

Facing Our Spiritual Hurricanes by Believing in Christ

By Elder Sean Douglas
Of the Seventy

We face our spiritual hurricanes best by believing in Christ and keeping His commandments.

For the past six years, my sweetheart, Ann, and I have lived in Texas near the Gulf Coast, where some of the largest hurricanes have struck the United States, leaving behind tremendous destruction and even loss of life. Sadly enough, recent months have been no stranger to such devastating events. Our love and prayers extend to all who have been impacted in any way. In 2017 we personally experienced Hurricane Harvey, which dropped record rainfall of up to 60 inches (150 cm).

Natural laws govern the formation of hurricanes. The ocean temperature must be at least 80 degrees Fahrenheit (27 degrees C), extending to 165 feet (50 m) below the ocean's surface. As wind meets the warm ocean water, it causes the water to vaporize and rise into the atmosphere, where it liquifies. Clouds then form, and winds produce a spiral pattern over the ocean's surface.

Hurricanes are colossal in size, reaching 50,000 feet (15,240 m) or more into the atmosphere and spanning at least 125 miles (200 km) across. Interestingly, as hurricanes meet land, they begin to weaken because they are no longer above the warm waters required to fuel their strength.¹

You may never face a devastating physical hurricane. However, each of us has weathered and will weather spiritual hurricanes that threaten our peace and try our faith. In today's world, they seem to be increasing in frequency and intensity. Thankfully, the Lord has provided us a sure way to joyfully overcome them. By living the gospel of Jesus Christ, we are assured that "when dark clouds of trouble hang o'er us and threaten our peace to destroy, there is hope smiling brightly before us."²

President Russell M. Nelson explained:

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“When the focus of our lives is on ... Jesus Christ and His gospel, we can feel joy regardless of what is happening—or not happening—in our lives.”³

Just as natural laws govern physical hurricanes, divine laws govern how to feel joy during our spiritual hurricanes. The joy or misery we feel as we brave the storms of life is tied to the laws that God has set. President Nelson has shared, “They’re called commandments, but they are just as true as the law of lift, the law of gravity, [and] the law that governs the heartbeat.”

President Nelson continued, “It becomes a rather simple formula: If you want to be happy, keep the commandments.”⁴

Doubt is an enemy of faith and joy. Just as warm ocean water is the breeding ground for hurricanes, doubt is the breeding ground for spiritual hurricanes. Just as belief is a choice, so is doubt. When we choose to doubt, we choose to be acted upon, yielding power to the adversary, thereby leaving us weak and vulnerable.⁵

Satan seeks to lead us to the breeding ground of doubt. He seeks to harden our hearts so that we will not believe.⁶ The breeding ground of doubt can appear inviting because its seemingly peaceful, warm waters do not require us to “live by every word that proceedeth forth from the mouth of God.”⁷ In such waters Satan tempts us to relax our spiritual vigilance. That inattention can induce a lack of spiritual conviction, where we are “neither cold nor hot.”⁸ If we are not anchored on Christ, doubt and its allures will lead us away to apathy, where we shall find neither miracles, lasting happiness, nor “rest unto [our] souls.”⁹

Just as hurricanes weaken over land, doubt is replaced with faith as we build our foundation on Christ. We are then able to see spiritual hurricanes in their proper perspective, and our capacity to overcome them is enlarged. Then, “when the devil shall send forth his mighty winds, yea, his shafts in the whirlwind, ... it shall have no power ... to drag [us] down to the gulf of misery and endless wo, because of the rock upon which [we] are built, which is a sure foundation.”¹⁰

President Nelson has taught:

“Faith in Jesus Christ is the foundation of all belief and the conduit of divine power. ...

“The Lord does not require *perfect* faith for us to have access to His *perfect* power. But He does ask us to believe.”¹¹

Since April general conference, my family and I have been seeking to strengthen our faith in Jesus Christ and His Atonement to help us “turn [our] challenges into unparalleled growth and opportunity.”¹²

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Last May, Ruby faced an additional hurricane in her life with faith. She was also born with less than a fully developed hand that needed reconstructive surgery. Prior to this rather complex operation, we visited with her and gave her a drawing that beautifully depicts a child's hand warmly holding the hand of the Savior. When we asked her if she was nervous, she replied, "No, I am happy!"

Then we asked her, "Ruby, how is that so?"

Ruby confidently asserted, "Because I know that Jesus will hold my hand."

Ruby's recovery has been miraculous, and she continues to be happy. How the purity of a child's faith contrasts with the foolishness of doubt that can frequently tempt us as we get older!¹³ But we can all become as little children and choose to put aside our unbelief. It is a simple choice.

A caring father diligently pleaded with the Savior, saying, "If thou canst do any thing, ... help us."¹⁴

Jesus then said unto him:

"If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.

"And straightway the father ... cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief."¹⁵

This humble father wisely chose to trust his belief in Christ rather than his doubt. President Nelson shared, "Only *your* unbelief will keep God from blessing you with miracles to move the mountains in *your* life."¹⁶

How merciful is our God to place the bar for us at the level of believing and not at the level of knowing!

Alma teaches:

"Blessed is he that believeth in the word of God."¹⁷

"[For] God is merciful unto all who believe on his name; therefore he desireth, in the first place, that ye should believe."¹⁸

Yes, in the first place, God desires that we believe in Him.

We face our spiritual hurricanes best by believing in Christ and keeping His commandments. Our belief and obedience link us to power beyond our own to overcome "[whatever] is happening—or not happening—in our lives."¹⁹ Yes, God "doth immediately bless [us]" for believing and obeying.²⁰ In fact, over time our state of being changes to happiness, and "we are made alive in Christ" as we

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Notes

1. 1. See Lee Cook, “What Weather Conditions Create a Hurricane,” July 29, 2019, Sciencing, sciencing.com.
2. 2. “We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet,” *Hymns*, no. 19.
3. 3. Russell M. Nelson, “Joy and Spiritual Survival,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2016, 82.
4. 4. Russell M. Nelson, in “Eternal Laws: From Scrabble to the Commandments” (video), *Church News*, Aug. 31, 2019, thechurchnews.com; see also Mosiah 2:41; Doctrine and Covenants 130:20–21.
5. 5. See 2 Nephi 2:26–27.
6. 6. See Doctrine and Covenants 10:32–33.
7. 7. Doctrine and Covenants 84:44; see also Deuteronomy 8:3; Matthew 4:4; Doctrine and Covenants 98:11.
8. 8. Revelation 3:15–16.
9. 9. See 2 Nephi 28:21–26. In contrast, see Matthew 11:28–30 and note the “rest” Christ will give us as we come unto Him.
10. 10. Helaman 5:12.
11. 11. Russell M. Nelson, “Christ Is Risen; Faith in Him Will Move Mountains,” *Liahona*, May 2021, 102.
12. 12. Russell M. Nelson, “Christ Is Risen; Faith in Him Will Move Mountains,” 104.
13. 13. See 2 Nephi 9:28–29.
14. 14. Mark 9:22. Note the father pleaded for Christ to help “us”—parents and child together, seeking the Savior’s love and healing power.
15. 15. Mark 9:23–24.
16. 16. Russell M. Nelson, “Christ Is Risen; Faith in Him Will Move Mountains,” 103.
17. 17. Alma 32:16. The full verse reads, “Therefore, blessed are they who *humble* themselves without being *compelled* to be humble; or rather, in other words, blessed is he that believeth in the word of God, and is baptized

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18. 18. Alma 32:22.
19. 19. Russell M. Nelson, “Joy and Spiritual Survival,” 82.
20. 20. Mosiah 2:24; see also Mosiah 2:41; Ether 12:4.
21. 21. See 2 Nephi 25:24–25.
22. 22. Mormon 9:27; see also 1 Nephi 4:3.
23. 23. 2 Nephi 25:28.
24. 24. 1 Nephi 21:16.
25. 25. See Revelation 3:20. Note in verse 21 the promise made “to him that overcometh.”

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