

Talk given on May 29<sup>th</sup>, 2016

# Happiness and Enduring to the End

Good morning everyone. I'm very grateful for this opportunity to speak to you today and hope that the Spirit will teach you and me. I would like to begin my talk sharing a story told by Elder Ballard about a year and a half ago. He speaks about one of his friend's that went white water rafting on the Colorado River in Cataract Canyon.

"At the beginning of the trip, one of the experienced river guides reviewed important safety instructions, emphasizing three rules that would ensure the group's safe travel through the rapids. "Rule number one: stay in the boat! Rule number two: always wear a life jacket! Rule number three: always hold on with both hands!" He then said again, with even more emphasis, 'Above all, remember rule number one: stay in the boat!'

This adventure reminds me of our mortal journey. Most of us experience periods in our lives where the tranquil waters of life are appreciated. At other times, we encounter white-water rapids that are metaphorically comparable to those found in the 14-mile stretch through Cataract Canyon—challenges that may include physical and mental health issues, the death of a loved one, dashed dreams and hopes, and—for some—even a crisis of faith when faced with life's problems, questions, and doubts."

As I studied his talk, I was continually impressed by this metaphor. I thought about how these three rules could relate to a principle found in 2 Nephi chapter 31. Nephi was teaching us and those he loved about the doctrine of Jesus Christ. He taught that we must follow our Savior Jesus Christ through faith, and repentance. He also taught that repentance prepares us for baptism by immersion and for the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost. After which, he said,

"18 And then are ye in this strait and narrow path which leads to eternal life; yea, ye have entered in by the gate; ye have done according to the commandments of the Father and the Son; and ye have received the Holy Ghost, which witnesses of the Father and the Son, unto the fulfilling of the promise which he hath made, that if ye entered in by the way ye should receive.

19 And now, my beloved brethren, after ye have gotten into this strait and narrow path, I would ask if all is done? Behold, I say unto you, Nay; for ye have not come thus far save it were by the word of Christ with unshaken faith in him, relying wholly upon the merits of him who is mighty to save."

It is interesting how life works sometimes. It can be extremely difficult, and in those times of difficulty sometimes a lot is asked of us. I believe that there is divine purpose in the difficulty of life. I believe that our Heavenly Father loves us dearly and that He truly wants us to be happy. I also believe that He gives us what we need to be happy. Going back to Nephi's question, if all has been done after being baptized. He said 'no' pretty clearly, but then he taught us something profound, he said,

"for ye have not come thus far save it were by the word of Christ with unshaken faith in him, relying wholly upon the merits of him who is mighty to save."

Now, when I stopped to think about that, I wondered what that has to do with the question he just asked. It's like he said, Is everything done? No, you got here by following Jesus Christ in faith. As if implying that because we followed Jesus Christ, we really shouldn't want to be done. He also said, "Relying wholly upon the merits of him who is mighty to save."

I think that most of us have felt the peace, strength, and joy that come through relying on the Savior and following Him in faith. If we have felt that joy and peace from Him who is mighty to save, why would we want to go any other direction? Why would we want to stop acting in faith? Why would we want to be done, and go off our own way? Perhaps it is because sometimes the other path is easier. Perhaps it is because the other path has things that look fun, or exciting. Regardless of what it is, I have noticed that the more I look at another path, the more disconnected I become from the path the Savior. Perhaps I haven't even taken a step yet...but if my heart is lingering elsewhere, it will soon forget the peace, strength and joy that accompany the Savior's path.

So again, Nephi asks if all is done. The truth is, our Heavenly Father has an entire life prepared for us, full of joy, and happiness that is possible through faith in Jesus Christ. We learned from Lehi that we exist, that we might have joy. I know that joy comes through following our Savior and through being obedient to his commandments. President Uchtdorf taught,

"But to what end were we created? We were created with the express purpose and potential of experiencing a fulness of joy. Our birthright—and the purpose of our great voyage on this earth—is to seek and experience eternal happiness."

So I ask you, what brings happiness? The speakers who have spoken in this meeting have taught very well about enduring to the end. Continuing in Elder Ballard's talk, he talked about how we need to stay in the boat, likening it to staying in the Gospel whether times were easy or difficult and despite the immense challenges we face in these days. He declared,

"We need to experience a continuing conversion by increasing our faith in Jesus Christ and our faithfulness to His gospel throughout our lives—not just once but regularly. Alma asked, 'And now behold, I say unto you, my brethren [and sisters], if ye have experienced a change of heart, and if ye have felt to sing the song of redeeming love, I would ask, can ye feel so now?'"

That change of heart that Alma referred to, often goes hand in hand with the peace, strength and joy that I mentioned a few minutes ago. In the continuous tumult of our lives, it is easy to forget what it felt like to enter into sacred covenants with our Heavenly Father; or what it felt like to act in faithful obedience relying wholly upon the Lord and His power in the midst of temptation. It is often easy to forget that we are children of a King, destined to experience the joy and the life that He does; and that He has prepared the way for us to return to His presence, both prepared and worthy to receive all that He hath - through Jesus Christ.

In Helaman 5 we read,

"9 O remember, remember, my sons, the words which king Benjamin spake unto his people; yea, remember that there is no other way nor means whereby man can be saved, only through the atoning blood of Jesus Christ, who shall come; yea, remember that he cometh to redeem the world."

And so it is with us, of vital importance that we remember our Savior always. For this purpose, we come to partake of the sacrament every week, and so that through Him we can be made clean again. Jesus Christ taught,

"And if ye do always remember me ye shall have my Spirit to be with you. (3 Ne. 18:7)" .

What an incredible promise. By faithfully seeking to 'always remember Him,' we can experience a continuous conversion like Elder Ballard taught, by increasing our faith in Jesus Christ - not just once, but regularly. This life is the time for men to prepare to meet God. Life is meant to be full of challenges of all sorts and sizes that test our faith...but if we can remember that we are children of God, destined to receive His greatness, then we can continually grow in faith, continually draw nearer unto God, and essentially fulfill our purpose here in this mortal journey becoming prepared to meet God.

I know that as we act in faith, He will be with us because He wants us to succeed and wants us to be happy. I know that even though life is difficult, it is meant to be enjoyed. Nephi asked, if all has been done...I say unto you, nay. The Lord still has wonders to work in our lives, and in our very natures. He desires to prepare us for Eternal Life. If we act in faith, seeking continual conversion through Jesus Christ, then our Heavenly Father will be able to prepare us for Eternal Life, and we will experience a fullness of joy. I know that these things are true. They bring me hope and strength in my times of need.

I invite all of us to ponder upon the things the Spirit has taught us this day, that we may know what we must do to more fully come unto Christ in our personal lives. I know that as we seek to do this, our Heavenly Father will not only bless us with inspiration to know what to do or change in our lives, but also with the strength and capacity to do so. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

If there is time...

I would like to suggest five things that have brought happiness to me in my life, things that we can choose to do on a regular basis.

1. Pray often

1. We are God's children. He loves us dearly. He wants to teach us. He wants us to communicate with Him. He loves listening to our stories and the things that are important to us. Our bond with Him is essential in us finding true and lasting happiness.

2. Feast upon the scriptures

1. For us to continually draw nearer to God, we need to continually learn about Him through scripture study. Scripture study invites the Holy Ghost, and the Holy Ghost testifies of our Savior and Heavenly Father. Through scripture study we can not only learn the will of God, but can be blessed with inspiration for our lives, and about our existence.

3. Attend the temple

1. We are fortunate to live in a day when there are temples. We are blessed to be able to go to the temple and worship our Heavenly Father. President Monson said,

"I think there is no place in the world where I feel closer to the Lord than in one of His holy temples."

We would do well to take advantage of this incredible opportunity to learn more about the Savior, and receive strength from on high.

4. Love and serve God

1. President Uchtdorf continued in his same talk and said,

"As we lose ourselves in the service of others, we discover our own lives and our own happiness."

We have been taught that through serving our fellow beings, we are only in the service of God. This not only blesses the lives of those around us and those we serve, but it also allows the Lord to bless our lives more fully.

5. Spend quality time with family

1. President Uchtdorf taught

, "Since 'no other success can compensate for failure [in the home]', we must place high priority on our families. We build deep and loving family relationships by doing simple things together, like family dinner and family home evening and by just having fun together. In family relationships love is really spelled t-i-m-e, time. Taking time for each other is the key for harmony at home. We talk with, rather than about, each other. We learn from each other, and we appreciate our differences as well as our commonalities. We establish a divine bond with each other as we approach God together through family prayer, gospel study, and Sunday worship."

There is great joy to be found in being united as a family and in seeking the Lord together.