

# Have We Not Reason to Rejoice?

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*This is a joyful religion, one of hope, strength, and deliverance.*



**I** still rejoice in the wonderful spirit we felt as we sang together this morning:

*Now let us rejoice in the day of salvation.*

*No longer as strangers on earth need we roam.*

*Good tidings are sounding to us and each nation.*

(“Now Let Us Rejoice,” *Hymns*, no. 3)

These words by Brother William W. Phelps are quite a contrast to the world’s tendency to focus on bad news. It is true, we live in a time foretold in the scriptures as a day of “wars, rumors of wars, and earthquakes in

divers places” (Mormon 8:30), when “the whole earth shall be in commotion, and men’s hearts shall fail them” (D&C 45:26).

But how does this affect us as members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints? Are we living with apprehension, fear, and worry? Or have we, amidst all of our challenges, not *reason to rejoice*?

We all go through different life experiences. Some are filled with joy, and others with sorrow and uncertainty.

I remember a time when things didn’t look good for our family when I was a child. It was in the winter of 1944, one of the coldest during World War II. The war front was approaching our town, and my mother had to take us four children, leave all our possessions behind, and join the millions of fleeing refugees in a desperate search for a place to survive. Our father was still in the military, but he and Mother had agreed that if they were ever separated during the war, they would try to reunite at the hometown of my grandparents. They felt this place offered the greatest hope for shelter and safety.

With bombing raids during the night and air attacks during the day, it took us many days to reach my grandparents. My memories of those days are of darkness and coldness.

My father returned to us unharmed, but our future looked extremely bleak. We were living in the rubble of postwar Germany with a devastating feeling of hopelessness and darkness about our future.

In the middle of this despair, my family learned about The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the healing message of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. This message made all the difference; it lifted us above our daily misery. Life was still thorny and the circumstances still horrible, but the gospel brought light, hope, and joy into our lives. The plain and simple truths of the gospel warmed our hearts and enlightened our minds. They helped us look at ourselves and the world around us with different eyes and from an elevated viewpoint.

My dear brothers and sisters, aren't the restored gospel of Jesus Christ and our membership in His Church great reasons to rejoice?

Wherever you live on this earth and whatever your life's situation may be, I testify to you that the gospel of Jesus Christ has the divine power to lift you to great heights from what appears at times to be an unbearable burden or weakness. The Lord knows your circumstances and your challenges. He said to Paul and to all of us, "My grace is sufficient for thee." And like Paul we can answer: "My strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me" (2 Corinthians 12:9).

As members of the Church of Jesus Christ, we may claim the blessings promised in the covenants and the ordinances we received when we accepted the gospel of Jesus Christ.

#### **What Is the Gospel of Jesus Christ?**

The gospel of Jesus Christ is good news, glad tidings, and much more. It is the message of salvation as repeatedly announced by Jesus Christ and



His apostles and prophets. It is my firm belief that all truth and light originating with God is embraced in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

God, our loving Father in Heaven, has said that it is His work and glory "to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man" (Moses 1:39). God the Father is the author of the gospel; it is a key part of God's plan of salvation, or plan of redemption. It is called the gospel of Jesus Christ because it is the Atonement of Jesus Christ that makes redemption and salvation possible. Through the Atonement all men, women, and children are unconditionally redeemed from physical death, and all will be redeemed from their own sins on the condition of accepting and obeying the gospel of Jesus Christ (see D&C 20:17–25; 76:40–42, 50–53; Moses 6:62).

Christ's gospel is the only true gospel, and "there shall be no other

name given nor any other way nor means whereby salvation can come unto the children of men, only in and through the name of Christ" (Mosiah 3:17; see also Acts 4:12).

The core elements of the gospel message are found in all the holy scriptures but are most clearly given to us in the Book of Mormon and in the revelations to the Prophet Joseph Smith. Here Jesus Himself plainly declares His doctrine and His gospel, with which God's children must comply to "have eternal life" (D&C 14:7; see also 3 Nephi 11:31–39; 27:13–21; D&C 33:11–12).

The gospel is clear and plain. It answers the most complex questions in life, yet even a young child can comprehend and apply it. As Nephi said: "My soul delighteth in plainness; for after this manner doth the Lord God work among the children of men. For the Lord God giveth light

unto the understanding; for he speaketh unto men according to their language, unto their understanding” (2 Nephi 31:3).

The Prophet Joseph Smith followed the same pattern of clarity and plainness when he explained to the world in a very concise way “the first principles and ordinances of the Gospel” (Articles of Faith 1:4), which we must accept to receive the eternal blessings of the gospel:

First, faith in the Lord Jesus Christ—believing in the Redeemer, the Son of God, “with unshaken faith in him, relying wholly upon the merits of him who is mighty to save” and then “[pressing] forward with a steadfastness in Christ, . . . feasting upon the word of Christ” (2 Nephi 31:19–20).

Second, repentance, which includes a change of mind, offering up “a sacrifice . . . [of] a broken heart and a contrite spirit”; giving up sin and becoming meek and humble “as a little child” (3 Nephi 9:20, 22).

Third, baptism by immersion for the remission of sins and as a covenant to keep the commandments of God and take upon us the name of Christ.

Fourth, laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost, also known as baptism by fire, which sanctifies us and makes us “new creatures,” born of God (Mosiah 27:26; see also 1 Peter 1:23).

The gift of the Holy Ghost, given to us by our Heavenly Father and administered by one having authority, includes the merciful promise: “If ye will enter in by the way, and receive the Holy Ghost, it will show unto you all things what ye should do” (2 Nephi 32:5). Through the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost, every member of the Church can receive “the words of Christ” directly (2 Nephi 32:3), at any time or place. This personal divine guidance helps us to remain valiant in the testimony of Jesus Christ and endure to the end



of our days. Isn't this wonderful!

*Have we not reason to rejoice?*

#### **What Does It Mean to Endure to the End?**

The scriptures teach us that once we have received the ordinances of baptism and confirmation, our task then is to “endure to the end” (2 Nephi 31:20).

When I was a young boy, “endure to the end” meant to me mainly that I had to try harder to stay awake until the end of our Church meetings. Later as a teenager I progressed only slightly in my understanding of this scriptural phrase. I linked it with youthful empathy to the efforts of our dear elderly members to hang in there until the end of their lives.

Enduring to the end, or remaining faithful to the laws and ordinances of the gospel of Jesus Christ throughout our life, is a fundamental requirement for salvation in the kingdom of God. This belief distinguishes Latter-day

Saints from many other Christian denominations that teach that salvation is given to all who simply believe and confess that Jesus is the Christ. The Lord clearly declared, “If you keep my commandments and endure to the end you shall have eternal life, which gift is the greatest of all the gifts of God” (D&C 14:7).

Therefore, enduring to the end is not just a matter of passively tolerating life's difficult circumstances or “hanging in there.” Ours is an active religion, helping God's children along the strait and narrow path to develop their full potential during this life and return to Him one day. Viewed from this perspective, enduring to the end is exalting and glorious, not grim and gloomy. This is a joyful religion, one of hope, strength, and deliverance. “Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy” (2 Nephi 2:25).

Enduring to the end is a process filling every minute of our life, every hour, every day, from sunrise to sunrise. It is accomplished through personal discipline following the commandments of God.

The restored gospel of Jesus Christ is a way of life. It is not for Sunday only. It is not something we can do only as a habit or a tradition if we expect to harvest all of its promised blessings. “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap” (Galatians 6:7).

Enduring to the end implies “patient continuance in well doing” (Romans 2:7), striving to keep the commandments (see 2 Nephi 31:10), and doing the works of righteousness (see D&C 59:23). It requires sacrifice and hard work. To endure to the end, we need to trust our Father in Heaven and make wise choices, including paying our tithes and offerings, honoring our temple covenants, and serving the Lord and one another willingly and faithfully in our Church callings

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and responsibilities. It means strength of character, selflessness, and humility; it means integrity and honesty to the Lord and our fellowmen. It means making our homes strong places of defense and a refuge against worldly evils; it means loving and honoring our spouses and children.

By doing our best to endure to the end, a beautiful refinement will come into our lives. We will learn to “do good to them that hate [us], and pray for them which despitefully use [us]” (Matthew 5:44). The blessings that come to us from enduring to the end in this life are real and very significant, and for the life to come they are beyond our comprehension.

#### **Jesus Christ Wants You to Succeed**

My dear brothers and sisters, there will be days and nights when you feel overwhelmed, when your hearts are heavy and your heads hang down. Then, please remember, Jesus Christ, the Redeemer, is the Head of this Church. It is His gospel. He wants you to succeed. He gave His life for just this purpose. He is the Son of the living God. He has promised:

“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28).

“For the mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee” (3 Nephi 22:10). “I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer” (3 Nephi 22:8).

My dear friends, the Savior heals the broken heart and binds up your wounds (see Psalm 147:3). Whatever your challenges may be, wherever you live on this earth, your faithful membership in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the divine powers of the gospel of Jesus Christ will bless you to endure joyfully to the end.

Of this I bear witness with all my heart and mind in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■