

## Elder Jeffrey R. Holland

### The promise of “good things to come”

On those days when we have special need of heaven’s help, we would do well to remember one of the titles given to the Savior in the epistle to the Hebrews. Speaking of Jesus’ “more excellent ministry” and why He is “the mediator of a better covenant” filled with “better promises,” this author—presumably the Apostle Paul—tells us that through His mediation and Atonement, Christ became “an high priest of good things to come.”<sup>1</sup>

Every one of us has times when we need to know things will get better. The Book of Mormon speaks of this as “hope for a better world.”<sup>2</sup> For emotional health and spiritual stamina, everyone needs to be able to look forward to some respite, to something pleasant and renewing and hopeful, whether that blessing be near at hand or still some distance ahead. It is enough just to know we can get there, that however measured or far away, there is the promise of “good things to come.”

My declaration is that this is precisely what the gospel of Jesus Christ offers us, especially in times of need. There *is* help. There *is* happiness. There really *is* light at the end of the tunnel. It is the Light of the World, the Bright and Morning Star, the “light that is endless, that can never be darkened.”<sup>3</sup> It is the very Son of God Himself. In loving praise far beyond Romeo’s reach, we say, “What light through yonder window breaks?” It is the return of hope, and Jesus is the Sun.<sup>4</sup> To any who may be struggling to see that light and find that hope, I say: Hold on. Keep trying. God loves you. Things will improve. Christ comes to you in His “more excellent ministry” with a future of “better promises.” He is your “high priest of good things to come.”

### Cling to faith and hope

I think of newly called missionaries leaving family and friends to face, on occasion, some rejection and some discouragement and, at least in the beginning, a moment or two of homesickness and perhaps a little fear.

I think of young mothers and fathers who are faithfully having their families while still in school—or just newly out—trying to make ends meet even as they hope for a brighter financial future someday. At the same time, I think of other parents who would give any earthly possession they own to have a wayward child return.

I think of single parents who face all of this but face it alone, having confronted death or divorce, alienation or abandonment, or some other misfortune they had not foreseen in happier days and certainly had not wanted.

I think of those who want to be married and aren’t, those who desire to have children and cannot, those who have acquaintances but very few friends, those who are grieving over the death of a loved one or are themselves ill with disease. I think of those who suffer from sin—their own or someone else’s—who need to know there is a way back and that happiness can be restored. I think of the disconsolate and downtrodden who feel life has passed them by, or now wish that it would pass them by. To all of these and so many more, I say: Cling to your faith. Hold on to your hope. “Pray always, and be believing.”<sup>5</sup> Indeed, as Paul wrote of Abraham, he “against [all] hope believed in hope” and “staggered not . . . through unbelief.” He was “strong in faith” and was “fully persuaded that, what [God] had promised, he was able . . . to perform.”<sup>6</sup>

Even if you cannot always see that silver lining on your clouds, God can, for

He is the very source of the light you seek. He does love you, and He knows your fears. He hears your prayers. He is your Heavenly Father, and surely He matches with His own the tears His children shed.

### Christ understands, calms life's storms

In spite of this counsel, I know some of you do truly feel at sea, in the most frightening sense of that term. Out in troubled waters, you may even now be crying with the poet:

It darkens. I have lost the ford.  
There is a change on all things  
made.  
The rocks have evil faces, Lord,  
And I am [sore] afraid.<sup>7</sup>

No, it is not without a recognition of life's tempests but fully and directly because of them that I testify of God's love and the Savior's power to calm the storm. Always remember in that biblical story that He was out there on the water also, that He faced the worst of it right along with the newest and youngest and most fearful. Only one who has fought against those ominous waves is justified in telling us—as well as the sea—to “be still.”<sup>8</sup> Only one who has taken the full brunt of such adversity could ever be justified in telling us in such times to “be of good cheer.”<sup>9</sup> Such counsel is not a jaunty pep talk about the power of positive thinking, though positive thinking is much needed in the world. No, Christ knows better than all others that the trials of life can be very deep, and we are not shallow people if we struggle with them. But even as the Lord avoids sugary rhetoric, He rebukes faithlessness and He deplors pessimism. He expects us to believe!

### Christ's example of faith

No one's eyes were more penetrating than His, and much of what He saw

pierced His heart. Surely His ears heard every cry of distress, every sound of want and despair. To a degree far more than we will ever understand, He was “a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.”<sup>10</sup> Indeed, to the layman in the streets of Judea, Christ's career must have seemed a failure, a tragedy, a good man totally overwhelmed by the evils surrounding Him and the misdeeds of others. He was misunderstood or misrepresented, even hated from the beginning. No matter what He said or did, His statements were twisted, His actions suspected, His motives impugned. In the entire history of the world no one has ever loved so purely or served so selflessly—and been treated so diabolically for His effort. Yet nothing could break His faith in His Father's plan or His Father's promises. Even in those darkest hours at Gethsemane and Calvary, He pressed on, continuing to trust in the very God whom He momentarily feared had forsaken Him.

### Focus on promises of the future

Because Christ's eyes were unfailingly fixed on the future, He could endure all that was required of Him, suffer as no man can suffer except it be “unto death,”<sup>11</sup> as King Benjamin said, look upon the wreckage of individual lives and the promises of ancient Israel lying in ruins around Him, and still say then and now, “Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”<sup>12</sup> How could He do this? How could He believe it? *Because He knows that for the faithful, things will be made right soon enough. He is a King; He speaks for the crown; He knows what can be promised.* He knows that “the Lord . . . will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble. . . . For the needy shall not away[s] be forgotten: the expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever.”<sup>13</sup> He knows that “the Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.” He knows that

"the Lord redeemeth the soul of his servants: and none of them that trust in him shall be desolate."<sup>14</sup>

### A young family's journey

Forgive me for a personal conclusion, which does not represent the terrible burdens so many of you carry, but it *is* meant to be encouraging. Thirty years ago last month, a little family set out to cross the United States to attend graduate school—no money, an old car, every earthly possession they owned packed into less than half the space of the smallest U-Haul trailer available. Bidding their apprehensive parents farewell, they drove exactly 34 miles up the highway, at which point their beleaguered car erupted.

Pulling off the freeway onto a frontage road, the young father surveyed the steam, matched it with his own, then left his trusting wife and two innocent children—the youngest just three months old—to wait in the car while he walked the three miles or so to the southern Utah metropolis of Kanarrville, population then, I suppose, 65. Some water was secured at the edge of town, and a very kind citizen offered a drive back to the stranded family. The car was attended to and slowly—*very* slowly—driven back to St. George for inspection—U-Haul trailer and all.

After more than two hours of checking and rechecking, no immediate problem could be detected, so once again the journey was begun. In exactly the same amount of elapsed time at exactly the same location on that highway with exactly the same pyrotechnics from under the hood, the car exploded again. It could not have been 15 feet from the earlier collapse, probably not 5 feet from it! Obviously the most precise laws of automotive physics were at work.

Now feeling more foolish than angry, the chagrined young father once more left his trusting loved ones and started the long walk for help once again. This time

the man providing the water said, "Either you or that fellow who looks just like you ought to get a new radiator for that car." For the second time a kind neighbor offered a lift back to the same automobile and its anxious little occupants. He didn't know whether to laugh or to cry at the plight of this young family.

"How far have you come?" he said. "Thirty-four miles," I answered. "How much farther do you have to go?" "Twenty-six hundred miles," I said. "Well, *you* might make that trip, and *your wife* and those two little kiddies might make that trip, but *none of you* are going to make it in *that* car." He proved to be prophetic on all counts.

### Help and happiness lie ahead

Just two weeks ago this weekend, I drove by that exact spot where the freeway turnoff leads to a frontage road, just three miles or so west of Kanarrville, Utah. That same beautiful and loyal wife, my dearest friend and greatest supporter for all these years, was curled up asleep in the seat beside me. The two children in the story, and the little brother who later joined them, have long since grown up and served missions, married perfectly, and are now raising children of their own. The automobile we were driving this time was modest but very pleasant and very safe. In fact, except for me and my lovely Pat situated so peacefully at my side, nothing of that moment two weeks ago was even remotely like the distressing circumstances of three decades earlier.

Yet in my mind's eye, for just an instant, I thought perhaps I saw on that side road an old car with a devoted young wife and two little children making the best of a bad situation there. Just ahead of them I imagined that I saw a young fellow walking toward Kanarrville, with plenty of distance still ahead of him. His shoulders seemed to be slumping a little, the weight of a young father's fear evi-

dent in his pace. In the scriptural phrase, his hands did seem to “hang down.”<sup>15</sup> In that imaginary instant, I couldn’t help calling out to him: “Don’t give up, boy. Don’t you quit. You keep walking. You keep trying. There is help and happiness ahead—a lot of it—30 years of it now, and still counting. You keep your chin up. It will be all right in the end. Trust God and believe in good things to come.”

### Blessings will come

I testify that God lives, that He is our Eternal Father, that He loves each of us with a love divine. I testify that Jesus Christ is His Only Begotten Son in the flesh and, having triumphed in this world, is an heir of eternity, a joint-heir with God, and now stands on the right hand of His Father. I testify that this is Their true Church and that They sustain us in our hour of need—and always will, even if we cannot recognize that intervention. 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*. Of that I personally attest. I thank my Father in Heaven for His goodness past, present, and future, and I do so in the name of His Be-

loved Son and most generous high priest, even the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. Hebrews 8:6; 9:11.
2. Ether 12:4.
3. See John 8:12; Revelation 22:16; Mosiah 16:9.
4. See William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, act 2, scene 2, lines 2–3.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 90:24.
6. Romans 4:18, 20–21.
7. Joseph Hilaire Belloc, “The Prophet Lost in the Hills at Evening,” in Lord David Cecil, ed., *The Oxford Book of Christian Verse* (1940), 520.
8. Mark 4:39; see also Doctrine and Covenants 101:16.
9. John 16:33; Doctrine and Covenants 68:6.
10. Mosiah 14:3; Isaiah 53:3.
11. Mosiah 3:7.
12. John 14:27.
13. Psalm 9:9, 18; italics added.
14. Psalm 34:18, 22.
15. Doctrine and Covenants 81:5.

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The chorus sang “I Feel My Savior’s Love.”

Elder Robert K. Dellenbach offered the benediction.

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## GENERAL PRIESTHOOD SESSION

The general priesthood session, the third session of the 169th Semiannual General Conference, convened in the Tabernacle at 6:00 P.M. on Saturday, October 2, 1999. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

Music was provided by a combined men’s choir from the Tabernacle Choir and the BYU Men’s Choir. Barlow Bradford and Ronald Staheli directed the choir. John Longhurst was the organist.

President Hinckley opened the meeting with the following remarks.

### President Gordon B. Hinckley

We welcome you, brethren, to this general priesthood session of the 169th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.