

Enduring Well

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The plan of salvation is a wonderful plan, and part of that plan includes overcoming obstacles that sometimes get in the way and keep us from accomplishing our hopes and dreams. We all face crises during our time on earth. Some are small and some are large.

A small crisis may be running out of gas on a busy road. A large crisis may be the loss of a loved one, a crippling accident, or a family tragedy. Some crises we bring on ourselves through disobedience to the laws of God or man. Some come upon us through no fault of our own. I suspect that most of us have experienced what could be termed the “bad bounces” of life. Anyone who has ever played a game in which a ball is involved knows all about bad bounces. They are part of the game. They are not predictable in size or frequency.

A good player realizes that bad bounces are a part of life and tries to continue living with faith and courage.

We should not expect the Lord to remove our challenges just because we promise Him that we will always be faithful if He does. Rather, we are to endure well, and then we will be blessed.

To stay true to our desire to live with Heavenly Father again, we must find a way to work through obstacles and discover what is really important in life.

Just Keep Swimming

When our only daughter, Lindsay, was young, she and I enjoyed watching movies together. One that we enjoyed and watched together many times was an animated film called *Finding Nemo*. In the movie, Nemo is caught by a scuba diver and ends up in a fish tank in a dentist’s office. His father, Marlin, is determined to find Nemo. Marlin meets a fish named Dory during his journey. They face obstacle after obstacle as they try to find Nemo. Whether the obstacle is big or small, Dory’s message to Marlin is the same: “Just keep swimming.”

Several years later Lindsay served a mission in Santiago, Chile. Missions are hard. Disappointments are many. Each week at the end of my email I wrote,



“Just keep swimming. Love, Dad.”

When Lindsay was expecting her second child, she found out that her unborn baby had a hole in his heart and that he had Down syndrome. As I wrote to her during this very difficult time, I closed my emails, “Just keep swimming.”

Obstacles come into each of our lives, but to get through them and to get where we want to go, we must keep swimming.

One of my favorite passages of scripture is section 121 of the Doctrine and Covenants. It is a wonderful passage in which the Prophet Joseph Smith begins in the depths of despair and rises to celestial heights. This section and sections 122 and 123 come from a letter Joseph wrote to the Church. To better understand these great revelations, we should put them in proper context.

Joseph and a few of his followers were prisoners in the jail at Liberty, Missouri, from December 1838 until April 1839. The jail had no heat, and the food was barely edible. They were in a basement dungeon with a dirt floor and a ceiling so low they could not fully stand up. The Saints, meanwhile, had been driven from their homes. Amid this upheaval, Governor Lilburn W. Boggs issued his infamous extermination order.

Joseph asks, “O God, where art thou? And where is the pavilion that covereth thy hiding place?” (D&C

121:1). This is the same Joseph Smith who had heavenly visitations from God the Father; Jesus Christ; Moroni; John the Baptist; Peter, James, and John; and others. Shortly after his questions in the initial verses, Joseph expresses his frustration:

“Let thine anger be kindled against our enemies; and, in the fury of thine heart, with thy sword avenge us of our wrongs.

“Remember thy suffering saints, O our God; and thy servants will rejoice in thy name forever” (verses 5–6).

The Lord responds to Joseph’s outpouring by saying, “My son, peace be unto thy soul; thine adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a small moment” (verse 7).

Then He teaches Joseph a wonderful principle: “And then, if thou endure it well, God shall exalt thee on high; thou shalt triumph over all thy foes” (verse 8).

The message is straightforward and succinct. We should not expect the Lord to remove our challenges just because we promise Him that we will always be faithful if He does. Rather, we are to endure well, and then we will be blessed. That is a marvelous life lesson for each of us.

More instruction comes in verse 10, where the Lord tells Joseph, “Thou art not yet as Job; thy friends do not contend against thee, neither charge thee with transgression, as they did Job.” Despite how much Job suffered,

we learn, “The Son of Man hath descended below [it] all. Art thou greater than he?” (D&C 122:8).

Section 122 complements section 121. I call it the *if* section. The word *if* appears 15 times. For instance, verse five says, “*If* thou art called to pass through tribulation; *if* thou art in perils among false brethren; *if* thou art in perils among robbers; *if* thou art in perils by land or by sea” (D&C 122:5; emphasis added).

If we substitute those challenges for the challenges we face in the modern world, perhaps we can learn something, such as *if* I have a death in my family or *if* my boyfriend or girlfriend dumps me or *if* I have financial burdens or *if* I were smarter.

After the *ifs*, the Lord says, “Know thou, my son [or daughter], that all these things shall give thee experience, and shall be for thy good” (verse 7). In other words, the challenges we have in life are ultimately helpful and even essential.

“Therefore, dearly beloved brethren,” the Prophet writes, “let us cheerfully do all things that lie in our power; and then may we stand still, with the utmost assurance, to see the salvation of God, and for his arm to be revealed” (D&C 123:17).

Life is full of obstacles, some of which seem insurmountable. We are to endure them cheerfully and faithfully. By so doing, we will ultimately return to live with God forever.

The Savior's Example

The greatest example we have of endurance is the life of the Savior. The Atonement required that He descend below all things and offer His perfect life on our behalf. In descending below all things, He suffered for all of life's misfortunes and sins, "which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit" (D&C 19:18).

Jesus knew what was required of Him, and He said in a very human way, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matthew 26:39). Nevertheless, He was willing to do His Father's will and endure all things.

What We Become Makes All the Difference

The business I own today was founded by my father nearly 60 years ago. He died in 1980, leaving me to take the helm of the company at the young age of 30.

In those early years, situations came up that required me to make decisions that affected the future of our frail business. I worked hard to act as my father would have acted, and I spent a great deal of time on my knees, trying to discern what to do. In all those decisions, I never felt a calming influence or any direction one way or another. I ultimately did what I thought was best and moved on. But I was disappointed I had not been able to get any confirmation of my actions.

One night my father came to me in a dream. I began to chide him for not helping me know what to do. He said he was aware of my situation but he was busy where he was and his former business was not terribly important. "Chris, we really don't care about the business up here," he said. "What we care about very much is what you become because of your business."

That was a great lesson I hope I never forget. What we get during our life is inconsequential, but what we become in life makes all the difference.

Sometimes we forget that in premortality we fought alongside the Savior in defense of the Father's plan of moral agency. And we won! Lucifer and his followers were expelled, and we received the opportunity to experience the life we fought for. The Father's plan included the Atonement. Our job is to face our challenges and endure them well. As we do this, the Atonement has meaning in our lives and we fulfill the Lord's work and glory: "to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man" (Moses 1:39).

I bear witness that Jesus is the Christ. He is the Savior of the world. He is the Prince of Peace and our Advocate with the Father. I bear witness that the Father knows us by name, loves us despite our imperfections, and will prepare a place for us if we are faithful and endure to the end. ■

From a devotional address, "That's Life," delivered at BYU-Hawaii on October 30, 2012. For the full text in English, go to devotional.byuh.edu/archive.



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