

5. Marion G. Romney, in Conference Report, Oct. 1963, 23.

6. Mosiah 2:30.

7. Moroni 10:32.

## Elder Robert D. Hales

### The Savior's atoning sacrifice

On this Sabbath morning, we give thanks for and testify of the living reality of our Savior. His gospel has been restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith. The Book of Mormon is true. We are led by a living prophet today, President Thomas S. Monson. Above all, we bear solemn witness of the Atonement of Jesus Christ and the eternal blessings that flow from it.

During the past few months, I have had the opportunity to study and learn more about the Savior's atoning sacrifice and how He prepared Himself to make that eternal offering for each one of us.

His preparation began in the premortal life as He waited upon His Father, saying, "Thy will be done, and the glory be thine forever."<sup>1</sup> Beginning in that moment and continuing today, He exercises His agency to accept and carry out our Heavenly Father's plan. The scriptures teach us that through His youth, He went "about [His] Father's business"<sup>2</sup> and "waited upon the Lord for the time of his ministry to come."<sup>3</sup> At the age of 30, He suffered sore temptation yet chose to resist, saying, "Get thee behind me, Satan."<sup>4</sup> In Gethsemane, He trusted His Father, declaring, "Nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done,"<sup>5</sup> and then He exercised His agency to suffer for our sins. Through the humiliation of a public trial and the agony of crucifixion, He waited upon His Father, willing to be "wounded for our transgressions . . . [and] bruised for our iniquities."<sup>6</sup> Even as He cried out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"<sup>7</sup> He waited upon His Father—exercising His agency to forgive His enemies,<sup>8</sup> see that His mother was watched over,<sup>9</sup> and endure

to the end until His life and mortal mission were finished.<sup>10</sup>

### Why trials and tribulations?

I have often pondered, Why is it that the Son of God and His holy prophets and all the faithful Saints have trials and tribulations, even when they are trying to do Heavenly Father's will? Why is it so hard, especially for them?

I think about Joseph Smith, who suffered illness as a boy and persecution throughout his life. Like the Savior, he cried out, "O God, where art thou?"<sup>11</sup> Yet even when he was seemingly alone, he exercised his agency to wait upon the Lord and carry out his Heavenly Father's will.

I think of our pioneer forebears, driven from Nauvoo and crossing the plains, exercising their agency to follow a prophet even as they suffered sickness, privation, and some even death. Why such terrible tribulation? To what end? For what purpose?

As we ask these questions, we realize that the purpose of our life on earth is to grow, develop, and be strengthened through our own experiences. How do we do this? The scriptures give us an answer in one simple phrase: we "wait upon the Lord."<sup>12</sup> Tests and trials are given to all of us. These mortal challenges allow us and our Heavenly Father to see whether we will exercise our agency to follow His Son. He already knows, and we have the opportunity to learn, that no matter how difficult our circumstances, "all these things shall [be for our] experience, and . . . [our] good."<sup>13</sup>

Does this mean we will always understand our challenges? Won't all of us, sometime, have reason to ask, "O God,

where art thou?”<sup>14</sup> Yes! When a spouse dies, a companion will wonder. When financial hardship befalls a family, a father will ask. When children wander from the path, a mother and father will cry out in sorrow. Yes, “weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.”<sup>15</sup> Then, in the dawn of our increased faith and understanding, we arise and choose to wait upon the Lord, saying, “Thy will be done.”<sup>16</sup>

### Waiting upon the Lord

What, then, does it mean to wait upon the Lord? In the scriptures, the word *wait* means to hope, to anticipate, and to trust. To hope and trust in the Lord requires faith, patience, humility, meekness, long-suffering, keeping the commandments, and enduring to the end.

To wait upon the Lord means planting the seed of faith and nourishing it “with great diligence, and . . . patience.”<sup>17</sup>

It means praying as the Savior did—to God, our Heavenly Father—saying: “Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done.”<sup>18</sup> It is a prayer we offer with our whole souls in the name of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Waiting upon the Lord means pondering in our hearts and “receiv[ing] the Holy Ghost” so that we can know “all things what [we] should do.”<sup>19</sup>

As we follow the promptings of the Spirit, we discover that “tribulation worketh patience,”<sup>20</sup> and we learn to “continue in patience until [we] are perfected.”<sup>21</sup>

Waiting upon the Lord means to “stand fast”<sup>22</sup> and “press forward” in faith, “having a perfect brightness of hope.”<sup>23</sup>

It means “relying alone upon the merits of Christ”<sup>24</sup> and “with [His] grace assisting [us, saying]: Thy will be done, O Lord, and not ours.”<sup>25</sup>

As we wait upon the Lord, we are “immovable in keeping the commandments,”<sup>26</sup> knowing that we will “one day rest from all [our] afflictions.”<sup>27</sup>

And we “cast not away . . . [our] confidence”<sup>28</sup> that “all things wherewith [we] have been afflicted shall work together for [our] good.”<sup>29</sup>

Those afflictions will come in all shapes and sizes. Job’s experience reminds us what we may be called upon to endure. Job lost all his possessions, including his land, house, and animals; his family members; his reputation; his physical health; and even his mental well-being. Yet he waited upon the Lord and bore a powerful personal testimony. He said:

“For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth:

“And though . . . worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.”<sup>30</sup>

“Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.”<sup>31</sup>

### The Lord’s answers will come

Even with the shining examples of Job, the prophets, and the Savior, we will still find it challenging to wait upon the Lord, especially when we cannot fully understand His plan and purposes for us. That understanding is most often given “line upon line, [and] precept upon precept.”<sup>32</sup>

In my life I have learned that sometimes I do not receive an answer to a prayer because the Lord knows I am not ready. When He does answer, it is often “here a little and there a little”<sup>33</sup> because that is all that I can bear or all I am willing to do.

Too often we pray to have patience, but we want it right now! As a young man, President David O. McKay prayed for a witness of the truthfulness of the gospel. Many years later, while he was serving his mission in Scotland, that witness finally came. Later he wrote, “It was an assurance to me that sincere prayer is answered ‘sometime, somewhere.’”<sup>34</sup>

We may not know when or how the Lord’s answers will be given, but in His

time and His way, I testify, His answers will come. For some answers we may have to wait until the hereafter. This may be true for some promises in our patriarchal blessings and for some blessings for family members. Let us not give up on the Lord. His blessings are eternal, not temporary.

### **Those who wait upon us**

Waiting upon the Lord gives us a priceless opportunity to discover that there are many who wait upon us. Our children wait upon us to show patience, love, and understanding toward them. Our parents wait upon us to show gratitude and compassion. Our brothers and sisters wait upon us to be tolerant, merciful, and forgiving. Our spouses wait upon us to love them as the Savior has loved each one of us.

As we endure physical suffering, we are increasingly aware of how many wait upon each of us. To all the Marys and Marthas, to all of the good Samaritans who minister to the sick, succor the weak, and care for the mentally and physically infirm, I feel the gratitude of a loving Heavenly Father and His Beloved Son. In your daily Christlike ministry, you are waiting upon the Lord and doing your Heavenly Father's will. His assurance to you is clear: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."<sup>35</sup> He knows your sacrifices and your sorrows. He hears your prayers. His peace and rest will be yours as you continue to wait upon Him in faith.

### **"Thy will be done"**

Every one of us is more beloved to the Lord than we can possibly understand or imagine. Let us therefore be kinder to one another and kinder toward ourselves. Let us remember that as we wait upon the Lord, we are becoming "saint[s] through [His] atonement . . . , submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to

submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon [us], even as a child doth submit to his father."<sup>36</sup>

Such was the submission of our Savior to His Father in the Garden of Gethsemane. He implored His disciples, "Watch with me," yet three times He returned to them to find their eyes heavy with sleep.<sup>37</sup> Without the companionship of these disciples and ultimately without the presence of His Father, the Savior chose to suffer our "pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind."<sup>38</sup> With an angel sent to strengthen Him,<sup>39</sup> He "shrank not to drink the bitter cup."<sup>40</sup> He waited upon His Father, saying, "Thy will be done,"<sup>41</sup> and He humbly trod the winepress alone.<sup>42</sup> Now, as one of His Twelve Apostles in these latter days, I pray that we will be strengthened to watch with Him and wait upon Him through all our days.

On this Sabbath morning, I express gratitude that "in my Gethsemane"<sup>43</sup> and yours, we are not alone. He that watches over *us* "shall neither slumber nor sleep."<sup>44</sup> His angels here and beyond the veil are "round about [us], to bear [us] up."<sup>45</sup> I bear my special witness that our Savior's promise is true, for He says, "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint."<sup>46</sup> May we wait upon Him by pressing forward in faith, that we may say in our prayers, "Thy will be done,"<sup>47</sup> and return to Him with honor. In the holy name of our Savior and Redeemer, even Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. Moses 4:2.
2. Luke 2:49.
3. Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 3:24, in Bible appendix.
4. Luke 4:8.
5. Luke 22:42.
6. Isaiah 53:5; Mosiah 14:5.
7. Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34.
8. See Luke 23:34.

9. See John 19:27.
10. See John 19:30.
11. Doctrine and Covenants 121:1.
12. Psalm 37:9; 123:2; Isaiah 8:17; 40:31; 2 Nephi 18:17.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 122:7.
14. Doctrine and Covenants 121:1.
15. Psalm 30:5.
16. Matthew 6:10; 3 Nephi 13:10; see also Matthew 26:39.
17. Alma 32:41.
18. Matthew 6:10; Luke 11:2.
19. 2 Nephi 32:5.
20. Romans 5:3.
21. Doctrine and Covenants 67:13.
22. Alma 45:17.
23. 2 Nephi 31:20.
24. Moroni 6:4.
25. Doctrine and Covenants 109:44.
26. Alma 1:25.
27. Alma 34:41.
28. Hebrews 10:35.
29. Doctrine and Covenants 98:3.
30. Job 19:25–26.
31. Job 13:15.
32. 2 Nephi 28:30.
33. 2 Nephi 28:30.
34. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: David O. McKay* (2003), xviii.
35. Matthew 25:40.
36. Mosiah 3:19.
37. Matthew 26:38; see also verses 39–45.
38. Alma 7:11.
39. See Luke 22:43.
40. “In Memory of the Crucified,” *Hymns*, no. 190; see also 3 Nephi 11:11; Doctrine and Covenants 19:18–19.
41. Matthew 26:42.
42. See Doctrine and Covenants 76:107; 88:106; 133:50.
43. “Where Can I Turn for Peace?” *Hymns*, no. 129.
44. Psalm 121:4.
45. Doctrine and Covenants 84:88.
46. Isaiah 40:31.
47. Matthew 26:42.

## Elder Tad R. Callister

### Book of Mormon—no middle ground

Years ago my great-great-grandfather picked up a copy of the Book of Mormon for the first time. He opened it to the center and read a few pages. He then declared, “That book was either written by God or the devil, and I am going to find out who wrote it.” He read it through twice in the next 10 days and then declared, “The devil could not have written it—it must be from God.”<sup>1</sup>

That is the genius of the Book of Mormon—there is no middle ground. It is either the word of God as professed, or it is a total fraud. This book does not merely claim to be a moral treatise or theological commentary or collection of insightful writings. It claims to be the word of God—every sentence, every verse, every page. Joseph Smith declared that an angel of God directed him to gold plates, which contained the writings of prophets

in ancient America, and that he translated those plates by divine powers. If that story is true, then the Book of Mormon is holy scripture, just as it professes to be; if not, it is a sophisticated but, nonetheless, diabolical hoax.

C. S. Lewis spoke of a similar dilemma faced by someone who must choose whether to accept or reject the Savior’s divinity—where there is likewise no middle ground: “I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: ‘I’m ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don’t accept His claim to be God.’ That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. . . . You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. . . . But let us not come with