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OVERCOMING THE DANGER OF DOUBT

During the Savior's earthly ministry, He was tested by Satan. "And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred.

"And when the tempter came to him, he said, *If thou be the Son of God*, command that these stones be made bread" (Matthew 4:2–3; emphasis added).

The adversary tempted the Savior by placing His divinity in doubt. He used the conditional phrase "*If thou be the Son of God.*"

But using the strength that comes from knowing the scriptures, the Lord rejected the temptation. "It is written," He said, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4).

This conversation between Jesus Christ and Satan gives us a clear

idea of how the adversary tempts us to place insidious doubts in our hearts and minds.

A Hidden Invasion

Where I grew up in Sonora, Mexico, there are large trees called Indian laurel. They are nearly 100 feet (30 m) high, with huge trunks and well-developed branch and leaf structures. Recently many of these trees were attacked by a disease called Texas root rot. When this fungus attacks, the effects are not seen for some years. However, the fungus gradually rots the roots of those beautiful trees, and they begin to die. The leaves turn yellow and fall. Then the trunk and branches dry up, and the trees must be cut down.

Like the fungus that enters these trees, doubts can invade our thoughts.

Even large trees can succumb to unseen fungus. It's the same with faith—if we let doubt grow, it can rot spiritual roots until we topple.

If we let them grow, over time they can affect our roots and rot our foundation of faith until we too may be cut down.

So-called friends can introduce doubt by asking hurtful questions. Internet sites can generate doubt by presenting information out of



context. But doubts especially intensify when we ourselves, feeling abandoned or overwhelmed, question the burdens we bear. The natural man's complaints, such as "Why me, Lord?" or "If I am Thy servant, why dost Thou allow . . .," can be

whispered in our ears by the father of lies. He has a sinister purpose: to weaken our certainty that we are God's children.

To counter such doubt, we must remember the perfection of our Father's plan. Rather than dwelling

on negative questions, we should ask for strength, as did Joseph Smith: "Remember thy suffering saints, O our God; and thy servants will rejoice in thy name forever" (D&C 121:6). We must also trust that the Lord will deliver us (see 1 Corinthians 10:13).

Robbed at Gunpoint

I remember a personal experience that helped me learn to replace doubt with hope. I was serving as a stake president at the time. My children were small. My wife and I owned a tortilla-making business, and we worked long hours.

One of those nights, when my wife and I had to make tortillas from midnight until 3:00 a.m., three young men came to our shop. All three were high on drugs. Two of them wore ski masks and long raincoats. The raincoats hid their weapons. They threatened us, put us inside the shop, and closed the door. One stood guard outside, repeatedly shouting, "Kill them! Kill them!"

One of the young men put the barrel of his gun against my temple and forced me to lie down. The other put the barrel of his gun to my wife's chest. I prayed that my children would not become orphans, and the Lord protected us. The robbers finally locked us in the bathroom and disappeared, driving away in my truck.

We escaped and called for help. The police came and so did my brother. As soon as possible, we took my wife home. Then my brother and I went looking, unsuccessfully, for my truck. Feeling very sad, I returned home at 5:00 a.m.

Where Was My Family?

To my surprise, my wife and children were not there. A neighbor told

me that my four-year-old daughter was suffering stomach pain, and they had rushed her to the hospital. Knowing that we would desperately need money for her care, I felt I had no choice but to return to the tortilla shop and fill the orders for the day. Since my wife and I were the only workers, I was alone, rushing like crazy, kneading, putting dough in the hopper, adjusting the size, running back and forth to finish tortillas and wait on customers.

By now it was 8:00 a.m. I began to reflect on the events of the night. The question went through my mind, "If you are the stake president, why is all this happening to you?"

Everything but Tortillas

I pushed the malicious thought aside and prayed for strength. Then I heard a voice behind me: "President." It was my bishop and a brother from the ward, my home teachers.

The bishop said, "We don't know how to make tortillas, so we can't help you here. But don't worry about your truck, your wife, your sick daughter, or your other children. You stay here and we will help you with the rest." My eyes filled with tears of gratitude.

They took charge of everything but tortillas. That afternoon when I returned home, I found my house clean and tidy, my shirts ironed, and food waiting for me. No one was home, but I knew that the Relief Society had been there. The police



The spiritual roots of my family tree have been strengthened for six generations because of the unwavering faith of my great-grandfather.

had found my truck, and someone from the ward had paid to get it released.

I quickly went to see my wife and daughter. The bishop had been there and had given my daughter a blessing. She had appendicitis, but everything was under control.

As my wife and I talked, we were impressed that the bishop had not used fast offerings or items from the bishops' storehouse to assist us. Rather, he used the resources and mercy of the members of our ward.

A few days later, while my daughter was recuperating and my wife was helping me in the tortilla shop, three women arrived. They were the mothers of the young thieves and had come to offer their apologies. They explained that the police had caught their sons. Later these mothers practically dragged their sons into the shop to ask forgiveness, and we forgave them.

They Did Not Doubt

Another example in my family history reminds me not to doubt. In 1913 in Mexico, Elder Ernest Young and his companions preached the gospel to my great-great-grandmother Maria de Jesus de Monroy, a widow; her three daughters, Natalia, Jovita, and Guadalupe; and her only son, Rafael—my great-grandfather. They were baptized on June 10. Two months later, citizens of the United States left the country because of the Mexican Revolution.

On August 29, 1913, the day President Rey L. Pratt and all American missionaries were to depart, Rafael Monroy, a 34-year-old convert of two months, went to the mission home to express his concern. "What is going to become of us?" he asked.

"There is no organized branch in San Marcos, and we don't have the priesthood." Listening to Rafael's concerns, President Pratt asked him to sit down. He placed his hands on Rafael's head, conferred on him the Melchizedek Priesthood, ordained him an elder, and set him apart as president of the San Marcos Branch.

Rafael, who understood that his baptismal covenant was sacred and eternal, also understood that he should share the gospel. For 23 months he and his counselor, Vicente Morales, helped in the conversion and baptism of more than 50 people. They preached to dozens more.

Then, on July 17, 1915, the revolution arrived in San Marcos. Revolutionary soldiers accused Rafael and Vicente of belonging to and supporting the opposing army, hiding weapons, and belonging to a strange religion. They took them prisoner, tortured them, and hanged them until they fainted. Then the soldiers gave them one last chance to save their lives. They would be spared if they would renounce their religion. Rafael answered, "I cannot do it, for I know that what I have received is true."

Rafael and Vicente did not doubt. They acted consistent with their knowledge and testimony. At the end of that day, they were executed by the Liberation Army of the South, giving their lives for what they believed.¹

Still True Today

Let us not doubt that this work is true. Whenever we are tried with doubts, let us ponder our spiritual experiences. Doing so will help us to erase the doubts. This is particularly true for those who have returned from full-time missionary service and then allowed doubts to creep in, for long-time members who have grown tired of enduring, and for recent converts who initially felt great joy but have not nourished their faith.

If such is your case, I would like to say: If the gospel was true when you sent in your missionary application (and it was!), if it was true when you entered the temple (and it was!), if it was true when you were converted and baptized or when you converted and baptized others (and it was!), if it was true when you were sealed (and it was!), then it is equally true today!

Jesus showed by example that we can receive strength from the scriptures. Joseph Smith showed that asking in prayer will bring relief. Those who have given their lives, nothing doubting, have shown that even when faced with death, we have hope.

We must not succumb to desperation, for trials and temptations are temporary. We can all find hope in the Savior's declaration: "Look unto me in every thought; doubt not, fear not" (D&C 6:36). ■

NOTE

1. See Rey L. Pratt, in Conference Report, Apr. 1920, 90–93.