



By Elder Wilford W. Andersen
Of the Seventy

The Rock of Our Redeemer

I testify that those who keep His commandments will grow in faith and hope. They will be given strength to overcome all of life's trials.

Years ago I visited Nauvoo, Illinois, with my family. There the early Saints had come seeking refuge. Many had lost their homes and their farms, and some had lost their loved ones to the growing persecution. In Nauvoo they gathered and built a new and beautiful city. But the persecution was relentless, and by 1846 they were once again forced to leave their homes—this time in the middle of winter. They lined up their wagons on Parley Street, awaiting their turn to cross the frozen waters of the Mississippi River into an unknown future.

As we stood on Parley Street reflecting upon their desperate conditions, my eyes were drawn to a series of wooden signs nailed to fence posts upon which were etched quotes from the diaries of these suffering Saints. As we read each quote, to our amazement what we found in their words was not desperation and discouragement but confidence and commitment and even joy. They were filled with hope, the hope that is reflected by this quote from the diary of Sarah DeArmon Rich, February 1846: “To

start out on such a journey in the winter . . . would seem like walking into the jaws of death but we had faith . . . [and] we felt to rejoice that the day of our deliverance had come.”¹

These early Saints were indeed homeless, but they were not hopeless. Their hearts were broken, but their spirits were strong. They had learned a profound and important lesson. They had learned that hope, with its attendant blessings of peace and joy, does not depend upon circumstance. They had discovered that the true source of hope is faith—faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and in His infinite Atonement,



the one sure foundation upon which to build our lives.

Today another group of pioneers exemplifies this important principle. On Tuesday, the 12th of January, a massive earthquake struck the country of Haiti. The earthquake left the capital city of Port-au-Prince in shambles. Its impact was devastating—an estimated 1,000,000 people were left homeless, and over 200,000 were reported dead.

While the world followed the unprecedented international response, another remarkable and inspiring rescue effort was under way in Port-au-Prince—this one directed by a committee made up of local Haitian Church leaders organized according to the priesthood pattern and operating under inspiration. Members of the committee included, among others, the two stake presidents and the two stake Relief Society presidents in Port-au-Prince and the mission president, who at age 30 presides over 74 full-time missionaries in the Haiti Port-au-Prince Mission. All of his missionaries are Haitian, and miraculously not one of them was injured in this devastating earthquake.

Into the hands of these local inspired leaders were placed the resources of the Church, resources which included the generous contributions of many of you. For these contributions, the people of Haiti are profoundly thankful. Under the direction of the committee, truckloads of provisions arrived from the Dominican Republic almost immediately. Within days of the earthquake, planeloads of food, water purification systems, tents, blankets, and medical supplies arrived, along with a team of doctors.

The nine chapels in and around Port-au-Prince were mostly undamaged—another remarkable miracle. During the weeks that

followed the earthquake, they became shelters for over 5,000 Haitians and bases from which food, water, and medical attention were distributed. Basic needs were met, and order began to emerge out of chaos.

Though the faithful Haitian Saints have suffered greatly, they are filled with hope for the future. Like the early pioneers in 1846, their hearts are broken but their spirits are strong. They too are teaching us that hope and happiness and joy are not products of circumstance but of faith in the Lord.

The prophet Mormon, himself no stranger to difficult circumstances, understood and clearly taught this doctrine:

“And again, my beloved brethren, I would speak unto you concerning hope. . . .

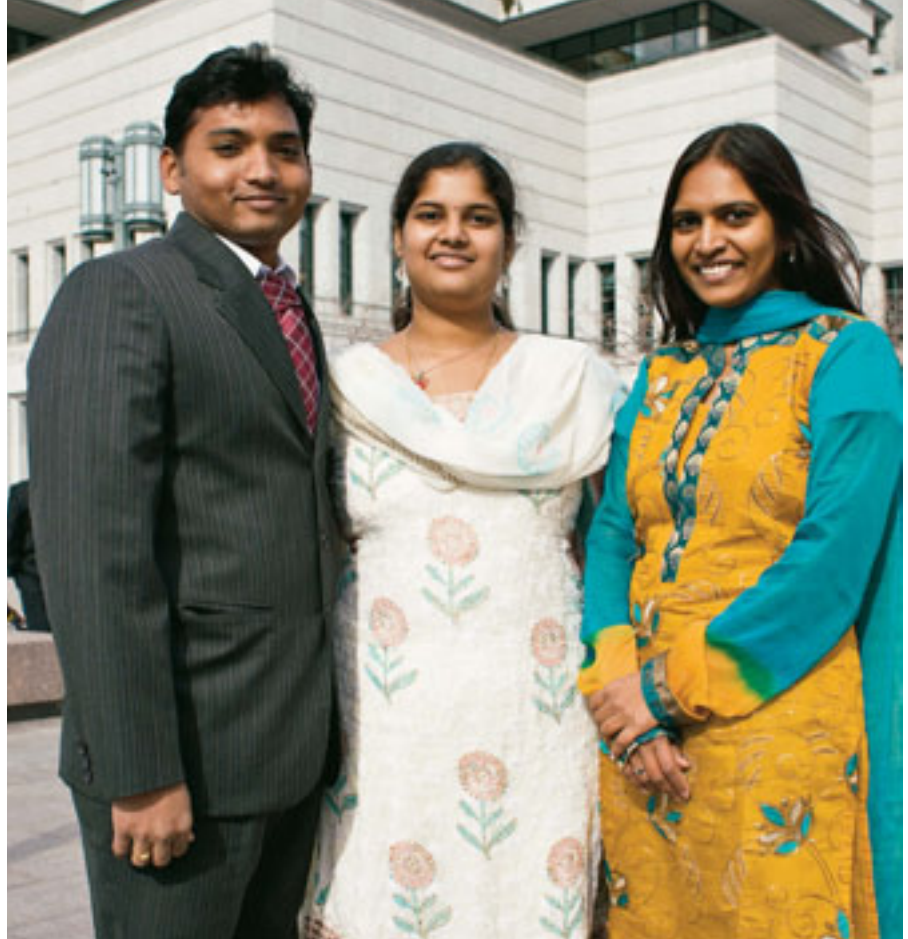
“ . . . Behold I say unto you that ye shall have hope through the atonement of Christ . . . , and this because of your faith in him according to the promise.

“Wherefore, if a man have faith he must needs have hope; for without faith there cannot be any hope.”²

Hope comes from faith in Jesus Christ. He has already overcome the world and has promised that He will wipe away our tears if we will only turn to Him and believe and follow.³

Some who at this very moment feel desperate or discouraged may wonder how they can possibly regain hope. If you are one of those, remember that hope comes as a result of faith. If we would build our hope, we must build our faith.

Faith in the Savior requires more than mere belief. The Apostle James taught that even the devils believe and tremble.⁴ But true faith requires work. The difference between the devils and the faithful members of this Church is not belief but work. Faith grows by



keeping the commandments. We must work at keeping the commandments. From the Bible Dictionary we read that “miracles do not produce faith but strong faith is developed by obedience to the gospel of Jesus Christ; in other words, faith comes by righteousness.”⁵

When we strive to keep the commandments of God, repenting of our sins and promising our best efforts to follow the Savior, we begin to grow in confidence that through the Atonement everything will be all right. Those feelings are confirmed by the Holy Ghost, who drives from us what our pioneer mothers and fathers called “our useless cares.” In spite of our trials, we are filled with a sense of well-being and feel to sing with them that indeed “all is well.”⁶

I do not wish to minimize the reality of clinical depression. For some, solutions to depression and anxieties will be found through consultation with competent professionals. But for most of us, sadness and fear begin to melt away and are replaced by happiness and peace when we put our trust in the Author of the plan of happiness

and when we develop faith in the Prince of Peace.

Recently a dear friend of mine passed away from cancer. He and his family are people of great faith. It was inspiring to see how their faith carried them through this very difficult time. They were filled with an inner peace that sustained and strengthened them. With their permission I would like to read from a family member’s letter written just days before her father passed away:

“The last few days have been especially difficult. . . . Last night as we gathered at Dad’s bedside, the Spirit of the Lord was palpable and truly acted as a comforter to us. We are at peace. . . . It has been the hardest thing any of us has ever experienced, but we feel peace in the knowledge that . . . our Father in Heaven has promised that we will live together as a family again. After the doctor told Dad in the hospital that there was nothing left to be done, he looked at all of us with perfect faith and boldly asked, ‘Does anybody in this room have a problem with the plan of

salvation?’ We do not and are grateful for a father and mother who have taught us to have perfect trust in the plan.”

I speak to all who suffer, to all who mourn, to all who now face or who will yet face trials and challenges in this life. My message is to all who are worried or afraid or discouraged. My message is but an echo, a reminder of the constant comforting counsel from a loving Father to His children since the world began.

“Remember, remember that it is upon the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God, that ye must build your foundation; that when the devil shall send forth his mighty winds, yea, his shafts in the whirlwind, yea, when all his hail and his mighty storm shall beat upon you, it shall have no power over you to drag you down to the gulf of misery and endless wo, because of the rock upon which ye are built, which is a sure foundation, a foundation whereon if men build they cannot fall.”⁷

I testify of Him, that He has overcome the world, that He will never forget or abandon us, for He has graven us upon the palms of His hands.⁸ I testify that those who keep His commandments will grow in faith and hope. They will be given strength to overcome all of life’s trials. They will experience peace that passes all understanding.⁹ In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Sarah DeArmon Rich, in Carol Cornwall Madsen, *Journey to Zion: Voices from the Mormon Trail* (1997), 173–74; spelling modernized.
2. Moroni 7:40–42.
3. See Revelation 7:14–17.
4. See James 2:19.
5. Bible Dictionary, “Faith.”
6. “Come, Come, Ye Saints,” *Hymns*, no. 30.
7. Helaman 5:12.
8. See 1 Nephi 21:16.
9. See Philippians 4:7.