

THE POWER OF FAITH

By Amber Barlow Dahl

If Heavenly Father were to free us from our challenges simply because we asked, He would deny us the very experiences necessary for our salvation.

One year in college, I was taking a test when my neck began to hurt. The pain didn't go away when the tension of the test had passed. I consulted with doctors and therapists and tried a variety of treatments, but still the pain continued. Over the next year, as I struggled to cope with this pain, I also struggled to increase my faith. I spent much time in prayer, I studied the scriptures, and I asked for priesthood blessings. I felt that if I just had enough faith, I would be healed.

Jesus Christ healed the sick, the blind, the lame, the leprous—"according to [their] faith" (Matthew 9:29). I knew He had the power to heal me as He had so many others during His mortal life. I concluded, therefore, that only my lack of faith kept me from being healed, so I redoubled my efforts. While I continued with physical therapy, I prayed and fasted and studied and believed. Yet my pain persisted.

The scriptures teach us that with faith we can work miracles (see Matthew 17:20), yet I could not be relieved of this minor suffering. Where was the power in my faith? Finally, I quietly accepted my situation, found ways to cope with my discomfort, and became content to

save full understanding of faith and healing for a future time.

Years later I was talking with a friend who had struggled with terrible nausea that had sent her to the hospital more than once during her first pregnancy. Erin wanted to have another baby, but she was terrified that she would have to endure the same discomforts she had faced with her first pregnancy. She told me that she had been fasting and praying and that she really believed Heavenly Father would not ask that of her a second time.

As we talked, I recalled the scripture, "Be still, and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10). I thought of my own experience in learning to be still in the midst of affliction and urged Erin to continue to have faith but not to make that faith dependent on whether or not she experienced nausea with her next pregnancy.

As I continued to study the principle of faith, I turned to Alma's discourse on faith in which he teaches that "if ye have faith ye hope for things which are not seen, which are true" (Alma 32:21).



RISING ABOVE TRIALS

"Is there not wisdom in [Heavenly Father] giving us trials that we might rise above them, responsibilities that we might achieve, work to harden our muscles, sorrows to try our souls? Are we not exposed to temptations to test our strength, sickness that we might learn patience, death that we might be immortalized and glorified?"

"If all the sick for whom we pray were healed, if all the righteous were protected and the wicked destroyed, the whole program of the Father would be annulled and the basic principle of the gospel, free agency, would be ended. No man would have to live by faith."

President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985), *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Spencer W. Kimball* (2006), 15.



Pondering this scripture, I discovered that faith wasn't what I thought it was. Faith, Alma teaches us, is hope in true principles. To have faith does not mean we believe our Heavenly Father will always give us what we ask for when we ask for it. Having faith that Christ would heal my neck or that He would grant Erin a nausea-free pregnancy is not having faith in true principles. However, we can have faith that Christ has the power to heal, that He is mindful of us, that He will strengthen us, and that if we endure well, we may qualify for eternal life.

The Lord promised, "Whatsoever thing ye shall ask in faith, believing that ye shall receive in the name of

Christ, ye shall receive it" (Enos 1:15). I believe the power in this promise lies in the counsel to believe "in the name of Christ." The Bible Dictionary entry on prayer teaches us: "We pray in Christ's name when our mind is the mind of Christ, and our wishes the wishes of Christ—when His words abide in us (John 15:7). We then ask for things it is possible for God to grant. Many prayers remain unanswered because they are not in Christ's name at all; they in no way represent His mind but spring out of the selfishness of man's heart."

When we ask in faith for something that is in accordance with the will of God, He will grant us according to

our desires. Heavenly Father knows us, loves us, and desires everything necessary for us to return to His presence. And sometimes that includes trials, troubles, and challenges (see 1 Peter 1:7). If Heavenly Father were to free us from our challenges simply because we asked, He would deny us the very experiences necessary for our salvation. We must learn to trust in God's plan for us and submit our will to His. As we align our desires with His desires and acknowledge our complete dependence on Him, we may qualify to receive "the end of [our] faith, even the salvation of [our] souls" (1 Peter 1:9). ■

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