

“Trust in the Lord with All Thine Heart”

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This is a wonderful sight—all of you faithful sisters here to learn and share together. I consider it a special privilege to be asked to speak to you. I acknowledge that I will need the Spirit of the Lord to be with me as I talk with you today about the importance of trusting in the Lord in all you do—every day and in every way. I will share some examples of real people who learned to do that, and hopefully you will be able to say to yourselves, "I can do it, too."

My husband and I served in Toronto, Ontario, Canada, where he was mission president. We learned to love the missionaries as though they were our own. As Christmas time approached that first year we were there, I began to worry a little. I thought, "Oh, these missionaries are going to be so homesick at Christmastime. What can we do to help them?"

That is how naive I was. They were not homesick. They simply said, "Sister Ballard, what greater place in the world could we be than in the mission field serving the Savior by proclaiming His message on His birthday?" They felt that was a remarkable and wonderful blessing at Christmastime. I was so very impressed with the maturity and spirituality of those servants of the Lord and with the love and devotion they had for Him. They taught the wife of their mission president a valuable truth that holiday season. They had become anchored and dedicated to the Lord through their faith and their service. They were learning and seeking to know Him and His gospel. They had the determination to succeed in their missionary work and the desire to fulfill their callings as missionaries of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Alma had that same desire when he exclaimed: "O that I were an angel, and could have the wish of mine heart, that I might go forth and speak with the trump of God, with a voice to shake the earth, and cry repentance unto every people!" (Alma 29:1).

Our missionaries taught me that a simple desire to know and learn, coupled with commitment to a righteous goal, strengthens faith and testimony. As we read in Proverbs, "The desire of the righteous shall be granted" (Proverbs 10:24).

I have a friend who has remained single throughout her life. Basically, she has been responsible for herself from her late teens when her father and mother died within just a few months of each other. She has worked full-time since graduating from this university. She has been living with an older sister who has some very serious health problems due to complications from diabetes. It would be very easy for her to become depressed as she watches her sister's daily struggle with these challenges, because my friend also has diabetes and high blood pressure and sometimes she wonders when the other shoe will drop. It is too easy to visualize herself having to go to dialysis

three times a week and having activity restricted to a wheelchair. But my friend refuses to let despair take over her life. She still works full time, travels whenever vacation days and finances allow, spends time and energy maintaining old friendships and developing new ones—all in all, trying to lead a productive and happy life.

I share my friend's circumstances with you to reinforce a true principle: Some people carry a real burden through life; but I believe that if we look deep enough, all of us face our own set of challenges that we must handle in our own way. This life truly is a proving ground for each of us.

Brigham Young wrote: "You all know that the Saints must be made pure, to enter into the celestial kingdom. It is recorded that Jesus was made perfect through suffering. If he was made perfect through suffering, why should we imagine for one moment that we can be prepared to enter into the kingdom of rest with him and the Father, without passing through similar ordeals?" [1](#)

How does this dear friend of mine keep up her cheerful attitude? I believe she has developed tolerance, patience, and an unwavering faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. For each one of us, this is the same well of spiritual strength that we can find as we look deep into our own hearts, as my friend has done. I hope she realizes how much she is contributing to the success of others' lives through the skills she has been given.

A few years ago, I was privileged to be sitting with a group of women who were wives of mission presidents. The meeting was casual—a break from the formal teaching of the seminar. As we were telling each other a little about ourselves, one beautiful black sister began to tell us one of the most touching examples of faith and testimony I had ever heard. She told us about their family visiting the Sao Paulo temple during the open house preceding the dedication of that temple. The parents, with their children at their side, were thrilled with what they saw and heard. They were active members of the Church, but at the time her husband could not hold the priesthood. The tour came at last to the celestial room. They stood there in awe, and the tears started to flow. They said to each other, "Take a good look at this room, for we will never be able to see it again in this life."

I can still remember how stunned I was at that moment. Think of it! They loved the Lord and His gospel so much that they were willing to give themselves to Him, even though they could not participate fully in the blessings of the temple. None of us who were there that day will ever forget her testimony of faith, hope, and gratitude.

This story, of course, has a happy ending. Not too long after the Sao Paulo temple was dedicated, the revelation extending the priesthood to all worthy men was given. This faithful, valiant family was sealed together for time and all eternity. This good brother fulfilled his priesthood assignments with heart and soul. He not only served as the first black mission president but later as the first black general authority as well.

This beautiful family personifies the scripture found in 2 Nephi 31:20: "Wherefore, ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men. Wherefore, if ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life."

My husband, Elder Ballard, has many examples of faithful women in his ancestry. I will mention two of them.

Mary Fielding Smith was the wife of Hyrum Smith, the older brother of the Prophet Joseph. She is my husband's great-great-grandmother, and she is a remarkable example of courage and inner strength and faith.

When Joseph and Hyrum were martyred in Carthage jail, it left Hyrum's wife Mary on her own with a large family to care for. Notwithstanding her many challenges, she made the decision to travel west with the Saints. In her history, she records her extremely trying and difficult circumstances that would have discouraged most women as she journeyed in a wagon train headed for the Salt Lake Valley from Winter Quarters. Even the captain of the wagon train, who resented her being there, tried to weaken her resolve to go on.

Many of you are familiar with her experience at a point midway between the Platte and Sweetwater Rivers. One of Mary's best oxen lay down in the yoke as if poisoned. All supposed he would die. All the teams behind her stopped, those in the wagons gathering around to see what had happened. In a short time, the captain perceived that something was wrong and went to where the ox lay. He was stiffening in the throes of death. The captain blustered about and said, "He is dead; there is no use working with him. We'll have to fix up some way to take the widow along. I told her she would be a burden on the company." But in this, he was mistaken.

Mary said nothing but went to her wagon and returned with a bottle of consecrated oil. She asked her brother and his friend James Lawson to administer to her fallen ox, believing that the Lord could and would raise him. The men removed their hats; all bowed their heads as Joseph Fielding knelt, laid his hands on the head of the ox, and prayed over it. Its haunches started to rise, and the forelegs strengthened. The ox stood and without urging started off as though nothing had happened. This amazing thing greatly astonished the onlookers. The team went on with a renewal of strength for the remainder of the long journey.[2](#)

Mary's great faith touched her young son Joseph's heart, and he never forgot his mother's example. Her great faith helped carry Joseph F. through a lifetime of dedicated service, including serving as president of the Church for seventeen years. I believe that all mothers can leave a legacy of faith for their children if they themselves have that faith.

The second woman I'd like to tell you about is Margaret McNeil Ballard, who is my husband's great-grandmother. She was born in Scotland in 1845, one year after her father joined the Church. Although the family was eager to join the Saints in Utah, Church callings, including that of Margaret's father to be the branch president, kept them in Scotland for a time. They sailed for New York in 1856. After experiencing several more delays, eleven-year-old Margaret and her family finally began their journey west.

From Margaret's personal history, we know that measles broke out, and all of her siblings became very sick. The rest of the company began to move on without them. Because Margaret did not take sick, her mother was anxious for her to remain with the company. In Margaret's own words, "My mother strapped my little brother James on my back with a shawl. He was only four years old and still quite sick with the measles, but I took him since mother had all she could do to care for the other children. I hurried and caught up with the company, traveling with them all day. That night a kind lady helped me take my brother off my back. I sat up and held him on my lap with the shawl wrapped around him, alone, all night. He was a little better in the morning. The people in the camp were very good to us and gave us a little fried bacon and some bread for breakfast.

"We traveled this way for about a week, my brother and I not seeing our mother during this time. Each morning one of the men would write a note and put it in the slit of a willow stuck into the ground to tell how we were getting along. In this way mother knew we were all right."

Margaret ends this part of her account with these words: "We arrived in Ogden on the fourth day of October, 1859, after a journey of hardships and hunger, with thankfulness to our Heavenly Father for his protecting care." She had walked every step of the way across the plains and for a large part of the way had carried her brother James on her back. Her feet were often wrapped only in

bloodstained rags.

Once in the dark of night Margaret was sent to retrieve their cow, which had wandered away. She was barefoot and unable to see clearly where she was walking. All of a sudden she felt that she was walking on something soft. She stopped and looked down to see what it could be. She wrote: "To my horror I found that I was standing in a bed of snakes, large ones and small ones. At the sight of them I became so weak that I could scarcely move. All I could think of was to pray."³

Each of these great women became the mother of an apostle of the Lord. Their indomitable courage came from their unwavering faith. As with them, so it is with us. Faith in God and in His Son, Jesus Christ, is absolutely essential if we are to maintain a balanced perspective through times of trial and difficulty. While righteousness has never precluded adversity, faith in the Lord Jesus Christ can be a source of inner strength through which we may find comfort and the courage to cope.

My husband has taught: "Our Heavenly Father is aware of us, individually and collectively. He understands the spiritual, physical, and emotional difficulties we face in the world today. In fact, they are all part of His plan for our eternal growth and development."⁴

"But where do we find hope in the midst of [our trials]? Quite simply, our one hope for spiritual safety . . . is to turn our minds and our hearts to Jesus Christ."⁵

Elder Ballard and I have had the privilege of rearing seven children, two sons and five daughters. I can clearly picture in my mind each of these little ones as they first stood, balancing next to the couch or a chair. Soon they were able to stand in the middle of the floor. I still feel delight when I think of their first wobbly steps and the comical surprise which showed on their little faces. In no time at all, they were off and running, and we haven't been able to keep up with them since.

All of us, as parents, watch our children so very carefully during this critical stage of their lives. We know they will stumble and receive their share of bumps and bruises—just as we did at that early age. Still, we encourage every move that will give them the confidence to pull themselves up, brush themselves off, and try again. As children of our Heavenly Father, we are learning to walk an eternal path. Sometimes we are wobbly; sometimes we fall. We are not perfect. But, just as we encouraged these toddlers to keep trying and trying, again and again, we must always remember that our Father in Heaven is there to encourage our efforts, and to comfort us when we make mistakes. We must keep trying. We must not lose hope or give up. He will always be there for us if we seek Him, for has He not said:

"Fear not, little flock; do good; let earth and hell combine against you, for if ye are built upon my rock, they cannot prevail. . . . Look unto me in every thought; doubt not, fear not" (D&C 6:34, 36).

"Even so am I in the midst of you"(D&C 6:32).

I believe that each of us would desire to be as courageous, noble, and steadfast as the women we have spoken of today. What does it require? It requires that we follow the admonition from the book of Proverbs:

"Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths" (Proverbs 3:5-6). As I have studied, pondered, and prayed over this assignment these past few months, I have been struck with the frequency of these words in our scriptures and life stories: desire, faith, prayer, hope, patience, and love.

In the beginning of our quest to cultivate these values and virtues, we must have the desire to make them part of our lives and then pray with faith that it will happen. Paul taught that hope is the anchor

to our souls, and with hope we can be filled with love and charity. Patience and courage are the natural offspring of all these magnificent qualities as we learn to bear our burdens with deep inner strength. That strength comes through letting the Lord work with us to share our burdens. Our testimonies will be deep and everlasting, fortified with the knowledge that with the Lord's help, we can do it!

Sisters, I leave with you my testimony of the truthfulness of this gospel. I know the Lord cares for us, but we must invite him into our lives. Sometimes we wait for a while for answers to our needs, but if we are patient long enough, we receive peace in our hearts in one way or another. Heavenly Father lives, and He loves us. Jesus is the Christ, and He loved us enough to lay down his life for us. This is His church, and I am so grateful to be a part of it.

Life with my husband during the past fifty years has taken me to many places in the world. Everywhere we have visited, I have found women of faith, just like you, and my testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ has grown through the association with wonderful sisters in many lands. May our Heavenly Father's blessings be with each one of us as we strive to be His faithful daughters, in my prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

[1](#) *Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. by John A. Widtsoe (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1954), 346.

[2](#) Don Cecil Corbett, *Mary Fielding Smith, Daughter of Britain* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1966).

[3](#) Personal history of Margaret McNeil Ballard in possession of the author.

[4](#) M. Russell Ballard, "The Joy of Hope Fulfilled," *Ensign*, November 1992, 33.

[5](#) Ballard, "Joy of Hope Fulfilled," 32.

