

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf

The infinite power of hope

My dear brothers and sisters and friends, what a glorious day for us to witness the announcement of five new temples by our beloved prophet. What a beautiful day for all of us.

Toward the end of World War II, my father was drafted into the German army and sent to the western front, leaving my mother alone to care for our family. Though I was only three years old, I can still remember this time of fear and hunger. We lived in Czechoslovakia, and with every passing day the war came nearer and the danger grew greater.

Finally, during the cold winter of 1944, my mother decided to flee to Germany, where her parents were living. She bundled us up and somehow managed to get us on one of the last refugee trains heading west. Traveling during that time was dangerous. Everywhere we went, the sound of explosions, the stressed faces, and ever-present hunger reminded us that we were in a war zone.

Along the way the train stopped occasionally to get supplies. One night during one of these stops, my mother hurried out of the train to search for some food for her four children. When she returned, to her great horror, the train and her children were gone!

She was weighed down with worry; desperate prayers filled her heart. She frantically searched the large and dark train station, urgently crisscrossing the numerous tracks while hoping against hope that the train had not already departed.

Perhaps I will never know all that went through my mother's heart and mind on that black night as she searched through a grim railroad station for her lost children. That she was terrified, I have no doubt. I am certain it crossed her mind that if she did not find this train, she might never see her children again. I know with

certainty: her faith overcame her fear, and her hope overcame her despair. She was not a woman who would sit and bemoan tragedy. She moved. She put her faith and hope into action.

And so she ran from track to track and from train to train until she finally found our train. It had been moved to a remote area of the station. There, at last, she found her children again.

I have often thought about that night and what my mother must have endured. If I could go back in time and sit by her side, I would ask her how she managed to go on in the face of her fears. I would ask about faith and hope and how she overcame despair.

While that is impossible, perhaps today I could sit by your side and by the side of any who might feel discouraged, worried, or lonely. Today I would like to speak with you about the infinite power of hope.

The importance of hope

Hope is one leg of a three-legged stool, together with faith and charity. These three stabilize our lives regardless of the rough or uneven surfaces we might encounter at the time. The scriptures are clear and certain about the importance of hope. The Apostle Paul taught that the scriptures were written to the end that we "might have hope."¹

Hope has the power to fill our lives with happiness.² Its absence—when this desire of our heart is delayed—can make "the heart sick."³

Hope is a gift of the Spirit.⁴ It is a hope that through the Atonement of Jesus Christ and the power of His Resurrection, we shall be raised unto life eternal and this because of our faith in the Savior.⁵ This kind of hope is both a principle of promise as well as a commandment,⁶ and, as with all commandments, we have the responsibility to make it an active part of

our lives and overcome the temptation to lose hope. Hope in our Heavenly Father's merciful plan of happiness leads to peace,⁷ mercy,⁸ rejoicing,⁹ and gladness.¹⁰ The hope of salvation is like a protective helmet;¹¹ it is the foundation of our faith¹² and an anchor to our souls.¹³

Moroni in his solitude—even after having witnessed the complete destruction of his people—believed in hope. In the twilight of the Nephite nation, Moroni wrote that without hope we cannot receive an inheritance in the kingdom of God.¹⁴

Why, then, is there despair?

The scriptures say that there must be “an opposition in all things.”¹⁵ So it is with faith, hope, and charity. Doubt, despair, and failure to care for our fellowmen lead us into temptation, which can cause us to forfeit choice and precious blessings.

The adversary uses despair to bind hearts and minds in suffocating darkness. Despair drains from us all that is vibrant and joyful and leaves behind the empty remnants of what life was meant to be. Despair kills ambition, advances sickness, pollutes the soul, and deadens the heart. Despair can seem like a staircase that leads only and forever downward.

Hope, on the other hand, is like the beam of sunlight rising up and above the horizon of our present circumstances. It pierces the darkness with a brilliant dawn. It encourages and inspires us to place our trust in the loving care of an eternal Heavenly Father, who has prepared a way for those who seek for eternal truth in a world of relativism, confusion, and of fear.

What, then, is hope?

The complexities of language offer several variations and intensities of the word *hope*. For example, a toddler may hope for a toy phone; an adolescent may hope for a phone call from a special friend; and an adult may simply hope that the phone will stop ringing altogether.

I wish to speak today of the hope that transcends the trivial and centers on the Hope of Israel,¹⁶ the great hope of mankind, even our Redeemer, Jesus Christ.

Hope is not knowledge,¹⁷ but rather the abiding trust that the Lord will fulfill His promise to us. It is confidence that if we live according to God's laws and the words of His prophets now, we will receive desired blessings in the future.¹⁸ It is believing and expecting that our prayers will be answered. It is manifest in confidence, optimism, enthusiasm, and patient perseverance.

In the language of the gospel, this hope is sure, unwavering, and active. The prophets of old speak of a “firm hope”¹⁹ and a “lively hope.”²⁰ It is a hope glorifying God through good works. With hope come joy and happiness.²¹ With hope, we can “have patience, and bear [our] afflictions.”²²

Things we hope for, things we hope in

The things we hope *for* are often future events. If only we could look beyond the horizon of mortality into what awaits us beyond this life. Is it possible to imagine a more glorious future than the one prepared for us by our Heavenly Father? Because of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, we need not fear, for we will live forever, never to taste of death again.²³ Because of His infinite Atonement, we can be cleansed of sin and stand pure and holy before the judgment bar.²⁴ The Savior is the Author of our Salvation.²⁵

And what kind of existence can we hope for? Those who come unto Christ, repent of their sins, and live in faith will reside forever in peace. Think of the worth of this eternal gift. Surrounded by those we love, we will know the meaning of ultimate joy as we progress in knowledge and in happiness. No matter how bleak the chapter of our lives may look today, because of the life and sacrifice of Jesus Christ, we may hope and be assured that

the ending of the book of our lives will exceed our grandest expectations. “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.”²⁶

The things we hope *in* sustain us during our daily walk. They uphold us through trials, temptations, and sorrow. Everyone has experienced discouragement and difficulty. Indeed, there are times when the darkness may seem unbearable. It is in these times that the divine principles of the restored gospel we hope *in* can uphold us and carry us until, once again, we walk in the light.

We hope in Jesus the Christ, in the goodness of God, in the manifestations of the Holy Spirit, in the knowledge that prayers are heard and answered. Because God has been faithful and kept His promises in the past, we can hope with confidence that God will keep His promises to us in the present and in the future. In times of distress, we can hold tightly to the hope that things will “work together for [our] good”²⁷ as we follow the counsel of God’s prophets. This type of hope in God, His goodness, and His power refreshes us with courage during difficult challenges and gives strength to those who feel threatened by enclosing walls of fear, doubt, and despair.

Hope leads to good works

We learn to cultivate hope the same way we learn to walk, one step at a time. As we study the scriptures, speak with our Heavenly Father daily, and commit to keep the commandments of God, like the Word of Wisdom and paying a full tithing, we attain hope.²⁸ We grow in our ability to “abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost,”²⁹ as we more perfectly live the gospel.

There may be times when we must make a courageous decision to hope even when everything around us contradicts this hope. Like Father Abraham, we will

“against hope [believe] in hope.”³⁰ Or, as one writer expressed, “in the depth of winter, [we find] within [us] an invincible summer.”³¹

Faith, hope, and charity complement each other, and as one increases, the others grow as well. Hope comes of faith,³² for without faith, there *is* no hope.³³ In like manner faith comes of hope, for faith is “the substance of things hoped for.”³⁴

Hope is critical to both faith and charity. When disobedience, disappointment, and procrastination erode faith, hope is there to uphold our faith. When frustration and impatience challenge charity, hope braces our resolve and urges us to care for our fellowmen even without expectation of reward. The brighter our hope, the greater our faith. The stronger our hope, the purer our charity.

The things we hope *for* lead us to faith, while the things we hope *in* lead us to charity. The three qualities—faith, hope, and charity³⁵—working together, grounded on the truth and light of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ, lead us to abound in good works.³⁶

Hope from personal experience

Each time a hope is fulfilled, it creates confidence and leads to greater hope. I can think of many instances in my life where I learned firsthand the power of hope. I well remember the days in my childhood encompassed by the horrors and despair of a world war, the lack of educational opportunities, life-threatening health issues during youth, and the challenging and discouraging economic experiences as a refugee. The example of our mother, even in the worst of times, to move forward and put faith and hope into action, not just worrying or wishful thinking, sustained our family and me and gave confidence that present circumstances would give way to future blessings.

I know from these experiences that it is the gospel of Jesus Christ and our membership in The Church of Jesus Christ of

Latter-day Saints that strengthen faith, offer a bright hope, and lead us to charity.

Hope sustains us through despair.

Hope teaches that there is reason to rejoice even when all seems dark around us.

With Jeremiah I proclaim, “Blessed is the man . . . whose hope the Lord is.”³⁷

With Joel I testify, “The Lord [is] the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel.”³⁸

With Nephi I declare: “Press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men. Wherefore, if ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life.”³⁹

This is the quality of hope we must cherish and develop. Such a mature hope comes in and through our Savior Jesus Christ, for “every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as [the Savior] is pure.”⁴⁰

Never surrender to despair

The Lord has given us a reassuring message of hope: “Fear not, little flock.”⁴¹ God waits with “open arms to receive”⁴² those who give away their sins and continue in faith, hope, and charity.

And to all who suffer—to all who feel discouraged, worried, or lonely—I say with love and deep concern for you, never give in. Never allow despair to overcome your spirit.

Embrace and rely upon the Hope of Israel, for the love of the Son of God pierces all darkness, softens all sorrow, and gladdens every heart.

Of this I testify and leave you my blessing in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Romans 15:4.
2. See Psalm 146:5.

3. Proverbs 13:12.
4. See Moroni 8:26.
5. See Moroni 7:41.
6. See Colossians 1:21–23.
7. See Romans 15:13.
8. See Psalm 33:22.
9. See Romans 12:12.
10. See Proverbs 10:28.
11. See 1 Thessalonians 5:8.
12. See Hebrews 11:1; Moroni 7:40.
13. See Hebrews 6:19; Ether 12:4.
14. See Ether 12:32; see also Romans 8:24.
15. 2 Nephi 2:11.
16. See Jeremiah 17:13.
17. See Romans 8:24.
18. See Doctrine and Covenants 59:23.
19. Alma 34:41.
20. 1 Peter 1:3.
21. See Psalm 146:5.
22. Alma 34:41.
23. See Alma 11:45.
24. See 2 Nephi 2:6–10.
25. See Hebrews 5:9.
26. 1 Corinthians 2:9.
27. Doctrine and Covenants 90:24.
28. See Romans 15:13.
29. Romans 15:13.
30. Romans 4:18.
31. Albert Camus, in John Bartlett, comp., *Familiar Quotations*, 17th ed. (2002), 790.
32. See Ether 12:4.
33. See Moroni 7:42.
34. Hebrews 11:1.
35. See Moroni 10:20.
36. See Alma 7:24.
37. Jeremiah 17:7.
38. Joel 3:16.
39. 2 Nephi 31:20.
40. 1 John 3:3.
41. Doctrine and Covenants 6:34.
42. See Mormon 6:17.

The choir sang “I Need Thee Every Hour.”

Elder Craig A. Cardon offered the benediction.
