



By Elder Paul B. Pieper
Of the Seventy

Trials and Testimony

I testify that as we turn to our testimony of Him in times of crisis, we can find the strength to overcome all that we are asked to endure.

While in exile on the island of Patmos off the coast of present-day Turkey, the Apostle John received a visit from the risen Lord. In his vision, John was shown the trials the former-day Saints were facing in Asia and the trials that Latter-day Saints would face in our time. He saw that the war that began in heaven continued in his day and would persist in our day (see Revelation 12).

John was also privileged to see in his vision

those who would remain faithful through their tribulations to the end. Of these he said, “And they overcame him [the devil and his temptations] by the blood of the Lamb, and by the *word of their testimony*” (Revelation 12:11; emphasis added). John learned that reliance on a personal testimony of the Savior and His gospel is essential in order to remain faithful during times of testing and crisis.

Each person who accepts the restored gospel of Jesus Christ receives a testimony by the power of the Holy Ghost that our Heavenly Father lives, Jesus Christ is the Savior, Joseph Smith is the prophet of the Restoration, the Book of Mormon is true, and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is God’s only true and living church on the earth today. This testimony causes us to change our lives and chart a new course, conforming our lives to Heavenly Father’s will and commandments. As we live the commandments, we receive blessings and additional spiritual witnesses that the doctrines and commandments are true.

When we have fully repented, we are privileged to enter into the waters of baptism and be cleansed from all of our sins. We then receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, which gives us a more powerful spiritual witness of the correctness of our path. The continuing witness of the Spirit becomes the testimony that anchors us to Jesus Christ and His restored gospel.

For a time after baptism, our spiritual experiences are new and fresh in our minds. We feel the



influence of the Spirit with us and the power and strength of our newfound testimony. Time passes, and the truths we have found become a routine part of our lives. We attend church, partake of the sacrament, and listen to lessons. We are comfortable with our lives and all is well. But then it happens. Something upsets the rhythm of our lives—a crisis, a mistake, a temptation, a distraction.

In a moment life changes and we are left searching for answers. This is a critical time of decision. How will we react? Where will we look to find the answers we need?

This is the moment when eternal destinies are forged in the quiet reaches of the heart and mind as we struggle to respond to a personal trial. At such moments we can choose to remember the spiritual witnesses and testimony we have received and rely on the Lord to help us through the challenge in a way consistent with His teachings and commandments. Or we can discount the sacred whisperings we have received from the Spirit and turn to our own or another's wisdom for a solution. As John saw, in the end only those who choose to rely consistently and completely on their testimonies will be able to overcome all things in mortality and stand worthily before God at the last day.

A new convert to the Church taught me this lesson and strengthened my faith. This woman was converted to the Church in a land where the gospel was new. She gained a testimony of its truthfulness and embraced it with all her heart. The gospel brought her something she had known little of—hope. Her only son, who had struggled for years to overcome an addiction, began to attend church meetings with her and to change. Her heart rejoiced. She finally had hope that he could overcome his past and find happiness together with her.

But then her trial came. One night he came home late after being out with old friends and engaging in old ways. By morning he was dead.

How would she react to her trial? Would the emotion of a mother grieving the loss of her only son overcome her? Would she begin to question her Heavenly Father, as others did, wondering why He would let this happen? Would she become bitter



God's plan is designed so that each of us will go through many trials . . . Trials are His way of . . . helping us become as He is.

and withdraw from the enlivening doctrines of the Restoration? No! She returned to the testimony she had received during her conversion and gave thanks to a loving Heavenly Father for bringing the gospel to her before the crisis so that she would have the strength to endure it. With a witness of the reality of God's plan, she could go on. She didn't have all the answers, but she had a testimony and relied on it for the strength to endure her trial. God's plan is designed so that each of us will go through many trials in our lives. Trials are His way of stretching us and helping us become as He is. Our crises will differ in magnitude and frequency, but they will continue throughout our lives. As John learned, strength to overcome these trials and return to Heavenly Father is found in the word of our testimonies. I testify that as we turn to our testimony of Him in times of crisis, we can find the strength to overcome all that we are asked to endure. ■