

Swallowed Up in the Joy of Christ

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Of the Seventy

I testify that our Heavenly Father hears your tearful pleadings and will always respond in perfect wisdom.

We love you, Elder Kearon. May I borrow that accent for 10 minutes?

Yearned-for Miracles

In the New Testament we learn of blind Bartimaeus, who cried out to Jesus desiring a miracle. “Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole. And *immediately* he received his sight.”¹

On another occasion a man in Bethsaida longed for healing. In contrast, this miracle *did not come instantly*. Rather, Jesus blessed him *twice* before he “was restored.”²

In a third example, the Apostle Paul “*besought the Lord thrice*” in his affliction,³ and yet, to our knowledge, *his earnest supplication was not granted*.

Three different people. Three unique experiences.

Thus, a question: Why do some receive their yearned-for miracles quickly, while others patiently endure, waiting upon the Lord?⁴ We may not know the *why*, yet gratefully, we know He *who* “loveth [us]”⁵ and “[doeth] all things for [our] welfare and happiness.”⁶

Divine Purposes

God, who sees the end from the beginning,⁷ reassures, “Thine adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a small moment,”⁸ and they shall be consecrated “for thy gain.”⁹

Helping us find further meaning in our trials, Elder Orson F. Whitney taught: “No pain that we suffer, no trial that we experience is wasted. It ministers to our education. ... All ... that we [patiently] endure ... builds up our characters, purifies our hearts, expands our souls, and makes us more tender and charitable. ... It is through sorrow and suffering, toil and tribulation, that we gain the education that we come here to acquire and which will make us more like our [heavenly parents].”¹⁰

Understanding that “the power of Christ [would] rest upon [him]” in his afflictions, the Apostle Paul said humbly, “For when I am weak, then am I strong.”¹¹

Life’s trials prove us.¹² Even the Savior “learned ... obedience by” and was made “perfect through sufferings.”¹³

And one day He will compassionately declare, “Behold, I have refined *thee*, I have chosen *thee* in the furnace of affliction.”¹⁴

Coming to trust in God’s divine purposes breathes hope into weary souls and kindles determination in seasons of anguish and heartache.¹⁵

Divine Perspectives

Years ago, President Russell M. Nelson shared this valuable insight: “As we look at all things with eternal perspective, it will significantly lighten our load.”¹⁶

My wife, Jill, and I recently witnessed this truth in the faithful lives of Holly and Rick Porter, whose 12-year-old son, Trey, passed away in a tragic fire. With hands and feet severely burned in a heroic attempt to save her dear son, Holly later testified in ward sacrament meeting of the great peace and joy the Lord had poured out upon her family in their anguish, using words such as *miraculous*, *incredible*, and *amazing*.

This precious mother’s unbearable grief was replaced by surpassing peace with this thought: “My hands are not the hands that save. Those hands belong to the Savior! Instead of looking at my scars as a reminder of what I was not able to do, I remember the scars my Savior bears.”

Holly’s witness fulfills our prophet’s promise: “As you think celestial, you will view trials and opposition in a new light.”¹⁷

Elder D. Todd Christofferson stated: “I believe that the challenge of overcoming and growing from adversity appealed to us when God presented His plan of redemption in the premortal world. We should approach that challenge now knowing that our Heavenly Father will sustain us. *But it is crucial that we turn to Him.* Without God, the dark experiences of suffering and adversity tend to despondency, despair, and even bitterness.”¹⁸

Divine Principles

To avoid the darkness of discontent and instead find greater peace, hope, and even joy during life’s difficult challenges, I share three divine principles as invitations.

One—stronger faith comes by putting Jesus Christ first.¹⁹ “Look unto me in every thought,” He declares; “doubt not, fear not.”²⁰ President Nelson taught:

“[Our] eternal life is dependent upon [our] faith in [Christ] and in His Atonement.”²¹

“As I have wrestled with the intense pain caused by my recent injury, I have felt even deeper appreciation for Jesus Christ and the incomprehensible gift of His Atonement. Think of it! The

Savior suffered ‘pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind’ so that He can comfort us, heal us, [and] rescue us in times of need.”²²

He continued: “My injury has caused me to reflect again and again on ‘the greatness of the Holy One of Israel.’ During my healing, the Lord has manifested His divine power in peaceful and unmistakable ways.”²³

“In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer,” our Savior encourages; “I have overcome the world.”²⁴

Two—brighter hope comes by envisioning our eternal destiny.²⁵ In speaking of the power inherent in keeping “a vision of our Father’s incredible promised blessings ... before our eyes every day,” Sister Linda Reeves testified: “I do not know why we have the many trials that we have, but it is my personal feeling that the reward is so great, ... so joyful and beyond our understanding that in that day of reward, we may feel to say to our merciful, loving Father, ‘Was that all that was required?’ ... What will it matter ... what we suffered here if, in the end, those trials ... qualify us for eternal life ... in the kingdom of God?”²⁶

President Nelson shared this insight: “Consider the Lord’s response to Joseph Smith when he pleaded for relief in Liberty Jail. The Lord taught the Prophet that his inhumane treatment would give him experience and be for his good. ‘If thou endure it well,’ the Lord promised, ‘God shall exalt thee on high.’ The Lord was teaching Joseph to think celestial and to envision an eternal reward rather than focus on the excruciating difficulties of the day.”²⁷

Joseph’s change in perspective brought deepening sanctification, as reflected in this letter to a friend: “After having been inclosed in the walls of a prison for five months it seems to me that my heart will always be more tender after this than ever it was before. ... I think I never could have felt as I do now if I had not suffered the wrongs that I have suffered.”²⁸

Three—greater power comes by focusing on joy.²⁹ During eternity’s most crucial, agonizing hours, our Savior did not shrink but partook of the bitter cup.³⁰ How did He do it? We learn, “For the joy that was set before him [Christ] endured the cross,”³¹ His will “being swallowed up in the will of the Father.”³²

This phrase “swallowed up” deeply moves me. My interest was heightened when I learned that in Spanish, “swallowed up” is translated as “consumed”; in German, as “devoured”; and in Chinese, as “engulfed.” Thus, when life’s challenges are most painful and overwhelming, I remember the Lord’s promise—that we “should suffer no manner of afflictions, save it [be] swallowed up [consumed, devoured, and engulfed] in the joy of Christ.”³³

I see in so many of you this joy, which “[defies] ... mortal comprehension,”³⁴ even though your bitter cups have not yet been removed. Thank you for keeping your covenants and standing as witnesses for God.³⁵ Thank you for reaching out to bless us all, while “in [your] quiet heart is hidden sorrow that the eye can’t see.”³⁶ For when you bring the Savior’s relief to others, you will find it for yourselves, taught President Camille N. Johnson.³⁷

Divine Promises

Now, return with me to the sacrament meeting where we witnessed the miracle of Holly Porter's family being succored by the Lord.³⁸ On the stand while pondering what I might say to offer comfort to this remarkable family and their friends, this thought came: "Use the Savior's words."³⁹ So I close today as I did on that Sabbath, with His words, "which healeth the wounded soul."⁴⁰

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."⁴¹

"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; ... that ye may know of a surety that I, the Lord God, do visit my people in their afflictions."⁴²

"I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you."⁴³

My Witness

With joyful reverence, I witness our Savior lives and "His promises are sure."⁴⁴ Especially for you who are troubled or who are "afflicted in any manner,"⁴⁵ I testify that our Heavenly Father hears your tearful pleadings⁴⁶ and will always respond in perfect wisdom.⁴⁷ "May God grant unto you," as He has done for our family in times of great need, "that your burdens may be light,"⁴⁸ even "swallowed up in the joy of Christ."⁴⁹ In the holy name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. Mark 10:52; emphasis added.
2. Mark 8:25.
3. 2 Corinthians 12:8; emphasis added.
4. See Psalm 130:5.
5. 1 Nephi 11:17.
6. Helaman 12:2; see also 2 Nephi 26:24.
7. See Abraham 2:8.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 121:7.
9. 2 Nephi 2:2.
10. Orson F. Whitney, in *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Spencer W. Kimball* (2006), 16.
11. 2 Corinthians 12:9–10.
12. See Abraham 3:25–26.
13. Hebrews 5:8; 2:10.
14. 1 Nephi 20:10; emphasis added.

15. See 2 Nephi 4:19–35.
16. Personal conversation with Elder Russell M. Nelson, Apr. 2011.
17. Russell M. Nelson, “Think Celestial!,” *Liahona*, Nov. 2023, 118.
18. D. Todd Christofferson, “The Refining Fire of Affliction,” *Liahona*, Mar. 2022, 7; emphasis added.
19. See Russell M. Nelson, “Let God Prevail,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2020, 94.
20. Doctrine and Covenants 6:36.
21. Russell M. Nelson, “Think Celestial!,” 118.
22. Russell M. Nelson, “Think Celestial!,” 117. President Jeffrey R. Holland taught: “When you struggle, when you are rejected, when you are spit upon and cast out and made a hiss and a byword, you are standing with the best life this world has ever known, the only pure and perfect life ever lived. You have reason to stand tall and be grateful that the Living Son of the Living God knows all about your sorrows and afflictions” (“Missionary Work and the Atonement,” *Ensign*, Mar. 2001, 15).
23. Russell M. Nelson, “Think Celestial!,” 117; see also Alma 7:11–12.
24. John 16:33.
25. See 2 Nephi 31:20; Ether 12:4; Moroni 7:48.
26. Linda S. Reeves, “Worthy of Our Promised Blessings,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2015, 11.
27. Russell M. Nelson, “Think Celestial!,” 118.
28. Joseph Smith, letter to Presendia Huntington Buell, Mar. 15, 1839, josephsmithpapers.org.
29. See Russell M. Nelson, “Joy and Spiritual Survival,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2016, 81–84.
30. See Mark 14:35–41.
31. Hebrews 12:2.
32. Mosiah 15:7.
33. Alma 31:38; see also Psalm 30:5; John 15:10–11; 1 Thessalonians 1:6; Joseph Smith Translation, James 1:2 (in James 1:2, footnote *a*); 2 Nephi 2:25; 9:18; Alma 26:6–7, 11, 27, 37; 28:8; 33:23; 36:20–21; Doctrine and Covenants 109:76; Moses 5:10–11.

34. “Just as the Savior offers peace that ‘passeth all understanding’ [Philippians 4:7], He also offers an intensity, depth, and breadth of joy that defy human logic or mortal comprehension. For example, it doesn’t seem possible to feel joy when your child suffers with an incurable illness or when you lose your job or when your spouse betrays you. Yet that is precisely the joy the Savior offers. His joy is constant, assuring us that our ‘afflictions shall be but a small moment’ [Doctrine and Covenants 121:7] and be consecrated to our gain” (Russell M. Nelson, “Joy and Spiritual Survival,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2016, 82).
35. See Mosiah 24:14; Alma 33:23. Last year, Jill and I met Paula, a beautiful young Guatemalan woman who was struggling mightily with cancer. Her response to my question of how she was feeling left an unforgettable memory in our minds and hearts: “I am grateful,” this humble teenager quietly responded almost in a whisper, “that the Lord gave it to me and not to my sister.” Then, although she was not feeling well, she; her sister, Sariah; and their father went on two ministering visits to two elderly widows with great personal needs and challenges of their own.
36. “Lord, I Would Follow Thee,” *Hymns*, no. 220.
37. See Camille N. Johnson, “Jesus Christ Is Relief,” *Liahona*, May 2023, 81; see also Luke 23:34, 43; John 19:26–27. Elder Neal A. Maxwell shared this beautiful insight, urging that “when, for the moment, we ourselves are not being stretched on a particular cross, we ought to be at the foot of someone else’s—full of empathy and proffering spiritual refreshment” (“Endure It Well,” *Ensign*, May 1990, 34).
38. See Alma 7:12.
39. See Dallin H. Oaks, “The Teachings of Jesus Christ,” *Liahona*, May 2023, 102–5.
40. Jacob 2:8; see also Neil L. Andersen, “Wounded,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2018, 83–86.
41. Matthew 11:28; see also Matthew 28:20: “And, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.”
42. Mosiah 24:14.
43. John 14:18.
44. “I Am a Child of God,” *Children’s Songbook*, 3; see also Doctrine and Covenants 98:3.
45. 3 Nephi 17:7; see also Alma 36:3, 27.
46. See Exodus 2:24; 3:7; Mosiah 24:12.
47. See 2 Nephi 2:24; Mosiah 4:9; Isaiah 55:9. “Some blessings come soon, some come late, and some don’t come until heaven; but for those who embrace the gospel of Jesus Christ, *they come*” (Jeffrey R. Holland, “An High Priest of Good Things to Come,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1999, 38).
48. Alma 33:23.

49. Alma 31:38; see also Psalm 30:5; John 15:10–11; 1 Thessalonians 1:6; Joseph Smith Translation, James 1:2 (in James 1:2, footnote *a*); 2 Nephi 2:25; 9:18; Alma 26:6–7, 11, 27, 37; 28:8; 33:23; 36:20–21; Doctrine and Covenants 109:76; Moses 5:10–11.