



PERFECT LOVE CASTETH OUT ALL FEAR

By Leah Welker

Jesus Christ knew that the last days before His Second Coming would be difficult, and He warned:

“In that day shall be heard of wars and rumors of wars, and the whole earth shall be in commotion, and men’s hearts shall fail them. . . .

“And the love of men shall wax cold, and iniquity shall abound. . . .

“And there shall be earthquakes also in divers places, and many desolations; yet men will harden their hearts against me, and they will take up the sword, one against another, and they will kill one another” (D&C 45:26–27, 33).

And yet, right after describing these calamities, Christ told His disciples, “Be not troubled” (D&C 45:35).

This command seems to fly in the face of every voice of reason, every headline, every expert, and every human instinct. How can we possibly remain untroubled in the face of an ever-darkening world?

The divine attributes of faith, hope, and charity play an important part.

Fear, Despair, and Pride

When we hear about or are directly affected by wars, natural disasters, or crime,

the three most natural reactions are fear, despair, and pride. But “natural” does not mean good or even helpful (see Mosiah 3:19). In fact, the immediate results of these emotions are unhappiness and inaction, leading to long-term consequences that affect not just ourselves but also our world. Unsurprisingly, these emotions do not come from God but from the enemy of us all—Satan. Moreover, these feelings are choices we make; we do not have to feel them. But tragically, the more we give in to these tempting emotions, the more we feed the downward spiral of darkness in the world.

Fear is a familiar feeling to us all, one that needs little explanation. However, it’s important to clarify that fear is not caution. Caution is a healthy feeling that motivates us to prepare ourselves, to be careful, and to listen to the counsel of our inspired leaders. But when we have prepared and taken reasonable precautions, the Lord does not want us to dwell on fear, “for God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind” (2 Timothy 1:7).¹

Despair in this case is an overwhelming feeling that the world is so corrupt it is incapable of help or redemption. This is not

While we can easily become fearful and pessimistic about the world we live in, God doesn’t want us to be filled with fear but with faith, hope, and His perfect love.

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“sorrow for the sins of the world” (4 Nephi 1:44), a feeling that even devoted disciples still have (see 3 Nephi 28:9). Despair is essentially giving up on the world, something that only Satan would have us do.² When we are overcome with that emotion, we struggle to save even ourselves, let alone help others in the world.

Pride is rooted in a feeling of hostility toward our fellowmen³ and fosters a belief that the world is unworthy of help or redemption. This belief is simply not true, and even if it were, it would not be our judgment to make (see D&C 82:23). Unfortunately, this type of pride is dangerously common among God’s chosen people. This is the pride of the scribes and Pharisees who asked Christ why He ate with sinners (see Luke 5:29–32), of the people who wished to stone the woman taken in adultery (see John 8:2–11), and even of Christ’s Apostles James and John when they asked Him if they should command fire to rain down upon a village that had rejected Him (see Luke 9:53–56).

Fear, pride, or despair tempt us to entrench ourselves in metaphorical (or literal) shelters and wait for the storms of evil to blow themselves over—or, at their very worst, these feelings tempt us to cast final judgments and wish the wrath of God to fall upon others.

Though we are counseled to stand in holy places and to make our homes a refuge, that does not mean we are to cower behind our walls and turn a blind eye to the suffering of God’s children—our brothers and sisters. We are not meant to be passive bystanders, merely waiting for the day that our Deliverer will come. We are to be anxiously engaged in alleviating suffering and building His kingdom—here and now.

Faith, Hope, and Charity

There are other choices besides fear, despair, or pride—ones that fill our souls with light and joy and enable us to make a difference in the world.

Instead of reacting in fear, despair, or pride, we can choose to cultivate the feelings *God* would give to us: faith,

hope, and charity. Each of these divine qualities can be answers to the problems of fear, despair, and pride: faith casts out fear, hope dispels despair, and charity—the pure love of Christ—leaves no room for pride.

Faith, as President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, explained, “is a strong conviction about something we believe—a conviction so strong that it moves us to do things that we otherwise might not do.”⁴ Having faith when considering the darkness of the world means choosing not to fear. It means resisting the temptation to trust in ourselves, an institution, a community, or even a country—because those will all fail us at one point or another—and instead having complete trust in the One who will never fail us, Jesus Christ. And finally, it means acting on that belief to do what we can to make a difference.

“Therefore, hold on thy way, . . . for their bounds are set, they cannot pass. Thy days are known, and thy years shall not be numbered less; therefore, fear not what man can do, for God shall be with you forever and ever” (D&C 122:9).

Hope “is the confident expectation of and longing for the promised blessings of righteousness.”⁵ Choosing hope closes the heart to despair and opens it to Christ’s peace and joy. When the dark things of the world tempt you to despair, remember His words: “These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

There is great darkness in the world, yes, but there is also greater light than ever before. Believe in that light. Believe in *the Light*. Have hope.

Charity, “the pure love of Christ,” is “the greatest of all” (see Moroni 7:46–47). The truth is this: even the most terrible people in this world are children of our Heavenly Father. And He loves them. He weeps over their actions and the misery those actions bring. (See Moses 7:28–29, 32–33.) His love should be our love, and His tears our tears.

Christ never condoned sin, nor should we (see D&C 1:31). But when we are tempted to rail, in unrighteous and unproductive anger,⁶ against the wickedness we see, we should remember that one of the reasons God gave Enoch for why He wept was that the people were “without affection, and they hate[d] their own blood” (Moses 7:33). We must not let ourselves fall into the very cycle of hate that we are condemning.

Charity is key to our overcoming such hate, also referred to as enmity, “the central feature of pride.”⁷ Let us remember that the second of the two great commandments is to “love thy neighbour as thyself” (Matthew 22:39).

Christ wasn’t saying to just love those who are righteous. Compassion isn’t just for the worthy. Mercy isn’t just for the perfect. (See Luke 6:22–38; see also Mosiah 4:16–19.)

“I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you” (Matthew 5:44).

The Examples of Jonah and Mormon

There are two scriptural examples of how these principles applied in the lives of two very different men. Both were called of God and lived in challenging times, but how they reacted to these circumstances made all the difference.

Jonah

The first story is about Jonah, who sadly gave in to both fear and pride. God commanded Jonah to go preach to the people of Nineveh (see Jonah 1:2). It was understandable for Jonah to feel some fear: Nineveh was

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a major city of Israel’s great enemy Assyria, and the Assyrians were known for their brutality and cruelty toward the people they conquered.⁸ However, Jonah let that fear overcome him, and he tried to run away (see Jonah 1:3). When a storm threatened his ship, Jonah realized the consequences of his mistake, and he told the crew to throw him overboard. A “great fish” swallowed Jonah; later, after Jonah prayed to God, the fish deposited him on dry land. (See Jonah 1:4–17; 2:1–10.)

This time, Jonah did as the Lord commanded: he went to Nineveh and prophesied that the city would be destroyed if they did not repent (see Jonah 3:3–4). However, Jonah didn’t love the people any more than before. In fact, Jonah was furious when the Lord forgave the repentant people of Nineveh (see Jonah 4:1). Jonah even said that the reason he had been reluctant to come to Nineveh in the first place was that he knew that God would be merciful to them if he did (Jonah 4:2).

How often do we feel this pride, a disregard for whole nations, religions, or cultures we think are unworthy or unredeemable? How often, in our fear, are we tempted to do nothing to help other children of God?

Mormon

Mormon, in contrast, stands as one of the greatest examples of righteously enduring in dark and dangerous times.

He lived in a time of war and iniquity. In his own words, “A continual scene of wickedness and abominations has been before mine eyes ever since I have been sufficient to behold the ways of man” (Mormon 2:18).

And yet, despite his full knowledge of his people’s wickedness, he still loved them

and served them with all his might (see Mormon 3:12). When he believed they had begun to repent, he rejoiced (see Mormon 2:12). When the Nephites continued to sin, he sorrowed (see Mormon 2:13–15). We have no record of Mormon ever railing against the Lamanites, the Nephites' enemy and the cause of their destruction. We do know that when the Nephites began to desire to kill the Lamanites for vengeance's sake, Mormon refused to lead them any longer (see Mormon 3:9–11).⁹

Mormon lived to witness almost the entire destruction of his people, causing him to exclaim in agony:

“O ye fair ones, how could ye have departed from the ways of the Lord! . . .

“Behold, if ye had not done this, ye would not have fallen. But behold, ye are fallen, and I mourn your loss” (Mormon 6:17–18).

Though he experienced very difficult times, Mormon did not give in to despair. After writing to his son of all the wickedness he had seen, Mormon concluded, “My son, be faithful in Christ; and may not the things which I have written grieve thee, to weigh thee down unto death; but may Christ lift thee up” (Moroni 9:25).

Mormon spoke extensively about faith, hope, and charity. His words to the few faithful Nephites left in his time are treasures of wisdom to help us survive our own days.

Faith: “For no man can be saved, according to the words of Christ, save they shall have faith in his name” (Moroni 7:38).

Hope: “And what is it that ye shall hope for? Behold I say unto you that ye shall have hope through the atonement of Christ and the power of his resurrection, to be raised unto life eternal” (Moroni 7:41).

Charity: “If ye have not charity, ye are nothing, for charity never faileth. Wherefore, cleave unto charity, which is the greatest of all, for all things must fail—

“But charity is the pure love of Christ, and it endureth forever; and whoso is found possessed of it at the last day, it shall be well with him” (Moroni 7:46–47).

And finally, Mormon wrote, “I fear not what man can do; for perfect love casteth out all fear” (Moroni 8:16).

Share the Light

No matter what is occurring in the world, we can be assured that faith, hope, and charity will cast out all fear, despair, and pride that threaten to ruin our peace. Those divine qualities will kindle our souls with a light that is unquenchable by any earthly power. And in return for such a gift, we will desire nothing but to share it.¹⁰

The Savior told his disciples:

“Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.

“Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.

“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 5:14–16).

We *can* make a difference in the world as we resist the temptations to hide, hate, or despair. Let us reach out to the suffering and be valiant lamps reflecting the Light of the World. ■

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NOTES

1. President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) warned, “Let us recognize that fear comes not of God, but rather that this gnawing, destructive element comes from the adversary of truth and righteousness” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Gordon B. Hinckley* [2016], 338).
2. President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994) explained, “As the showdown between good and evil approaches with its accompanying trials and tribulations, Satan is increasingly striving to overcome the Saints with despair, discouragement, despondency, and depression” (“Do Not Despair,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1974, 65).
3. See *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Ezra Taft Benson* (2014), 232.
4. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “Fourth Floor, Last Door,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2016, 16.
5. “Hope,” Gospel Topics, topics.lds.org.
6. Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles warned: “We presume to make final judgments whenever we proclaim that any particular person is going to hell (or to heaven) for a particular act or as of a particular time. When we do this—and there is great temptation to do so—we hurt ourselves and the person we pretend to judge” (“Judge Not’ and Judging,” *Ensign*, August 1999, 7).
7. *Teachings: Ezra Taft Benson*, 232.
8. See *Old Testament Study Guide for Home-Study Seminary Students* (2015), 333–34.
9. Nevertheless, when Mormon later saw that the Nephites would soon be destroyed, he agreed to lead them again in their final battles (see Mormon 5:1–2).
10. Joseph Smith said, “A man filled with the love of God, is not content with blessing his family alone, but ranges through the whole world, anxious to bless the whole human race” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* [2007], 330–31).