

God Shall Wipe Away All Tears

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As we exercise our faith in the Savior, He will lift us up and carry us through all of our trials and, ultimately, save us in the celestial kingdom.

As part of our Heavenly Father's plan, He allowed sorrow to be woven into our mortal experience.¹ While it seems that painful trials fall unevenly on us, we can be assured that to one degree or another, we all suffer and struggle. It is my prayer that the Holy Spirit will guide us to a greater understanding why this must be so.

When we view the difficult experiences of life through the lens of faith in Christ, we are able to see that there can be godly purpose in our suffering. The faithful can experience the truth of Peter's seemingly contradictory counsel. He wrote, "If ye *suffer* for righteousness' sake, happy are ye."² As we apply our "hearts to understanding,"³ we can increase in our ability to both endure our trials well and learn from—and be refined by—them. Such understanding provides an answer to the ageless question "Why do bad things happen to good people?"

Everyone listening today is acquainted with some measure of loneliness, despair, grief, pain, or sorrow. Without an "eye of faith"⁴ and an understanding of eternal truth, we often find that the misery and suffering experienced in mortality can obscure or eclipse the eternal joy of knowing that the great plan of our Father in Heaven *really is* the eternal plan of happiness. There is no other way to receive a fulness of joy.⁵

God invites us to respond with faith to our own unique afflictions in order that we may reap blessings and gain knowledge that can be learned in no other way. We are instructed to keep the commandments in every condition and circumstance, for "he that is faithful in tribulation, the reward of the same is greater in the kingdom of heaven."⁶ And as we read in scripture, "If thou art sorrowful, call on the Lord thy God with supplication, that your souls may be joyful."⁷

The Apostle Paul, himself no stranger to affliction, drew from his own experience to teach with depth and beauty the eternal perspective that comes when we endure well and with patience. He said, "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."⁸ In other words, we can know in the midst of our afflictions that God has provided an eternal compensating reward.

Paul's ability to speak of the trials, persecutions, and sorrows of his life as "light" afflictions belies the severity of his suffering, which was for him swallowed up by the eternal perspective of the gospel. Paul's faith in Jesus Christ made all things bearable.

Five times he was beaten with stripes, thrice with rods; once he was stoned; thrice he suffered shipwreck; often he was put in peril of death by drowning, by robbers, and even by false brethren; he suffered weariness and pain, hunger and thirst, and was imprisoned in the cold and in nakedness.⁹

Many of us have pleaded with God to remove the cause of our suffering, and when the relief we seek has not come, we have been tempted to think He is not listening. I testify that, even in those moments, He hears our prayers, has a reason for allowing our afflictions to continue,¹⁰ and will help us bear them.¹¹

In an intimate and reflective passage, Paul tells us of an unnamed “thorn” in his flesh, which caused him great pain and brought him three times to his knees, begging the Lord to take it from him. In answer to Paul’s prayers, the Lord did not remove the thorn but did speak peace and give understanding to his heart, saying, “My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.” With new understanding, Paul was able to accept and be grateful for the thorn he was given. He said, “Most gladly therefore will I ... glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.”¹²

As we acquire this eternal perspective in our lives, our capacity to endure grows, we learn how to succor those in need of succor,¹³ and we come to appreciate and even express gratitude for the experiences God allows us to have as tutors in the path to eternal life.

When we find ourselves laboring through tribulation, it can be difficult to see our trials as signposts on our personal trail of discipleship. But whether we find ourselves at times in the dark valley of despair or on the high road of happiness, learning from and feeling compassion for the sufferings of others can be a blessing.

During a recent stake conference assignment I attended in the Philippines, my heart was broken as I learned of the tragic experience of Brother Daniel Apilado. Brother Apilado and his wife were baptized in 1974. They embraced the restored gospel and were sealed in the temple. Thereafter, they were blessed with five beautiful children. On July 7, 1997, while Brother Apilado was serving as the stake president, a fire broke out in their small home. Brother Apilado’s oldest son, Michael, rescued his father, pulled him from the burning structure, and then ran back into the house to rescue others. It was the last time Brother Apilado saw his son alive. Taken in the fire were Brother Apilado’s wife, Dominga, and each of their five children.

The fact that Brother Apilado was living a life pleasing unto God when tragedy struck did not prevent the tragedy, nor did it make him immune from the sorrow that followed. But his *faithfulness* in keeping his covenants and exercising his faith in Christ gave him assurance in the promise that he will be reunited with his wife and family. This hope became an anchor to his soul.¹⁴

During my visit, Brother Apilado, now the stake patriarch, introduced me to his new wife, Simonette, and to their two sons, Raphael and Daniel. Truly, Jesus Christ can and will “bind up the brokenhearted.”¹⁵

In sharing Brother Apilado’s story, I am concerned that the enormity of his loss may cause many to think their own sorrows and sufferings are of little consequence in comparison. Please don’t compare, but seek to learn and apply eternal principles as you wade through the furnace of your own afflictions.

If I may speak to you individually—“all ye that labour and are heavy laden”¹⁶—may I suggest that your personal struggles—your individual sorrows, pains, tribulations, and infirmities of every kind—are all known to our Father in Heaven and to His Son. Take courage! Have faith! And believe in the promises of God!

The purpose and mission of Jesus Christ included that He would “take upon him the pains and the sicknesses of his people,” “take upon him their infirmities,” and “succor his people according to their infirmities.”¹⁷

To fully receive these gifts our Savior has so freely offered, we all must learn that suffering in and of itself does not teach or grant to us anything of lasting value unless we *deliberately* become involved in the process of learning from our afflictions through the exercise of faith.

Elder Neal A. Maxwell once shared what he had learned of purposeful suffering in these words:

“Certain forms of suffering, endured well, can actually be ennobling. ...

“... Part of enduring well consists of being meek enough, amid our suffering, to learn from our relevant experiences. Rather than simply passing through these things, they must pass through us ... in ways which sanctify [us].”¹⁸

I have observed in the lives and examples of others that exercising strong and abiding faith in Jesus Christ and His promises provides the sure hope of better things to come. This sure hope steadies us, bringing the strength and power we need in order to endure.¹⁹ When we can link our suffering to an assurance of purpose in our mortality and *more specifically* to the reward awaiting us in heavenly places, our faith in Christ increases and we receive comfort to our souls.

Then we can see the light at the end of the tunnel. Elder Jeffrey R. Holland has taught: “There really *is* light at the end of the tunnel. It is the Light of the World, the Bright and Morning Star, the ‘light that is endless, that can never be darkened’ [Mosiah 16:9]. It is the very Son of God Himself.”²⁰

We can take strength in knowing that all the hard experiences in this life are temporary; even the darkest nights turn into dawn for the faithful.

When all is finished and we have endured all things with faith in Jesus Christ, we have the promise that "God shall wipe away all [the] tears from [our] eyes."²¹

I testify that God our Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, live and that They are keepers of promises. I testify that the Savior invites all of us to come and partake of His Atonement. As we exercise our faith in Him, He will lift us up and carry us through all of our trials and, ultimately, save us in the celestial kingdom. May I invite you to come unto Christ, endure well in faith, become perfected through Him, and have perfect joy in Him. In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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