

death,”²¹ for surely that is how He stood by us when it *was* unto death and when He had to stand entirely and utterly alone. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Isaiah 63:3, 5; see also Doctrine and Covenants 76:107; 88:106; 133:50.
2. Matthew 26:65–66; see footnote 66*b*.
3. Luke 23:14.
4. Matthew 27:26.
5. See Bible Dictionary, “Barabbas,” 619.
6. Matthew 27:21.
7. Matthew 26:24.
8. Matthew 26:38.
9. See Luke 22:44; Mosiah 3:7; Doctrine and Covenants 19:18.
10. Matthew 26:40.
11. Matthew 26:45.
12. See Spencer W. Kimball, *Peter, My Brother*, Brigham Young University Speeches of the Year (July 13, 1971), 5.
13. See Mark 14:27–31.
14. Luke 22:61–62.
15. Matthew 26:56.
16. Matthew 27:46; italics added.
17. John 16:32; 8:29.
18. See John 19:30.

19. Luke 23:46.

20. John 14:18; see also verse 23.

21. Mosiah 18:9.

The choir sang “This Is My Beloved Son.”

President Monson

The choir just sang “This Is My Beloved Son.”

We express our thanks to the Tabernacle Choir for the beautiful music they have provided this morning and to those who have spoken to us in this session of the conference.

It will now be my pleasure to address you. Following my remarks, this session will conclude with the choir singing “We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet.” The benediction will then be offered by Elder Donald L. Hallstrom of the Presidency of the Seventy. The concluding session of the conference will begin at 2:00 this afternoon.

President Thomas S. Monson

My dear brothers and sisters, I express my love to you. I am humbled by the responsibility to address you, and yet I am grateful for the opportunity to do so.

Be of good cheer

Since last we met together in a general conference six months ago, there have been continuing signs that circumstances in the world aren’t necessarily as we would wish. The global economy, which six months ago appeared to be sagging, seems to have taken a nosedive, and for many weeks now the financial outlook has been somewhat grim. In addition, the moral footings of society continue to slip, while those who attempt to safeguard

those footings are often ridiculed and, at times, picketed and persecuted. Wars, natural disasters, and personal misfortunes continue to occur.

It would be easy to become discouraged and cynical about the future—or even fearful of what might come—if we allowed ourselves to dwell only on that which is wrong in the world and in our lives. Today, however, I’d like us to turn our thoughts and our attitudes away from the troubles around us and to focus instead on our blessings as members of the Church. The Apostle Paul declared, “God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.”¹

None of us makes it through this life without problems and challenges—and sometimes tragedies and misfortunes. After all, in large part we are here to learn and grow from such events in our lives. We know that there are times when we will suffer, when we will grieve, and when we will be saddened. However, we are told, “Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy.”²

How might we have joy in our lives, despite all that we may face? Again from the scriptures: “Wherefore, be of good cheer, and do not fear, for I the Lord am with you, and will stand by you.”³

The history of the Church in this, the dispensation of the fulness of times, is replete with the experiences of those who have struggled and yet who have remained steadfast and of good cheer as they have made the gospel of Jesus Christ the center of their lives. This attitude is what will pull us through whatever comes our way. It will not remove our troubles from us but rather will enable us to face our challenges, to meet them head on, and to emerge victorious.

Too numerous to mention are the examples of all the individuals who have faced difficult circumstances and yet who have persevered and prevailed because their faith in the gospel and in the Savior has given them the strength they have needed. This morning, however, I’d like to share with you three such examples.

Pioneer journey of Condie family

First, from my own family, I mention a touching experience that has always been an inspiration to me.

My maternal great-grandparents Gibson and Cecelia Sharp Condie lived in Clackmannan, Scotland. Their families were engaged in coal mining. They were at peace with the world, surrounded by relatives and friends, and were housed in fairly comfortable quarters in a land they loved. Then they listened to the message of the missionaries from The Church of

Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and, to the depths of their very souls, were converted. They heard the call to gather to Zion and knew they must answer that call.

Sometime around 1848, they sold their possessions and prepared for the hazardous voyage across the mighty Atlantic Ocean. With five small children, they boarded a sailing vessel, all their worldly possessions in one tiny trunk. They traveled 3,000 miles across the waters—eight long, weary weeks on a treacherous sea, watching and waiting, with poor food, poor water, and no help beyond the length and breadth of that small ship.

In the midst of this soul-trying situation, one of their young sons became ill. There were no doctors, no stores at which they might purchase medicine to ease his suffering. They watched, they prayed, they waited, and they wept as day by day his condition deteriorated. When his eyes were at last closed in death, their hearts were torn asunder. To add to their grief, the laws of the sea must be obeyed. Wrapped in a canvas weighed down with iron, the little body was consigned to a watery grave. As they sailed away, only those parents knew the crushing blow dealt to wounded hearts.⁴ However, with a faith born of their deep conviction of the truth and their love of the Lord, Gibson and Cecelia held on. They were comforted by the words of the Lord: “In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.”⁵

How grateful I am for ancestors who had the faith to leave hearth and home and to journey to Zion, who made sacrifices I can scarcely imagine. I thank my Heavenly Father for the example of faith, of courage, and of determination Gibson and Cecelia Sharp Condie provide for me and for all their posterity.

A blind man’s gratitude for gospel light

I introduce next a gentle, faith-filled man who epitomized the peace and joy

which the gospel of Jesus Christ can bring into one's life.

Late one evening on a Pacific isle, a small boat slipped silently to its berth at the crude pier. Two Polynesian women helped Meli Mulipola from the boat and guided him to the well-worn pathway leading to the village road. The women marveled at the bright stars, which twinkled in the midnight sky. The moonlight guided them along their way. However, Meli Mulipola could not appreciate these delights of nature—the moon, the stars, the sky—for he was blind.

Brother Mulipola's vision had been normal until a fateful day when, while working on a pineapple plantation, light turned suddenly to darkness and day became perpetual night. He was depressed and despondent until he learned the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ. His life was brought into compliance with the teachings of the Church, and he once again felt hope and joy.

Brother Mulipola and his loved ones had made a long voyage, having learned that one who held the priesthood of God was visiting among the islands of the Pacific. He sought a blessing, and it was my privilege, along with another who held the Melchizedek Priesthood, to provide that blessing to him. As we finished, I noted that tears were streaming from his sightless eyes, coursing down his brown cheeks, and tumbling finally upon his native dress. He dropped to his knees and prayed:

"O God, Thou knowest I am blind. Thy servants have blessed me that my sight might return. Whether in Thy wisdom I see light or whether I see darkness all the days of my life, I will be eternally grateful for the truth of Thy gospel, which I now see and which provides the light of my life."

He rose to his feet and, smiling, thanked us for providing the blessing. He then disappeared into the still of the night. Silently he came; silently he departed. But his

presence I shall never forget. I reflected upon the message of the Master: "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."⁶

My brothers and sisters, each of us has that light in his or her life. We are not left to walk alone, no matter how dark our pathway.

I love the words penned by M. Louise Haskins:

And I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year:

"Give me a light, that I may tread safely into the unknown!"

And he replied:

"Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the Hand of God.

That shall be to you better than [a] light and safer than a known way."⁷

A woman's postwar ordeal

The setting for my final example of one who persevered and ultimately prevailed, despite overwhelmingly difficult circumstances, begins in East Prussia following World War II.

In about March 1946, less than a year after the end of the war, Ezra Taft Benson, then a member of the Quorum of the Twelve, accompanied by Frederick W. Babel, was assigned a special postwar tour of Europe for the express purpose of meeting with the Saints, assessing their needs, and providing assistance to them. Elder Benson and Brother Babel later recounted, from a testimony they heard, the experience of a Church member who found herself in an area no longer controlled by the government under which she had resided.

She and her husband had lived an idyllic life in East Prussia. Then had come the second great world war within their lifetimes. Her beloved young husband was killed during the final days of the frightful battles in their homeland, leaving her alone to care for their four children.

The occupying forces determined that the Germans in East Prussia must go to Western Germany to seek a new home. The woman was German, and so it was necessary for her to go. The journey was over a thousand miles, and she had no way to accomplish it but on foot. She was allowed to take only such bare necessities as she could load into her small wooden-wheeled wagon. Besides her children and these meager possessions, she took with her a strong faith in God and in the gospel as revealed to the latter-day prophet Joseph Smith.

She and the children began the journey in late summer. Having neither food nor money among her few possessions, she was forced to gather a daily subsistence from the fields and forests along the way. She was constantly faced with dangers from panic-stricken refugees and plundering troops.

As the days turned into weeks and the weeks to months, the temperatures dropped below freezing. Each day, she stumbled over the frozen ground, her smallest child—a baby—in her arms. Her three other children struggled along behind her, with the oldest—seven years old—pulling the tiny wooden wagon containing their belongings. Ragged and torn burlap was wrapped around their feet, providing the only protection for them, since their shoes had long since disintegrated. Their thin, tattered jackets covered their thin, tattered clothing, providing their only protection against the cold.

Soon the snows came, and the days and nights became a nightmare. In the evenings she and the children would try to find some kind of shelter—a barn or a shed—and would huddle together for warmth, with a few thin blankets from the wagon on top of them.

She constantly struggled to force from her mind overwhelming fears that they would perish before reaching their destination.

And then one morning the unthinkable happened. As she awakened, she felt a chill in her heart. The tiny form of her three-year-old daughter was cold and still, and she realized that death had claimed the child. Though overwhelmed with grief, she knew that she must take the other children and travel on. First, however, she used the only implement she had—a tablespoon—to dig a grave in the frozen ground for her tiny, precious child.

Death, however, was to be her companion again and again on the journey. Her seven-year-old son died, either from starvation or from freezing or both. Again her only shovel was the tablespoon, and again she dug hour after hour to lay his mortal remains gently into the earth. Next, her five-year-old son died, and again she used her tablespoon as a shovel.

Her despair was all-consuming. She had only her tiny baby daughter left, and the poor thing was failing. Finally, as she was reaching the end of her journey, the baby died in her arms. The spoon was gone now, so hour after hour she dug a grave in the frozen earth with her bare fingers. Her grief became unbearable. How could she possibly be kneeling in the snow at the graveside of her last child? She had lost her husband and all her children. She had given up her earthly goods, her home, and even her homeland.

In this moment of overwhelming sorrow and complete bewilderment, she felt her heart would literally break. In despair she contemplated how she might end her own life, as so many of her fellow countrymen were doing. How easy it would be to jump off a nearby bridge, she thought, or to throw herself in front of an oncoming train.

And then, as these thoughts assailed her, something within her said, “Get down on your knees and pray.” She ignored the prompting until she could resist it no longer. She knelt and prayed more fervently than she had in her entire life:

“Dear Heavenly Father, I do not know how I can go on. I have nothing left—except my faith in Thee. I feel, Father, amidst the desolation of my soul, an overwhelming gratitude for the atoning sacrifice of Thy Son, Jesus Christ. I cannot express adequately my love for Him. I know that because He suffered and died, I shall live again with my family; that because He broke the chains of death, I shall see my children again and will have the joy of raising them. Though I do not at this moment wish to live, I will do so, that we may be reunited as a family and return—together—to Thee.”

When she finally reached her destination of Karlsruhe, Germany, she was emaciated. Brother Babbel said that her face was a purple-gray, her eyes red and swollen, her joints protruding. She was literally in the advanced stages of starvation. In a Church meeting shortly thereafter, she bore a glorious testimony, stating that of all the ailing people in her saddened land, she was one of the happiest because she knew that God lived, that Jesus is the Christ, and that He died and was resurrected so that we might live again. She testified that she knew if she continued faithful and true to the end, she would be reunited with those she had lost and would be saved in the celestial kingdom of God.⁸

“Their joy shall be full forever”

From the holy scriptures we read, “Behold, the righteous, the saints of the Holy One of Israel, they who have believed in [Him], they who have endured the crosses of the world, . . . they shall inherit the kingdom of God, . . . and their joy shall be full forever.”⁹

I testify to you that our promised blessings are beyond measure. Though the storm clouds may gather, though the rains may pour down upon us, our knowledge of the gospel and our love of our Heavenly Father and of our Savior will comfort and sustain us and bring joy to our hearts as we walk uprightly and keep the commandments. There will be nothing in this world that can defeat us.

My beloved brothers and sisters, fear not. Be of good cheer. The future is as bright as your faith.

I declare that God lives and that He hears and answers our prayers. His Son, Jesus Christ, is our Savior and our Redeemer. Heaven’s blessings await us. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. 2 Timothy 1:7.
2. 2 Nephi 2:25.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 68:6.
4. Adapted from Thomas A. Condie, “History of Gibson and Cecelia Sharp Condie” (1937); unpublished.
5. John 16:33.
6. John 8:12.
7. From “The Gate of the Year,” in James Dalton Morrison, ed., *Masterpieces of Religious Verse* (1948), 92.
8. From personal conversations and from Frederick W. Babbel, *On Wings of Faith* (1972), 40–42.
9. 2 Nephi 9:18.

The choir sang “We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet.”

Elder Donald L. Hallstrom offered the benediction.

SUNDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The fifth session of the 179th Annual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 2:00 p.m. on Sunday,

April 5, 2009. President Henry B. Eyring conducted this session.