



The Strengthening Power of Faith

*Faith is a gift from the Lord through
which the righteous are empowered
to do remarkable things.*

From the Life of George Albert Smith

In 1919 George Albert Smith, then a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, was called as president of the European Mission. In a message to the local Saints shortly after his arrival, President Smith noted the difficult conditions in Europe, which was still recovering from the devastations of World War I: “I realize that we are living in an important period in the world’s history. With new, strained conditions confronting the nations, and a spirit of unrest rife almost everywhere, among the children of men, I, therefore, sense the great responsibility assumed in meeting them, and most earnestly desire divine guidance in the discharge of my duties.” President Smith had faith that despite the trying times they faced, the efforts of the members and the missionaries would be rewarded with success: “Assisted by good, capable associates at [mission] headquarters, and faithful men and women in the field, I look with pleasant anticipation for a fruitful harvest of honest souls.”¹

One of President Smith’s most pressing duties as mission president was to increase the number of missionaries in Europe. The Church had sent very few missionaries to Europe during the war, and now food shortages and other economic problems made European government officials unwilling to grant visas to foreigners. President Smith’s difficult task was to persuade these officials to allow missionaries into their countries. In a letter to his daughter Emily, President Smith told of a trip to London for this purpose.



“Scripture is replete with evidences of the power of faith. . . . By faith, the Prophet Elijah called down fire from heaven to consume his offering.”

“Our American Ambassador has been very kind and succeeded in securing an interview for us with Sir Robert Horne, the Minister of Labour for Great Britain. When we presented ourselves at his office, we handed our letter from the Ambassador to Sir Robert’s secretary, who asked us if our business would hold over as his chief was leaving in a few minutes for Scotland to be gone three weeks. I assured him that we would greatly appreciate five minutes of his time now as we did not live in London and our business was urgent. The secretary went in to Sir Robert and soon returned with the information that he would postpone his trip and meet us at four o’clock that day. I had prayed most fervently that morning that our way might be opened and when we were invited to return I felt most grateful to our Heavenly Father.”

At the appointed hour, President Smith and his companions were invited into Sir Robert Horne’s private office. “We tried to tell him what we needed and assured him that Great Britain needed what we were asking. For an hour and nearly a half he was a most interested listener to part of the history of the Church and our belief, etc.

“When I had finished he again asked what we wanted of him and when we told him we wanted the privilege of recruiting our missionary forces up to two hundred and fifty, the same as before the war, he said it would afford him pleasure to issue instructions to his department to allow that number to land as fast as they should arrive. Of course we were much pleased and left him with the assurance that he had lifted quite a burden from our minds.

“I feel sure we made a friend of one of England’s most influential men and I would not hesitate to go to him at any time if necessity required.”²

James Gunn McKay, one of President Smith’s missionaries who was present at the meeting with Sir Robert Horne, later said: “Look at the wonderful work he accomplished. There were only a few elders there [in the mission]. The way seemed to be hedged up, and yet he came imbued with the inspiration of the Lord, and was able to knock at the doors of the officials, to gain their confidence; and eventually we obtained the privileges we wanted, that elders might

come to take up their work and fulfil their missions in furthering the cause of God and accomplishing his work, and in that way he secured to us a testimony that God directs that work.”³ Elder McKay attributed President Smith’s success to his “faith and devotion and charity toward all those with whom he associated.” “I labored with him,” he said. “I counseled with him; I prayed with him, and I know that his faith and loyalty are as deep as life itself.”⁴ [See suggestion 1 on page 188.]

Teachings of George Albert Smith

The power of faith is evident in the scriptures.

We are informed that without faith we cannot please God [see Hebrews 11:6]. It is the moving cause of all action, and Scripture is replete with evidences of the power of faith. It was Noah’s faith that enabled him to build an ark, and as a result of obedience to the commandments of God he and his household were saved, while those who lacked faith were buried in the great flood [see Genesis 6:13–22; 7:1–24].

It was through faith that Lot and the members of his family were preserved when fire from heaven consumed the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, and destroyed the inhabitants who had not faith [see Genesis 19:12–25].⁵

By faith Moses led the children of Israel from bondage, passing through the Red sea as by dry land, which, the pursuing hosts of the Egyptians essaying to do, were drowned. The multitude were fed with bread from heaven. When Moses smote the rock in Horeb, water gushed forth to slake [satisfy] their thirst; and, passing through the wilderness, they were led to the promised land. [See Exodus 14:21–31; 16:14–15; 17:5–6.]⁶

When Daniel continued to pray openly to the God of Israel, contrary to a decree which had been prepared by his enemies purposely to destroy him, he was cast into a den of lions and left there all night. He knew his Heavenly Father could preserve him and his confidence was unshaken. The next morning the king went early to the pit and found Daniel alive. His faith had rendered the wild



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beasts harmless and earned for him the devotion of the king. [See Daniel 6:4–28.]

Three Hebrews, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who refused to worship a golden image set up by Nebuchadnezzar, were cast into a fiery furnace heated seven times hotter than usual. They trusted in the living God and their faith was rewarded by the preservation of their lives. [See Daniel 3:8–28.]

By faith, the Prophet Elijah called down fire from heaven to consume his offering, and the king and the people were convinced that the God of Israel was God and that Baal was not [see 1 Kings 18:36–40].

It was by faith that the brother of Jared and his followers retained the language of their fathers during the confusion of tongues at the Tower of Babel, and were brought to this Western Hemisphere [see Ether 1:33–43]. . . . It was a similar faith that enabled Lehi to bring

his family across the sea and plant their feet on this land, choice above all other lands.

It was faith that enabled the disciples of Jesus to endure the persecution that overtook them, and in spite of the opposition of the Jews, to establish the gospel which the Savior had delivered to them.⁷

It was by faith that all the miracles were wrought by the Redeemer of the world, and by those who were associated with Him. From the beginning of time until now it has been the faithful man who has had power with God.⁸ [See suggestion 2 on pages 188–89.]

The power of faith is evident in the lives of righteous Saints in this dispensation.

In this latter dispensation it was because of his implicit faith in God that the boy prophet [Joseph Smith] went into the woods and knelt down and prayed, and received the first great heavenly manifestation that came to him, by which the personality of the Godhead was again made known to mankind. It was by faith that he was able to go to the hill Cumorah and receive from the hands of the angel those sacred records that he later translated by the gift and power of God. It was by faith he led his people from Kirtland to the land of Missouri and back to Illinois, and though repeatedly plundered and driven from their homes, the faith that had been planted in their hearts remained with them, and they knew that God was mindful of them. It was by faith that the great city of Nauvoo was founded, under the direction of the Prophet Joseph Smith; and by faith the glorious truths contained in the Doctrine and Covenants were received by him.

It was by faith that Brigham Young led the people into this western land [the Salt Lake Valley]; and, when he arrived upon the summit of the mountain and looked over the valley, God gave to him a witness that this was the place where Israel should be planted. . . . It was by faith that the people laid the corner stone of this great Temple [the Salt Lake Temple], in their weakness and in their poverty, believing that God would prepare the way and provide the means whereby the structure might be completed. It was by faith



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that the mercy of our Heavenly Father was extended to the people, when, in their distress, they saw their crops being consumed by the crickets, with no means of preventing it, and, in the providence of God, their prayers were answered, and they received a witness of it in the coming of the gulls to preserve their harvest and deliver them from starvation. . . .

. . . It has been by faith that the men who have stood at the head of this work have been inspired, from time to time, to give the instructions that we have needed. It is by faith that we are edified . . . by those who minister in the name of the Lord, and the Comforter quickens their understanding, bringing things past to their remembrance and showing them things to come; thus evidencing the spirit of revelation.⁹

It has been by faith that the elders of Israel have gone forth, leaving home and loved ones, and enduring the reproach of the world,

to bear witness that God lives and that Jesus is the Christ, and that Joseph Smith was a prophet of the Lord. By faith your sick have been healed, your dead have been raised to life. Were the records available of the miracles wrought among this people . . . , it would be a testimony of the power of God, through faith, unsurpassed in any age of the world.

It is this principle, my brethren and sisters, that points us heavenward, that gives us hope in the battle of life. When we become confused, and find ourselves confronted by obstacles we, seemingly, cannot overcome, having faith in the Redeemer of the world, we can go to Him and know that our prayers will be answered for our good.¹⁰ [See suggestion 3 on page 189.]

The question has often been asked: Is it possible that the boys and girls, the young men and women who have been reared in this generation of the Church would be willing to suffer the hardships, privations and trials that their fathers and mothers endured for the gospel's sake? Would they leave their homes of comfort to people a new country in the interest of their faith?

I say to you that if there has been planted in their hearts a knowledge of the divinity of this work as we know it, if faith has been given them by reason of our keeping the commandments of the Lord, if they have been taught to know that Jesus is the Christ and that Joseph Smith was a prophet of the Lord, then I say unto you, Yes! they would do what their fathers and mothers have done, take their place in the ranks of latter-day Israel.

If it meant privation, if it meant sickness and distress, or even expatriation from home, there are hundreds and thousands of our sons and daughters who, knowing that this is the gospel of Christ, would, if need be, seal their testimony with their lives.¹¹ [See suggestion 2 on pages 188–89.]

**The Lord will open the way for us to do
what He asks if we exercise faith.**

I remember one day I was impressed to say to a missionary who was going to a certain town where they would not let us hold street meetings:

“Now remember, give the Lord a chance. You are going to ask a favor. Give the Lord a chance. Ask him to open the way.”

The young man went to that city, went into the office of the mayor, and asked if he could see him. He was going to ask if they might change the rule.

When he got there, he found that the mayor was out of town. The young man came out of the office, looked down the hall and saw on a door at the end of the hall, “Chief Constable’s Office.” He hesitated a moment, and something said to him: “Give the Lord a chance.” He walked into the chief constable’s office and told him what he had come for. When he finished the man said:

“Well, what street corner would you like?”

He said: “I don’t know this city as well as you do. I would not ask for a corner that would be undesirable, or where we would block the traffic. Would you mind going with me to select a corner?”

Just think of a missionary asking the chief constable to pick a corner on which to preach the gospel!

The constable said:

“Surely, I will go with you.”

In fifteen minutes they had one of the best corners in town, with permission to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ where it had not been preached on the streets since before the war [World War I]. . . .

The Lord has a way of accomplishing things that we are unable to do, and never asks us to do anything that he does not make the way possible. That is what he told us through Nephi. He will not require anything without preparing the way.

“And it came to pass that I, Nephi, said unto my father: I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded, for I know that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them.” [1 Nephi 3:7.]

If you have something that the Lord asks or expects you to do and you don’t know just how to proceed, do your best. Move in the direction that you ought to go; trust the Lord, give him a chance, and he will never fail you.¹²

What a wonderful thing it is to know that we can, if we will, hold our Heavenly Father's hand and be guided by him. No other people in the world have the assurance that this group of people has.¹³ [See suggestion 4 on page 189.]

God grants faith as a gift to the righteous.

Our faith is conditioned upon our righteous lives. We cannot live improperly and have faith as we should, but if we keep the commandments of the Lord, we can have faith, and it will grow and increase as our righteousness increases.¹⁴

If there are any of us who lack faith in this work it is because we have not kept the commandments of God. If there are any who do not know that this is the work of our Father, it is because they have not done their duty. I know as I know that I live that this is the Lord's work, and that knowledge comes as a result of keeping His commandments.¹⁵

We know that faith is a gift of God; it is the fruitage of righteous living. It does not come to us by our command, but is the result of doing the will of our Heavenly Father. If we lack faith let us examine ourselves to see if we have been keeping His commandments, and repent without delay if we have not. . . . May the Lord increase our faith, and may we live to be worthy of it.¹⁶

I hope that those who have received this wonderful gift of faith are living to retain it.¹⁷ [See suggestion 5 on page 189.]

Suggestions for Study and Teaching

Consider these ideas as you study the chapter or as you prepare to teach. For additional help, see pages v–vii.

1. Look for evidences of George Albert Smith's faith in the story on pages 179–81. One of President Smith's missionaries said that his accomplishments "secured to us a testimony that God directs that work" (page 182). How have you been influenced by the faith of others, such as a family member or a close friend?
2. Review the examples of faith on pages 182–86. What other examples of faith are particularly meaningful to you? How could

you use these examples to help someone who is exercising faith but has not yet received the blessings he or she desires?

3. How has your faith given you “hope in the battle of life”? How can faith help us overcome fear or other “obstacles we, seemingly, cannot overcome”? (page 186).
4. Read the story that begins on page 186, and compare it with the story in “From the Life of George Albert Smith.” What experiences have you had that are similar to these? What do you think it means to “give the Lord a chance”?
5. President Smith taught that “faith is a gift of God” that “does not come to us by our command” (page 188). How does this principle influence the way you try to increase your faith and inspire faith in others? What are some specific things we can do to “retain” the gift of faith? (see Alma 32:35–43).

Related Scriptures: Hebrews 11:1–11, 17–34; James 2:17–24; Alma 32:26–43; Ether 12:6–22; Moroni 7:27–39; Doctrine and Covenants 136:42

Teaching help: “To help learners prepare to answer questions, you may want to tell them before something is read or presented that you will be asking for their responses. . . . For example, you could say, ‘Listen as I read this passage so that you can share what most interests you about it’ or ‘As this scripture is read, see if you can understand what the Lord is telling us about faith’” (*Teaching, No Greater Call*, 69).

Notes

1. “Greeting,” *Millennial Star*, July 10, 1919, 440–41.
2. In Glenn R. Stubbs, “A Biography of George Albert Smith, 1870 to 1951” (PhD diss., Brigham Young University, 1974), 142–43.
3. James Gunn McKay, in Conference Report, Oct. 1921, 156.
4. James Gunn McKay, in “A Biography of George Albert Smith,” 160.
5. In Conference Report, Apr. 1923, 75–76.
6. In Conference Report, Oct. 1913, 102.
7. In Conference Report, Apr. 1923, 75–76.
8. In Conference Report, Oct. 1913, 102.
9. In Conference Report, Oct. 1913, 102–3.
10. In Conference Report, Oct. 1913, 102–3.
11. “As to This Generation,” *Improvement Era*, Feb. 1949, 73.
12. “Give the Lord a Chance,” *Improvement Era*, July 1946, 427.
13. In Conference Report, Apr. 1947, 164.
14. In Conference Report, Oct. 1950, 6.
15. In Conference Report, Oct. 1915, 27–28.
16. In Conference Report, Oct. 1913, 103.
17. In Conference Report, Apr. 1923, 77.



*"If we will follow the advice and counsel that the Lord has given,
our pathway will be one of happiness."*