



Confidence in the Presence of God

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Of the Seventy



As we increase our faith and commitment, we will draw nearer to our Father in Heaven.

The story of the Prophet Joseph Smith seeking to know which church to join amid the “contests of . . . parties of religionists” (Joseph Smith—History 1:11) is a story of inspiration and hope for all honest seekers of truth. What a relief it must have been to Joseph—an obscure boy of 14 with a simple question and an honest desire—to read the following passage from the Bible: “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him” (James 1:5).

This passage provides a great insight into the kind of relationship each of us should have with our Father in Heaven. Indeed, this verse expresses the tender mercies and inclinations of our loving Father toward a son who came to Him with a question. The Father does not generally answer prayers with visions, as He did in the Sacred Grove, but He does provide answers that bring much comfort and peace. Such is His promise to us—to give liberally and not upbraid, or chastise.

As a young boy, I had several opportunities to put this promise to the test. I testify

that the promise is sure. Whether I lost a toy or a coin or any other precious possession that may seem of no consequence to adults, Heavenly Father answered my prayers and put my mind at ease. I recall distinctly the confidence I had that an answer would come. Such is the faith of a young boy. Such was the faith of the young Joseph Smith.

Such faith is consistent with the conditions under which prayers are answered, as the following passage outlines: “Let him ask in faith, nothing wavering” (James 1:6).

As I grew older, I found that unwavering faith became increasingly difficult to exercise. The world plants seeds of doubt and prejudice in our minds and hearts. Hence, the Savior’s admonition that we “become as little children” (Matthew 18:3) has for me become a lifelong quest. I find that faith “as a grain of mustard seed” (Matthew 17:20) is within my reach at times but far from my reach at other times.

How can we consistently exercise this kind of faith? The following counsel provides insight into this righteous pursuit: “That which is of God is light; and he that receiveth light, and continueth in God, receiveth more



light; and that light groweth brighter and brighter until the perfect day” (D&C 50:24).

This is the process that the Prophet Joseph Smith went through. Like others before him, he proved himself by consistently exercising faith and the righteous use of agency over time. He continued in God, received more light, and that light grew brighter and brighter until the perfect day.

One incident in the Prophet’s life had a powerful influence on me as a young man:

“At a late hour of the night Joseph was lying down and slumbering heavily from weariness. . . . A few moments later an infuriated mob burst the door open and . . . seized him and were dragging him from the house when Emma screamed. . . .

“ . . . A group gathered . . . to hold a council. . . . After the council was concluded, the leading mobocrats declared that they would not kill him but would strip him naked and whip and tear his flesh. . . . They thrust a reeking tar paddle into his face and attempted to force it down his throat. . . .

“After they left Joseph, he attempted to rise, but fell back again from pain and exhaustion. He succeeded, however, in tearing the tar away from his face so that he could breathe freely. . . .

“Securing some covering for his person, the Prophet entered the house, and spent the night in cleansing his body and dressing his wounds. . . .

“The next morning, being the Sabbath,

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the people assembled at the usual hour of worship. With them came some of the mobbers. . . .

“With his flesh all bruised and scarred, Joseph went to the meeting and stood before the congregation, facing his assailants of the previous night calmly and manfully. He preached a powerful sermon and on the same day baptized three believers into the Church.”¹

I cannot begin to imagine the pain and discomfort the Prophet Joseph must have endured. He had ample excuse not to preach the following morning, but this and many other experiences of similar or worse consequence did not cause him to shrink from his responsibility. How, then, can we feel justified if we shrink from our duty because of a minor discomfort or inconvenience?

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“Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall answer, Here I am” (Isaiah 58:9).

“Then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God; and the doctrine of the priesthood shall distil upon thy soul as the dews from heaven.

“. . . And without compulsory means it

shall flow unto thee forever and ever” (D&C 121:45–46).

It is a privilege for me to testify that Joseph Smith is a prophet of God. Because he sought wisdom in the Sacred Grove and exercised diligence afterward, we enjoy the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The following tribute by President John Taylor (1808–87), written when he was a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, eloquently describes what the Prophet Joseph Smith did for all of us: “Joseph Smith, the Prophet and Seer of the Lord, has done more, save Jesus only, for the salvation of men in this world, than any other man that ever lived in it. . . . He lived great, and he died great in the eyes of God and his people; and like most of the Lord’s anointed in ancient times, has sealed his mission and his works with his own blood” (D&C 135:3).

May we consistently use our agency wisely and, like the Prophet Joseph Smith, exercise unwavering faith regardless of our circumstances so that our confidence may “wax strong in the presence of God.” ■

NOTE

1. George Q. Cannon, *Life of Joseph Smith the Prophet* (1986), 133–35; see also *History of the Church*, 1:261–64.