

# *The Power of Deliverance*

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I am grateful for the honor and the opportunity to speak with you today. It is an honor because you are precious children of our Heavenly Father. In the life before this one you were His pupils. I am honored by this invitation from the First Presidency to teach. It is an opportunity because you have chosen to listen, among the many things you could be doing, and so you must have at least a hope that I will say something useful to you. I pray that will be true.

We are unique. No two of us are in exactly the same circumstances. We have not had identical experiences in the past, nor do we have a single vision of what happiness in the future would be for us. There will be people from every part of the United States and many countries of the world listening. Because of that variety, I have prayed to know what help God wants to offer to us all. An answer finally came.

Today I wish to bear witness of God's power of deliverance. At some point in our lives we will all need that power. Every person living is in the midst of a test. We have been granted by God the precious gift of life in a world created as a proving ground and a preparatory school. The tests we will face, their severity, their timing, and their duration will be unique for each of us. But two things will be the same for all of us. They are part of the design for mortal life.

First, the tests at times will stretch us enough for us to feel the need for help beyond our own. And, second, God in His kindness and wisdom has made the power of deliverance available to us.

Now you might well ask, "Since Heavenly Father loves us, why does His plan of happiness include trials that could overwhelm us?" It is because His purpose is to offer us eternal life. He wants to give us a happiness that is only possible as we live as families forever in glory with Him. And trials are necessary for us to be shaped and made fit to receive that happiness that comes as we qualify for the greatest of all the gifts of God.

Today I will talk about some of the trials we are given and the power of deliverance available to us as we pass through them. There are many different tests, but today I will speak of only three. You may be in one of these tests now. For each, the power of deliverance is available—not to escape the test but to endure it well.

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First: We can feel overcome with pain and sorrow at the death of a loved one.

Second: Each of us will struggle against fierce opposition—some of which comes from dealing with our physical needs and some from enemies.

Third: Each of us who live past the age of accountability will feel the need to escape from the effects of sin.

Each of these tests can provide the opportunity for us to see that we need the power of God to help us pass them well.

Some of you may feel the pressures of those tests now, but all of us will face them. It helps to know that they do not come from random chance or from a cruel God. And knowing what a wonderful reward lies ahead helps to endure the tests well. The Prophet Joseph Smith needed and got that assurance when he was feeling deserted and nearly overwhelmed by persecution and contention among those he led and loved:

*My son, peace be unto thy soul; thine adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a small moment;*

*And then, if thou endure it well, God shall exalt thee on high.<sup>1</sup>*

The Lord told Joseph that his trials would be for a small moment. That was true for him, and it will be for us as we compare the duration of any earthly trial with the endlessness of eternity. And the reward for passing the tests well is to become worthy of eternal life. That assurance will help us when enemies defame us or doctors deliver a grim prognosis.

That brings us to the first category of trials we will consider: the tragedy that death can bring. Life ends early for some and eventually for us all. Each of us will be tested by facing the death of someone we love. Just the other day I met a man I had not seen since his wife died. It was a chance meeting in a pleasant social holiday situation. He was smiling as he approached me. Remembering his wife's

death, I phrased the common greeting very carefully: "How are you doing?"

The smile vanished, his eyes became moist, and he said quietly, with great earnestness, "I'm doing fine. But it's very hard."

It is very hard, as most of you have learned and all of us will sometime know. The hardest part of that test is to know what to do with the sorrow, the loneliness, and the loss that can feel as if a part of us has been lost. Grief can persist like a chronic ache. And for some there may be feelings of anger or injustice.

The Savior's Atonement and Resurrection give Him the power to deliver us in such a trial. Through His experience He came to know all our griefs. He could have known them by the inspiration of the Spirit. But He chose instead to know by experiencing them for Himself. This is the account:

*And behold, he shall be born of Mary, at Jerusalem which is the land of our forefathers, she being a virgin, a precious and chosen vessel, who shall be overshadowed and conceive by the power of the Holy Ghost, and bring forth a son, yea, even the Son of God.*

*And he shall go forth, suffering pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind; and this that the word might be fulfilled which saith he will take upon him the pains and the sicknesses of his people.*

*And he will take upon him death, that he may loose the bands of death which bind his people; and he will take upon him their infirmities, that his bowels may be filled with mercy, according to the flesh, that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities.<sup>2</sup>*

Good people around you will try to understand your grief at the passing of a loved one. They may feel grief themselves. The Savior not only understands and feels grief but also feels *your* personal grief that only you feel. And He knows you perfectly. He knows your heart. So He can know which of the many things you can do that will be best for you as you invite

the Holy Ghost to comfort and bless you. He will know where it is best for you to start. Sometimes it will be to pray. It might be to go to comfort someone else. I know of a widow with a debilitating illness who was inspired to visit another widow. I wasn't there, but I am certain that the Lord inspired a faithful disciple to reach out to another and thus was able to succor them both.

There are many ways that the Savior can succor those who grieve, each fitted to them. But you can be sure that He can and that He will do it in the way that is best for those who grieve and for those around them. The constant when God delivers people from grief is people feeling childlike humility before God. A great example of the power of that faithful humility comes from the life of Job. You remember the account:

*Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped,*

*And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.*

*In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.<sup>3</sup>*

Humility is one constant in those who are delivered from grief. The other, which Job had, is abiding faith in the power of the Savior's Resurrection. We all will be resurrected. The loved one who dies will be resurrected as the Savior was. The reunion we will have with them will not be ethereal but with bodies that need never die nor age nor become infirm. When the Savior appeared to His apostles after the Resurrection, He not only reassured them in their grief but also all of us who might ever grieve. He reassured them and us this way:

*Peace be unto you. . . .*

*Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.<sup>4</sup>*

The Lord can inspire us to reach out for the power of deliverance from our grief in the way best suited to us. We can invite the Holy Ghost in humble prayer. We can choose to serve others for the Lord. We can testify of the Savior, of His gospel, and of His restoration of His Church. We can keep His commandments. All of those choices invite the Holy Ghost. It is the Holy Ghost who can comfort us in the way suited to our need. And by the inspiration of the Spirit we can have a testimony of the Resurrection and a clear view of the glorious reunion ahead. I have felt that comfort as I looked down at the gravestone of someone I knew—someone that I know I can at some future time hold in my arms. Knowing that, I was not only delivered from grief but was filled with happy anticipation.

Had that little person lived to maturity, she would have needed deliverance in another set of trials. She would have been tested to stay faithful to God through the physical and spiritual challenges that come to everyone. Even though the body is a magnificent creation, keeping it functioning is a challenge that tests us all. For too many in the world it is hard to find enough food and clean water to get through the next day. Everyone must struggle through illness and the effects of aging.

Beyond the challenges of the body that come from within, we face the opposition of enemies from without. There is anger and hatred in the world around us, and some of it will at times be directed at us. As the Prophet Joseph learned, the opposition grew as he became more valuable to the Lord's purposes.

The power of deliverance from these trials is in place. It works in the same way as the deliverance from the trial that comes in facing the death of a loved one. Just as that deliverance is not always to have spared the life of a loved

one, the deliverance from other trials may not be to remove them. It may not be to have perfect health or to have enemies vanish or ignore us. He may not give relief until we develop faith to make choices that will bring the power of the Atonement to work in our lives. He does not require that out of indifference but out of love for us. Here is His warning:

*For behold, the Lord hath said: I will not succor my people in the day of their transgression; but I will hedge up their ways that they prosper not; and their doings shall be as a stumbling block before them.*<sup>5</sup>

There is a guide for receiving the Lord's power of deliverance from opposition in life. It was given to Thomas B. Marsh, then the president of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He was in difficult trials, and the Lord knew he would face more. Here was the counsel to him that I take for myself and offer you: "Be thou humble; and the Lord thy God shall lead thee by the hand, and give thee answer to thy prayers."<sup>6</sup>

The Lord always wants to lead us to deliverance through our becoming more righteous. That requires repentance. And that takes humility. So the way to deliverance always requires humility in order for the Lord to be able to lead us by the hand where He wants to take us through our troubles and on to sanctification.

We might make the mistake of assuming that illness, persecution, and poverty will be humbling enough. They don't always produce by themselves the kind and degree of humility we will need to be rescued. Trials can produce resentment or discouragement. The humility you and I need to get the Lord to lead us by the hand comes from faith. It comes from faith that God really lives, that He loves us, and that what He wants—hard as it may be—will always be best for us.

The Savior showed us that humility. You have read of how He prayed in the garden while He was suffering a trial on our behalf beyond our ability to comprehend or to endure, or even for me to describe. You remember His prayer: "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done."<sup>7</sup>

He knew and trusted His Heavenly Father, the great Elohim. He knew that His Father was all-powerful and infinitely kind. The Beloved Son asked for the power of deliverance to help Him in humble words like those of a little child.

The Father did not deliver the Son by removing the trial. For our sakes He did not do that, and He allowed the Savior to finish the mission He came to perform. Yet we can forever take courage and comfort from knowing of the help that the Father did provide:

*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.*

*And when he rose up from prayer, and was come to his disciples, he found them sleeping for sorrow, And said unto them, Why sleep ye? rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.*<sup>8</sup>

The Savior prayed for deliverance. What He was given was not an escape from the trial but comfort enough to pass through it gloriously.

His command to His disciples, who were themselves being tested, is a guide for us. We can determine to follow it. We can determine to rise up and pray in great faith and humility. And we can follow the command added in the book of Mark: "Rise up, let us go."<sup>9</sup>

From this you have counsel for passing the physical and spiritual tests of life. You will need God's help after you have done all you can for yourself. So rise up and go, but get His

help as early as you can, not waiting for the crisis to ask for deliverance.

The way that President Hinckley designed the Perpetual Education Fund—about which you have heard—is an example. It was intended for those who would find it hard to follow the prophet’s admonition to get an education. They would face difficulty, almost overwhelming challenges. But the plan required that they stand up and do all they could for themselves while being faithful enough to God to qualify for His help when the difficulties might become overwhelming. They had to make and follow their own plan to get the education and to find the means to finance it. They were required to attend institute and be faithful in the Church.

I was able to see what happened. I saw miracles come to help those who went forward as if it all depended upon them but acted as if it would finally all depend on God’s power of deliverance.

In education and in life you will face stumbling blocks and opposition. You can and must go forward with confidence. If you start determined to qualify for God’s power of deliverance, not just in education but also in all the trials of mortality, you will succeed. You will be strengthened. You will be guided around and through barriers. Help and comfort will come. Your faith in Heavenly Father and the Savior will be increased. You will be strengthened to resist evil. And you will feel the gospel of Jesus Christ working in your life.

And that brings us to the third trial. All of us will at times struggle to feel free from the effects of sin. Only the Savior had the power to resist every temptation and never sin. So the most important and most difficult trial for us all is to become clean and to know that we are. All of us yearn at times for the confidence that we will see the Lord’s face, as we will, in the final judgment and see it with joy and pleasure.

The purpose of our long discussion today about trials and what it takes to get the powers

of deliverance was to give you and me hope for happiness in that day of judgment that will come for all of us. What it takes to qualify for the powers of deliverance in the trials of life also can qualify us for the assurance we need that we will have passed the ultimate test of mortality.

We have seen that deliverance always requires humility before God. It takes submission to His will. It takes prayer and the willingness to obey. It takes serving others out of love for them and for the Savior. And it always requires and invites the Holy Ghost.

As you are delivered in trials, the Holy Ghost comes to you. Many of you have felt the result of frequent contact with the Holy Ghost. It may have been in your missionary service, where you needed deliverance many times. The Holy Ghost came to comfort and to guide you. As that recurred again and again, you may have noticed a change in yourself. The temptations that once troubled you seemed to fade. People who once seemed difficult began to appear more lovable. You began to see almost unreasonable potential in very humble people. You came to care more about their happiness than about your own.

If that change in you came, it was more likely gradual than sudden. Yet it was what the scriptures call the “mighty change.”<sup>10</sup> And it is the evidence you and I need to have hope and assurance as we look forward to the great and final test [the final Judgment] that comes after this life. Your experience in enduring well in the trials of life by drawing on God’s power of deliverance can bring you the assurance you need to find peace in this life and confidence for the next.

I bear you my solemn witness that God the Father lives and loves us. I know that. His plan of happiness is perfect, and it *is* a plan of happiness. Jesus Christ was resurrected, as we will be. He suffered so that He could succor us in all of our trials. He paid the ransom for all of our sins and those of all of Heavenly Father’s

children so that we could be delivered from death and sin. I know that in the Church of Jesus Christ the Holy Ghost can come to comfort and to cleanse us as we follow the Master. You have felt that influence today as I have.

I testify that the keys of the priesthood were restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith. They are exercised today by President Gordon B. Hinckley. This is the true Church of Jesus Christ.

I leave you my witness and my love, and I bless you that you may receive sufficient comfort and succor in your times of need, through all the tests and trials of your life. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### Notes

1. D&C 121:7–8.
2. Alma 7:10–12.
3. Job 1:20–22.
4. Luke 24:36, 39.
5. Mosiah 7:29.
6. D&C 112:10.
7. Luke 22:42.
8. Luke 22:43–46.
9. Mark 14:42.
10. Mosiah 5:2, Alma 5:12–14.