



Be of Good Cheer

CHOOSING HAPPINESS

Challenges have always been part of mortality and God's plan for our growth. Through the power of the Atonement, we can still "be of good cheer."

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To the paralytic man lying helpless on a bed, Jesus proclaimed, “Be of good cheer” (Matthew 9:2). To the frightened Apostles battling the tempestuous sea, Jesus appeared on the water, declaring, “Be of good cheer” (Matthew 14:27). As Joseph Smith met with 10 elders about to be sent out on missions fraught with trouble and danger, the Lord announced, “Be of good cheer” (D&C 61:36). In each instance the people had every reason to be anxious, fearful, and hopeless, yet the Lord directed them toward a reason to rejoice.

How does the Lord’s admonition of cheer sound in our world today? When economic uncertainties, terrorist threats, and corruption provide top stories for the evening news, how can the good news of the gospel intervene? When we experience personal loss in so many ways and on so many days, what is left to be cheerful about?

The Key to Cheerfulness

We find the key to understanding this seeming contradiction in the context of the Last Supper. Speaking to the Apostles in His final moments before Gethsemane, Jesus said, “In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). Elder Neal A. Maxwell explained: “The unimaginable agony of Gethsemane was about to descend upon Jesus; Judas’ betrayal was imminent. Then would come Jesus’ arrest and arraignment; the scattering of the Twelve like sheep; the awful scourging of the Savior; the unjust trial; the mob’s shrill cry for Barabbas instead of Jesus; and then the awful crucifixion on Calvary. What was there to be cheerful about?



Just what Jesus said: He had overcome the world! The atonement was about to be a reality. The resurrection of all mankind was assured. Death was to be done away with—Satan had failed to stop the atonement.”¹

Christ’s enabling power helps us feel happiness and cheer amid mortal gloom and doom. Misfortune and hardship lose their tragedy when viewed through the lens of the Atonement. The process could be explained this way: The more we know the Savior, the longer our view becomes. The more we see His truths, the more we feel His joy.

Consider two false assumptions that, if pursued, will block our appreciation of and access to the Lord’s divine assistance.

False Assumption 1: We Can Avoid Tribulation

First is the false assumption that, if we are good enough, we can avoid having bad things happen to us and those we love. If we can just keep all of the commandments, pay an honest tithing, and have daily prayer and scripture study, we can assure ourselves of

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His protection from heartache, accident, or tragedy. But trials will surely come, including when we are trying to do everything right.

If we believe that God will shield us from tribulation because of our obedience and then adversity strikes, we may be tempted to accuse God of not hearing our prayers or, worse, of not honoring His promises. Obedience to God is not insurance against pain and sadness. Challenges have always been included in God's great plan to test our faith and to help us grow in humility and compassion.

The Apostle Paul acknowledged, "There was given to me a thorn in the flesh, . . . to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure" (2 Corinthians 12:7). Part of Christ's mission is to heal broken hearts. He came to wipe away our tears, not to ensure that we would never weep (see Revelation 7:17). He clearly promised, "In the world ye shall have tribulation" (John 16:33).

False Assumption 2: We Can Trust in Our Own Efforts

A second false assumption might come from misunderstanding 2 Nephi 25:23—"It is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do." We mistakenly deduce that we must first prove our worth through our obedience and righteousness before the Lord's sacrifice will cover us or His grace enable us.

We may come to believe that we can and should trust in our own efforts rather than humbly acknowledge God. This is *self-righteousness*. When we look through the lens of our righteousness and take comfort in our good efforts, the idea of depending wholly on Christ (see 2 Nephi 31:19; Moroni 6:4) seems a bit risky.

Unwittingly, when we reason this way, we sound eerily similar to Korihor, the anti-Christ from the Book of Mormon, who taught that "every man fared in this life according to the management of the creature; therefore every man prospered according to his genius, and . . . conquered according to his strength" (Alma 30:17), thereby arguing that his listeners had no need for Christ and His Atonement.

Such thinking easily leads to justifying wrongdoing because we think we are in control; we think we know better than others, and sin is not a problem for us. If we can just get control over our world—our addictions in all their varieties, our eating disorders and obsession with thinness, our insistence that our house always be immaculate, our fascination with outward evidence of education and success—then we can finally be cheerful.

Christ declared, "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; *I* have overcome the world" (John 16:33; emphasis added).

Be of Good Cheer

Cheerfulness in the scriptural context connotes a divinely assured optimism, “a deep trust in God’s unfolding purposes,” a grounded conviction that God will always keep His promises.² When Christ proclaims, “Be of good cheer,” He is not requesting a naïve, Pollyanna-like response to life’s cruel twists and turns. Nor is He promising a pain-free life of constant bliss. Trial is no respecter of persons. Tragedy and hardship do not discriminate. Our world sees opposition among rich and poor, men and women, the righteous as well as the wicked. The Savior specifically prayed that God would not take us

“out of the world” (John 17:15). “In this world your joy is not full,” He taught, “but in me your joy is full” (D&C 101:36). True happiness and satisfaction are found only by turning away from the world and coming to Christ.

Only after Sariah feared the loss of her sons and then saw their deliverance did she come to her own deeper conviction of the Lord and His plans. She declared:

“Now I know of a surety that the Lord hath commanded my husband to flee into the wilderness; yea, and I also

know of a surety that the Lord hath protected my sons, and delivered them out of the hands of Laban, and given them power whereby they could accomplish the thing which the Lord hath commanded them” (1 Nephi 5:8).

She discovered that Christ’s grace was sufficient. And when her sons returned to their father’s tent, Nephi reported, “My mother, Sariah, was exceedingly glad”

THE ULTIMATE FORMULA FOR HAPPINESS

“The gospel of Jesus Christ has the answers to all of our problems. The gospel is not a secret. It is not complicated or hidden. . . . It is not someone’s theory or proposition. It does not come from man at all. It springs from the pure and everlasting waters of the Creator of the universe, who knows truths we cannot even begin to comprehend. And with that knowledge, He has given us the gospel—a divine gift, the ultimate formula for happiness and success.”

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “The Way of the Disciple,” *Liahona or Ensign*, May 2009, 75.



BE PATIENT IN AFFLICTIONS

Name withheld and posed by models

Beginning with complications from a strep infection at age 10, I have spent the past 30 years in and out of hospitals. I have had four kidney transplants, two bone fusions, two neurological operations, and more than two dozen other surgeries. Due to side effects of the medications I need to take, I have also developed osteoporosis, arthritis, and numerous other maladies.

Despite experiencing chronic pain and many disappointments, I have learned to distance myself from negative thoughts and focus on recognizing Heavenly Father’s hand in my life. Over the years, the words of the Lord to the Prophet Joseph Smith have been particularly meaningful for me: “Be patient in afflictions, for thou shalt have many; but endure them, for, lo, I am with thee, even unto the end of thy days” (D&C 24:8).

One of the greatest blessings I have received is the opportunity to serve others. There was a time when I struggled with depression, and looking back, I realize that I was spending all of my time and energy thinking about my problems and feeling sorry for myself. But an inspired Church leader called

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me to work with a special-needs Mutual group. Being able to serve these choice spirits of our Heavenly Father quickly brought me out from my emotional void. I found that when I forgot myself and spent my energy helping others, the deep sadness disappeared and I became happy and content with my life.

I know that the Savior has been with me throughout my trials, and I take comfort in the knowledge of the Resurrection, that someday I will be restored to a perfect body free of infirmities (see Alma 11:43). I know that if it were Heavenly Father’s will, I could be healed. However, I also know that He allows us to experience adversity so that we can grow and become more like Him. Knowing that He wants only what is best for me makes it easier to say, “Thy will be done.”

The healing power of Christ’s Atonement has no adverse side effects; it is perfect and complete. I know that as we have faith in Him and follow His example, we will be filled with happiness and hope. ■



(1 Nephi 5:1). Naturally such gladness came because her sons returned safely. But such joy is also evident in her witness that the Lord's power enabled her sons to do good works that they otherwise would not have been able to do if left to their own means.

After suffering physical and emotional persecution throughout years of missionary labors, Paul landed in a Roman prison and then declared:

"I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.

"I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.

"I can do all things through Christ which strengthen me" (Philippians 4:11–13).

The Lord clearly promises, "In the world ye shall have tribulation" (John 16:33). When we acknowledge that we each face difficulties, that the Savior overcame the world, that He has lifted and strengthened and given vision to each of us in very personal ways, we will realize that we are never alone. We will feel a peace within even though the crisis without still rages. We will be filled with hope and even cheer.

A GRATEFUL HEART

"A grateful heart is a beginning of greatness. . . . It is a foundation for the development of such virtues as prayer, faith, courage, contentment, happiness, love, and well-being."

President James E. Faust (1920–2007), "Gratitude As a Saving Principle," *Ensign*, Dec. 1996, 5.

Christ Has Overcome the World

As mentioned before, Jesus Christ has indeed overcome the world. As darkness has no power when light appears, so the world cannot overcome the Light of the World (see John 1:5). He is the Victor, come to earth "with healing in his wings" (3 Nephi 25:2) for all humankind. He will not forsake us.

As a mother hen covers her chicks with her wings, so the Redeemer will surround us with His comprehensive power if we will come to Him (see Matthew 23:37). There is room under those wings for all of us, for He declares:

"Wherefore, be of good cheer, and do not fear, for I the Lord am with you, and will stand by you; and ye shall bear record of me, even Jesus Christ, that I am the Son of the living God, that I was, that I am, and that I am to come" (D&C 68:6).

True, we live in a time of war, a day of conflicts and terrors not only among nations but within our own hearts. But He who is the Balm of Gilead (see Jeremiah 8:22) is the Lord of all creation; only in Him are peace and serenity found. Amid all our mortal gloom and doom, Jesus Christ has overcome the world. Come, let us rejoice. ■

Adapted from a Brigham Young University Women's Conference address given April 30, 2004. For the full text, visit speeches.byu.edu.

NOTES

1. Neal A. Maxwell, *But a Few Days* (1983), 4.
2. Maxwell, 4.

FOR MORE ON THIS TOPIC

- Topical Guide, "Happiness, Happy," "Joy"; Psalms 30:5; James 5:11; 2 Nephi 2; Mosiah 2:41; Alma 41:10.
- Claudio R. M. Costa, "Fun and Happiness," *Liahona* or *Ensign*, Nov. 2002, 92–94.
- Dieter F. Uchtdorf, "Your Happily Ever After," *Liahona* or *Ensign*, May 2010, 124–27.
- James E. Faust, "Our Search for Happiness," *Liahona*, Oct. 2000, 2–8; or *Ensign*, Oct. 2000, 2–6.
- Joseph B. Wirthlin, "Come What May, and Love It," *Liahona* or *Ensign*, Nov. 2008, 26–28.
- Richard G. Scott, "Finding Joy in Life," *Ensign*, May 1996, 24–26.
- Richard G. Scott, "How to Live Well amid Increasing Evil," *Liahona* or *Ensign*, May 2004, 100–102.
- Thomas S. Monson, "Happiness—the Universal Quest," *Liahona*, Mar. 1996, 2–8; or *Ensign*, Oct. 1993, 2–7.