

## Elder Robert C. Oaks

### Patience and charity

How thankful I am for latter-day scriptures regarding core Christian virtues.

The Book of Mormon provides insight into the relationship between patience and charity. Mormon, after pointing out that if a man “have not charity he is nothing; wherefore he must needs have charity,” goes on to name the 13 elements of charity, or the pure love of Christ. I find it most interesting that 4 of the 13 elements of this must-have virtue relate to patience (see Moroni 7:44–45).

First, “charity suffereth long.” That is what patience is all about. Charity “is not easily provoked” is another aspect of this quality, as is charity “beareth all things.” And finally, charity “endureth all things” is certainly an expression of patience (Moroni 7:45). From these defining elements it is evident that without patience gracing our soul, we would be seriously lacking with respect to a Christlike character.

### Scriptural examples of patience

In the Bible, Job offers the classic portrait of patience. In the face of losing his vast empire, including his children, Job was able, because of his unflinching faith, to proclaim, “The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.” Through all of his tribulation and pain, “Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly” (Job 1:21–22).

How often do we hear oppressed souls ask foolishly, “How could God do this to me?” when really they should be praying for strength to bear and endure all things?

The greatest scriptural examples of patience are found in the life of Jesus Christ. His long-suffering and endurance are best demonstrated on that excruciating night in Gethsemane as He uttered, in

His atoning agony, “O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt” (Matthew 26:39). He truly suffered and bore and endured all things.

While nailed to the cross on Calvary, Christ continued in His perfect example of patience as He uttered the singular words, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34).

These examples of patience have greater meaning for us when we consider the admonition found in 3 Nephi: “Therefore, what manner of men ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as I am” (3 Nephi 27:27).

### Importance of patience

Several scriptures highlight the importance of patience. Let me mention a few:

“Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath” (James 1:19).

“Nevertheless the Lord seeth fit to chasten his people; yea, he trieth their patience and their faith” (Mosiah 23:21).

In Mosiah, King Benjamin instructs us that we will be a natural-man enemy of God until we yield to the enticings of the Holy Ghost through our patience, plus other virtues (see Mosiah 3:19).

Joseph Smith stated, “Patience is heavenly” (*History of the Church*, 6:427).

Is patience important and worthy of our pondering and pursuit? It certainly is if we would avoid the demeaning classification of “nothing” used to label those without charity. It is if we desire to be less a natural-man enemy of God. It is if we would be heavenly. It is if we would seek to become after the manner of Christ.

The impatient, natural man is all about us. We see it manifest in news reports of parents, in a fit of rage, abusing a child, even unto death. On our highways, incidents of mobile impatience, or road

rage, result in violent accidents and sometimes fatalities.

On a less dramatic but much more common level are flared tempers and harsh words uttered in response to slow-moving customer lines, never-ending telephone solicitation calls, or children reluctant to respond to our instructions. Do any of these sound familiar?

### **A father's patience with his son**

Fortunately, there are seldom-reported but marvelous-to-consider stories of great patience. Recently I attended the funeral of a lifelong friend. His son told a beautiful story of parental patience. When the son was in his youth, his dad owned a motorcycle dealership. One day they received a shipment of shiny new motorcycles, and they lined them all up in the store. The boy did what every boy would like to do, and he climbed up on the closest one. He even started it up. Then, when he figured he had pushed his luck far enough, he jumped off. To his dismay, his dismount knocked the first bike down. Then, like a string of dominoes, they all went down, one after another. His dad heard the commotion and looked out from behind the partition where he was working. Slowly, smiling, he said, "Well, Son, we had better fix one up and sell it, so we can pay for the rest of them."

I think my friend's response personifies parental patience.

### **Patience as a gateway virtue**

Patience may well be thought of as a gateway virtue, contributing to the growth and strength of its fellow virtues of forgiveness, tolerance, and faith. When Peter asked Christ how many times he should forgive his brother, Christ replied, "Seventy times seven," rather than the mere seven times that Peter had offered (see Matthew 18:21–22). To forgive seventy times seven certainly takes a large measure of patience.

Elder Neal A. Maxwell linked patience and faith together when he taught: "Patience is tied very closely to faith in our Heavenly Father. Actually, when we are unduly impatient, we are suggesting that we know what is best—better than does God. Or, at least, we are asserting that our timetable is better than his" ("Patience," *Ensign*, Oct. 1980, 28).

We can grow in faith only if we are willing to wait patiently for God's purposes and patterns to unfold in our lives, on His timetable.

### **Developing the virtue of patience**

Since impatience is so natural, how do we develop the divine virtue of patience? How do we move our behavior from that of the natural man to that of our patient, perfect example, Jesus Christ?

First, we must understand that to do so is necessary, if we desire to fully enjoy the blessings of the restored gospel. Such an understanding might motivate us to:

1. Read each of the scriptures in the Topical Guide listed under the topic "patience" and then ponder Christ's patient examples.

2. Evaluate ourselves to determine where we stand on the patience continuum. How much more patience do we need to become more Christlike? This self-assessment is difficult. We might ask our spouse or another family member to help us.

3. Become sensitive to the examples of patience and of impatience that occur around us every day. We should strive to emulate those individuals we consider to be patient.

4. Recommit each day to become more patient, and be certain to keep our selected family member involved in our patience project.

This sounds like a great deal of work, but to achieve any worthwhile goal requires hard work. And overcoming the natural man and working to become more

Christlike in our patience is a most appropriate objective. I pray that we will pursue this path with diligence and dedication.

I testify that Jesus is the Christ and that He stands at the head of this Church,

guiding us through a living prophet and blessing our every effort to become more Christlike. And I so testify in the holy name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder M. Russell Ballard

### “O be wise”

Brothers and sisters, while I was studying the Book of Mormon recently, one of the teachings of the prophet Jacob caught my attention. As you remember, Jacob was one of Father Lehi’s two sons born in the wilderness after the family left Jerusalem. He was an eyewitness to miracles, and he also watched as his family was torn apart by disobedience and rebellion. Jacob knew and loved Laman and Lemuel as he knew and loved Nephi, and the dissension between them was intimate and personal. As far as Jacob was concerned, it wasn’t about ideology, philosophy, or even theology. It was about family.

The tender anguish of Jacob’s soul is evident as he expresses grave concern that his people will “reject the words of the prophets” concerning Christ and “deny . . . the power of God, and the gift of the Holy Ghost, . . . and make a mock of the great plan of redemption” (Jacob 6:8).

And then, just before he bids farewell, he speaks eight simple words that are the basic text of my message this morning. Jacob’s plea was “O be wise; what can I say more?” (Jacob 6:12).

Those of you who are parents and grandparents have a sense of what Jacob must have been feeling at the time. He loved his people, partly because they were also his family. He had taught them as clearly as he could and with all the energy of his soul. He warned them in no uncertain terms what would happen if they chose not to “enter in at the strait gate, and continue in the way which is narrow”

(Jacob 6:11). He couldn’t think of anything else to say to warn, to urge, to inspire, to motivate. And so he simply and profoundly said, “O be wise; what can I say more?”

### The need for wisdom in Church service

I have met with members of the Church in many nations of the world. I’m impressed with the spirit and energy of so many of our members. Hearts are being touched and lives are being blessed. The work is moving forward in dynamic ways, and for that I am profoundly grateful. But I see many ways that Church members must be so very wise in all that we do.

The Lord in His infinite wisdom has designed His Church to operate with a lay ministry. That means we have been charged to watch over one another and to serve one another. We are to love one another as our Father in Heaven and the Lord Jesus Christ love us. Our callings and circumstances change from time to time, providing us with different and unique opportunities to serve and to grow. Most of the leaders and teachers in the Church are anxiously engaged in fulfilling their responsibilities. Some are less effective than others—it is true; but almost always there is sincere effort to provide meaningful gospel service.

Occasionally we find some who become so energetic in their Church service that their lives become unbalanced. They start believing that the programs they administer are more important than the people they serve. They complicate their