



By Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

God Will Do Something Unimaginable

God has prepared His children and His Church for this time.

Not long after arriving in the Salt Lake Valley, the Latter-day Saints began building their holy temple. They felt they had finally found a place where they could worship God in peace and be free from persecution.

However, just as the temple foundation was nearing completion, an army of United States soldiers approached to forcibly install a new governor.

Because Church leaders did not know how hostile the army would be, Brigham Young ordered the Saints to evacuate and bury the temple foundation.

I'm sure some members of the Church wondered why their efforts to build God's kingdom were constantly being frustrated.

Eventually, the danger passed, and the temple foundations were excavated and inspected. It was then that the pioneer builders discovered that some of the original sandstones had cracked, making them unsuitable as a foundation.

Consequently, Brigham had them repair the foundation so that it could adequately support the granite¹ walls of the majestic Salt Lake Temple.² Finally, the Saints could sing the

hymn "How Firm a Foundation"³ and know their holy temple was built on a solid foundation that would last for generations.

This story can teach us how God uses adversity to bring about His purposes.

A Worldwide Pandemic

If this sounds familiar given the circumstances in which we find

ourselves today, it's because it is.

I doubt there is a person who hears my voice or reads my words who has not been affected by the worldwide pandemic.

To those who mourn the loss of family and friends, we mourn with you. We plead with Heavenly Father to comfort and console you.

The long-term consequences of this virus go beyond physical health. Many families have lost incomes and are threatened with hunger, uncertainty, and apprehension. We admire the selfless efforts of so many to prevent the spread of this disease. We are humbled by the quiet sacrifice and noble efforts of those who have risked their own safety to assist, heal, and support people in need. Our hearts are full of gratitude for your goodness and compassion.

We pray mightily that God will open the windows of heaven and fill your lives with God's eternal blessings.



Lo Narváz, Valparaíso, Chile

We Are Seeds

There are still a lot of unknowns about this virus. But if there is one thing I do know, it is that this virus did not catch Heavenly Father by surprise. He did not have to muster additional battalions of angels, call emergency meetings, or divert resources from the world-creation division to handle an unexpected need.

My message today is that even though this pandemic is not what we wanted or expected, God has prepared His children and His Church for this time.

We will endure this, yes. But we will do more than simply grit our teeth, hold on, and wait for things to return to the old normal. We will move forward, and we will be better as a result.

In a way, we are seeds. And for seeds to reach their potential, they must be buried before they can sprout. It is my witness that though at times we may feel buried by the trials of life or surrounded by emotional

darkness, the love of God and the blessings of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ will bring something unimaginable to spring forth.

Blessings Come from Hardship

Every dispensation has faced its times of trial and hardship.

Enoch and his people lived in a time of wickedness, wars, and bloodshed. “But the Lord came and dwelt with his people.” He had something unimaginable in mind for them. He helped them establish Zion—a people “of one heart and one mind” who “dwelt in righteousness.”⁴

Young Joseph, the son of Jacob, was thrown into a pit, sold into slavery, betrayed, and abandoned.⁵ Joseph must have wondered if God had forgotten him. God had something unimaginable in mind for Joseph. He used this period of trial to strengthen Joseph’s character and put him in a position to save his family.⁶

Think of Joseph Smith the Prophet while imprisoned in Liberty Jail, how

he pled for relief for the suffering Saints. He must have wondered how Zion could be established in those circumstances. But the Lord spoke peace to him, and the glorious revelation that followed brought peace to the Saints—and it continues to bring peace to you and me.⁷

How many times in the early years of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints did the Saints despair and wonder if God had forgotten them? But through persecutions, perils, and threats of extermination, the Lord God of Israel had something else in mind for His little flock. Something unimaginable.

What do we learn from these examples—and the hundreds of others in the scriptures?

First, the righteous are not given a free pass that allows them to avoid the valleys of shadow. We all must walk through difficult times, for it is in these times of adversity that we learn principles that fortify our characters and cause us to draw closer to God.



Montegrotto Terme, Padua, Italy

Second, our Heavenly Father knows that we suffer, and because we are His children, He will not abandon us.⁸

Think of the compassionate one, the Savior, who spent so much of His life ministering to the sick, the lonely, the doubting, the despairing.⁹ Do you think He is any less concerned about you today?

My dear friends, my beloved brothers and sisters, God will watch over and shepherd you during these times of uncertainty and fear. He knows you. He hears your pleas. He is faithful and dependable. He will fulfill His promises.

God has something unimaginable in mind for you personally and the Church collectively—a marvelous work and a wonder.

We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet

Our best days are ahead of us, not behind us. This is why God gives us *modern* revelation! Without it, life might feel like flying in a holding pattern, waiting for the fog to lift so we can land safely. The Lord's purposes for us are much higher than that. Because this is the Church of the living Christ, and because He directs His prophets, we are moving forward and upward to places we've never been, to heights we can hardly imagine!

Now, this does not mean we won't experience turbulence in our flight through mortality. It doesn't mean there won't be unexpected instrument failures, mechanical malfunctions, or serious weather challenges. In fact, things might get worse before they get better.

As a fighter pilot and airline captain, I learned that while I could not choose the adversity I would encounter during a flight, I could

choose how I prepared and how I reacted. What is needed during times of crisis is calm and clear-headed trust.

How do we do this?

We face the facts and return to the fundamentals, to the basic gospel principles, to what matters most. You strengthen your private religious behavior—like prayer and scripture study and keeping God's commandments. You make the decisions based on best proven practices.

Focus on the things you can do and not on the things you cannot do.

You muster your faith. And you listen for the guiding word of the Lord and His prophet to lead you to safety.

Remember, this is the Church of Jesus Christ—He is at the helm.

Think of the many inspired advancements that happened in the past decade alone. To mention just a few:

- The sacrament was reemphasized as center of our Sabbath worship.
- *Come, Follow Me* was provided as a home-centered, Church-supported tool to strengthen individuals and families.
- We began a higher and holier way of ministering to all.
- The use of technology in sharing the gospel and doing the Lord's work has spread throughout the Church.

Even these general conference sessions would not be possible without the wonderful tools of technology.

Brothers and sisters, with Christ at the helm, things will not only be all right; they will be unimaginable.



Temecula, California, USA

The Work of Gathering Israel Goes Forward

At first it may have seemed that a worldwide pandemic would be a roadblock to the Lord's work. For example, traditional methods of sharing the gospel have not been possible. However, the pandemic is revealing new and more creative ways of reaching out to the honest in heart. The work of gathering Israel is increasing in power and enthusiasm. Hundreds and thousands of stories attest to this.

A good friend living in beautiful Norway wrote to Harriet and me about a recent increase in baptisms. "In locations where the Church is small," she wrote, "twigs will become branches, and branches will become wards!!"

In Latvia, a woman who had discovered the Church by clicking on an internet ad was so excited to learn about the gospel of Jesus Christ that she showed up to her appointment an hour early, and before the missionaries ended the first lesson, she asked for a date to be baptized.

In Eastern Europe, one woman who received a call from the missionaries exclaimed, "Sisters, why haven't you called earlier? I've been waiting!"



Many of our missionaries are busier than ever. Many are teaching more people than ever. There is an increased connection between members and missionaries.

In the past, we might have been so tied to traditional approaches that it took a pandemic to open our eyes. Perhaps we were still building with sandstone when granite was already available. Of necessity, we are now learning how to use a variety of methods, including technology, to invite people—in normal and natural ways—to come and see, come and help, and come and belong.

His Work, His Ways

This is the Lord’s work. He invites us to find His ways of doing it, and they may differ from our past experiences.

This happened to Simon Peter and other disciples who went fishing on the Sea of Tiberias.

“That night they caught nothing.

“But when the morning [came], Jesus stood on the shore. . . .

“And he said unto them, Cast the net on the [other] side of the ship, and ye shall find.”

They did cast their nets on the other side and “were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes.”¹⁰

God has revealed and will continue to reveal His almighty hand. The day will come when we will look back

and know that during this time of adversity, God was helping us to find better ways—His ways—to build His kingdom on a firm foundation.

I bear my witness that this is God’s work and He will continue to do many unimaginable things among His children, His people. God holds us in the palm of His caring and compassionate hands.

I testify that President Russell M. Nelson is God’s prophet for our day.

As an Apostle of the Lord, I invite and bless you to “cheerfully do all things that lie in [your] power; and then may [you] stand still, with the utmost assurance, to see the salvation of God, and for his arm to be revealed.”¹¹ And I promise that the Lord will cause unimaginable things to come from your righteous labors. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Quartz monzonite that looked like granite, taken from a quarry at the mouth of Little Cottonwood Canyon, 20 miles (32 km) southeast of the city.
2. For a more in-depth look at this period of history, see *Saints: The Story of the Church of Jesus Christ in the Latter Days*, vol. 2, *No Unhallowed Hand, 1846–1893* (2020), chapters 17, 19, and 21.
3. See “How Firm a Foundation,” *Hymns*, no. 85.

The verses of this great anthem can serve as a theme for our times, and when we listen to the lyrics with new ears, it provides insight into the challenges we face:

In ev’ry condition—in sickness, in health,

*In poverty’s vale or abounding in wealth,
At home or abroad, on the land or the sea—
As thy days may demand, . . . so thy succor
shall be.*

*Fear not, I am with thee; oh, be not dismayed,
For I am thy God and will still give thee aid.
I’ll strengthen thee, help thee, and cause
thee to stand,
Upheld by my righteous, . . . omnipotent
hand.*

*When through the deep waters I call thee
to go,
The rivers of sorrow shall not thee o’erflow,
For I will be with thee, thy troubles to bless,
And sanctify to thee . . . thy deepest distress.*

*When through fiery trials thy pathway
shall lie,
My grace, all sufficient, shall be thy supply.
The flame shall not hurt thee; I only design
Thy dross to consume . . . and thy gold to
refine. . . .*

*The soul that on Jesus hath leaned for repose
I will not, I cannot, desert to his foes;
That soul, though all hell should endeavor
to shake,
I’ll never, no never, . . . no never forsake!*

4. See Moses 7:13–18.

5. Joseph was perhaps as young as 17 when his brothers sold him into slavery (see Genesis 37:2). He was 30 years old when he entered Pharaoh’s service (see Genesis 41:46). Can you imagine how difficult it was for a young man in his prime to be betrayed, sold into slavery, falsely accused, and then imprisoned? Joseph certainly is a model for not only the youth of the Church but also every man, woman, and child who desires to take up the cross and follow the Savior.

6. See Genesis 45:4–11; 50:20–21. In Psalm 105:17–18, we read, “He sent a man before them, even Joseph, who was sold for a servant: whose feet they hurt with fetters: he was laid in iron.” In another translation, verse 18 reads, “They have afflicted with fetters his feet, Iron hath entered his soul” (Young’s Literal Translation). To me, this suggests that Joseph’s hardships gave him a soul as strong and resilient as iron—a quality he would need for the great and unimaginable future the Lord had in store for him.

7. See Doctrine and Covenants 121–23.

8. If God commands His children to be aware of and compassionate toward the hungry, the needy, the naked, the sick, and the afflicted, surely He will be aware of and merciful to us, His children (see Mormon 8:39).

9. See Luke 7:11–17.

10. See John 21:1–6.

11. Doctrine and Covenants 123:17.