

## Elder Neal A. Maxwell

As I raised my arm this morning, I raise my voice this afternoon gladly to sustain President Hunter. He is a meek and special man. And, as we've heard the testimonies from two new Apostles whom we sustained this morning, I raise my sustaining voice this afternoon. I rejoice in two outstanding new Seventies and in new special sister leaders.

### Increasing despair and hopelessness

For some years, brothers and sisters, there has been an increasing and profound sense of existential despair in the world. This mortal hopelessness both reflects and affects much of mankind. Whether tribal or national, wars constitute "the continued experience of twentieth-century man" (Alfred Kazin, *Bright Book of Life* [Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1973], p. 81). A grumpy cynicism pervades politics in so many places on this planet. Holocausts, famine, pestilence, and tides of refugees have taken a terrible toll on human hope, with much of that toll coming from man-made, avoidable disasters. Causality can be assigned to one or another form of iniquity. No wonder, as the scriptures say, despair comes of iniquity! (see Moroni 10:22).

Of course, many disagree over what constitutes sin, but surely they do not welcome the deepening of human despair! Some moderns do not lament the loss of traditional faith either, but surely they lament the further loss of hope and charity, ever in such short supply anyway.

### Consequences of lack of hope

Does hope really matter, or is it merely an antique virtue?

Without hope, what is the future of lubricating forgiveness among the human family? Without hope, why forgo now in order to preserve precious resources for

future generations? Without hope, what will keep the remaining idealism from also souring into cynicism and thereby laying waste to governments and families—institutions already in such serious jeopardy?

A coalition of consequences is emerging. As prophesied, the love of many waxes cold (see Matthew 24:12). Even those affectionally secure themselves can sense the chill in the air. The loss of hope sends selfishness surging as many turn even more intensively to pleasing themselves. The diminished sense of sin diminishes shame, that hot, sharp spur needed for repentance. Shame is often replaced by the arrogance of those morally adrift, including strutting celebrities whose outer boldness camouflages their inner emptiness. Henry David Thoreau correctly observed that "unconscious despair is concealed even under what are called the games and amusement of mankind" (*Walden* [New York: Harper and Row, 1965], p. 7). No wonder so much hollow laughter emanates from the "lonely crowd."

As societies trivialize traditional values, we witness a flow of immense suffering. We anguish, for instance, over what happens to the unborn, who cannot vote, and to children at risk. We weep over children having children and children shooting children. Often secular remedies to these challenges are not based on spiritual principles. To borrow a metaphor—secular remedies resemble an alarmed passenger traveling on the wrong train who tries to compensate by running up the aisle in the opposite direction!

### Ultimate hope is in Christ

Only the acceptance of the revelations of God can bring both direction and correction and, in turn, bring a "brightness of hope" (2 Nephi 31:20). Real

hope does not automatically “spring eternal” unless it is connected with eternal things!

“What is it that ye shall hope for?” Moroni wrote. “Behold I say unto you that ye shall have hope through the atonement of Christ” (Moroni 7:41; see also Alma 27:28). From this triumphal act, resulting in the eventual resurrection of all mankind, so many lesser hopes derive their significance!

Prophets have always had and taught ultimate hope in Christ. Jacob wrote, “We knew of Christ, and we had a hope of his glory many hundred years before his coming; and . . . also all the holy prophets which were before us” (Jacob 4:4).

You and I can be repeatedly reassured concerning this grand hope by the Comforter, who teaches us the truth about “things as they really are, and . . . really will be” (Jacob 4:13; see also Moroni 8:26). Such hope constitutes the “anchor of the soul” (Hebrews 6:19). Such hope is retained through faith in Christ (see Alma 25:16; Ether 12:9). In contrast, a resurrectionless view of life produces only proximate hope (see 1 Corinthians 15:19).

Having ultimate hope does not mean we will always be rescued from proximate problems, but we will be rescued from everlasting death! Meanwhile, ultimate hope makes it possible to say the same three words used centuries ago by three valiant men. They knew God could rescue them from the fiery furnace if He chose. “But if not,” they said, nevertheless, they would still serve Him! (Daniel 3:18).

#### **Relation of faith, hope, and charity**

Unsurprisingly the triad of faith, hope, and charity, which brings us to Christ, has strong and converging linkage: faith is in the Lord Jesus Christ, hope is in His atonement, and charity is the “pure love of Christ” (see Ether

12:28; Moroni 7:47). Each of these attributes qualifies us for the celestial kingdom (see Moroni 10:20–21; Ether 12:34). Each, first of all, requires us to be meek and lowly (see Moroni 7:39, 43).

Faith and hope are constantly interactive and may not always be precisely distinguished or sequenced. Though not perfect knowledge either, hope’s enlivened expectations are “with surety” true (Ether 12:4; see also Romans 8:24; Hebrews 11:1; Alma 32:21). In the geometry of restored theology, hope has a greater circumference than faith. If faith increases, the perimeter of hope stretches correspondingly.

Just as doubt, despair, and desensitization go together, so do faith, hope, and charity. The latter, however, must be carefully and constantly nurtured, whereas despair, like dandelions, needs so little encouragement to sprout and spread. Despair comes so naturally to the natural man!

#### **Hope strengthens and illuminates us**

Souls can be roused and rallied by hope’s “reveille” as by no other music. Even if comrades slumber or desert, “lively hope” performs like a reconnoitering scout out in advance of God’s columns; “there is hope smiling brightly before us” (1 Peter 1:3; “We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet,” *Hymns*, no. 19). Hope caused disciples to go quickly and expectantly to an empty garden tomb (see Mark 16:1–8; Luke 24:8–12). Hope helped a prophet to see rescuing rain in a distant cloud which appeared to be no larger than a man’s hand (see 1 Kings 18:41–46).

Significantly, those who look forward to a next and better world are usually “anxiously engaged” in improving this one, for they “always abound in good works” (D&C 58:27; Alma 7:24). Thus, real hope is much more than wishful musing. It stiffens, not slackens, the

spiritual spine. It is composed, not giddy, eager without being naive, and pleasantly steady without being smug. Hope is realistic anticipation taking the form of determination—a determination not merely to survive but to “endure . . . well” to the end (D&C 121:8).

While weak hope leaves us at the mercy of our moods and events, “brightness of hope” produces illuminated individuals. Their luminosity is seen, and things are also seen by it! Such hope permits us to “press forward” even when dark clouds oppress (2 Nephi 31:20; see also v. 16; Hebrews 6:19; Ether 12:4; Colossians 1:21–23). Sometimes in the deepest darkness there is no external light—only an inner light to guide and to reassure.

Though anchored in grand and ultimate hope, some of our tactical hopes are another matter. We may hope for a pay raise, a special date, an electoral victory, or a bigger house—things which may or may not be realized. Faith in Father’s plan gives us endurance even amid the wreckage of such proximate hopes. Hope keeps us “anxiously engaged” in good causes even when these appear to be losing causes (D&C 58:27).

### Hope helps us walk by faith

Hope helps us to walk by faith, not by sight (see 2 Corinthians 5:7). This can actually be safer. When unaided spiritually, natural sight often shrinks from the odds. It is immobilized by improbabilities. Mauled by his moods and intimidated by his fears, the natural man overreacts to, while hope overrides, the disappointments of the day.

Hope is particularly needed in the hand-to-hand combat required to put off the natural man (see Mosiah 3:19). Giving up on God and on oneself constitutes simultaneous surrender to the natural man.

Daily hope is vital, since the “Winter Quarters” of our lives are not immedi-

ately adjacent to our promised land either. An arduous trek still awaits, but hope spurs weary disciples on.

Those with true hope often see their personal circumstances shaken, like kaleidoscopes, again and again. Yet with the “eye of faith,” they still see divine pattern and purpose (Alma 5:15).

By pressing forward we can stand on what was yesterday’s horizon, thereby drawing hope from our own experiences. Hence Paul described how “tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope” (Romans 5:3–4). Therefore we sing, “We’ve proved him in days that are past” (*Hymns*, no. 19).

Hope feasts on the words of Christ, “written for our learning,” so that “having all these witnesses” through the “comfort of the scriptures [we] might have hope” (Romans 15:4; Jacob 4:6; see also 2 Nephi 31:20). We sing, too, of how “more holiness” involves having “more hope in his word” (“More Holiness Give Me,” *Hymns*, no. 131).

### Hope helps us bless others

Genuine hope is urgently needed in order to be more loving even as the love of many waxes cold; more merciful, even when misunderstood or misrepresented; more holy, even as the world ripens in iniquity; more courteous and patient in a coarsening and curt world; and more full of heartfelt hope, even when other men’s hearts fail them. Whatever our particular furrow, we are to “plow in hope,” without looking back or letting yesterday hold tomorrow hostage (1 Corinthians 9:10).

Hope can be contagious, so we are to be “ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh . . . a reason of the hope that is in [us]” (1 Peter 3:15). If, said Brother Brigham, we do not impart knowledge to others and do good, then we “will become contracted in [our] views and feelings” (in *Journal of Dis-*

*courses*, 2:267). Despair is contraction at the end of its journey.

Genuine hope gives spiritual spunk, including to deserving parents drenched in honest sweat from being “anxiously engaged.” Just as the leaning Tower of Pisa is a persistent rebuke to architectural pessimism, so parental hope—by refusing to topple merely because of the gravity of the current family situation—is a repudiation of despair. Giving parents never give up hope!

Though otherwise “lively,” hope stands quietly with us at funerals. Our tears are just as wet, but not because of despair. Rather, they are tears of appreciation evoked by poignant separation. They will change, ere long, to tears of glorious anticipation. Yet the emptiness is so real and so restless that it initiates a retroactive inventory of what is now so painfully missing, doing so, however, while forecasting fulness and resplendent reunion!

Humble hope helps us to improve by being sufficiently free of ego to ask, “Lord, is it I?” (Matthew 26:22). Submissive hope also readies us to “give away all [our] sins” because we have come to know Jesus, who alone can take them! (Alma 22:18).

Gospel hope keeps us from being muted by being either a naive Pollyanna or a despairing Cassandra. Voices of warning are meant to be heard, not just raised.

Being blessed with hope, let us, as disciples, reach out to all who, for whatever reason, have “moved away from the hope of the gospel” (Colossians 1:23). Let us reach to lift hands which hang hopelessly down.

### Hope beckons us to the Savior

Hope beckons all of us to come home where a glow reflects the Light of the World, whose “brightness and glory defy all description” (Joseph Smith—History

1:17). Jesus waits “with open arms to receive” those who finally overcome by faith and hope (Mormon 6:17). His welcome will consist not of a brief, loving pat but instead of being “clasped in the arms of Jesus”! (Mormon 5:11).

These Primary children will soon sing about wishing “that [Jesus’] arms had been thrown around [them]” (“I Think When I Read That Sweet Story,” *Children’s Songbook*, p. 56). They and we can “hope, and even know” of such sacred things! (Alma 28:12).

Of this I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### President Hinckley

Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Council of the Twelve Apostles has been our concluding speaker.

We remind the brethren of the general priesthood meeting, which will convene in the Tabernacle this evening at 6:00 P.M. mountain daylight time.

The nationwide CBS Tabernacle Choir broadcast tomorrow morning will be from 9:30 to 10:00 A.M. daylight saving time. Those desiring to attend this broadcast and the Sunday morning session, which will immediately follow, must be in their seats no later than 9:15 A.M.

We express gratitude to the Primary children’s choir from the Kaysville Utah Region for the beautiful music we have heard this afternoon. They will now sing in closing “Jesus Once Was a Little Child” and “I Think When I Read That Sweet Story of Old.” Following the singing, the benediction will be offered by Elder Gary J. Coleman of the Seventy.

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