

Spiritual Message #43 – 19 May 2019

I WISH YOU COULD SMELL ALL OF THE SINS

Years ago when I was a Deacon, we lived in a very small town in Utah. My parents owned a little grocery store there. Because the town only had 800 people, one ward and only 4 non-church members we all knew each other very well. That was especially true of us because we owned the grocery store and most people came there to shop. But one of the hard parts of being there in the store was seeing my parents catching a few of the town's people shoplifting. That was especially hard for me when I had to see some of those same people at church.

You have to understand the spiritual culture of our little town to get the full significance of this story. There was an often told joke in our town that demonstrates that unusual culture of fanatical following some parts of the gospel but ignoring other parts. This joke was about a young girl who came home and told her parents she was pregnant. Her dad said she would have to marry him. She said she could not. Her dad asked her why not and she said "BECAUSE HE SMOKES". You may have to have lived in a little Utah town to understand that joke but that is a very good bird's eye view of the lopsided spiritual culture there of some of the people.

Back in those day's not very many people stood up and bore their testimonies in Fast and Testimony meeting. There were just 4 or 5 people who seemed to participate each time. One woman stood and read her testimony every time. I think I can still repeat most of it because it was the same every time.

One Fast Sunday, the Fast and Testimony meeting took a very different turn than it had ever done before. One of the boys my age had been caught smoking. Many people in town were talking about it when they came in our store. I could see that he and his family were really looked down upon by some because of it. Because of that, this particular Fast Sunday, his father stood up as soon as it was testimony time. He just stood there quiet for what seemed like forever to me. It surely was not more than a minute. Everyone was looking at him because he had never bore his testimony before. Finally he just said in a very stern voice, "I WISH YOU COULD SMELL ALL OF THE SINS". Then he sat down. No one else bore their testimony that day. It made it seem like a very very long meeting when we all just sat there the whole rest of the time waiting for the meeting to end.

I am sure I will never forget that Sunday and him standing there saying that. I knew exactly what he meant because of my parents owning the grocery store and the shoplifting. I also knew a lot of other bad things about people from hearing people talk about others in the store. He had lived in the town his whole life so he also knew a lot of what went on in the town that was never talked about. He taught me a great life's lesson that day that I will never forget by saying, "I WISH YOU COULD SMELL ALL OF THE SINS".

Brother Vail

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