

Steadfast and Immovable

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If we are faithful and endure to the end, we will receive all of Heavenly Father's blessings, even eternal life and exaltation.

I am grateful to be part of this gathering of faithful women across the world. I have met thousands of you in different countries. Your faithfulness and devotion have strengthened me. Your examples of goodness and commitment to the gospel have inspired me. Your quiet acts of selfless service and your words of testimony and conviction have humbled me.

I will ask each of you tonight the same questions I have asked many of you in our conversations:

1. What helps you be steadfast and immovable as you face the challenges that try your faith?
2. What sustains you through trials and adversity?
3. What helps you endure and become a true disciple of Christ?

Some of the answers you have given me include:

1. Your knowledge that Heavenly Father loves you and cares for you.
2. Your hope that through Jesus Christ's atoning sacrifice, all the blessings promised to the faithful will be fulfilled.
3. Your knowledge of the plan of redemption.

My message today will expand on these affirmations that have come from your hearts.

Romans 8:16 says, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." The first time I remember feeling with all certainty that Heavenly Father knew me, loved me, and cared for me was when I entered the waters of baptism at age 15. Before then, I knew God existed and Jesus Christ was the Savior of the world. I believed in Them and loved Them, but I had never felt Their love and care for me, individually, until that day as I rejoiced in my opportunity to make baptismal covenants.

I realized what a great miracle it had been to have been found and taught by the missionaries, especially with only a handful of missionaries amongst two million people! I knew then that Heavenly Father knew me and loved me in such a special way that He guided the missionaries to my home.

I know now that God is a God of love. This is true because we are His children and He desires that all of us have

joy and eternal happiness. His work and His glory are that we might have immortality and eternal life. ¹ That is why He provided an eternal plan of happiness for us. Our purpose in life is to gain eternal life and exaltation for ourselves and to help others do the same. He created this earth for us to obtain a physical body and be tested in our faith. He gave us the precious gift of agency, through which we can choose the pathway that leads to everlasting happiness. Heavenly Father's plan of redemption is for you and me. It is for all of His children.

“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

“And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth.” ²

“And he gave unto them commandments, that they should worship the Lord their God. ... And Adam was obedient unto the commandments of the Lord.” ³

Adam and Eve bore children, and the plan continued to be carried out.

I know that each of us has a vital and essential role as a daughter of God. He has bestowed upon His daughters divine attributes for the purpose of forwarding His work. God has entrusted women with the sacred work of bearing and rearing children. No other work is more important. It is a holy calling. The noblest office for a woman is the sacred work of building eternal families, ideally in partnership with her husband.

I am aware that some of our sisters have not yet received the blessings of marriage or children. I assure you that in due time you will receive all the blessings promised to the faithful. You must “press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, ... and endure to the end” to have eternal life. ⁴ In the eternal perspective, the missing blessings “shall be but a small moment.” ⁵

In addition, you don't have to be married to keep the commandments and to nurture families, friends, and neighbors. Your gifts, talents, skills, and spiritual strengths are greatly needed in building up the kingdom. The Lord relies on your willingness to perform these essential duties.

The Lord says:

“I [will] not forget thee.

“Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me.” ⁶

The Lord loves you. He knows your hopes and your disappointments. He will not forget you because your pains and your suffering are continually before Him.

The greatest expression of God's love for us was His willingness to send His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ, to atone for our sins, to be our Savior and Redeemer.

In John 3:16 we read, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

The Savior says, “As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you.” ⁷

Jesus Christ's willingness to be the sacrificial lamb was an expression of His love for the Father and of His infinite love for each of us.

Isaiah describes the Savior's suffering:

"He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows. ...

"... He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: ... and with his stripes we are healed." ⁸

The Lord Himself declared, "I, God, have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent." ⁹

He broke the bands of death and made it possible for all mankind to be resurrected. He gave us the gift of immortality.

Jesus Christ took upon Himself our sins, suffered, and died to satisfy the demands of justice that we might not suffer if we repent.

We demonstrate our acceptance of Jesus Christ as our Savior when we place our faith in Him, repent of our sins, and receive the saving ordinances required to enter God's presence. These saving ordinances are symbols of the covenants we make. The covenants of obedience to His laws and commandments bind us to God and strengthen our faith. Our faith and steadfastness in Christ will give us the courage and confidence we need to face life's challenges, which are part of our mortal experience.

Soon after my husband was called to preside over the Paraguay Asunción Mission in 1992, we attended a branch conference in an isolated community in the Paraguayan Chaco. ¹⁰ We traveled four hours on a paved road and then seven more hours on a primitive road. The perils and discomfort of the long trip were soon forgotten when we greeted the happy and welcoming members of Mistolar.

Julio Yegros was the young branch president, and he and his wife, Margarita, were one of the few families who had been sealed in the temple. I asked them to share their experience of their trip to the temple.

At the time, the closest temple was the Buenos Aires Temple in Argentina. The trip from Mistolar required 27 hours one way to reach the temple, and they had gone with their two small children. It was in the middle of a very cold winter, but with much sacrifice they made it to the temple and were sealed together as an eternal family. On the way back, the two babies got very sick and died. They buried them along the way and returned home empty-handed. They were sad and lonely but amazingly felt comforted and peaceful. They said of the experience: "Our children were sealed to us in the house of the Lord. We know we will have them back with us for all eternity. This knowledge has given us peace and comfort. We have to remain worthy and faithful to the covenants we made in the temple, and then we will be reunited with them."

How do we increase our faith and hope to be like that of these faithful members from Paraguay?

How do we strengthen our belief in the affirmations that I have heard over and over again from so many of you, that you believe in God's love for you, that you trust you will receive His blessings, and that you understand the plan of redemption through the Savior Jesus Christ and your important part in His plan?

I will suggest four things that have helped me: prayer, scripture study, obedience, and service.

Prayer

Prayer is the act of communicating with Heavenly Father. When we pray, we acknowledge our faith in Him and His power to bless us.

In Alma 37:37 we read, “Counsel with the Lord in all thy doings, and he will direct thee for good; yea, when thou liest down at night lie down unto the Lord, that he may watch over you in your sleep; and when thou risest in the morning let thy heart be full of thanks unto God; and if ye do these things, ye shall be lifted up at the last day.”

Scripture Study

A knowledge and understanding of Heavenly Father’s plan helps us know who we are and what we should become.

The Lord commanded, “Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.”¹¹

There is a great need for each woman to study the scriptures. As we become more familiar with the truths of the scriptures, we will be able to apply them to our lives and have more power to accomplish God’s purposes. Daily personal prayer and scripture study also invite the influence and power of the Holy Ghost into our lives.

Obedience

The Lord says, “If ye love me, keep my commandments.”¹² Our faithful obedience will help us develop the attributes of godliness and change our hearts.

In the Doctrine and Covenants we are counseled:

“Cleave unto the covenants which thou hast made. ...

“Keep my commandments continually, and a crown of righteousness thou shalt receive.”¹³

Our commitment to live the gospel nurtures our faith and hope in Jesus Christ.

Service

We have multiple opportunities to serve Him. Each sister is asked to seek out and help the poor and the needy among and around us. The “poor and the needy” includes those with spiritual and emotional needs as well. Each one has also been charged to save our dead, which can be done by working on family history or by doing temple work. We have been commanded to share the gospel with others, and there are many ways to participate in missionary work. All of these things are ways we can serve the Lord. Our Heavenly Father expects those who are strong to strengthen the weak, and your own faith will be strengthened as you strengthen and care for His children.

I know Heavenly Father loves each of His children perfectly, individually, and constantly. I know that, as women, we have an essential part in the plan of happiness. Our best effort is all He requires from us, and each of us is needed in building up the kingdom. The Atonement is real. Jesus Christ is our Savior and Redeemer. I testify that if we are faithful and endure to the end, we will receive all of Heavenly Father’s blessings, even eternal life and exaltation. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

1. See Moses 1:39.
2. Genesis 1:27–28.
3. Moses 5:5.
4. 2 Nephi 31:20.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 121:7.
6. Isaiah 49:15–16.
7. John 15:9.
8. Isaiah 53:4–5.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 19:16.
10. The semiarid, sparsely populated area of western Paraguay.
11. John 5:39.
12. John 14:15.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 25:13, 15.

