

Elder Richard G. Scott

When the Lord answers no

It is so hard when sincere prayer about something we desire very much is not answered the way we want. It is especially difficult when the Lord answers *no* to that which is worthy and would give us great joy and happiness. Whether it be overcoming illness or loneliness, recovery of a wayward child, coping with a handicap, or seeking continuing life for a dear one who is slipping away, it seems so reasonable and so consistent with our happiness to have a favorable answer. It is hard to understand why our exercise of deep and sincere faith from an obedient life does not bring the desired result.

No one wants adversity. Trials, disappointments, sadness, and heartache come to us from two basically different sources. Those who transgress the laws of God will always have those challenges. The other reason for adversity is to accomplish the Lord's own purposes in our life that we may receive the refinement that comes from testing. It is vitally important for each of us to identify from which of these two sources come our trials and challenges, for the corrective action is very different.

Adversity from transgression

If you are suffering the disheartening effects of transgression, please recognize that the only path to permanent relief from sadness is sincere repentance with a broken heart and a contrite spirit. Realize your full dependence on the Lord and your need to align your life with His teachings. There is really no other way to get lasting healing and peace. Postponing humble repentance will delay or prevent your receiving relief. Admit to yourself your mistakes and seek help now. Your bishop is a friend with keys of authority to help you find peace of mind and contentment. The way will be opened for

you to have strength to repent and be forgiven.

Adversity to accomplish the Lord's purposes

Now may I share some suggestions with you who face the second source of adversity, the testing that a wise Heavenly Father determines is needed even when you are living a worthy, righteous life and are obedient to His commandments.

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 Proverbs 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.

When you face adversity, you can be led to ask many questions. Some serve a useful purpose; others do not. To ask, Why does this have to happen to me? Why do I have to suffer this now? What have I done to cause this? will lead you into blind alleys. It really does no good to ask questions that reflect opposition to the will of God. Rather ask, What am I to do? What am I to learn from this experience? What am I to change? Whom am I to help? How can I remember my many blessings in times of trial? Willing sacrifice of deeply held personal desires in favor of the will of God is very hard to do. Yet when you pray with real conviction, "Please let me know Thy will" and "May Thy will be done," you are in the strongest position to receive the maximum help from your loving Father.

Trust in the Lord

This life is an experience in profound trust—trust in Jesus Christ, trust in His teachings, trust in our capacity as led by the Holy Spirit to obey those teachings for happiness now and for a purposeful, supremely happy eternal existence. To trust means to obey willingly without knowing the end from the beginning (see Proverbs 3:5–7). To produce fruit, your trust in the Lord must be more powerful and enduring than your confidence in your own personal feelings and experience.

To exercise faith is to trust that the Lord knows what He is doing with you and that He can accomplish it for your eternal good even though you cannot understand how He can possibly do it. We are like infants in our understanding of eternal matters and their impact on us here in mortality. Yet at times we act as if we knew it all. When you pass through trials for His purposes, as you trust Him, exercise faith in Him, He will help you. That support will generally come step by step, a portion at a time. While you are passing through each phase, the pain and difficulty that come from being enlarged will continue. If all matters were immediately resolved at your first petition, you could not grow. Your Father in Heaven and His Beloved Son love you perfectly. They would not require you to experience a moment more of difficulty than is absolutely needed for your personal benefit or for that of those you love.

The Savior's example in adversity

As in all things, the Master is our perfect example. Who could have asked with more perfect faith, greater obedience, or more complete understanding than did He when He asked His Father in Gethsemane, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt"

(Matthew 26:39). Later He pled twice again, "O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done" (v. 42; see also v. 44).

How grateful I am personally that our Savior taught we should conclude our most urgent, deeply felt prayers, when we ask for that which is of utmost importance to us, with "Thy will be done" (v. 42). Your willingness to accept the will of the Father will not change what, in His wisdom, He has chosen to do. However, it will certainly change the effect of those decisions on you personally. That evidence of the proper exercise of agency allows His decisions to produce far greater blessings in your life. I have found that because of our Father's desire for us to grow, He may give us gentle, almost imperceptible promptings that, if we are willing to accept without complaint, He will enlarge to become a very clear indication of His will. This enlightenment comes because of our faith and our willingness to do what He asks even though we would desire something else.

The Lord gives what we need

Our Father in Heaven has invited you to express your needs, hopes, and desires unto Him. That should not be done in a spirit of negotiation, but rather as a willingness to obey His will no matter what direction that takes. His invitation "Ask, and ye shall receive" (3 Nephi 27:29) does not ensure that you will get what you *want*. It does guarantee that, if worthy, you will get what you *need*, as judged by a Father who loves you perfectly, who wants your eternal happiness even more than do you.

I testify that when the Lord closes one important door in your life, He shows His continuing love and compassion by opening many other compensating doors through your exercise of faith. He will place in your path packets of spiritual sunlight to brighten your way.

They often come after the trial has been the greatest, as evidence of the compassion and love of an all-knowing Father. They point the way to greater happiness and more understanding and strengthen your determination to accept and be obedient to His will.

True happiness is centered in Christ

It is a singularly marvelous blessing to have faith in the Savior and a testimony of His teachings. So few in the world have that brilliant light to guide them. The fulness of the restored gospel gives perspective, purpose, and understanding. It allows us to face what otherwise appear to be unjust, unfair, unreasonable challenges in life. Learn those helpful truths by pondering the Book of Mormon and other scriptures. Try to understand those teachings not only with your mind but also with your heart.

True enduring happiness with the accompanying strength, courage, and capacity to overcome the most challenging difficulties comes from a life centered in Jesus Christ. Obedience to His teachings provides a sure foundation upon which to build. That takes effort. There is no guarantee of overnight results, but there is absolute assurance that, in the Lord's time, solutions will come, peace will prevail, and emptiness will be filled.

Finding peace during adversity

Recently a great leader, suffering from physical handicaps that come with advancing age, said, "I am glad I have what I have." It is wisdom to open the windows of happiness by recognizing your abundant blessings.

Don't let the workings of adversity totally absorb your life. Try to understand what you can. Act where you are able; then let the matter rest with the Lord for a period while you give to others in worthy ways before you take on appropriate concern again.

Please learn that as you wrestle with a challenge and feel sadness because of it, you can simultaneously have peace and rejoicing. Yes, pain, disappointment, frustration, and anguish can be temporary scenes played out on the stage of life. Behind them there can be a background of peace and the positive assurance that a loving Father will keep His promises. You can qualify for those promises by a determination to accept His will, by understanding the plan of happiness, by receiving all of the ordinances, and by keeping the covenants made to assure their fulfillment.

The Lord is preparing you for exaltation

The Lord's plan is to exalt you to live with Him and be greatly blessed. The rate at which you qualify is generally set by your capacity to mature, to grow, to love, and to give of yourself. He is preparing you to be a god. You cannot understand fully what that means, yet He knows. As you trust Him, seek and follow His will, you will receive blessings that your finite mind cannot understand here on earth. Your Father in Heaven and His Holy Son know better than you what brings happiness. They have given you the plan of happiness. As you understand and follow it, happiness will be your blessing. As you willingly obey, receive, and honor the ordinances and covenants of that holy plan, you can have the greatest measure of satisfaction in this life, yes, even times of overpowering happiness. You will prepare yourself for an eternity of glorious life with your loved ones who qualify for that kingdom.

I know the principles that we have discussed are true. They have been tested in the crucible of personal experience. To recognize the hand of the Lord in your life and to accept His will without complaint is a beginning. That decision does not immediately eliminate the struggles that will come for your growth. But I witness that it is the best way there is for you

to find strength and understanding. It will free you from the dead ends of your own reasoning. It will allow your life to become a productive, meaningful experience when otherwise you may not know how to go on (see D&C 24:8).

I testify that you have a Heavenly Father who loves you. I witness that the Savior gave His life for your happiness. I know Him. He understands your every need. I positively know that as you accept Their will without complaint, They will bless and sustain you. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Boyd K. Packer

The brilliant morning of forgiveness

In April of 1847, Brigham Young led the first company of pioneers out of Winter Quarters. At that same time, 1,600 miles to the west the pathetic survivors of the Donner Party straggled down the slopes of the Sierra Nevada Mountains into the Sacramento Valley.

They had spent the ferocious winter trapped in the snowdrifts below the summit. That any survived the days and weeks and months of starvation and indescribable suffering is almost beyond belief.

Among them was fifteen-year-old John Breen. On the night of April 24 he walked into Johnson's Ranch. Years later John wrote:

"It was long after dark when we got to Johnson's Ranch, so the first time I saw it was early in the morning. The weather was fine, the ground was covered with green grass, the birds were singing from the tops of the trees, and the journey was over. I could scarcely believe that I was alive.

"The scene that I saw that morning seems to be photographed on my mind. Most of the incidents are gone from memory, but I can always see the camp near Johnson's Ranch."¹

The chorus sang "True to the Faith."

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Elder Richard G. Scott has just spoken to us, followed by the chorus singing "True to the Faith."

President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, will now be our concluding speaker for this session.

At first I was very puzzled by his statement that "most of the incidents are gone from memory." How could long months of incredible suffering and sorrow ever be gone from his mind? How could that brutal dark winter be replaced with one brilliant morning?

On further reflection I decided it was not puzzling at all. I have seen something similar happen to people I have known. I have seen some who have spent a long winter of guilt and spiritual starvation emerge into the morning of forgiveness. When morning came, they learned this:

"Behold, he who has repented of his sins, the same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more."²

"I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins."³

"I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."⁴

"For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more."⁵

Alma feels the joy of forgiveness

When the prophet Alma was young, he spent such a time "racked," as he said, "with eternal torment, [his] soul . . . harrowed up to the greatest degree."⁶