

The Comforter

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I give my witness that the living Christ sends the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, to those we are pledged to help Him comfort.

My beloved sisters, it has been a joy for me to be with you. I've thought of my mother, my wife, my daughters, my daughters-in-law, my granddaughters—a number of whom are here. This wonderful program has made me appreciate them more. I recognize that having had such a family and such a wonderful family life comes from their having the Savior at the center of each of their lives. We have remembered Him tonight in music, in prayers, and through inspired sermons. One of the attributes of the Savior we most appreciate is His infinite compassion.

Tonight you have felt He knows you and loves you. You have felt His love for those seated around you. They are your sisters, spirit daughters of our Heavenly Father. He cares for them as He cares for you. He understands all their sorrows. He wants to succor them.

My message to you tonight is that you can and must be an important part of His giving comfort to those who need comfort. You can play your part best if you know more of how He answers those prayers for help.

Many are praying to Heavenly Father for relief, for help in carrying their burdens of grief, loneliness, and fear. Heavenly Father hears those prayers and understands their needs. He and His Beloved Son, the resurrected Jesus Christ, have promised help.

Jesus Christ gave this sweet promise:

“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

“Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

“For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”¹

The burdens His faithful servants must carry in life are made lighter by His Atonement. The burden of sin can be taken away, but the trials of mortal life for good people can still be heavy burdens.

You have seen such tests in the lives of good people you love. You have felt a desire to help them. There is a reason for your feeling of compassion for them.

You are a covenant member of the Church of Jesus Christ. A great change began in your heart when you came into the Church. You made a covenant, and you received a promise that began changing your very nature.

Alma described, in his words at the Waters of Mormon, what you promised at your baptism and what it will mean to

you and everyone around you—especially in your families. He was speaking to those who were about to make the covenants you have made, and they also received the promise that the Lord made to you:

“Behold, here are the waters of Mormon (for thus were they called) and now, as ye are desirous to come into the fold of God, and to be called his people, and are willing to bear one another’s burdens, that they may be light;

“Yea, and are willing to mourn with those that mourn; yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort, and to stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places that ye may be in, even until death, that ye may be redeemed of God, and be numbered with those of the first resurrection, that ye may have eternal life.”²

That is why you have a feeling to want to help a person struggling to move forward under a load of grief and difficulty. You promised that you would help the Lord make their burdens light and be comforted. You were given the power to help lighten those loads when you received the gift of the Holy Ghost.

When He was about to be crucified, the Savior described the way He helps lighten loads and gives strength to carry them. He knew that His disciples would grieve. He knew that they would fear for their future. He knew they would feel uncertain of their capacity to move forward.

So He gave them the promise that He makes to us and to all His true disciples:

“And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;

“Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.”³

Then He promised:

“But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

“Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”⁴

In just the past few weeks, I have seen that promise of sending the Holy Ghost fulfilled in the lives of children of God who were pleading in prayer that their burdens would be lightened. The miracle of the loads being lightened came in a way the Lord promised. He and Heavenly Father sent the Holy Ghost as the Comforter to His disciples to help.

Recently three generations of a family were grieving at the death of a five-year-old boy. He died accidentally while with his family on a vacation. I was granted the opportunity to watch once again how the Lord blesses the faithful with relief and the strength to endure.

I watched the way the Lord made their great burden lighter. I was with them as the Lord’s covenant servant—as you will be often in your life—“to mourn with those that mourn ... and comfort those that stand in need of comfort.”⁵

Because I knew that was true, I was pleased and at peace when the grandparents invited me to meet with them and the parents of the little boy before the funeral.

I prayed to know how I could help the Lord comfort them. They sat down with me in our living room. I had warmed the room on a cold night with a small fire in the fireplace.

I had felt to tell them that I loved them. I told them that I had felt the Lord's love for them. In just a few words I tried to tell them that I mourned for them but that only the Lord knew and could experience perfectly their pain and grief.

After saying those few words, I felt impressed to listen with love while they talked about their feelings.

In the hour we sat together, they spoke far more than I did. I could feel in their voices and see in their eyes that the Holy Ghost was touching them. In words of simple testimony, they spoke of what happened and how they felt. The Holy Ghost had already given them the peace that comes with the hope of eternal life, when their son, who died without sin, could be theirs forever.

When I gave them each a priesthood blessing, I gave thanks for the influence of the Holy Ghost that was there. The Comforter had come, bringing hope, courage, and increased strength for all of us.

That night, I saw demonstrated how the Lord works with us to lighten the loads of His people. You remember in the Book of Mormon when His people were nearly crushed by the burdens placed upon their backs by fierce taskmasters.

The people pleaded for relief, as many of those we love and serve do. Here is the record, which I know is true:

“And I will also ease the burdens which are put upon your shoulders, that even you cannot feel them upon your backs, even while you are in bondage; and this will I do that ye may stand as witnesses for me hereafter, and that ye may know of a surety that I, the Lord God, do visit my people in their afflictions.

“And now it came to pass that the burdens which were laid upon Alma and his brethren were made light; yea, the Lord did strengthen them that they could bear up their burdens with ease, and they did submit cheerfully and with patience to all the will of the Lord.”⁶

I have seen that miracle time and time again. We lighten the loads of others best by helping the Lord strengthen them. That is why the Lord included in our charge to comfort others the command to be His witnesses at all times and in all places.

The father and the mother of the little boy bore witness of the Savior that evening in my living room. The Holy Ghost came, and all were comforted. The parents were strengthened. The burden of grief did not disappear, but they were made able to bear the sorrow. Their faith increased. And their strength will continue to grow as they ask for it and live for it.

The Spirit's witness of the Atonement that came that night also strengthened Job to carry his load:

“For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth:

“And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.”⁷

It was that witness of the Spirit that gave him strength to endure. He would pass through mourning and the lack of comfort from people around him to see the joy that would come to the faithful after passing faithfully through their trials.

It was true for Job. Blessings came to him in this life. The story of Job ends with this miracle:

“So the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning. ...

“And in all the land were no women found so fair as the daughters of Job: and their father gave them inheritance among their brethren.

“After this lived Job an hundred and forty years, and saw his sons, and his sons’ sons, even four generations.

“So Job died, being old and full of days.”⁸

It was the witness of the Spirit of the coming Atonement which saw Job through the tests life is intended to include for all of us. That is part of the great plan of happiness the Father gave us. He allowed His Son to provide, by His atoning sacrifice, the hope that comforts us no matter how hard the way home to Him may be.

The Father and the Son send the Holy Ghost to comfort and strengthen disciples of the Master in their journey.

I saw this miracle of comfort as I arrived outside the chapel where the funeral of the little boy was to be held. I was stopped by a lovely young woman I did not recognize. She said that she was coming to the funeral to mourn and to give comfort if she could.

She said that she had come to the funeral in part for comfort for herself. She told me that her first child had died recently. She was carrying in her arms a beautiful little girl. I leaned toward her to look into the little girl’s smiling face. I asked the baby’s mother, “What is her name?” Her quick and cheerful answer was “Her name is Joy. Joy always comes after sorrow.”

She was bearing her witness to me. I could see that the peace and comfort had come to her from the only sure source. Only God knows hearts, and so only He can say, in truth, “I know how you feel.” So I can only imagine both her joy and the sorrow that preceded it, but the Lord, who loves her, knows.

I can know only partially how much He feels joy each time you, as His disciple, help Him bring a moment of peace and joy to a child of our Heavenly Father.

I bear my witness that the Lord has asked each of us, His disciples, to help bear one another’s burdens. We have promised to do it. I bear my testimony that the Lord, through His Atonement and Resurrection, has broken the power of death. I give my witness that the living Christ sends the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, to those we are pledged to help Him comfort.

You are all witnesses, as I am, of the truth of the inscription on the pin my mother wore for more than 20 years as a member of the Relief Society general board. It read, “Charity Never Faileth.”⁹ I still do not know the full meaning of those words. But I have caught a glimpse as I saw her reach out to those in need. The scripture tells us this truth: “Charity is the pure love of Christ.”¹⁰

His love never fails, and we never will cease to feel in our hearts the urge “to mourn with those that mourn ... and comfort those that stand in need of comfort.”¹¹ Nor will the peace He promises ever leave us as we serve others for Him.

As His witness, I extend gratitude for what you do so well to help the living Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, strengthen feeble knees and lift up hands that hang down.¹² I am grateful, with all my heart, for the women in my life who have helped me and blessed me as true disciples of Jesus Christ. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

1. Matthew 11:28–30.

2. Mosiah 18:8–9.

3. John 14:16–17.

4. John 14:26–27.

5. Mosiah 18:9.

6. Mosiah 24:14–15.

7. Job 19:25–26.

8. Job 42:12, 15–17.

9. 1 Corinthians 13:8.

10. Moroni 7:47.

11. Mosiah 18:9.

12. See Doctrine and Covenants 81:5.

