

After an organ interlude, the congregation sang the hymn, "Now Let Us Rejoice in the Day of Salvation."

ELDER MARION G. ROMNEY

Of the Council of the Twelve

● President McKay, other members of the General Authorities, brothers and sisters, and listeners throughout the world:

I have selected as the subject of my remarks today "The Crucible of Adversity and Affliction," something with which we are all well acquainted. My purpose is to give comfort and courage to the weary and heavy-laden, among whom we all, at times, find place.

Latter-day Saints know that much of pain and suffering would be avoided if the people would accept and follow the Savior. Our mission, as a church, is to bring people to a knowledge of Christ and thus avoid all unnecessary suffering. We are aware, however, that should all men accept and live his teachings, adversity and affliction would still abound because, in the words of the Prophet Joseph Smith, "Men have to suffer that they may come upon Mount Zion and be exalted above the heavens." (*Documentary History of the Church*, Vol. 5, p. 556.)

Crucible of adversity

This does not mean that we crave suffering. We avoid all we can. However, we now know, and we all knew when we elected to come into mortality, that we would here be proved in the crucible of adversity and affliction.

As our Heavenly Father, in that great pre-earth council referred to here this morning by President Tanner, "stood in the midst of" us, his spirit children, and announced his plan for bringing "to pass" our "immortality and eternal life" (Moses 1:39), he said, ". . . We will go down, . . . and . . . make an earth whereon these may dwell;

"And we will prove them . . . to

President Hugh B. Brown

Elder Marion G. Romney of the Council of the Twelve will be our next speaker.

see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them." (Abr. 3:24-25.)

The Prophet Joseph Smith said that "the organization of the spiritual and heavenly worlds, and of spiritual and heavenly beings . . . were . . . voluntarily subscribed to in their heavenly estate by themselves." (*DHC*, Vol. 6, p. 51.)

Savior not exempt

The Father's plan for proving his children did not exempt the Savior himself. The suffering he undertook to endure, and which he did endure, equaled the combined suffering of all men. Eighteen hundred years after he had endured it, he spoke of it as being so intense that it "caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit—and would that I might not drink the bitter cup, and shrink—
"Nevertheless, [he concluded,] glory be to the Father, and I partook and finished my preparations unto the children of men." (D&C 19:18-19.)

Intensity of suffering

President Brigham Young pointed out that the intensity of Christ's suffering was induced by the withdrawal from him of the Father's Spirit. And I quote from Brother Young:

". . . at the very moment . . . when the crisis came . . . the Father withdrew . . . His Spirit, and cast a veil over him. That is what made him sweat blood. . . he then plead with the Father not to forsake him. 'No,' says the Father 'you must have your trials, as well as others.'" (*Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 3, p. 206.)

The severity of the suffering incident

to the withdrawal of the Father's Spirit is intimated in the Lord's statement, through the Prophet, to Martin Harris, in which he said:

"... repent . . . lest you suffer these punishments of which I have spoken, of which in the smallest, yea, even in the least degree you have tasted at the time I withdrew my Spirit." (D&C 19:20.)

Fortunately, we need not endure such suffering because Jesus endured it for us, provided, of course, that we bring ourselves, through righteous living, within the reach of his atoning sacrifice.

Men must prove themselves

However, just as Jesus had to endure affliction to prove himself, so must all men endure affliction to prove themselves.

"Abel was slain for his righteousness. . . . Abraham . . . was laid upon the iron bedstead for slaughter; and . . . cast into the fire. . . . Moses . . . was driven from his country and kindred. Elijah had to flee his country. . . . Daniel was cast into a den of lions; Micah was fed on the bread of affliction; and Jeremiah was cast into the filthy hole under the Temple. . . .

"... all the Saints . . . prophets and apostles, have had to come up through great tribulation. . . ." (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 1938 ed., pp. 260-61.)

Afflictions of Prophet Joseph

From his own experiences, the Prophet Joseph was eminently qualified to talk about affliction, and this he most eloquently did.

Writing from Liberty Jail in March 1839, he revealed something concerning the tribulations then being endured by him and his associates.

"... we have been taken prisoners charged falsely with every kind of evil, and thrown into prison, enclosed with strong walls, surrounded with a strong guard, who continually watch day and night as indefatigable as the devil. . . .

"... we are compelled to hear nothing but blasphemous oaths, and witness

a scene of blasphemy, and drunkenness and hypocrisy, and debaucheries of every description." (DHC, Vol. 3, p. 290.)

But even as he protested these atrocities, his soul expanded as he endured them. To the Saints—who themselves (at that time some 12 to 15 thousand of them) were being ravished and plundered, robbed and driven from their homes, in the dead of winter—he said: "... our circumstances are calculated to awaken our spirits to a sacred remembrance of everything, and we think that yours are also, and that nothing . . . can separate us from the love of God and fellowship one with another; and that every species of wickedness and cruelty practiced upon us will only tend to bind our hearts together and seal them together in love. . . ." (DHC, Vol. 3, p. 290.)

Tried in crucible

A little later on in his letter he added this:

"And now, beloved brethren, we say unto you, that inasmuch as God hath said that He would have a tried people, that He would purge them as gold, now we think that this time He has chosen His own crucible, wherein we have been tried; and we think if we get through with any degree of safety, and shall have kept the faith, that it will be a sign to this generation, altogether sufficient to leave them without excuse; and we think also, it will be a trial of our faith equal to that of Abraham, and that the ancients will not have whereof to boast over us in the day of judgment, as being called to pass through heavier afflictions. . . ." (DHC, Vol. 3, p. 294.)

And then, speaking for himself and his fellow prisoners, he said: "... in His Almighty name we are determined to endure tribulation as good soldiers unto the end." (DHC, Vol. 3, p. 297.) And counseling the Saints to do likewise, he said: "... let thy bowels . . . be full of charity towards all men. . . ." (DHC, Vol. 3, p. 300.)

This admonition, considered in light of the circumstances under which it was given, seems to me to almost equal the Master's statement from the cross:

"Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." (Luke 23:34.)

Soul heightened by endurance

The Prophet's soul never could have reached these heights without enduring well the tribulations and afflictions heaped upon him.

President Brigham Young is quoted as observing that the Prophet was more perfect in 38 years, with the severe tribulation through which he passed, than he would have been in a thousand years without it. (Truman G. Madsen, *Eternal Man* [Deseret Book Company, 1966], p. 61.)

The Prophet's appreciation and gratitude for the kindness of a friend, the "pure love of Christ" which filled his soul, and the assurance given him by the Lord, he expressed in the following passage. (As I read it, note how it reveals the purity of his heart, the tenderness of his spirit, and the nobility of his soul.)

" . . . those who have not been enclosed in the walls of prison without cause or provocation, can have but little idea how sweet the voice of a friend is; one token of friendship from any source whatever awakens and calls into action every sympathetic feeling; it brings up in an instant everything that is passed; it seizes the present with the avidity of lightning; it grasps after the future with the fierceness of a tiger; it moves the mind backward and forward, from one thing to another, until finally all enmity, malice and hatred, and past differences, misunderstandings and mismanagements are slain victorious at the feet of hope; and when the heart is sufficiently contrite, then the voice of inspiration steals along and whispers, [My son, peace be unto thy soul; thine adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a small moment; and then if thou endure it well, God shall exalt thee on high. . . .]" (*DHC*, Vol. 3, p. 293.)

No wonder the Lord could say to him, as he did, ". . . I seal upon you your exaltation, and prepare a throne for you in the kingdom of my Father, with Abraham your father.

"Behold, I have seen your sacrifices, and will forgive all your sins; I have

seen your sacrifices in obedience to that which I have told you. . . ." (*D&C* 132:49-50.)

Courage to bear afflictions

Now, as I noted in the beginning, my desire is to comfort and encourage and inspire all you faithful, humble people who are enduring, with patience and loneliness, pain, sorrow, and at times almost despair; you who languish in hospitals and nursing homes, and all you other shut-ins; you who mourn the loss of loved ones by death or transgression; you who are experiencing diminution of strength in mind and body. In sympathy and love I say to you and all the rest of us 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.

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 shall be comforted by the knowledge that we are not enduring, nor will we be required to endure, the suffering of the wicked who are to "be cast out into outer darkness [where] there shall be weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth." (Al. 40:13.)

Blessings follow tribulation

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.)

Glory in tribulations

We can experience what Paul was expressing in his epistle to the Romans, when he said:

"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:

"By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

"And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience;

"And patience, experience; and experience, hope:

"And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." (Rom. 5:1-5.)

In conclusion, I testify to the truthfulness of these things. They are part and parcel of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. I know they are true. I have read and been impressed by the testimony of others. Paul, for example, having thrice sought the Lord to remove "a thorn in the flesh," was answered: "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness." Then Paul answered: "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

"Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong." (2 Cor. 12:9-10.)

Growth through adversity

Not only have I been impressed by the testimonies of others; I have been

eyewitness to the operation of these principles in the lives of my own acquaintances. I have seen the remorse and despair in the lives of men who, in the hour of trial, have cursed God and died spiritually. And I have seen people rise to great heights from what seemed to be unbearable burdens.

Finally, I have sought the Lord in my own extremities and learned for myself that my soul has made its greatest growth as I have been driven to my knees by adversity and affliction.

To these things I bear solemn witness in the name of Jesus Christ, our beloved Savior, and in his name I invoke a comforting and sustaining blessing upon each of you. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen. ○

President Hugh B. Brown

The comforting and encouraging address just given was by Elder Marion G. Romney of the Council of the Twelve.

The Tabernacle Choir will now sing: "The Artisan," with Olga Gardner as soloist, following which there will be a brief organ interlude and then Elder Ezra Taft Benson of the Council of the Twelve will be our concluding speaker.

The Tabernacle Choir sang "The Artisan" with Olga Gardner as soloist.

Following this, the Choir sang the number, "Come Ye Thankful People."

ELDER EZRA TAFT BENSON

Of the Council of the Twelve

● My brethren and sisters, seen and unseen, godless forces threaten us of the free world. My text is from Paul's timely admonition:

"Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." (Eph. 6:11-12.)

A modern-day prophet has said, "...