

Elder Henry B. Eyring

In the strength of the Lord

When I was a young man, I served as counselor to a wise district president in the Church. He tried to teach me. One of the things I remember wondering about was this advice he gave: “When you meet someone, treat them as if they were in serious trouble, and you will be right more than half the time.”

I thought then that he was pessimistic. Now, more than 40 years later, I can see how well he understood the world and life. As time passes, the world grows more challenging, and our physical capacities slowly diminish with age. It is clear that we will need more than human strength. The Psalmist was right: “But the salvation of the righteous is of the Lord: he is their strength in the time of trouble.”¹

The restored gospel of Jesus Christ gives us help in knowing how to qualify for the strength of the Lord as we deal with adversity. It tells us why we face tests in life. And even more importantly, it tells us how to get protection and help from the Lord.

Why we face trials

We have trials to face because our Heavenly Father loves us. His purpose is to help us qualify for the blessing of living with Him and His Son, Jesus Christ, forever in glory and in families. To qualify for that gift, we had to receive a mortal body. With that mortality we understood that we would be tested by temptations and by difficulties.

The restored gospel not only teaches us why we must be tested, but it makes clear to us what the test is. The Prophet Joseph Smith gave us an explanation. By revelation he was able to record words spoken at the Creation of the world. They are about us, those of the spirit children

of our Heavenly Father who would come into mortality. Here are the words: “And we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them.”²

That explanation helps us understand why we face trials in life. They give us the opportunity to prove ourselves faithful to God. So many things beat upon us in a lifetime that simply enduring may seem almost beyond us. That’s what the words in the scripture “Ye must . . . endure to the end”³ seemed to mean to me when I first read them. It sounded grim, like sitting still and holding on to the arms of the chair while someone pulled out my tooth.

It can surely seem that way to a family depending on crops when there is no rain. They may wonder, “How long can we hold on?” It can seem that way to a youth who is faced with resisting the rising flood of filth and temptation. It can seem that way to a young man struggling to get the training he needs for a job to support a wife and family. It can seem that way to a person who can’t find a job or who has lost job after job as businesses close their doors. It can seem that way to a person faced with the erosion of health and physical strength which may come early or late in life for them or for those they love.

But the test a loving God has set before us is not to see if we can endure difficulty. It is to see if we can endure it well. We pass the test by showing that we remembered Him and the commandments He gave us. And to endure well is to keep those commandments whatever the opposition, whatever the temptation, and whatever the tumult around us. We have that clear understanding because the restored gospel makes the plan of happiness so plain.

That clarity lets us see what help we need. We need strength beyond ourselves

to keep the commandments in whatever circumstance life brings to us. For some it may be poverty, but for others it may be prosperity. It may be the ravages of age or the exuberance of youth. The combination of trials and their duration are as varied as are the children of our Heavenly Father. No two are alike. But what is being tested is the same at all times in our lives and for every person: will we do whatsoever the Lord our God will command us?

How to get help for trials

Knowing why we are tested and what the test tells us how to get help. We have to go to God. He gives us the commandments. And we will need more than our own strength to keep them.

Again, the restored gospel makes plain the simple things we need to do. And it gives us confidence that the help we need will come if we do those things early and persistently, long before the moment of crisis.

Prayer

The first, the middle, and the last thing to do is to pray. The Savior told us how. One of the clearest instructions is in 3 Nephi:

“Behold, verily, verily, I say unto you, ye must watch and pray always lest ye enter into temptation; for Satan desireth to have you, that he may sift you as wheat.

“Therefore ye must always pray unto the Father in my name;

“And whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, which is right, believing that ye shall receive, behold it shall be given unto you.

“Pray in your families unto the Father, always in my name, that your wives and your children may be blessed.”⁴

So, we must pray always.

Feast on the word

Another simple thing to do, which allows God to give us strength, is to feast on the word of God: read and ponder the standard works of the Church and the words of living prophets. There is a promise of help from God that comes with that daily practice. Faithful study of scriptures brings the Holy Ghost to us. The promise is given in the Book of Mormon, but it applies as well to all the words of God that He has given and will give us through His prophets.

“Behold, I would exhort you that when ye shall read these things, if it be wisdom in God that ye should read them, that ye would remember how merciful the Lord hath been unto the children of men, from the creation of Adam even down until the time that ye shall receive these things, and ponder it in your hearts.

“And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost.

“And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things.”⁵

We should claim the promise not only once nor only for the Book of Mormon. The promise is sure. The power of the Holy Ghost is real. It will come, again and again. And one overriding truth it will always testify to is that Jesus is the Christ.

That testimony will draw us to the Savior and to accepting the help He offers to all who are being tested in the crucible of mortality. More than once He has said that He would gather us to Him as a hen would gather her chickens under her wings. He says that we must choose to come to Him in meekness and with

enough faith in Him to repent “with full purpose of heart.”⁶

One way to do that is to gather with the Saints in His Church. Go to your meetings, even when it seems hard. If you are determined, He will help you find the strength to do it.

Strength from early-morning seminary

A member wrote to me from England. When her bishop asked if she would accept a call to teach early-morning seminary, he told her she’d better pray about it before she accepted. She did. She accepted. When she met the parents for the first time, the bishop stood beside her. She announced that she felt the program should go to five days a week. Some parents looked doubtful. One person said, “They won’t come. They’ll vote with their feet.”

Well, the doubt was half right. The students did vote with their feet. But their attendance in those cold and dark morning hours is now above 90 percent. That teacher and her bishop believed that if the students would start to come, they would be strengthened by power more than their own. It came. That power will protect them when they go to places where they will be the only Latter-day Saints. They will not be alone or without strength, because they accepted the invitation to gather with the Saints when it was not easy.

Help for a widow

That strength is given to those who are older as well as the young. I know a widow more than 90 years of age. She is in a wheelchair. She prays as you do, pleading for help to solve problems beyond her human power to resolve. The answer is a feeling in her heart. It draws her to keep a commandment: “And behold, ye shall meet together oft.”⁷ So she finds a way to

get to her meetings. People who attend there have told me, “We are so glad to see her. She brings such a spirit with her.”

She partakes of the sacrament, and she renews a covenant. She remembers the Savior, and she tries to keep His commandments. And so she takes His Spirit with her, always. Her problems may not be resolved. Most of them come from the choices of others, and even the Heavenly Father who hears her prayers and loves her cannot force others to choose the right. But He can send her to the safety of the Savior and the promise of His Spirit to be with her. And so I am sure that she will, in the strength of the Lord, pass the test she faces, because she keeps the commandment to gather often with the Saints. That is both the evidence that she is enduring well and the source of her strength for what lies ahead.

Responding to a call to serve

There is another simple thing to do. The Lord’s Church has been restored, and so any call to serve in it is a call to serve Him. That bishop in England was so wise. He asked the woman to pray about her call to serve. He knew what answer she would receive. It would be an invitation from the Father and His Beloved Son. He knew what she has learned by responding to the call from the Master. In His service the Holy Ghost comes as a companion to those who try to do the best they can. She must have felt that as she stood before the parents and when she saw the students vote with their feet. What looked hard, almost impossible under her own power, became a joy in the strength of the Lord.

When she reads and ponders over the scriptures and prays to prepare for those classes, she knows that the Savior has asked the Father to send her the Holy Ghost, just as He promised His disciples He would at the Last Supper, when He

knew what trials they would face and that He must leave them. He did not leave them comfortless. He promised them the Holy Ghost, and He promises it to us in His service. So whenever the invitation to serve comes, take it. It brings with it help to pass tests far beyond those of that call.

Now, not all have formal calls. But every disciple serves the Master by bearing testimony and being kind to people around them. All have promised in the waters of baptism to do that. And all will gain the companionship of the Spirit as they persist in keeping their commitments with God.

Blessings from service

In the Master's service, you will come to know and love Him. You will, if you persevere in prayer and faithful service, begin to sense that the Holy Ghost has become a companion. Many of us have for a period given such service and felt that companionship. If you think back on that time, you will remember that there were changes in you. The temptation to do evil seemed to lessen. The desire to do good increased. Those who knew you best and loved you may have said, "You have become more kind, more patient. You don't seem to be the same person."

You weren't the same person because the Atonement of Jesus Christ is real. And the promise is real that we can become new, changed, and better. And we can become stronger for the tests of life. We then go in the strength of the Lord, a strength developed in His service. He goes with us. And in time we become His tested and strengthened disciples.

You will then notice a change in your prayers. They will become more fervent and more frequent. The words you speak will have a different meaning to you. By commandment we always pray to the Father in the name of Jesus Christ. But you will feel a greater confidence as you pray to the Father, knowing that you go to Him

as a trusted and proven disciple of Jesus Christ. The Father will grant you greater peace and strength in this life and with it a happy anticipation of hearing the words, when the test of life is over, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."⁸

I know that God the Father lives. I testify that He hears and answers our every prayer. I know that His Son, Jesus Christ, paid the price of all of our sins and that He wants us to come to Him. I know that the Father and the Son want us to pass the tests of life. I testify that They have prepared the way for us. Through the Restoration of the gospel in the last days, the way is made clear for us. We can know the commandments. We have the right to claim the promise of the companionship of the Holy Ghost in the true Church of Jesus Christ. And we can endure well. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Psalm 37:39.
2. Abraham 3:25.
3. 2 Nephi 31:20.
4. 3 Nephi 18:18–21.
5. Moroni 10:3–5.
6. 3 Nephi 10:6.
7. 3 Nephi 18:22.
8. Matthew 25:21.

The choir sang "We Are Sowing."

President Faust

We are grateful to the Tabernacle Choir for the beautiful music they have provided this morning. President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, will be our concluding speaker at this session.

Following President Monson's remarks, the choir will sing "Come, Come, Ye Saints." The benediction will then be offered by Elder Wayne S. Peterson of the Seventy, and the conference will be adjourned until 2:00 this afternoon.