is a danger in doing this with CES men because if there are any of you out there who are like I was, then this could be a stone of offense for you. And I apologize in advance if what I say is a stumbling block. I don't mean it to be. And I feel that the only way I can share with you my feelings on accessing the power of the atonement of Jesus Christ is by sharing with you some very private experiences. And I'm going to do that today.

In 1985, my wife was killed in an automobile accident and that accident caused my whole family to pretty well be blown to smithereens. The girl who called her mother to come pick her up from high school, blamed herself for her mother's death. "Oh, if only I had not called her that day, she would never have been there and those two boys wouldn't have come across that lane and killed her." Left me with nine kids. And I remember as I was in that intersection at Lindsay and Southern, we pulled up there and it was like a battle zone. There were three helicopters, two in the air and one on the ground. I have been called on a cell phone and told she'd been in an accident. She was in a great big three-quarter ton suburban and I thought, "Oh my gosh- I hope she hasn't hurt somebody!" In fact, I bought that vehicle as a protection in case of an accident. So, my thought was, "I hope that she hasn't hurt somebody." I had no idea that it would be the opposite. The closer we got to it, I could see that it was a battle zone, and some of you who were around then remember this. I got up there and the police had it quartered off and there were emergency vehicles all over the place, and two helicopters in the air, one on the ground. As I got closer to it the more my anxiety level went up. As I pulled up through the police line my mother who was there, came through the crowd and she simply said, "Brace yourself." And I went over and found her and she had our little 18 month old son in the car with her at that time, and so, I was immediately looking around to find out where that little boy was. I knew the first thing Janet would want to know was, "How is that little boy?" I found out that he had been picked up by the car behind her that got hit. The person left the scene of the accident with our 18-month-old son and took him to Desert Samaritan hospital. Broke all the laws and all the rules. It's a good thing that he did because that kept him from some trauma injury. Anyway, I got up there and the boys were screaming in the vehicle: three boys and they were cutting them out. My wife was in the middle of the road and I had a chance to sit there and hold her in my arms while they were cutting these three boys out. She was unconscious but still alive. There were several acts of kindness that took place in there that had life-changing experiences. But, basically, she passed away from that.

Now, I want to jump forward and just say that within six months... you think that would be a life-changing experience wouldn't you? You would think that that would really alter your life, but within six months, I was pretty much the same person doing the same things that I was prior to the accident. I remarried and our family jumped up to 12 and entered into a marriage that for a good portion of that 17 years was, at best, rocky. There were all kinds of issues involved- blended families and kids who... lots of death. I took my sister's family in, who both their parents died. So, everybody in my family had lost both their parents and some of my kids had lost their two parents and one step parent. And so, we had all these issues and that spilled over into our marriage. And as a result of that I'm trying to teach seminary and I have a marriage that, at times, it's not real good. And it wasn't my wife. It was just that the situation was just difficult- this blended situation. More than once I called my area director and said, "We need to talk." And he'd come and I'd say, "I'm not going to be able to... you need to prepare to replace me in the classroom because I'm not going to be able to come back this year. I can't teach and not have the relationship with my family that I have." You came in on a little bit of that. And a couple of times I contacted trucking firms because I used to be an across the road trucker before I was a seminary teacher. And I was thinking about getting hired and going back on the road because I didn't think I'd be able to come back in the seminary classroom because of the problems involved in family. About that time one of our sons died of a prescription drug overdose. At the same time this one daughter who blamed herself for her mother's death, had gone off for 15 years and become a drug addict. And just about anything you can imagine, she'd done. We tried one more time to bring her into our home and that resulted in an argument where I restrained her. She called 911 and Apache County sheriffs came and handcuffed me and took me off to jail. Now, I'm probably the only seminary teacher in the world you'll ever meet that went to jail and is still teaching. I remember that experience, do you?

[audience comment: "So do I." Laughter]

Because Brother Olson, you were just brand-new. Wasn't that your first real challenge? I called him on the phone and said, "I've just come out of jail." And there was this big pause on the other end of the line there.

When I went the next morning before Judge Sherry Minnere down there. You know Judge Minnere; a good member of the church. And she said, "What are you in here for?"

And I said, "I'm in here for... domestic violence is what I was arrested for."

She says, "Brother Stroud," because I knew her, and she said, "tell me the whole story." And so I told her the whole story. And she said, "You're in here because you were trying to help your daughter? And you're in jail because of that?"

And I said, "That's kind of the way it is." And so they arranged to go out. But, I remember that night in jail and I remember going into that little cubicle that night and having them shut that door with a little square window that big, in this iron room with iron cots. And I remember thinking, "Here I am, a seminary teacher for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and I'm in jail." I remember spending a good portion of that night either sitting on that caught, or on my knees talking to Heavenly Father and saying, "What is going on here? What is happening here?"

15:40 Just prior to that, I had a little talk come into my hands, which was interesting, by Hugh Nibley called, "Work we must, but the lunch is free." And that's just a talk that means nothing to anybody, but when I read that talk, some little thing in it started me thinking about serving my fellow man. One of the things I'd like to point out to you, brothers and sisters, is this: my experiences is that huge life changing experiences take place with small, small instances. An accumulation of small things being given to us by the Lord, eventually can I can lead to a mighty change of heart. That's Alma 37:6-7, isn't it?! I want to testify to you that that is true. So, this little talk had an influence on me. And then I looked at the second counselor in the stake presidency, who has a reputation for being a service oriented person, and I looked at him and I saw, "Boy, I want to be like him." And so, I started looking for ways to serve my fellow man. And then it went from there, after I found ways to serve, I found myself asking, "Why are you doing to good things you're doing?" And I didn't like the answers that came from that. So, it was one thing to get to the point where you serve, and it's another thing to get to a point where you ask why you're serving. All too often the reason I was serving was so I could be seen by other people and receive the praise and accolades of people around me. Nonetheless, it's all a part of a process.

Then, in May 2 years ago, my wife got really sick and we had a heck of a time. I was thinking of Bryson Jones. He's having a hard time figuring out what's wrong with his sweetheart. For two years he just can't find out what's wrong. Nobody seems to know. Well, that's the way it was with Jenny. We worked on that for months and tried everything. We tried all the MRIs and everything. We were just giving up. Finally, I was going to leave work for two weeks and go down to Scripps clinic and had made the commitment that we were not coming back until we find out what's going on. Remember that? And had permission to do whatever we needed to do. We went up to flagstaff and did a little exploratory thing and found out that she has pancreatic cancer and it's way into its stages. If you know anything about pancreatic cancer, you know that it's a vicious son of a gun. The only good thing about it is that it kills you pretty quick. But it's a hard way to go. So, through all of that we also had one send the overdosed on drugs. They found him three days after he was dead and we had to have a close casket funeral. And that added to, I think, the stress of my wife getting cancer and she never recovered from that death. And then we went through that period of time where I had the chance to bring her into the house and minister to her. My second wife was a very, very private person. It was interesting for me to see how the things that were most important to her were peeled off and shed through the circumstances that were involved. I got to the point where I had to do all of the care in the last stages of that cancer. We got to where I gave her all the injections, any of the suppository pain killers, any of the anti-nausea, anything that I was able to minister for my wife, as she just slowly starved to death. To make a decision to starve your spouse, that's what you do. You make a decision to stop all food and stop all water and then just make them as comfortable as they can until they pass away. I watch some interesting things happen and I'll share with you one experience. All this adding to what's going on with me.

Right in the last stages she would ask me the question, "What have I done wrong, Mike? Why won't Heavenly Father let me die? What have I done wrong that he won't let me die?" And I had laid my hands on her head and given her a release blessing because I was just sure at certain times that this was going to be something that was going to happen pretty quickly, but she lingered on. Her daughter and her son came and

stayed at our house. We had a hospital bed set up right up in the front room or we could have access. We rolled around in shifts trying to take care of her. One day she said she sat up in bed and she said, "I need to be washed."

And we went over the bed and sat down right next to her and I called her daughter over here and I said, "What did you say?"

And she said, "I need to be washed clean."

I said to Stacy, "I think your mom wants to go in and have a bath."

She shook her head and she said, "No." She said, "I need to be washed clean." We pulled our chairs up close and she was sitting on the edge, just a little skeleton with a big bloated tummy.

Stacy said, "Do you want to shower mom?" And all of a sudden you could watch and you could see her disappear. Her eyes were wide open, but she was gone. She left. She'd just gone.

I went right up into her face and I said, "Jenny, can you hear me?" And there was just no response. She was looking right at me, but there was nobody there. And I turned to her daughter and I said, "She's not here."

Her son walked in and said, "What's going on?"

And I said, "Your mom has left us for a minute. I have no idea where she's at, but she's not here." After a few minutes, about 5 to 6 minutes, you could see that come back. It was like a vacant stare and then all of a sudden life came back. And I said, "Can you hear me?"

She said, "Yes."

I said, "Did you go somewhere?"

She said, "Yes." There was a whole calmness that came about her.

I said, "Where did you go?"

She looked at me and she focused and she said this... now here's a message for us all... "All that counts in life is family." That's what she said.

And I said, "Have you seen the Savior?"

She said, "Yes."

"Did He talk to you?"

She said, "Yes."

I said, "What did He say?" And she wouldn't answer. "Can you tell me what He said to you?" And she didn't say anything. I said, "Did He embrace you?"

And she said, "Yes."

"Did you see the prints of the nails in His hands?"

And she said, "Yes, I did." And within 36 hours she passed away. Now, what happened there was, I saw a woman totally changed. If she had survived that cancer, whatever happened would have changed her to a degree that she would've not been the same person in anyway after that experience. And it was just a short five minutes. Now brothers and sisters, that can and should happen every one of us while we're in mortality.

We can't teach above our own level of conversion. We can't do it. Wherever you're at in your own spiritual level of conversion, that's the level you can teach at and no higher, with any power. Brother Terry Cowton said something one time in one of our meetings, and he doesn't even know what an effect... it's one of those little things that had a big effect. Brother Cowton said this, "The most important thing we can do for our students is to sanctify ourselves." Now, that was a time in my life, when he said that, that those words sunk deep into my heart; that little statement. I didn't know what this meant. But when he said, it the Lord's spirit carried that into my heart and I knew that if I was going to do any good for my students, for my wife, for my children, or for my 27 grandchildren, and most of all, for myself, it wasn't going to happen unless something called sanctification begins in our lives. When we talk about accessing the blood of Jesus Christ in our lives on a consistent basis, what we're talking about is coming up to a step-by-step level of progression. Accessing the atonement to one degree or another, at all of those different levels until you arrive at sanctification.

My favorite scripture is in the book of Mormon. Let's turn over to Moroni chapter 10. It used to be another one, but now it's this one. Now, let me show you what I've seen and then I'll share with you just a couple of concluding ideas on that. Verse 32, isn't it interesting that verses 32 and 33, the message of Moroni is an encapsulation of a thousand years of book of Mormon history. If you were the chronicler of the Book of Mormon, and your assignment was to seal that book up for those in the latter-days, after having your father and you compile and abridge a thousand years of Nephite history, what words would you put to end up that record

and seal it for future dispensations? What would be your message after everything from Nephi on down, what would be your words? And look how he ends it up. It's a direct challenge to us. "Come unto Christ and..." what? "...be perfected..." not by Him, and not through Him, but what? "...in him." Be perfect perfected in Him. "...deny yourselves of all ungodliness; and if ye deny yourselves of all and godliness, and love God with all your might, mind and strength, then is his grace sufficient for you, that by his grace ye may be made perfect in Christ; and if by the grace of God ye are perfect in Christ, ye can in nowise deny the power of God." So what's the challenge? Come to Christ and what? Become what? Be perfected. Now, members of the church look at that they think that that's something that takes place after death and way into eternity. That isn't what Moroni is talking about. He's talking about that happening while we breathe in this life. It's not the perfection that Jesus Christ was. It's the perfection that each of us can become if we have His divine nature transferred into us. If we have any of His perfected divine nature, and its fullness, as a part of us, through the atonement of Christ, to that degree, we become perfected in Him. The next step that comes after perfection... look at the sequence, "And again, if ye by the grace of God are perfected in Christ..." see perfection first, "...and deny not his power, then are you *sanctified* in Christ by the grace of God." Sanctification means to become holy, to be pure, without spot. Perfected means to have those attributes of the perfected Father and the Son transferred into you by the atonement of Jesus Christ, so that They become in you, and you in Them. Not corporeally, but through Their divine nature.

So, I watched her die. And interestingly enough you would think that the accident in the middle of Lindsay and Southern would be something that would change your life, but that really didn't do much to me. Hardened my kids to where they all left the church. Just one of them now, after 15 years tonight, tonight after 15 years of tattoos and drugs and everything you can imagine, sits in a bishop's office tonight, in Round Valley, and gets her endowment recommend interview tonight. 15 years... coming back.

Well I met Margie and that was the story in and of itself. Talk about grace and mercy of the Lord! The stake president of Snowflake got us together through unrelated circumstances. I took her on our first date on Saturday night. We were in the temple on Wednesday and I asked her to marry me; three days later. She said, "Yes," and by the time we got out to the car she said, "I don't want to see you anymore. You scared me off." So she accepted the proposal and within an hour and a half it was all off. [audience laughing] Now, I blame that on Snowflake to a great degree. [audience laughing] But, nonetheless, after a while we got together and it's been a great experience. We had our honeymoon in Hawaii. And as we got to the resort at Turtle Bay there, we were just take care of baggage down to the room and somebody comes up with a fax. The fax says, "Call home, Scott." Well, can you imagine? I haven't even checked into our honeymoon room and I've got a fax that says, "Call home." So, we turned around before we even got our luggage in there, called home and my son says, "I've got some bad news for you. Is Margie with you?"

I said, "Yeah."

He said, "You better get her close. Are you sitting down?"

I said, "Do I need to?"

And he said, "I think you'd better dad."

I said, "What's up?"

He said, "We found Heidi dead this morning."

That was the girl who blamed herself for her mother's death. Who had also been walking out on the wild side for about 20 years, from 1985 on. She always said, "If only I hadn't made that phone call and we'd have never had any of these experiences. It's my fault that dad's second marriage isn't working that good, that the family is blown away, that my brother didn't serve his mission..." And so, she carried all this and died that night. So, we sat in the room and I cried, and my new wife help me in her arms. We made a decision as to whether to go back home or to stay on our honeymoon. We figured there was nothing we could do by going home, so we stayed for the week and completed our honeymoon. Then we went home and two days later had a funeral for another daughter.

I don't tell you these things... my experiences are no more severe than others' and many have had much, much more. But, I tell you these things to let you know that in the process of all of this, Heavenly Father brings us to a point where you realize that your way, *your way*, is futile and worthless. Now, I've always been a person who said, "I can do this! Just tell me what needs to be done, I can do it. If it's broke, give it here. I'll fix it." And all of these experiences, one after another, brought me to a point where, "*Your way*..." all of these years, 25 or

27 years in CES, “Your way stinks! And is at best, sporadic and ultimately futile and worthless.” Now whatever it takes to get us to that point, then and only then, can the Lord begin to do what he wants to do, to where we access the power of the atonement and have a change of heart.

Go with me to Mosiah 4 for a minute. These are scriptures that have just jumped up off the page for me over the last couple of years. Let's go to verse 6. No, go to verse 5 and then we'll go to verse 11. Just these 2 verses, “For behold, if the knowledge of the goodness of God at this time has awakened you to a sense of your...” look at this, “...of your nothingness and your worthless and fallen state.” I'm telling you, whatever it takes for the Lord to bring us to that point is worth all the pain, all the effort, and everything it takes to get you there. Over to verse 11, “And again I say unto you as I have said before, that as ye have come to the knowledge of the glory of God, or if ye have known of his goodness and have tasted of his love, and have received a remission of your sins, which causeth such exceedingly great joy in your souls, even so I would that ye should remember...” here we go, “...and always retain the remembrance, the greatness of God, and *your own nothingness.*”

Brothers and sister, full power of the atonement of Jesus Christ cannot be accessed as long as we think that we can do **anything** of any spiritual or eternal significance while in mortality. Nothing! We have to get to a point where we have to realize **anything** that takes place in our life that spiritually significant, ennobling, edifying, and changes the heart, comes only in and through the merits and mercy and grace of Jesus Christ and in no other way. How do we get to that point? That's the key. Adversity and trials which are a part of life, if we let them, will take us to a point where your heart can be broken. Where Janet's death didn't change me much, Jenny's death broke my heart. Isn't that interesting? My childhood sweetheart, first date, mother of six children, when she passed in a horrendous accident, it really didn't have a great effect on me... life-changing. But, when the one that we struggled in our marriage and tried to find happiness balance in a blended family, when she died, it broke my heart. I remember the **terror**. This is the word. I remember the **terror** of thinking of being alone. It absolutely terrorized me after her funeral and within weeks after that, and the several months after that. Absolutely the greatest fear of my life was being alone. That again is an experience that takes you to a point where it breaks your heart. All of us, because of our fallen natures, have, to one degree or another, a hardness about our hearts. As long as that stone and that flint and that hardness is there, it becomes an effective barrier to the life-changing, atoning sacrifice that wants to take place. So, the Lord is going to allow us to have experiences that will break your heart. Break your heart, because only once that is pulverized can He then can he then come in and give you a new heart in Jesus Christ.

It's interesting that when you have these kinds of experiences and you feel this mighty change, one of the things that goes along with the mighty change of heart, interestingly enough, is the desire to fully and completely submit and consecrate yourself for the first time. I've understood the doctrine of submission. We did a masterful job of it, two years ago, teaching it here. It was wonderful! I understood the doctrine, but I never was given, as a gift, the desire. I want to emphasize that because this comes around to what I want to sum up today. I never was given the gift to have the **desire** to submit, until after my heart was broken and the Savior's atonement began to work a mighty change. With that mighty change of heart, comes a desire to submit and consecrate. There's only one place in the scriptures that describes it. Back in Mosiah 15 where Abinadi is talking to those guys and he says that your will become swallowed up... -that term: *swallowed up*, in the will of the Father and the Son. In that handout that we had two years ago, brother Maxwell had a statement. One of those little jewels that when you are ready and you read it, it just means something to you that prior to that doesn't mean much. But, that little statement was this, "The last step in your spiritual progression is consecration and submission of your will to the will of the Father and the Son." Think about that for a minute. The last step in your spiritual progression... So, we come back to this: How do we access the desire? ...because it all begins with a desire and if you don't have the desire, nothing long lasting or consistent is going to happen. It's going to be gutted out with knuckled fists, clenched teeth, sheer willpower, and sporadic. So how do we get to a point where we can have this power in our lives on an every day, every hour, consistent, forward-moving basis. And here's the answer: it must be given to us as a gift through the atonement of Jesus Christ. Here's what I'm learning that I'd not known before. Everything that's good that happens to us in the way of desire, progress, spirituality, knowledge, whatever else, is a gift through the atonement of Jesus Christ. It's all given to us, all of it. He wants to give much to us, we set up barriers and stakes and keep it from coming into our lives, for whatever reason. All of these things that He has that are for ordained for us and that are rightfully ours, He's ready **right now** to

give us, but we set up the bounds and stakes and we stop it, for a myriad of reasons. I decided that there's only one thing that Mike Stroud merits and has truly earned in this life, and that is to go to hell. That I earned. And, without Jesus Christ's atoning blood, that's exactly where I'll go. Anything else on upward mobility is truly a gift from Him.

So how do we do this? We access this by asking for it. Isn't that amazing? The most beautiful truths of the gospel are always, always the simplest and, once revealed, most obvious. But, until that time they remain grand secrets and are not seen. We don't get the gifts that will allow us to consistently, versus sporadically, move forward and upward because we don't ask for them. The greatest gift manifested among members of the church, is the one gift that's asked for most frequently and that's the gift of healing. Because we ask for it, we see it. How about we get on our knees and ask Heavenly Father, "Bless me with the gift of humility. Bless me with the gift of meekness. **Endow** me with the gift of charity." And then acknowledge this- here's another secret: We need to get to point where we say this, "I can't do this by myself." We've got to get to a point where we say that. And then the second part of that is, "Heavenly Father, please help me." [getting choked up] It's taken me a long time to learn that one. But, when your heart is broken and you're down and there's no place else, then finally, **finally**, you can look up and say, "I just can't do this by myself, help me!" [crying] Then it comes. And you find yourself **endowed** with grace and power to do things that you can't do by yourself: To have him make so much more of you than you could ever do on your own. [sniffing] Excuse me.

Now, in closing, with this change that comes through the atonement of Christ, comes the desire to consecrate. And our friends in the Christian world are closer to this, many times, than we are. They use terms like, "Give yourself to Jesus Christ." And we back off from that because of the connotation, "doctrinal correctness" that doesn't fit in with our theology. But, you get to a point where you say, "Take me. I give myself to You. Such as it is, not much, but I give myself to You."

I talked to my wife about that, I said, "I want to do that."

She said, "Do it!"

I said, "I made a covenant 43 years ago to do that. Maybe all I need to do is activate that covenant!"

She said, "Yeah, that's probably all you need to do is activate that covenant."

"But, I feel this is so special in my life that I need to do something formally to do that." I had some ideas so, I went to the temple President of the Snowflake temple and I asked him about some ideas and he gave me some counsel. Most of my ideas were inappropriate. But, that's why I went to him, because I really didn't know.

And he simply said this. He said, "Are you ready for that?"

I said, "Yes, I want to. I don't want my way anymore. I don't want to give just part. I want to give **all** of me. I don't ever want to do it my way, ever again. I want to do it His way."

And he gave me some counsel. He said, "You've got some horses, don't you?"

I said, "Yeah."

He said, "You live over there in those mountains of Eager, don't you?"

And I said, "Yes."

"Why don't you just go up there in those mountains somewhere and spend some time with your Heavenly Father?" So, I debated back-and-forth on that. I thought maybe that wasn't inappropriate. I mean, He had given me tremendous revelations in finding a wife and I feel the spirit of the Lord every day I'm in the class. It's not like I don't know He's there. I know He's there. There's not a day goes by that I don't feel His Spirit, but more often than not, I feel it's in behalf of others and he blesses me as an instrument.

I felt, "I'd kind of like to know, are you happy with what I'm doing? Is the course I'm pursuing pleasing to you?" And I kind of wanted something just for me.

So, I saddled up one horse, packed up another one. My wife says, "Where you going?"

And I said, "Up there."

"How long are you going to be gone?"

"I don't know. Maybe not too long, maybe a little while." And so, she gave me a kiss and off into the sunset I rode.

I got up there and I had two things in mind. Number one: I wanted to formally enter into a covenant with my Savior to submit. SUBMIT. I had the desire. It was given to me by the Spirit of the Holy Ghost, or I could never do it. And the second thing was: I wanted Him to just tell me that I'm OK and that what I'm doing is all

right. I'm not looking for angels, I just needed something for **me**. So, I went up there and I camped. I hobbled my horses and found a place and I was all alone in a pretty remote area in Fox Canyon, way up in the White Mountains, nobody anywhere around- bear and mountain lion, that's about it! And I entered into a formal covenant with my Heavenly Father, that I was willing to submit my life to His will for the remainder of my life, and with His help, keep His commandments and serve His children. With His help- because I can't do this by myself. If I try to do it by myself, at best, it's going to be hit and miss and sporadic and I don't want that anymore. But, with *His* help and *His* strength, I can do this on a consistent basis where I'll be blessed by serving my fellow man. I came back after a few days didn't have any personal revelation and was a little bit discouraged. But I did do what I went there to do, and that was to enter into a covenant, -very private- with my Father.

Now, here's the thing I want to end up on. That year following that, the Lord has poured out His spirit and knowledge and blessings on me. If I were to take all of my previous life and take all of those things together, it would not be equivalent to the amount that I received in one year afterwards, and continue to receive from Him. He is gracious and kind and merciful. [gettingchoked up] I feel to sing a song of redeeming grace when I think about Jesus Christ and His atonement. I know that He lives. I have felt His power and feel it daily in my life. I felt it in our little group as we were talking. I feel it now. [siffling] How grateful I am that He is mindful of me, [crying] who has been so arrogant and self-willed for so many years. And I thank Him for the gift of His Son and testify to you that the changing powers of the atonement are available **now**. Every hour, every day, but we set up the stakes and the bounds and keep it from happening. It's really quite simple and the formula is found in the book of Mormon. We all need to ask ourselves a question, brothers and sisters. Have I been born again? Have I received that mighty change in my heart? Have I receive the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost? Do you have great views of eternal things? Those are all the blessings that come through the atonement of Jesus Christ. Do you want to bless your students? My one regret is that only in the last few months have I been teaching, after 27 years, the way I think the Lord Jesus Christ wants me to teach...and that's atonement-centered and how to access the power. God bless us to do that. Thank you for letting me share that with you. I hope that that hasn't been... I hope that's not upsetting or a stumbling block in anyway to anybody. I do not profess to be better in any way and any in this room. I admire you. I know that you are men and women of tremendous and varied experiences. And that your experiences to you are every bit as powerful and life-changing potential as anything I've ever had. I share that with you only with the hope that maybe it will give you a little key from my experience on how to help you further and more fully access power of the atonement of Jesus Christ in your life. I love Jesus Christ. [crying] He died for me. I know he lives. God be thanked for the matchless gift of His Divine Son. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen