

President Thomas S. Monson

“You can’t run away from trouble”

I commence my message this morning with a question: Have you ever taken a vacation with your entire family? If not, you are in for some surprises when you do. My wife and I a few years ago joined our children, their companions, and the grandchildren at Disneyland in southern California. Beyond the entrance to the famous theme park, the group rushed to what was then the newest feature—Star Tours. You enter a simulated rocket, take your seat, and fasten your seat belt. All of a sudden the entire vehicle begins to vibrate violently. I think the mechanical voice which comes over the loudspeaker calls it “heavy turbulence.” (I have never returned to this featured ride. I get all the real turbulence I can handle just flying from place to place fulfilling my responsibilities.)

After recuperating for a few minutes, we journeyed to the feature with the longest line. It is called Splash Mountain. The crowd filed round and round in a serpentine pattern. The music, which was piped through the loudspeakers to the waiting throng, contained the words of the song:

Zip-a-dee-doo-dah, Zip-a-dee-ay,
My, oh my, what a wonderful day!
Plenty of sunshine, headin’ my way,
Zip-a-dee-doo-dah, zip-a-dee-ay!¹

By now we were ready to board the boat which would carry us in a vertical dive that evoked screams from the passengers in the boat ahead as it roared down the waterfall and glided to a stop in the water below. Just before taking the plunge, however, I noticed on one wall a small sign declaring a profound truth: “You can’t run away from trouble; there’s no place that far!”

These few words have remained with me. They pertain not only to the

theme of Splash Mountain but also to our sojourn in mortality.

We learn as we bear our afflictions

Life is a school of experience, a time of probation. We learn as we bear our afflictions and live through our heartaches.

As we ponder the events that can befall all of us—even sickness, accident, death, and a host of other challenges—we can say with Job of old: “Man is born unto trouble.”² Job was a “perfect and upright” man who “feared God, and eschewed evil.”³ Pious in his conduct, prosperous in his fortune, Job was to face a test which could have destroyed anyone. Shorn of his possessions, scorned by his friends, afflicted by his suffering, shattered by the loss of his family, he was urged to “curse God, and die.”⁴ He resisted this temptation and declared from the depths of his noble soul:

“Behold, my witness is in heaven, and my record is on high.”⁵

“I know that my redeemer liveth.”⁶
Job kept the faith.

It may safely be assumed that no person has ever lived entirely free of suffering and tribulation, nor has there ever been a period in human history that did not have its full share of turmoil, ruin, and misery.

“Is there no balm in Gilead?”

When the pathway of life takes a cruel turn, there is the temptation to ask the question “Why me?” Self-incrimination is a common practice, even when we may have had no control over our difficulty. At times there appears to be no light at the tunnel’s end, no dawn to break the night’s darkness. We feel surrounded by the pain of broken hearts, the disappointment of shattered dreams, and the despair of vanished hopes. We join in uttering the biblical plea, “Is there

no balm in Gilead . . . ?”⁷ We feel abandoned, heartbroken, alone.

To all who so despair, may I offer the assurance found in the psalm, “Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.”⁸

Whenever we are inclined to feel burdened down with the blows of life, let us remember that others have passed the same way, have endured, and then have overcome.

There seems to be an unending supply of trouble for one and all. Our problem is that we often expect instantaneous solutions, forgetting that frequently the heavenly virtue of patience is required.

Do any of the following challenges sound familiar to you?

- Handicapped children
- The passing of a loved one
- Employment downsizing
- Obsolescence of one’s skills
- A wayward son or daughter
- Mental and emotional illness
- Accidents
- Divorce
- Abuse
- Excessive debt

The list is endless. In the world of today there is at times a tendency to feel detached—even isolated—from the Giver of every good gift. We worry that we walk alone. You ask, “How can we cope?” What brings to us ultimate comfort is the gospel.

God will not fail us

From the bed of pain, from the pillow wet with tears, we are lifted heavenward by that divine assurance and precious promise, “I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.”⁹

Such comfort is priceless as we journey along the pathway of mortality, with its many forks and turnings. Rarely is the assurance communicated by a flashing sign or a loud voice. Rather, the language

of the Spirit is gentle, quiet, uplifting to the heart, and soothing to the soul.

The example of Elijah

Lest we question the Lord concerning our troubles, let us remember that the wisdom of God may appear as foolishness to men; but the greatest single lesson we can learn in mortality is that when God speaks and a man obeys, that man will always be right.

The experience of Elijah the Tishbite is illustrative of this truth. In the midst of a terrible famine, a drought, and the despair of hunger, suffering, and perhaps even death, “the word of the Lord came unto him, saying, Arise, get thee to Zarephath, . . . and dwell there: behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee.”¹⁰

Elijah didn’t question the Lord. “He arose and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, behold, the widow woman was there gathering of sticks: and he called to her, and said, Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink.

“And as she was going to fetch it, he called to her, and said, Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thine hand.

“And she said, As the Lord thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and, behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die.

“And Elijah said unto her, Fear not; go and do as thou hast said: but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son.

“For thus saith the Lord God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the Lord sendeth rain upon the earth.”¹¹

She did not question the improbable promise. “She went and did according to

the saying of Elijah: and she, and he, and her house, did eat many days.

“And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the Lord, which he spake by Elijah.”¹²

The Savior’s life inspires patience and courage

Let us now fast-forward the pages of history to that special night when shepherds were abiding with their flocks and heard the holy pronouncement:

“Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

“For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.”¹³

With the birth of the babe in Bethlehem, there emerged a great endowment—a power stronger than weapons, a wealth more lasting than the coins of Caesar. The long-foretold promise was fulfilled; the Christ child was born.

The sacred record reveals that the boy Jesus “increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.”¹⁴ At a later time, a quiet entry records that He “went about doing good.”¹⁵

Out of Nazareth and down through the generations of time come His excellent example, His welcome words, His divine deeds. They inspire patience to endure affliction, strength to bear grief, courage to face death, and confidence to meet life. In this world of chaos, of trial, of uncertainty, never has our need for such divine guidance been more desperate.

All paths pass somewhere through Gethsemane

Lessons from Nazareth, Capernaum, Jerusalem, and Galilee transcend the barriers of distance, the passage of time, the limits of understanding as they bring to troubled hearts a light and a way.

Ahead lay Gethsemane’s garden and Golgotha’s hill.

The biblical account reveals:

“Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder.

“And he took with him Peter, [James, and John] and began to be sorrowful and very heavy.

“Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me.

“And he went a little further, . . . and prayed, saying,”¹⁶

“Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.

“And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him.

“And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.”¹⁷

What suffering, what sacrifice, what anguish did He endure to atone for the sins of the world!

For our benefit, the poet wrote:

In golden youth when seems the earth
A summer-land of singing mirth,
When souls are glad and hearts are
light,

And not a shadow lurks in sight,
We do not know it, but there lies
Somewhere veiled ’neath evening
skies

A garden which we all must see—
The garden of Gethsemane. . . .

Down shadowy lanes, across strange
streams

Bridged over by our broken dreams;
Behind the misty caps of years,

Beyond the great salt fount of tears,
The garden lies. Strive, as you may,

You cannot miss it in your way;
All paths that have been, or shall be

Pass somewhere through Gethse-
mane.¹⁸

The mortal mission of the Savior of the world drew rapidly to its close. Ahead lay Calvary's cross, the acts of depravity committed by those who thirsted for the blood of the Son of God. His divine response is a simple but profoundly significant prayer: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."¹⁹

The conclusion came: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus,"²⁰ the Great Redeemer died. He was buried in a tomb. He rose on the morning of the third day. He was seen by His disciples. Words that linger from that epochal event course through the annals of time and bring to our souls even today the comfort, the assurance, the balm, the certainty, "He is not here: . . . he is risen."²¹ Resurrection became a reality for all.

Surviving personal tragedy with faith

Last week I received a faith-filled letter from Laurence M. Hilton. May I share with you the account of surviving personal tragedy with faith, nothing wavering.

In 1892, Thomas and Sarah Hilton, Laurence's grandparents, went to Samoa, where Thomas was set apart as mission president after their arrival. They brought with them a baby daughter; two sons were born to them while they served there. Tragically, all three died in Samoa, and in 1895 the Hiltons returned from their mission childless.

David O. McKay was a friend of the family and was deeply touched by their loss. In 1921, as part of a world tour of visits to the members of the Church in many nations, Elder McKay stopped in Samoa, accompanied by Elder Hugh J. Cannon. Before leaving on his tour, he had promised the now-widowed Sister Hilton that he would personally visit the graves of her three children. I share with you the letter David O. McKay wrote to her from Samoa:

"Dear Sister Hilton:

"Just as the descending rays of the late afternoon sun touched the tops of the tall coconut trees, Wednesday, May 18th, 1921, a party of five stood with bowed heads in front of the little Fagali'i Cemetery. . . . We were there, as you will remember, in response to a promise I made you before I left home.

"The graves and headstones are in a good state of preservation. . . . I reproduce here a copy I made as I stood . . . outside the stone wall surrounding the spot.

Janette Hilton

Bn: Sept. 10, 1891

Died: June 4, 1892

"Rest, darling Jennie"

George Emmett Hilton

Bn: Oct. 12, 1894

Died: Oct. 19, 1894

"Peaceful be thy slumber"

Thomas Harold Hilton

Bn: Sept. 21, 1892

Died: March 17, 1894

"Rest on the hillside, rest"

"As I looked at those three little graves, I tried to imagine the scenes through which you passed during your young motherhood here in old Samoa. As I did so, the little headstones became monuments not only to the little babes sleeping beneath them, but also to a mother's faith and devotion to the eternal principles of truth and life. Your three little ones, Sister Hilton, in silence most eloquent and effective, have continued to carry on your noble missionary work begun nearly 30 years ago, and they will continue as long as there are gentle hands to care for their last earthly resting place.

By loving hands their dying eyes
were closed;

By loving hands their little limbs
composed;

By foreign hands their humble graves
adorned;
By strangers honored, and by strangers
mourned.

“Tofa Soifua,
“David O. McKay”

The peace which passes understanding

This touching account conveys to the grieving heart “the peace . . . which passeth all understanding.”²² Our Heavenly Father lives. Jesus Christ the Lord is our Savior and Redeemer. He guided the Prophet Joseph. He guides His prophet today, even President Gordon B. Hinckley. Of a truth I bear this personal witness.

That we may shoulder our sorrows, bear our burdens, and face our fears—as did our Savior—is my prayer. I know that He lives. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. “Zip-A-Dee-Doo-Dah,” Ray Gilbert, © 1945 Walt Disney Music Company.
2. Job 5:7.
3. Job 1:1.
4. Job 2:9.
5. Job 16:19.

6. Job 19:25.
7. Jeremiah 8:22.
8. Psalm 30:5.
9. Joshua 1:5.
10. 1 Kings 17:8–9.
11. 1 Kings 17:10–14.
12. 1 Kings 17:15–16.
13. Luke 2:10–11.
14. Luke 2:52.
15. Acts 10:38.
16. Matthew 26:36–39.
17. Luke 22:42–44.
18. Ella Wheeler Wilcox, “Gethsemane.”
19. Luke 23:34.
20. Luke 23:46.
21. Matthew 28:6.
22. Philippians 4:7.

The choir sang “For I Am Called by Thy Name.”

President Hinckley

President Thomas S. Monson has just spoken to us, followed by the choir singing “For I Am Called by Thy Name.”

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will now address us.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks

“Have you been saved?”

What do we say when someone asks us, “Have you been saved?” This question, so common in the conversation of some Christians, can be puzzling to members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints because it is not our usual way of speaking. We tend to speak of *saved* or *salvation* as a future event rather than something that has already been realized.

Good Christian people sometimes attach different meanings to some key gospel terms like *saved* or *salvation*. If we answer according to what our questioner probably means in asking if we have been “saved,” our answer must be “yes.” If we answer according to the various meanings we attach to the terms *saved* or *salvation*, our answer will be either “yes” or “yes, but with conditions.”