

## Don't ruin your life

We should never let Satan fool us into thinking that all is lost. Let us take pride in the good and right things we have done; reject and cast out of our lives those things that are wrong; look to the Lord for forgiveness, strength, and comfort; and then move onward.

A successful parent is one who has loved, one who has sacrificed, and one who has cared for, taught, and ministered to the needs of a child. If you have done all of these and your child is still wayward or troublesome or worldly, it could well be that you are, nevertheless, a successful parent. Perhaps there are children who have come into the world that would challenge any set of parents under any set of circumstances. Likewise, perhaps there are others who would bless the lives of, and be a joy to, almost any father or mother.

My concern today is that there are parents who may be pronouncing harsh judgments upon themselves and may be allowing these feelings to destroy their lives, when in fact they have done their best and should continue in faith. That all who are parents might find joy in their efforts with their children is my prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## President Benson

Elder Howard W. Hunter, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, has just spoken to us.

We shall now hear from Elder Robert D. Hales, a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy. He will be followed by Elder William R. Bradford, also a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy.

## Elder Robert D. Hales

### Sorrow and suffering

There are many kinds of sorrow and suffering:

- Self-inflicted suffering
- Suffering from infirmities of our mortal bodies and sorrow from separation by death.
- Suffering that tries and tests us
- Suffering to develop our spiritual strength
- Suffering to humble us and lead us to repentance
- The Savior's suffering and atoning sacrifice, the most important event in the history of the world.

But if our sorrow and suffering strengthen our faith in our Savior, Jesus Christ, "[our] sorrow shall be turned [to] joy" (John 16:20).

### Can hurt loved ones most

Thirty years ago, as a branch president, I was interviewing a man and

his wife. The wife was tearing down her husband: he had not been the provider she had expected; he had not been the companion she had dreamed about before her marriage; they could not communicate together without arguing and attacking one another.

Her husband loved her, and yet she hurt him. There were tears in his eyes as he absorbed the verbal abuse. I couldn't take any more as a twenty-one-year-old branch president, and asked, "Why do you hurt this person who loves you the most? Why do you hurt a husband who would do anything to help you?"

Her answer startled me. "Oh, I guess we argue and injure those we love because we can hurt them the most."

I have never forgotten that incident. There is truth in that example. We can't hurt a stranger as much as we can a loved one. We know just what to do to hurt our companions, parents, or brothers and sisters. We know where

they are vulnerable. We know how they can be hurt the most by our actions. To many it seems to be a test of faith in life to be wounded by those closest to us. Of Jesus it is said in Zechariah that when asked where he had received the wounds in his hands, he would say that he "was wounded in the house of [his] friends" (Zechariah 13:6). Isn't it true that God, our Father, and his Son grieve when we sin? When we fail to be obedient and accept the atoning sacrifice of our Lord, aren't we hurting Him who loves us most?

### Sorrow can be turned to joy

On one occasion Elder LeGrand Richards, who was being helped into a wheelchair a little against his will, turned to the younger General Authorities and said, "You, too, will grow old, if you live long enough." I observe my eighty-two-year-old mother—paralyzed the past eight years—and my eighty-four-year-old father—who is an artist, whose test of suffering is dimmed eyesight—and realize the joy they will receive when they receive perfect immortal bodies. The suffering in mortality will bring a greater appreciation of the blessings of a resurrected, perfect body. Also, our joy of service in helping our parents in time of need brings us a greater appreciation for one another.

We are told that out of suffering, sorrow, and sadness that joy will come. Sometimes we cannot understand that mortal suffering can bring eternal blessings. Jesus told his Apostles:

"A little while, and ye shall not see me. . . .

"I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy" (John 16:16, 20).

Jesus likened this to a woman's travail and suffering before her hour of delivery: as soon as she gives birth, "she remembereth no more the anguish" (John 16:21).

### Savior's visit in spirit world

After the Crucifixion, the earth was rent by earthquakes and eruptions that caused death and destruction. (See Matthew 27:51.) How could those who experienced such suffering have any comprehension of the joyous scene described by President Joseph F. Smith's vision of the Savior's visit to the spirits of the dead in the spirit world while his body lay in the tomb?

"All these had departed the mortal life, firm in the hope of a glorious resurrection, through the grace of God the Father and his Only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ.

"I beheld that they were filled with joy and gladness, and were rejoicing together because the day of their deliverance was at hand.

"They were assembled awaiting the advent of the Son of God into the spirit world, to declare their redemption from the bands of death.

"Their sleeping dust was to be restored unto its perfect frame, bone to his bone, and the sinews and the flesh upon them, the spirit and the body to be united never again to be divided, that they might receive a fulness of joy.

"While this vast multitude waited and conversed, rejoicing in the hour of their deliverance from the chains of death, the Son of God appeared, declaring liberty to the captives who had been faithful;

"And there he preached to them the everlasting gospel, the doctrine of the resurrection and the redemption of mankind from the fall, and from individual sins on conditions of repentance" (D&C 138:14–19).

### Suffering tries and tests

Oh, there's the suffering that tries and tests us. Job, a perfect man was tested and tried by Satan. Job's friends assumed his suffering was a result of sin, but the scriptures tell us he "sinned not, nor charged God foolishly" (Job 1:22). Nor should we charge God foolishly for our own suf-

ferings or assume we know the cause of another's suffering.

Suffering to develop strength will not exceed our ability to endure to the end.

When Joseph Smith was in Liberty Jail, he cried to the Lord for comfort, and the Lord gave it to him. He said that "if the very jaws of hell shall gape open the mouth wide after thee, know thou, my son, that all these things shall give thee experience, and shall be for thy good" (D&C 122:7).

Such trials give us the development of spirituality that we probably never would get if we didn't have the experience where the very jaws of hell gape open their mouth wide after us. Not only must we survive, but we must develop the ability to have a concern for others while we are suffering. It is a key element in our spiritual growth. As we lose our lives in the service of our fellowmen, we find ourselves.

Jesus gave us the perfect example at Gethsemane when he forgave his Apostles who slept while he bled at every pore for all our sins. He only asked, "Could ye not watch with me one hour?" (Matthew 26:40). Jesus also expressed concern for his mother's care as he suffered on the cross. And even while he was suffering, he taught the gospel to those who were suffering next to him. (See John 19:26-27.)

One of the greatest examples in my life happened when I was a brand-new General Authority on my first assignment. One of the General Authorities had a wife who had passed away just a few days before. I walked onto the airplane and there he was, sitting on the front row of the airplane. What a great message! I was moved by it because at the time I said to myself, "How can one who is suffering go out to help others?" He talked to me about how difficult it was for him to go on assignment, but he went to give succor and helped others when he was hurting.

Suffering is universal; how we react to suffering is individual. Suffering can take us one of two ways. It can be a strengthening and purifying experi-

ence combined with faith, or it can be a destructive force in our lives if we do not have faith in the Lord's atoning sacrifice. The purpose of suffering, however, is to build and strengthen us. We learn obedience by the things we suffer. We should be humbled and drawn to the Lord, as in the case of the prodigal son who appreciated his home only after going into the world and experiencing sorrow when he shut out his loved ones. (See Luke 15:11-32.) So suffering in his case was a vital part of his repentance.

### Repentance

When suffering comes as a consequence of sin, it should lead to repentance. Alma testified to his son Helaman:

"And it came to pass that as I was thus racked with torment, while I was harrowed up by the memory of my many sins, behold, I remembered also to have heard my father prophesy unto the people concerning the coming of one Jesus Christ, a Son of God, to atone for the sins of the world.

"Now, as my mind caught hold upon this thought, I cried within my heart: O Jesus, thou Son of God, have mercy on me, who am in the gall of bitterness, and am encircled about by the everlasting chains of death.

"And now, behold, when I thought this, I could remember my pains no more; yea, I was harrowed up by the memory of my sins no more.

"And oh, what joy, and what marvelous light I did behold; yea, my soul was filled with joy as exceeding as was my pain!" (Alma 36:17-20).

### Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ

After a number of mistakes and failures to live as we know we should, we may lose confidence in ourselves and have a poor self-image of who we are and what we are capable of becoming. We may forget that we are children of God and have the potential of dwelling with him and his Son if we accept

the Atonement and keep the commandments.

The first of the commandments we must keep is to have faith. First, we must gain faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Faith that he lives. Faith that he hears and answers prayers. Faith that he will forgive us of our transgressions. Faith in the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

### The atoning sacrifice

Why is the Savior's atonement so important as the central gospel principle in the Church and in our lives?

Jesus was born of heavenly parents in a premortal world—he was the firstborn of our Heavenly Father. In mortality, the Babe of Bethlehem's birth and life, concluding with the atoning sacrifice, was prophesied by ancient prophets in all dispensations. Only he could make the atoning sacrifice—having received the power over death from his Father. He overcame death, the grave's power was nullified, and he became our Savior, Mediator, and Master of the Resurrection—a means of salvation and immortality to all of us. We will all be resurrected and become immortal because of the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

In the study of the Atonement, most of us have probably asked the question, "Why is it so easy for the world to see and believe that in Adam all men died and were cast out from the presence of our Heavenly Father, yet it is so hard for the world to understand how Jesus Christ can bring us back in the same manner?" The scriptures are clear on this.

"For as by one man's disobedience [Adam] many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. . . .

"That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 5:19, 21).

"He will take upon him death, that he may loose the bands of death which

bind his people; and he will take upon him their infirmities, that his bowels may be filled with mercy, . . . that he may know according to the flesh, . . . that he might take upon him the sins of his people, that he might blot out their transgressions according to the power of his deliverance" (Alma 7:12-13).

"For behold, I, God, have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent;

"But if they would not repent they must suffer even as I" (D&C 19:16-17).

I stand all amazed at the love

Jesus offers me,  
Confused at the grace that so fully  
he proffers me;

I tremble to know that for me he  
was crucified,  
That for me, a sinner, he suffered,  
he bled and died.

I marvel that he would descend  
from his throne divine  
To rescue a soul so rebellious and  
proud as mine;  
That he should extend his great  
love unto such as I,  
Sufficient to own, to redeem, and  
to justify.

I think of his hands pierced and  
bleeding to pay the debt!  
Such mercy, such love, and  
devotion can I forget?  
No, no, I will praise and adore at  
the mercy seat,  
Until at the glorified throne I kneel  
at his feet.  
Oh, it is wonderful that he should  
care for me,  
Enough to die for me!  
Oh, it is wonderful, wonderful to  
me!  
("I Stand All Amazed," *Hymns*,  
no. 80.)

It is my prayer that our sorrow and suffering will strengthen our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, that our sorrow shall be turned to joy, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.