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Turn to the Lord

Never let an earthly circumstance disable you spiritually.

Many years ago, I observed a heartbreak—which became a tragedy. A young couple was nearing the delivery of their first child. Their lives were filled with the anticipation and excitement of this monumental experience. During the delivery, complications arose and the baby died. Heartbreak turned to grief, grief turned to anger, anger turned to blame, and blame turned to revenge toward the doctor, whom they held fully responsible. Parents and other family members became heavily involved, together seeking to ruin the reputation and the career of the physician. As weeks and then months of acrimony consumed the family, their bitterness was extended to the Lord. “How could He allow this horrible thing to occur?” They rejected the repeated efforts of Church leaders and members to spiritually and emotionally comfort them and, in time, disassociated themselves from the Church. Four generations of the family have now been affected. Where once there were faith and devotion to the Lord and His Church, there has been no spiritual activity by any family member for decades.

In the most difficult circumstances of life, there is often only one source of peace. The Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ, extends His grace with the invitation “Come unto me, all ye that

labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28). He further promises, “My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you” (John 14:27).

My paternal grandparents had two children, a son (my father) and a daughter. After serving a mission and military service in Hawaii, my father returned to the islands in 1946 to establish himself professionally and raise his family. His parents lived in Salt Lake City, as did his sister. She married in 1946 and four years later was expecting a child. There is something very special for parents to anticipate a daughter (in this instance an only daughter) giving birth for the first time. No one knew that she was carrying twins. Sadly, she and the twins all died during childbirth.

My grandparents were heartbroken. Their grief, however, immediately turned them to the Lord and His Atonement. Without dwelling on why this could happen and who might be to blame, they focused on living a righteous life. My grandparents never had wealth; they were never among the socially elite; they never held high position in the Church—they were simply devoted Latter-day Saints.

After retiring professionally in 1956, they moved to Hawaii to be with their only posterity. The ensuing decades found them loving their family, serving

in the Church, and mostly, they just enjoyed being together. They never liked being apart and even spoke of whoever died first finding a way to help them reunite soon. Nearing their 90th birthdays and after 65 years of marriage, they passed away within hours of each other by natural causes. As their bishop, I conducted their double funeral.

The faithfulness of Grandpa Art and Grandma Lou, especially when faced with difficulty, has now influenced four generations that have followed. Directly and profoundly, it affected their son (my father) and my mother when my parents' own daughter, their youngest child, died due to complications caused by giving birth. At 34 years of age, she passed away 10 days after

childbirth, leaving 4 children, 10 days to 8 years old. With the example that they had seen in the previous generation, my parents—without hesitation—turned to the Lord for solace.

Throughout the world and among the membership of the Church, there is great joy and great pain. Both are part of the plan. Without one, we cannot know the other. “Men are, that they might have joy” (2 Nephi 2:25) and “for it must needs be, that there is an opposition in all things” (2 Nephi 2:11) are not contradictory; they are complementary. In describing how he felt when he turned to the Lord, Alma the Younger said, “My soul was filled with joy as exceeding as was my pain” (Alma 36:20).

Some are overcome by major problems; others let small matters become big. Symonds Ryder was a Campbellite leader who heard about the Church and had a meeting with Joseph Smith. Moved by this experience, he joined the Church in June 1831. Immediately thereafter, he was ordained an elder and called to serve a mission. However, in his call letter from the First Presidency and on his official commission to preach, his name was misspelled—by one letter. His last name showed as R-i-d-e-r, not the correct R-y-d-e-r. This caused him to question his call and those from whom it came. He chose not to go on the mission and fell away, which soon led to hatred and intense opposition toward Joseph and the Church. In March 1832, when Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon were ripped from home during the night by an angry mob and tarred and feathered, a voice was heard to shout, “Simonds, Simonds [*sic*], where’s the tar bucket?” (*History of the Church*, 1:262–63). In less than 10 months, Symonds Ryder went from an eager convert to a mob leader, his spiritual decline starting with





the offense taken over the misspelling of his name—by one letter. No matter the size of the issue, how we respond can reset the course of our life.

The Prophet Joseph Smith provided a model in handling personal tragedy and opposition. Revealed to him while in the inhumane surroundings of the Liberty Jail was this divine direction (which, in part, was a description of Joseph's life to that point and also a forewarning): If "fools shall have thee in derision, . . . if thou art called to pass through tribulation; . . . if thine enemies fall upon thee; . . . if thou shouldst be cast into the pit, or into the hands of murderers, . . . 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" (D&C 122:1, 5–7). Then the profound statement: "The Son of Man hath descended below them all. Art thou greater than he?" (verse 8). This is followed by clear direction and great promises. "Therefore, hold on thy way,

and . . . fear not what man can do, for God shall be with you forever and ever" (verse 9).

Over the ensuing years, Joseph Smith continued to righteously endure a life full of adversity. He offered this faith-filled perspective: "And as for the perils which I am called to pass through, they seem but a small thing to me. . . . Deep water is what I am wont to swim in. . . . I . . . glory in tribulation; for . . . God . . . [has] delivered me out of them all, and will deliver me from henceforth" (D&C 127:2). Joseph's confidence in overcoming constant opposition was based on his ability to continually turn to the Lord.

If you feel you have been wronged—by anyone (a family member, a friend, another member of the Church, a Church leader, a business associate) or by anything (the death of a loved one, health problems, a financial reversal, abuse, addictions)—deal with the matter directly and with all the strength you have. "Hold on thy way" (D&C 122:9); giving up is not an option. And, without delay, turn to the Lord. Exercise all of the faith you have

in Him. Let Him share your burden. Allow His grace to lighten your load. We are promised that we will "suffer no manner of afflictions, save it were swallowed up in the joy of Christ" (Alma 31:38). Never let an earthly circumstance disable you spiritually.

His most exemplary act, the Atonement, required Jesus to descend "below all things" (D&C 88:6) and suffer "the pains of all men" (2 Nephi 9:21). Thus we understand the Atonement has broader purpose than providing a means to overcome sin. This greatest of all earthly accomplishments gives the Savior the power to fulfill this promise: "If ye will turn to the Lord with full purpose of heart, and put your trust in him, and serve him with all diligence . . . , if ye do this, he will . . . deliver you out of bondage" (Mosiah 7:33).

As we commemorate this Easter morning, let us turn to the Lord, our "bright and morning star" (Revelation 22:16). I testify He will forever light our way, our truth, and our life (see John 14:6), in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■