



UPON THE TOP OF THE Waters

I had been pleading with Heavenly Father to remove my anxiety and despair, but without these trials, I might not reach whatever “promised land” He was leading me to.

By Jon Warner

About six months after graduating from college, I started experiencing panic attacks, bouts of anxiety, and waves of depression. I had no idea where these feelings came from, but they were strong and debilitating.

I struggled to stay focused. At work, any new task brought such anxiety that I couldn't sit still. My mind would race, and my heart would beat so hard that I thought it would leap out of my chest. This would go on for days, and after returning home from work each day, I would collapse on the couch. Before I knew it, the evening was gone and another workday had begun.

These feelings persisted for months, even after I found a new job and sought professional help.

I prayed every morning on the way to work for the strength to just make it through the day and return home to my wife and daughter. I couldn't see an end to my struggle, and I often wanted to give up. Many days I begged heaven for help as my eyes filled with tears. I prayed with more sincerity than I ever had before, pleading with Heavenly Father to help me understand this trial and to remove it from me.

I felt lost in darkness and despair when I didn't feel the Spirit. But when the Spirit lifted me out of my hopelessness, I found the confidence to continue—if only until my next prayer. I came to rely on my Heavenly Father for more than just a prayer at mealtime or a casual nightly check-in. As a result, I grew closer to Him.

Tossed upon the Waves

In the middle of my anxiety and despair, I reread the account of the Jaredites crossing the “great deep” (Ether 2:25). I can only imagine their anxious anticipation as they entered their barges. Their journey might be perilous, but they knew they were headed to “a land choice above all other lands” (Ether 2:15).

Of their journey, we read:

“The Lord God caused that there should be a furious wind blow upon the face of the waters, towards the promised land; and thus they were tossed upon the waves of the sea before the wind.

“And it came to pass that they were many times buried in the depths of the sea, because of the mountain waves which broke upon them, and also the great and terrible tempests which were caused by the fierceness of the wind.

“. . . When they were encompassed about by many waters they did cry unto the Lord, and he did bring them forth again upon the top of the waters.

“And it came to pass that the wind did never cease to blow towards the promised land while they were upon the waters; and thus they were driven forth before the wind” (Ether 6:5–8).

These verses became personal to me. I felt that I was in my own barge, with winds of anxiety beating upon me and waves of depression swelling over me and burying me in the depths of despair. When I was “encompassed about” and would cry unto the Lord, I would break through the surface but would then be buried once more.

I read verse 8 again: “The wind did never cease to blow *towards the promised land* . . . and thus they were driven forth before the wind” (emphasis added). Then it hit me. The very wind that caused the mountainous waves to bury the barges also blessed the Jaredites on their journey. I had been pleading with Heavenly Father to calm the wind and waves, but without them, I might not reach whatever “promised land” He was leading me to.

These verses changed my outlook on life. My anxiety and depression had increased my reliance on Heavenly Father. Without the wind and waves, I might never have come to know God as I have—and the Jaredites might never have reached the promised land.

For now, a few years after this experience, my winds of anxiety are no longer gusting and my waves of depression have ceased to bury me. But if and when the tempest returns, I will call upon the Lord and be thankful, knowing that calm seas don’t carry barges to the promised land—stormy seas do. ■

The author lives in Utah, USA.



NEVER LOSE FAITH

“How do you best respond when mental or emotional challenges confront you or those you love? Above all, never lose faith in your Father in Heaven, who loves you more than you can comprehend. . . .

“Faithfully pursue the time-tested devotional practices that bring the Spirit of the Lord into your life. Seek the counsel of those who hold keys for your spiritual well-being. Ask for and cherish priesthood blessings. Take the sacrament every week, and hold fast to the perfecting promises of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. . . .

“. . . Broken minds can be healed just the way broken bones and broken hearts are healed. While God is at work making those repairs, the rest of us can help by being merciful, nonjudgmental, and kind.”

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Like a Broken Vessel,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2013, 40, 41.