

Overcoming Spiritual and Temporal Challenges

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Introduction

- Topic: Overcoming Spiritual and Temporal Challenges
 - Len Ogden
 - Why I asked him
 - Watched and admired Len and his wife deal with blow after blow
- Begin by relating this experience

Elder Robert E. Wells of the First Council of the Seventy:

“I have been flying many kinds of aircraft for the last 30 years, both in the United States and in Latin American countries. Not too long ago when I had returned to the [United] States after an absence of some years, a very dear friend offered me the use of his new [airplane]. ...

“We discussed my qualifications of being covered under his insurance policy, and it turned out that I needed a check ride with a qualified inspector as it had been some time since I had flown that particular type of plane.

“The arrangements were made, and I met the inspector at the side of the airplane at the appointed hour with my licenses from the USA, Argentina, Paraguay, and Ecuador, and logbooks showing flights in Cessna 310s across jungles, mountains, deserts, international boundaries, etc. He smiled calmly but was unimpressed and said, ‘I’ve heard about you, and I have no doubt about how much flying you have done, but I have to assume that those flights were when nothing went wrong. Now let’s fire up this bird and see how well you fly it when everything goes wrong!’

“For the next hour he made everything go wrong! He simulated every emergency he could think of. He turned things off that should have been on. He turned things on that should have been off. He tried to create disorientation or panic. He really wanted to know how well I could fly when everything did go wrong! In the end he climbed out, signed my logbook, and announced, ‘You’re okay, I’d let my wife and kids fly with you.’ ”

After relating this story Elder Wells poses the question:

“How well can you fly it when everything goes wrong? How well can you live when every test, every trial, every proof of your faithfulness is exacted of you?” (New Era, June 1978 “How Well Can You Fly It When Everything Goes Wrong?”)

- For the rest of my talk I'd like to examine
 - Why is it we have challenges & trials?
 - What kinds of challenges and trails we face?
 - How can we prepare for these challenges and trials?
 - How can we cope with them when they happen?

Why do we have trials?

- It is evident that we will all face trials and adversity, regardless of how righteous we are.
 - Being righteous and making good choices can help us avoid bringing on some challenges
 - Make poor choices we must suffer the consequences
 - But we won't avoid adversity altogether
- One of the purposes of life is to be tested and tried.
- Prophet Joseph Smith: "You will have all kinds of trials to pass through. And it is quite as necessary for you to be tried as it was for Abraham and other men of God, and (said he) God will feel after you, and He will take hold of you and wrench your very heart strings, and if you cannot stand it you will not be fit for an inheritance in the Celestial Kingdom of God." (in Deseret News [Weekly], 29 Aug. 1883, 498, John Taylor, in *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 24, p. 197)
- Sometimes we go many years with no problems, and then they seem to come all at once, and the burdens seem to be more than we can bear.
- But through it all, we have two main strengths to rely on:
 - 1) We knew before we came that it would be like this, yet we wanted to come because the blessings of remaining faithful to the end would earn us eternal exaltation. In other words we know that "we asked for it"
 - Another way to look at it is:
 - The expression "no pain no gain" can be applied to life itself
 - 2) We will never be tempted beyond our ability to resist. (1 Cor 10:13)

Kinds of tests & Trials

- If I said "list the trials and tests of life" this would be a common list:
 - Emergencies, accidents, sicknesses, diseases, discouragements, disappointments, reverses, failures, temptations, wayward children.
- We have all faced some of these and can easily recognize them as trials.
- Others we might not normally put on our list:
 - Prosperity. Sometimes prosperity makes it harder to remain spiritual. Sometimes the luxury of a fishing boat makes us break the Sabbath. Sometimes a condominium at a resort keeps us from holding positions or filling positions properly in our home ward. Prosperity is a test. Can we handle wealth and remain spiritual? (New Era, June 1978 "How Well Can You Fly It When Everything Goes Wrong?")

- Talents. Can we use our talent wisely? Can we stay spiritual when our talent leads us into careers where we perform in public, in night clubs, in the theater, or on the concert stage, where it is difficult to lead a normal LDS life? Yet the talent should be developed and used. The question is, "Are we strong enough to be in the entertaining or artistic world without being corrupted by it?" (New Era, June 1978 "How Well Can You Fly It When Everything Goes Wrong?")
- Relationship with Spouse. Sometimes the normal differences of opinion, or differences of culture, or differences of priorities between husband and wife allow Satan to tempt them with a question: "Are you happy? Wouldn't you be happier with someone else? Isn't happiness the most important thing in life?" These questions come from Satan, the father of all lies. We must make up our minds to pass this test, above all others, of staying faithful to our eternal companion even when there is a temporary interruption of "happiness." (New Era, June 1978 "How Well Can You Fly It When Everything Goes Wrong?")

How can we prepare for trials?

- Spiritual Preparation
 - Each person builds spiritual strength to meet life's challenges with confidence and stability by:
 - Learning to love God and communicate with Him in personal prayer
 - Learning to love and serve his neighbor
 - Learning to love and respect himself through righteous living and self-mastery.
 - Following the Prophet and our local leaders
 - These are just some of the things we can do to prepare spiritually
- Temporal Preparation
 - Temporal/material challenges can be met – even avoided by:
 - Establishing financial goals
 - Paying tithes and offerings
 - Avoiding debt, paying obligations
 - Using family resources wisely
 - Saving during times of plenty for times of need.
- As parents we need to both prepare our children and teach our children how to overcome challenges
 - Best thing we can do is show by how we overcome ourselves
 - Mom and Dad
 - Back to College
 - 4 children
 - If he had known the challenge....
 - Back operation
 - Cleaned the church
 - Fruit trees on the welfare farm
 - I am thankful for what they taught me

Coping with adversity

Faith in our Savior:

- Elder Richard G. Scott: “To exercise faith is to trust that the Lord knows what He is doing with you and that He can accomplish it for your eternal good even though you cannot understand how He can possibly do it. We are like infants in our understanding of eternal matters and their impact on us here in mortality. Yet at times we act as if we knew it all. When you pass through trials for His purposes, as you trust Him, exercise faith in Him, He will help you. That support will generally come step by step, a portion at a time. While you are passing through each phase, the pain and difficulty that come from being enlarged will continue.
If all matters were immediately resolved at your first petition, you could not grow. Your Father in Heaven and His Beloved Son love you perfectly. They would not require you to experience a moment more of difficulty than is absolutely needed for your personal benefit or for that of those you love.” (*Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 17)
- Christ has said:
 “Learn of me, and listen to my words; walk in the meekness of my Spirit, and you shall have peace in me.” (D&C 19:23)
and he said further:
 “Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee” (Psalms 55:22)
and he gave us this invitation:
 “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” (Matt 11:28)

Accepting the will of the Lord

- If we put our faith in the Lord we must be accepting of his will
- Sister Oaks “To find one’s own personal relationship with Heavenly Father, to never doubt that he guides the details of our lives, to be able in life’s conflict to say, ‘Thy will be done,’ is the attaining of the ability to walk by faith. This ability is something that each soul must find in his own way through the creative living-out of any and all trying experiences that may come along. My proving ground came in learning to be obedient to a frightening command—that of accepting the imminent death of my husband after only eleven years of marriage and accepting the challenge of being a mother and woman alone in the world. “I had watched Lloyd [my husband] become weaker and lose ground from day to day. ... “One June night I knelt alone in prayer, utterly spent, wondering at that midnight hour how humble one had to be to receive an answer to one’s pleading. It was just at that moment that I felt an envelopment of the spirit of peace, a profound assurance that God is over all and that it was his will that was in command and not mine. I could finally say, ‘Thy will be done,’ and feel the peace. ... I relaxed in my faith and discovered that I had a new trust in the Lord.
“But even though this sweet peace enveloped me I still could not sleep, and once more I turned on the light. As I reached for the Doctrine and Covenants, ... it fell open to a section where [a message was given to me]. ... I was given to know that the Lord loved me and that

I would be made equal to my mission. I felt an encircling love that has sustained me ever since that great moment of change in my life. I have had continual hardships and challenges but always the sure knowledge that Jesus is the Christ, our Redeemer, and that he sustains us through the opposition that must arise in all things” (“Thy Will Be Done,” in Leon Hartshorn, comp., *Remarkable Stories from the Lives of Latter-day Saint Women*, 2 vols. [1973-75], 2:183-84).

Fasting & Prayer

- President Ezra Taft Benson: “Prayer in the hour of need is a great boon. From simple trials to our Gethsemanes, prayer can put us in touch with God, our greatest source of comfort and counsel” (*Ensign*, Nov. 1974, 66).
- When we need special help from the Lord, we should remember that strength can come from fasting.
 - As we accompany our prayers with fasting, we can feel the Spirit and learn the Father’s will for us.

Scriptures

- The scriptures contain many passages that can enlighten, encourage, and comfort.
- We can find answers to our questions in the scriptures.
- The words of the living prophets can give direction.
- When we face our problems, strengthened with the messages of the scriptures, we will find new courage and direction.
- Joseph Smith in Liberty Jail (D&C 122:5-9)

5 If thou art called to pass through tribulation; if thou art in perils among false brethren; if thou art in perils among robbers; if thou art in perils by land or by sea;

6 If thou art accused with all manner of false accusations; if thine enemies fall upon thee; if they tear thee from the society of thy father and mother and brethren and sisters; and if with a drawn sword thine enemies tear thee from the bosom of thy wife, and of thine offspring, and thine elder son, although but six years of age, shall cling to thy garments, and shall say, My father, my father, why can’t you stay with us? O, my father, what are the men going to do with you? and if then he shall be thrust from thee by the sword, and thou be dragged to prison, and thine enemies prowl around thee like wolves for the blood of the lamb;

7 And if thou shouldst be cast into the pit, or into the hands of murderers, and the sentence of death passed upon thee; if thou be cast into the deep; if the billowing surge conspire against thee; if fierce winds become thine enemy; if the heavens gather blackness, and all the elements combine to hedge up the way; and above all, if the very jaws of hell shall gape open the mouth wide after thee, know thou, my son, that all these things shall give thee experience, and shall be for thy good.

8 The Son of Man hath descended below them all. Art thou greater than he?

9 Therefore, hold on thy way, and the priesthood shall remain with thee; for their bounds are set, they cannot pass. Thy days are known, and thy years shall not be numbered less; therefore, fear not what man can do, for God shall be with you forever and ever.

Priesthood Blessings

- We have the privilege of receiving blessings through the priesthood.
- These blessings can be given for many reasons, including sickness, distress, and trial.
- I have both received and given blessings

Service & Work

- As we become involved in helping others, our thoughts are lifted from our own personal problems.
- President Lorenzo Snow: “When you find yourselves a little gloomy, look around you and find somebody that is in a worse plight than yourself; go to him and find out what the trouble is, then try to remove it with the wisdom which the Lord bestows upon you; and the first thing you know, your gloom is gone, you feel light, the Spirit of the Lord is upon you, and everything seems illuminated” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1899, 2-3).

Strength from others

- True friends who can listen to our problems and give us counsel and encouragement are a great help in times of stress.
- The Prophet Joseph Smith wrote of the joy of friends: “How sweet the voice of a friend is; one token of friendship from any source whatever awakens and calls into action every sympathetic feeling” (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [1976], 134).
- As true brothers and sisters in the gospel we have taken on the covenant to bear one another's burdens. (Mosiah 18:8-9)

Strength from our ancestors' examples

- Parents & Grandparents
- Pioneers
 - Martin Handcart
- Early Saints
 - Mary Fielding Smith

Look for the Blessing

- To help us endure our afflictions in the manner suggested, we might ask ourselves:
 - How can I make this experience a blessing in my life?
 - What can I learn from this experience?
- Sometimes hard to accept - "This is for my good?"

Blessings after tribulation

- D&C 58:2-4

2 For verily I say unto you, blessed is he that keepeth my commandments, whether in life or in death; and he that is faithful in tribulation, the reward of the same is greater in the kingdom of heaven.

3 Ye cannot behold with your natural eyes, for the present time, the design of your God concerning those things which shall come hereafter, and the glory which shall follow after much tribulation.

4 For after much tribulation come the blessings. Wherefore the day cometh that ye shall be crowned with much glory; the hour is not yet, but is nigh at hand.
- Sweden
 - Leif Gronstedt
 - "Looked forward to flat tires"

Stake Theme

Our Stake theme for the year is:

"But as it is written, 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." (1 Cor 2:9)

He has blessings in store that we know not. We will receive them if we will but show our love of him by doing his will and being faithful through tribulations

He will bless us, He will uphold us

Sometimes things seem bleak and we might despair. And it seems small comfort to know that "this is for my good"

My exhortation is to remember the words of the Savior that we "Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee"

My testimony is His grace is sufficient for us all.

Closing

“The question still is: How well can we fly it when everything goes wrong?”

How Firm a Foundation (Hymn 85)

3. Fear not, I am with thee; oh, be not dismayed,
For I am thy God and will still give thee aid.
I'll strengthen thee, help thee, and cause thee to stand, ...
Upheld by my righteous, omnipotent hand.

4. When through the deep waters I call thee to go,
The rivers of sorrow shall not thee o'erflow,
For I will be with thee, thy troubles to bless, ...
And sanctify to thee thy deepest distress.

5. When through fiery trials thy pathway shall lie,
My grace, all sufficient, shall be thy supply.
The flame shall not hurt thee; I only design ...
Thy dross to consume and thy gold to refine.

7. The soul that on Jesus hath leaned for repose
I will not, I cannot, desert to his foes;
That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake, ...
I'll never, no never, no never forsake!

Bear Testimony & Close