

Our Relationship with God

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No matter what our mortal experience may entail, we can trust God and find joy in Him.

Section I (Kelly and Ryan)

As Job in the Old Testament, in a time of suffering some might feel that God has abandoned them. Because we know that God has power to prevent or remove any affliction, we may be tempted to complain if He does not do it, perhaps questioning, “If God does not grant the help I pray for, how can I have faith in Him?” At one point in his intense trials, righteous Job said: “Then know that God has wronged me and drawn his net around me.

“Though I cry, ‘I’ve been wronged!’ I get no response; though I call for help, there is no justice.”¹

In His response to Job, God demands, “Wilt thou condemn me, that thou mayest be righteous?”² Or in other words, “Will you even put me in the wrong? Will you condemn me that you may be justified?”³ Jehovah forcefully reminds Job of His omnipotence and omniscience, and Job in deepest humility admits he possesses nothing even close to the knowledge, power, and righteousness of God and cannot stand in judgment of the Almighty:

“I know that thou canst do every thing,” he said, “and that no thought can be withholden from thee.

“... I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not. ...

“Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.”⁴

In the end, Job was privileged to see the Lord, and “the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning.”⁵

It truly is folly for us with our mortal myopia to presume to judge God, to think, for example, “I’m not happy, so God must be doing something wrong.” To us, His mortal children in a fallen world, who know so little of past, present, and future, He declares, “All things are present with me, for I know them all.”⁶ Jacob wisely cautions: “Seek not to counsel the Lord, but to take counsel from his hand. For behold, ye yourselves know that he counseleth in wisdom, and in justice, and in great mercy, over all his works.”⁷

Some misunderstand the promises of God to mean that obedience to Him yields specific outcomes on a fixed schedule. They might think, “If I diligently serve a full-time mission, God will bless me with a happy marriage and children” or “If I refrain from doing schoolwork on the Sabbath, God will bless me with good grades” or “If I pay tithing, God will bless me with that job I’ve been wanting.” If life doesn’t fall out precisely this way or according to an expected timetable, they may feel betrayed by God. But things are not so mechanical in the divine

economy. We ought not to think of God’s plan as a cosmic vending machine where we (1) select a desired blessing, (2) insert the required sum of good works, and (3) the order is promptly delivered.⁸

God will indeed honor His covenants and promises to each of us. We need not worry about that.⁹ The atoning power of Jesus Christ—who descended below all things and then ascended on high¹⁰ and who possesses all power in heaven and in earth¹¹—ensures that God can and will fulfill His promises. It is essential that we honor and obey His laws, but not every blessing predicated on obedience to law¹² is shaped, designed, and timed according to our expectations. We do our best but must leave to Him the management of blessings, both temporal and spiritual.

President Brigham Young explained that his faith was not built on certain outcomes or blessings but on his witness of and relationship with Jesus Christ. He said: “My faith is not placed upon the Lord’s working upon the islands of the sea, upon his bringing the people here, ... nor upon the favors he bestows upon this people or upon that people, neither upon whether we are blessed or not blessed, but *my faith is placed upon the Lord Jesus Christ, and my knowledge I have received from him.*”¹³

Ryan and Kelly’s Thoughts:

Micah’s Thoughts:

This was a good section but since we are studying Isaiah my mind was drawn to the very first line, “As Job in the Old Testament, in a time of suffering some might feel that God has abandoned them”.

2 Nephi Chapter 8

Jacob continues reading from Isaiah: In the last days, the Lord will comfort Zion and gather Israel—The redeemed will come to Zion amid great joy—Compare Isaiah 51 and 52:1–2. About 559–545 B.C.

1 Hearken unto me, ye that follow after righteousness. Look unto the rock from whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit from whence ye are digged.

2 Look unto Abraham, your father, and unto Sarah, she that bare you; for I called him alone, and blessed him.

3 For the Lord shall comfort Zion, he will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord. Joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving and the voice of melody.

4 Hearken unto me, my people; and give ear unto me, O my nation; for a law shall proceed from me, and I will make my judgment to rest for a light for the people.

5 My righteousness is near; my salvation is gone forth, and mine arm shall judge the people. The isles shall wait upon me, and on mine arm shall they trust.

Brother Hyrum Andrus does a fantastic job breaking this down tied to this exact topic of the righteous obedient waiting on the Lord:

“In chapter 28 of Isaiah, as he talks about the drunkards of Ephraim, and this isn't drunkards in the sense that they get it from a bottle, it's the kind of drunkenness when it says "they are drunk,

but not with strong drink. "They are drunk with the ideals and the zeal and the culture of the Gentile society, and they act on that principle and march by that drum beat. Then speaking of the judgments to come upon Ephraim in that day, in verse 5, he says this: "In that day shall the Lord of hosts be for a crown of glory, and for a diadem of beauty unto the residue of his people. "Isaiah 51 is a whole chapter devoted to that righteous remnant. Note how he begins: "Hearken unto me, ye that follow after righteousness." This, then, is that righteous remnant. "Look unto the rock from whence ye were hewn, and to the hole of the pit from whence ye are digged." "Go back to your roots. See where you came from. Find out who you were. Find out what the Lord wants you to do. "Look to the rock from whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit from whence ye are digged. Look unto Abraham," there's an example." Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you; for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him." Now, this remnant is going to be left alone, they are going to sit in the dust. Many are going to say, "The Lord has forsaken us." What is your consolation? You go back to your roots and you look to Abraham, and you say, "I'm a descendant of Abraham, and the Lord is going to handle me like he did him..."

Section II (Brandon)

Our repentance and obedience, our service and sacrifices do matter. We want to be among those described by Ether as "always abounding in good works."¹⁴ But it is not so much because of some tally kept in celestial account books. These things matter because they engage us in God's work and are the means by which we collaborate with Him in our own transformation from natural man to saint.¹⁵ What our Heavenly Father offers us is Himself and His Son, a close and enduring relationship with Them through the grace and mediation of Jesus Christ, our Redeemer. We are God's children, set apart for immortality and eternal life. Our destiny is to be His heirs, "joint-heirs with Christ."¹⁶ Our Father is willing to guide each of us along His covenant path with steps designed to our individual need and tailored to His plan for our ultimate happiness with Him. We can anticipate a growing trust and faith in the Father and the Son, an increasing sense of Their love, and the consistent comfort and guidance of the Holy Spirit. Even so, this path cannot be easy for any of us. There is too much refining needed for it to be easy. Jesus said:

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.

"Every branch in me that beareth not fruit [the Father] taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit."¹⁷

The process of God-directed purging and purifying will, of necessity, be wrenching and painful at times. Recalling Paul's expression, we are "joint-heirs with Christ; *if so be that we suffer with him*, that we may be also glorified together."¹⁸

So, in the midst of this refiner's fire, rather than get angry with God, get close to God. Call upon the Father in the name of the Son. Walk with Them in the Spirit, day by day. Allow Them over time to manifest Their fidelity to you. Come truly to know Them and truly to know yourself.¹⁹ Let God prevail.²⁰ The Savior reassures us:

"Listen to him who is the advocate with the Father, who is pleading your cause before him—

“Saying: Father, behold the sufferings and death of him who did no sin, in whom thou wast well pleased; behold the blood of thy Son which was shed, the blood of him whom thou gavest that thyself might be glorified;

“Wherefore, Father, spare these my brethren [and my sisters] that believe on my name, that they may come unto me and have everlasting life.”²¹

Consider some examples of faithful men and women who trusted God, confident that His promised blessings would be upon them in life or in death. Their faith was based not on what God did or did not do in a particular circumstance or moment in time but on knowing Him as their benevolent Father and Jesus Christ as their faithful Redeemer.

When Abraham was about to be sacrificed by the Egyptian priest of Elkenah, he cried out to God to save him, and God did.²² Abraham lived to become the father of the faithful through whose seed all the families of the earth would be blessed.²³ Earlier, on this very same altar, that same priest of Elkenah had offered up three virgins who “because of their virtue ... would not bow down to worship gods of wood or of stone.”²⁴ They died there as martyrs.

Joseph of old, sold into slavery as a youth by his own brothers, in his anguish turned to God. Gradually, he rose to prominence in his master’s house in Egypt but then had all this progress ripped away because of the false accusations of Potiphar’s wife. Joseph could have thought, “So prison is what I get for keeping the law of chastity.” Instead he continued to turn to God and was prospered even in prison. Joseph suffered a further crushing disappointment when the prisoner he befriended, despite his promise to help Joseph, forgot all about him after being restored to his position in Pharaoh’s court. In due course, as you know, the Lord intervened to put Joseph in the highest position of trust and power next to Pharaoh, enabling Joseph to save the house of Israel. Surely Joseph could attest “that all things work together for good to them that love God.”²⁵

Brandon’s Thoughts:

I’d like to open by saying how much I loved this talk when I first heard it back in April and I’m very happy to be able to speak on it today. I want to touch and expound upon three interconnected topics from my section of the reading. They are repentance, sanctification, and enduring to the end with hope.

Repentance

My section starts with Elder Christopherson saying, “Our repentance and obedience, our service and sacrifices do matter.” I was pleased to get this section of the talk because I have taken President Nelson’s recent conference advice to heart and have tried to make repentance a daily part of my prayers. I can testify to everyone hearing these words that your repentance does matter. That the atonement of Jesus Christ is real. That making repentance a daily part of your life gives you a freedom to let go of past mistakes and move forward on the covenant path. In the past few years, I have struggled so much and made so many mistakes that it embarrasses me to even think about. I feel I can relate to Isaiah’s vision when he saw God and said, “Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a

people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.” (*Isaiah 6:5*) When I finally woke up to the mistakes of my life, I literally felt unclean but through these struggles I can state that I know God loves me and is eager to forgive me when I turn back to Him.

Sanctification

To segue into my next topic I have this quote from President Nelson. “Repentance is required of every accountable person who desires eternal glory. There are no exceptions. In a revelation to the Prophet Joseph Smith, the Lord chastised early Church leaders for not teaching the gospel to their children. Repenting is the *key* to progress. Pure faith keeps us moving forward on the covenant path.” (*President Russell M. Nelson, April 2022, “The Power of Spiritual Momentum”*) The whole point of being on the covenant path is to do as Elder Christofferson said and be “joint-heirs with Christ.” The process of sanctification is often a brutal one. To continue with Isaiah’s vision of seeing the Lord and having unclean lips he says,

6 Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: 7 And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.

8 Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me. (*Isaiah 6*)

I interpreted this vision of Isaiah’s to be his personal sanctification or at the very least the Lord’s desire for him to become worthy of such a sanctification. When he say’s “Here am I; send me” he is standing as a representative of the Savior who would also say, “Here am I send me” in the preexistence. The idea of having a coal burn your lips in order to become purified must be meant to give an imagery of pain. Sanctification is not an easy process, but it is the only path to redeeming Zion. Three nights ago, I had a dream that seemed oddly instructive. I dreamt there was a giant snake in my home. I was going to kill it, but I was surrounded by people trying to convince me to just contain the snake and not to kill it because it wouldn’t be nice to kill the snake. Like a fool I listened to them. And of course, in the dream I was unable to contain the snake and it grew larger. As I was waking and in that in between space of dream and alertness I felt prompted by the Lord that the only path forward was to kill the snake. If we want to be “joint-heirs with Christ” brothers and sisters, please let us kill the snakes in our lives, give no place for the enemy of our souls as Nephi says in the Book of Mormon. Allow your lips to be purged by coals.

Enduring to the End with Hope

When Elder Christopherson quoted the Savior saying, “I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman” I was reminded of Isaiah’s Allegory of the Vineyard found in chapter 5. Isaiah goes through painstaking measures to show us just how much the Father nurtures us to give us an opportunity to become good fruit. “And he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein: and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes.” We are

the vineyard and repentance is one of the protections that the Father “husbandman” gives us. All He asks in return is a “broken heart and a contrite spirit.” Please let us not be like the ancient Israelites who would so quickly forget the Lord and all the good blessings that come from him. Let us be like the examples that Elder Christofferson talked of. Let us be like Abraham and Joseph. People of the covenant that no matter what did not forget the Lord. Enduring to the end takes consistency and long suffering. It means to not give up hope.

Continuing with the message of hope in Doctrine and Covenants 121 we hear the Prophet Joseph Smith’s plea to the Lord to be delivered from Liberty jail. As he lay in a dark prison cell so small he could not stand up straight he said,

1 O God, where art thou? And where is the pavilion that covereth thy hiding place?

2 How long shall thy hand be stayed, and thine eye, yea thy pure eye, behold from eternal heavens the wrongs of thy people and thy servants, and thine ear be penetrated with their cries?

The Lord responded to Joseph by saying,

7 My son, peace be unto thy soul; thine adversity and thine affliction shall be but a small moment;

8 And then, if thou endure it well, God shall exalt thee on high; thou shalt triumph over all thy foes.”

Joseph Smith's plea to the Lord is another likeness of the cries of other prophets asking “how long” they too will have to endure their own specific trials. Continuing in Isaiah 6, Isaiah is given direction from the Lord that he will teach the people in a way that will be hard for them to understand. “Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not.” Isaiah has seen the coming Assyrian army and knows of the coming destruction of Israel and the scattering of the ten tribes, and yet he is told to speak in a way that is difficult to understand. He like Joseph Smith asks the Lord “how long” he must endure such a difficult trial. “Then said I, Lord, how long? And He answered, Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the house without man, and the land be utterly desolate.” It was too late for the unrepentant ten tribes to stop the slaughter of the Assyrian army but even at this point the Lord ends this chapter with hope, “But yet in it *shall be* a tenth, and it shall return ... when they cast *their leaves*: so the holy seed *shall be* the substance thereof.” The Lord promises Isaiah a remnant shall be spared and eventually Isaiah sees the gathering again of these lost tribes. At times, we might also find ourselves pleading “how long” to the Lord. Please let us not forget to “be of good cheer” and to “endure well.” Let us take this advice from President Oaks in the October 2020 General Conference:

In the midst of hardships, the divine assurance is always “be of good cheer, for I will lead you along. The kingdom is yours and the blessings

thereof are yours, and the riches of eternity are yours” (Doctrine and Covenants 78:18). How does this happen? How did it happen for the pioneers? How will it happen to women of God today? By our following prophetic guidance, “the gates of hell shall not prevail against [us],” the Lord said by revelation in April 1830. “Yea,” He said, “... the Lord God will disperse the powers of darkness from before you, and cause the heavens to shake for your good, and his name’s glory” (Doctrine and Covenants 21:6). “Fear not, little flock; do good; let earth and hell combine against you, for if ye are built upon my rock, they cannot prevail” (Doctrine and Covenants 6:34).

If we follow this advice, then maybe someday we will be worthy of saying as the Savior, Isaiah, Moses, and other prophets did, “Here am I, send me.” That we will become sanctified enough to be “instruments in the Lords hands” (*Alma 26:3*). I say these things in the name of Jesus Christ Amen.

Micah’s Thoughts:

In this section really made me think about the Two Brother’s latest video in which Ammon talked about his growing understanding surrounding Joseph Smith and the Lord always fulfilling His promises, specifically those provided to Joseph Smith in his patriarchal blessings, and how Joseph Smith did not receive those blessings in life. We are obedient because we know the Lord will fulfill and protect his elect but it might not come in the timing that we desire. If you haven’t checked out that video, I highly recommend checking it out. I’m not a fan of Elder Christofferson’s “cosmic vending machine” analogy and the reason why is explained in section two. We *should* view it as a cosmic vending machine where if we desire the Lord’s favor and blessings we insert obedience and we obtain the blessings- the only thing is this cosmic vending machine doesn’t always drop the Cheetos as soon as you click the button, but that doesn’t mean that the Lord isn’t going to someday deliver the Cheetos. The stories provided by Elder Christofferson, as well as Joseph Smith himself talked about by Ammon, prove that point. Just because Joseph Smith inserted the coins and clicked the button for the last Dab Cheetos and then the vending machine promised to give him those Cheetos and then Joseph Smith died before the Cheetos landed in the dispenser, it doesn’t mean that Joseph Smith will not eventually get those last Dab Cheetos. More and more the Saints are waking up to this reality and to this knowledge, and to this faith. Faith known as faith as the Brother of Jared. Mason in Discord shared with us today the following:

“Today we had our former Stake Patriarch speak in our ward. But he currently has non-functioning status. He gave blessings for 15 years, then served a mission with his wife and was placed on non-functioning status, then a new Patriarch was called.

His talk was amazing. A couple things he mentioned that I wanted to share with you guys was about the weight of the last day labors resting upon our shoulders. He said as he immersed himself in the will of the Lord and “Let God Prevail” he said he came to understand the purposes of our blessings. We get a glimpse of our pre-existence, our mortality, our duties to Gathering Israel, building up of Zion, the resurrection, our work in the millennium, our

Judgement and exhalation. He then continued on to say our PB's are not check lists, just because something hasn't happened yet, or we die before the blessing is fulfilled doesn't mean they were false. It just means we still have much more to do. The promises of our blessings don't end at death, but they can end by transgressions of an unrepentant heart.

Then he said, take the Prophet Joseph Smith for example, his Father gave him a few different blessings and stated some amazing tasks for the Prophet that have not been accomplished. Does this mean his father was wrong? Or that because Joseph is no longer living that all will not be fulfilled? Of course not. The Prophet Joseph Smith still has work that has to be done, and I've learned in my time as Patriarch that many of us with our ancestors will aid him in that work. He then urged us all to reread our blessings and ask the questions, how does this apply to me right now, what do I need to do to ready myself to help prepare the world for the second coming of Jesus Christ? The answers are there and God will show them to you. Please take the time to see your Devine potential and do it now. The upcoming labors might weigh heavy on your minds, but know that God is with us and it will be done.

I wish that everyone of you could have been in that chapel today. The spirit was so strong as he testified about Joseph Smith returning to compete his promised work. I know all of you would have loved his testimony. And I wish I could remember it word for word. Our labors may seem impossible and weigh heavily on our minds, but as the spirit keeps confirming to me, I need to Be still, and know that peace will come. Remain diligent, keep pushing, keep learning, keep sharing, keep building. We are doing what God has asked of us. This is part of the plan, getting ourselves and others ready for what's to come. I love this Gospel, I love this work, and I love that we get to do this together."

I love this and I add my testimony to it- it ties in perfectly with this subject.

Section III (Michael)

Abinadi was intent on fulfilling his divine commission. "I finish my message," he said, "and then it matters not [what happens to me], if it so be that I am saved."²⁶ He was not spared a martyr's death, but assuredly he was saved in the kingdom of God, and his one precious convert, Alma, changed the course of Nephite history leading up to the coming of Christ.

Alma and Amulek were delivered from prison in Ammonihah in answer to their plea, and their persecutors were slain.²⁷ Earlier, however, these same persecutors had cast believing women and their children into a raging fire. Alma, witnessing the horrific scene in agony, was constrained by the Spirit not to exercise the power of God to "save them from the flames,"²⁸ that they might be received up to God in glory.²⁹

The Prophet Joseph Smith languished in jail at Liberty, Missouri, powerless to help the Saints as they were pillaged and driven from their homes in the bitter cold of winter. "O God, where art thou?" Joseph cried. "How long shall thy hand be stayed?"³⁰ In response, the Lord promised:

"Thine adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a small moment; and then, if thou endure it well, God shall exalt thee on high. ... Thou art not yet as Job."³¹

In the end, Joseph could declare with Job, “Though [God] slay me, yet will I trust in him.”³² Elder Brook P. Hales related the story of Sister Patricia Parkinson, who was born with normal eyesight but by age 11 had gone blind.

Elder Hales recounted: “I’ve known Pat for many years and recently told her that I admired the fact that she is always positive and happy. She responded, ‘Well, you have not been at home with me, have you? I have my moments. I’ve had rather severe bouts of depression, and I’ve cried a lot.’ However, she added, ‘From the time I started losing my sight, it was strange, but I knew that Heavenly Father and the Savior were with my family and me. . . . To those who ask me if I am angry because I am blind, I respond, ‘Who would I be angry with? Heavenly Father is in this with me; I am not alone. He is with me all the time.’”³³

In the end, it is the blessing of a close and abiding relationship with the Father and the Son that we seek. It makes all the difference and is everlastingly worth the cost. We will testify with Paul “that the sufferings of this present [mortal] time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”³⁴ I bear witness that no matter what our mortal experience may entail, we can trust God and find joy in Him.

“Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.

“In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.”³⁵
In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Michael’s Thoughts:

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Black = talk

Red = Scriptures, TPJS, Teachings of prophets and apostles

Blue = my thoughts

Abinadi was intent on fulfilling his divine commission. “I finish my message,” he said, “and then it matters not [what happens to me], if it so be that I am saved.” ([Mosiah 13:9](#).) He was not spared a martyr’s death, but assuredly he was saved in the kingdom of God, and his one precious convert, Alma, changed the course of Nephite history leading up to the coming of Christ.

Alma and Amulek were delivered from prison in Ammonihah in answer to their plea, and their persecutors were slain. (See [Alma 14:23–28](#)). Earlier, however, these same persecutors had cast believing women and their children into a raging fire. Alma, witnessing the horrific scene in agony, was constrained by the Spirit not to exercise the power of God to “save them from the flames,” ([Alma 14:10](#)) that they might be received up to God in glory ([Alma 14:11](#)).

The Prophet Joseph Smith languished in jail at Liberty, Missouri, powerless to help the Saints as they were pillaged and driven from their homes in the bitter cold of winter. “O God, where art

thou?” Joseph cried. “How long shall thy hand be stayed?” ([Doctrine and Covenants 121:1–2](#)). In response, the Lord promised:

“Thine adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a small moment; and then, if thou endure it well, God shall exalt thee on high. ... Thou art not yet as Job.” ([Doctrine and Covenants 121:7–8, 10](#)).

In the end, Joseph could declare with Job, “Though [God] slay me, yet will I trust in him.” ([Job 13:15](#)).

It is significant that Elder Christofferson gives us three prophetic examples of suffering: Abinadi, Alma and Amulek, and Joseph Smith. All three of these examples teach us a number of truths. For example, prophets are not exempt from the vicissitudes and problems that mortality presents to all of us. Indeed, you could even say that prophets were meant to suffer in some fairly profound ways. The scriptures are replete with this suffering, as is Church history. Joseph Smith spent six months in a dank dungeon, ironically called Liberty Jail. Modern Church history has many examples of hardships and suffering. Spencer W. Kimball was keenly acquainted with physical suffering. He had a number of ailments that cropped up in his life, particularly after he became an Apostle in 1943. If you can find it online, try to listen to an earlier talk given by Elder Kimball, before he got throat cancer and had most of his vocal cords removed. He had an amazing, mellifluous voice. He was profoundly eloquent and a delight to hear. Post-surgery (where he famously told a BYU devotional audience that he fell among “cutthroats in the East”) his voice was radically different. Still eloquent, perhaps even more eloquent, but very different.

In fact, the difference at first brought him an element of discouragement because he was afraid that people would not be able to hear him or understand him, and his mission as an Apostle could be threatened. But he was able to master his voice, and it’s that voice that the world grew to adore as time went on and as he ascended the ranks of Church seniority until he became the prophet.

Ezra Taft Benson, Howard W. Hunter, Robert D. Hales, the list goes on. Many prophets and apostles have had to contend with *serious* health concerns while doing their utmost to fulfill their prophetic and apostolic mandates.

So it’s eminently clear that prophets suffer. In this regard, they provide us an example of how to endure and even appreciate the sufferings of life.

Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith, Chapter 19, p. 231, 235

John Taylor, the third President of the Church, said: “I heard the Prophet Joseph say, in speaking to the Twelve on one occasion: ‘You will have all kinds of trials to pass through. And it is quite as necessary for you to be tried as it was for Abraham and other men of God, and (said he) God will feel after you, and He will take hold of you and wrench your very heart strings, and

if you cannot stand it you will not be fit for an inheritance in the Celestial Kingdom of God.’ . . . Joseph Smith never had many months of peace after he received the truth, and finally he was murdered in Carthage jail.” (Source: John Taylor, *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly*, Aug. 21, 1883, p. 1.)

George A. Smith, who served as a counselor to President Brigham Young, received the following counsel from the Prophet Joseph Smith at a time of great difficulty: “He told me I should never get discouraged, whatever difficulties might surround me. If I was sunk in the lowest pit of Nova Scotia and all the Rocky Mountains piled on top of me, I ought not to be discouraged but hang on, exercise faith, and keep up good courage and I should come out on the top of the heap at last.” (Source: George A. Smith, “History of George Albert Smith by Himself,” p. 49, George Albert Smith, Papers, 1834–75, Church Archives.)

Just a few days before the Prophet was martyred, at a time when he and the Saints knew that his life was in danger, Joseph took the hand of Abraham C. Hodge and said: “Now, Brother Hodge, let what will, come; don’t deny the faith, and all will be well.” (Source: *History of the Church*, 6:546; punctuation modernized; from “History of the Church” (manuscript), book F-1, p. 147, Church Archives.)

Elder Bruce R. McConkie in **A New Witness for the Articles of Faith**, p. 103, had the following to say about suffering:

“This life is a probationary estate; it never was intended to be easy. Men are here gaining experiences that could not be gained in any other way. Disease, pain, suffering, war, and death – even as it was with the Son of Man himself, all these are needed. A gracious God allows them as part of the trials and tests of mortality.”

Again, **Elder McConkie, A New Witness, p. 188:**

“In this mortal probation, as pilgrims far from their heavenly home, the saints are called upon to put first in their lives the things of God's kingdom and to let the things of this world sink into a place of relative insignificance. If their hearts are set upon worldly things, including lands and money and power, their reward will come in the currency of the world. It is only when men's hearts are set on heavenly things, when they lay up treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt and where thieves do not break through and steal, that they are paid in the currency of heaven.

The trials and tests of mortality are designed to determine whether men will use their time and talents in worldly or spiritual pursuits. The crowning test in this field is the test of sacrifice. The Lord's saints must be willing, if called upon to do so, to sacrifice all that they have, including life itself, in their pursuit of eternal life. It is to them that this promise of Jesus applies: "Every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or

wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life." (Matthew 19:29.)”

Suffering, sacrifice, sanctification, salvation. There’s a deep relationship between all these aspects and principles of the Gospel. You can’t have suffering without sacrifice. Nor can you have sacrifice without some suffering. Without sacrifice, you cannot have sanctification. Without sanctification, there would be no point to sacrifice, since the very meaning of the word “sacrifice” is to “make holy.” Without sanctification, there would be no salvation in the Kingdom of God. Without salvation, there would be no sanctification. They are all required, all related to each other, all mutually interdependent and all needed.

Elder Brook P. Hales related the story of Sister Patricia Parkinson, who was born with normal eyesight but by age 11 had gone blind.

Elder Hales recounted: “I’ve known Pat for many years and recently told her that I admired the fact that she is always positive and happy. She responded, ‘Well, you have not been at home with me, have you? I have my moments. I’ve had rather severe bouts of depression, and I’ve cried a lot.’ However, she added, ‘From the time I started losing my sight, it was strange, but I knew that Heavenly Father and the Savior were with my family and me. ... To those who ask me if I am angry because I am blind, I respond, ‘Who would I be angry with? Heavenly Father is in this with me; I am not alone. He is with me all the time.’” (Brook P. Hales, “[Answers to Prayer](#),” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2019, 14).

Turning from examples of the prophets to an example perhaps closer to home, a lay member who had to deal with an incredible calamity: losing her sight at age 11. I personally cannot imagine having to deal with a trial like this.

In the end, it is the blessing of a close and abiding relationship with the Father and the Son that we seek. It makes all the difference and is everlastingly worth the cost. We will testify with Paul “that the sufferings of this present [mortal] time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.” ([Romans 8:18](#)).

Here we have a deep and profound doctrinal nugget that is so easy to pass over! Elder Christofferson here tells us explicitly that what we’re really seeking is a “close and abiding relationship with the Father and the Son.” Close and abiding relationship! Brothers and Sisters, the only truly “*close and abiding relationship*” I can think of is the one that the scriptures teach us and which the prophets and apostles of God have urged us to seek. We are seeking the crowning blessing of mortality: our calling and election to be made sure and to receive the Second Comforter!

Doctrine and Covenants 93:1

1 Verily, thus saith the Lord: It shall come to pass that every soul who forsaketh his sins and cometh unto me, and calleth on my name, and obeyeth my voice, and keepeth my commandments, shall see my face and know that I am;

Doctrine and Covenants 67:10

10 And again, verily I say unto you that it is your privilege, and a promise I give unto you that have been ordained unto this ministry, that inasmuch as you strip yourselves from jealousies and fears, and humble yourselves before me, for ye are not sufficiently humble, the veil shall be rent and you shall see me and know that I am—not with the carnal neither natural mind, but with the spiritual.

Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, pp. 149-151:

The Two Comforters

There are two Comforters spoken of. One is the Holy Ghost, the same as given on the day of Pentecost, and that all Saints receive after faith, repentance, and baptism. This first Comforter or Holy Ghost has no other effect than pure intelligence.

The Second Comforter

The other Comforter spoken of is a subject of great interest, and perhaps understood by few of this generation. After a person has faith in Christ, repents of his sins, and is baptized for the remission of his sins and receives the Holy Ghost, (by the laying on of hands), which is the first Comforter, then let him continue to humble himself before God, hungering and thirsting after righteousness, and living by every word of God, and the Lord will soon say unto him, Son, thou shalt be exalted. When the Lord has thoroughly proved him, and finds that the man is determined to serve Him at all hazards, then the man will find his calling and his election made sure, then it will be his privilege to receive the other Comforter, which the Lord hath promised the Saints, as is recorded in the testimony of St. John, in the 14th chapter, from the 12th to the 27th verses.

Note the 16, 17, 18, 21, 23 verses:

“16. And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever;

“17. Even the Spirit of Truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him; but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.

“18. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. * *

“21. He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. “23. If a man love me, he will keep my word: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.”

Now what is this other Comforter? It is no more nor less than the Lord Jesus Christ Himself; and this is the sum and substance of the whole matter; that when any man obtains this last Comforter, he will have the personage of Jesus Christ to attend him, or appear unto him from time to time, and even He will manifest the Father unto him, and they will take up their abode with him, and the visions of the heavens will be opened unto him, and the Lord will teach him face to face, and he may have a perfect knowledge of the mysteries⁸ of the Kingdom of God; and this is the state and place the ancient Saints arrived at when they had such glorious visions—Isaiah, Ezekiel, John upon the Isle of Patmos, St. Paul in the three heavens, and all the Saints who held communion with the general assembly and Church of the Firstborn.

Elder McConkie, from A New Witness, p. 492:

“What greater personal revelation could anyone receive than to see the face of his Maker? Is not this the crowning blessing of life? Can all the wealth of the earth, all of the powers of the world, and all of the honors of men compare with it? And is it an unseemly or unrighteous desire on man's part to hope and live and pray, all in such a way as to qualify for so great a manifestation?

There is a true doctrine on these points, a doctrine unknown to many and unbelieved by more, a doctrine that is spelled out as specifically and extensively in the revealed word as are any of the other great revealed truths. There is no need for uncertainty or misunderstanding; and surely, if the Lord reveals a doctrine, we should seek to learn its principles and strive to apply them in our lives. This doctrine is that mortal man, while in the flesh, has it in his power to see the Lord, to stand in his presence, to feel the nail marks in his hands and feet, and to receive from him such blessings as are reserved for those only who keep all his commandments and who are qualified for that eternal life which includes being in his presence forever. Let us at least sample the holy word and see what the Lord has promised as to seeing his face and being in his presence while we are yet pilgrims far removed from our heavenly home.”

Again, repeating the easy-to-gloss-over words of Elder Christofferson:

“In the end, it is the blessing of a close and abiding relationship with the Father and the Son that we seek. It makes all the difference and is everlastingly worth the cost.”

Whether we actually realize the promised receipt of the Second Comforter in this mortal life or not, the quest and the effort are required if we want to receive both the proximate and ultimate blessings that come to the faithful. The tremendous blessings that flow from the kind of consecration required in seeking after the Second Comforter will give us enormous spiritual dividends and blessings in this life, even if, in the Lord's great wisdom, we don't have the privilege of the Second Comforter until after our mortal probation concludes. We will still

progress upward and onward to a deeper and closer unity with the Godhead. We will still reap the spiritual gifts that come from such a seeking after our eternal inheritances.

In other words, we have to keep striving to rend that veil of unbelief. That is our great mandate individually and collectively. And I know that Elder Christofferson is right when he states clearly that this is what makes “all the difference and is everlastingly worth the cost.”

I bear witness that no matter what our mortal experience may entail, we can trust God and find joy in Him.

A very brief and succinct witness that Elder Christofferson shares. Yet like all Apostolic witnesses, it’s powerful and we are held accountable for what we do with this witness. I personally find it significant that he specifically mentions “no matter what our mortal experience may entail.” Mortal life is fraught with peril and many unforeseen things can happen to us. Going back to the earlier issue of suffering, there are huge disparities in what people go through in life. Some coast through while others seem to have trial upon trial. Yet no matter the sufferings that we are called to endure, we are given the Apostolic assurance that “we can trust God and find joy in Him.”

Ultimately, God our Father in Heaven, and His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ, are the only avenues to joy. Their Plan of Happiness is the only program in the Universe where we can find that enduring, eternal joy. We must have the eternal perspective in order to fully appreciate that Plan and the Eternal Persons who designed, ordained, and put that Plan into operation.

Elder Christofferson concludes:

“Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.

“In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.” ([Proverbs 3:5–6](#)).

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Micah’s Thoughts:

From the Doctrine and Covenants Student Manual:

D&C 121:7. How Does Adversity Fit in the Divine Plan?

Elder James E. Faust said: “In the pain, the agony, and the heroic endeavors of life, we pass through a refiner’s fire, and the insignificant and the unimportant in our lives can melt away like dross and make our faith bright, intact, and strong. In this way the divine image can be mirrored from the soul. It is part of the purging toll exacted of some to become acquainted with God. In the agonies of life, we seem to listen better to the faint, godly whisperings of the Divine Shepherd.”

Elder Faust noted that “unfortunately, some of our greatest tribulations are the result of our own foolishness and weakness and occur because of our own carelessness or transgression” (James E. Faust, in Conference Report, Apr. 1979, pp. 77–78; or Ensign, May 1979, pp. 53–54).

Other afflictions are the result of disease and weakness of the mortal body. Some adversity is the result of wicked individuals misusing their agency. Also, God’s judgments against the wicked cause famine, pestilence, earthquakes, and other tribulations.

But at least as important as the cause of adversity is how the Lord uses it to perfect us. President Brigham Young said that Joseph Smith progressed toward perfection more in thirty-eight years because of his trials than he would have been able to do in a thousand years without them (see Journal of Discourses, 2:7).

The Prophet Joseph Smith said, “I feel like Paul, to glory in tribulation” (D&C 127:2). The Savior’s life is the perfect example of enduring tribulation (see D&C 122:7–8). If we can look to the Savior or to the Prophet as models of endurance, we can find hope and strength to endure our own afflictions.

Elder Marion G. Romney said: “All . . . who are being tried in the crucible of adversity and affliction: Take courage; revive your spirits and strengthen your faith. In these lessons so impressively taught in precept and example by our great exemplar, Jesus Christ, and his Prophet of the restoration, Joseph Smith, we have ample inspiration for comfort and for hope. 296 “If we can bear our afflictions with the understanding, faith, and courage, and in the spirit in which they bore theirs, we shall be strengthened and comforted in many ways. We shall be spared the torment which accompanies the mistaken idea that all suffering comes as chastisement for transgression.... “We can draw assurance from the Lord’s promise that ‘he that is faithful in tribulation, the reward of the same is greater in the kingdom of heaven. ““Ye cannot behold with your natural eyes, for the present time, [he said,] the design of your God concerning those things which shall come hereafter, and the glory which shall follow much tribulation. ““For after much tribulation come the blessings. . . .’ (D&C 58:2–4.)” (In Conference Report, Oct. 1969, p. 59.)

Elder Eyring in his talk, Tested, Proved and Polished shared a story of his mother:

“I learned another lesson from my mother. As a girl she had diphtheria and nearly died. Later she had spinal meningitis. Her father died young, and so my mother and her brothers helped support their mother.

All her life, she felt the effects of the trials of illness. In her last 10 years of life, she required multiple operations. But through it all, she proved faithful to the Lord, even when bedridden. The only picture on her bedroom wall was of the Savior. Her last words to me on her deathbed were these: “Hal, you sound as if you are getting a cold. You ought to take care of yourself.”

At her funeral the last speaker was Elder Spencer W. Kimball. After saying something of her trials and her faithfulness, he said essentially this: “Some of you may wonder why Mildred had

to suffer so much and so long. I will tell you why. *It was because the Lord wanted to polish her a little more.*”

From Elder Richard G. Scott:

“Just when all seems to be going right, challenges often come in multiple doses applied simultaneously. When those trials are not consequences of your disobedience, they are evidence that the Lord feels you are prepared to grow more (see Prov. 3:11–12). He therefore gives you experiences that stimulate growth, understanding, and compassion which polish you for your everlasting benefit. To get you from where you are to where He wants you to be requires a lot of stretching, and that generally entails discomfort and pain.” (Trust in the Lord, October 1995)

3 Nephi 24:16-18

16 Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard; and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name.

17 And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.

18 Then shall ye return and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not.

My prayer brothers and sisters is that we can enduring the polishing so we can be the jewels in Christ’s crown.

In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.