

“Notwithstanding My Weakness”: Removing the Feeling of Forever Falling Short
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On the way to the recycling bin, as I was thumbing through a magazine that had come in the mail, I saw a page that literally stopped me in my tracks. It was an image of a painting by Caitlin Connolly entitled “Holding Holy Things.” (Sister of Jared)

I tore the page out of the magazine and, through tear-filled eyes, thought about how often I feel like the woman depicted in this painting—bringing my meager offerings, my rocks, to the Lord and asking for miracle, asking for His light and His hand in my life.



My offerings have become “holy things” as I have climbed high mountains and have sought to have my rough places made smooth, “notwithstanding my weakness.”¹

At times we feel overwhelmed with the demands of our circumstances:

Too many children—or not enough.

A calling that demands more time and energy than we have—or perhaps a feeling of being underutilized.

Bodies, minds, and relationships that need healing.

Financial stress that feels weighty.

The list could go on and on—you know; you have your own list.

Yet we get out of bed every day and want to bring the Lord our very best, ordinary offerings. You bring your 16 small stones—and you ask for miracles.

I would like to share some principles from this story and others found in scripture about small stones, light, faith in Jesus Christ, grace, and miracles—principles that help give me perspective when I find myself coming up short again and again and again!

There is a difference between weakness and sin.

Many of us are familiar with the scripture found in Ether 12:27: “And if men come unto me I will show unto them their weakness. I give unto men weakness that they may be humble.” Weakness in this verse is singular, not plural.

Weakness is a condition of mortality; it can help us experience how very much we need the Lord.

Elder Richard G. Scott taught that “the Lord sees weaknesses differently than He does rebellion. Whereas the Lord warns that unrepented rebellion will bring punishment, when the Lord speaks of weaknesses, it is always with mercy.”²

We should never question that in His mercy, the Lord is ready, willing, and anxious to help us overcome our weaknesses.

Recognizing weakness is a catalyst to change.

Back to Ether.

In Ether 12:37 the Lord says to Moroni, “Because thou hast seen thy weakness thou shalt be made strong.” He is not offering to change Moroni’s weakness, but to change Moroni, because Moroni recognized his weakness and shortcomings.

Those who do not see weakness simply do not progress. This awareness is a blessing; it keeps us humble and turning to the Savior.

It was after Peter had been invited to “launch out into the deep” and “let down [his] nets”³ after a long night of fishing and nothing to show for it that the miracle occurred—so many fish that the boats began to sink.

Peter fell at the feet of Jesus and cried out, “I am a sinful man, O Lord.”⁴ He certainly recognized and acknowledged weakness in this moment. His words and subsequent actions show us that as we get closer to Jesus Christ, we become aware of our weakness and we desire His help in becoming more like Him.

President Ezra Taft Benson taught, “Men and women who turn their lives over to God will discover that He can make a lot more out of their lives than they can.”⁵ This is what

happened to Peter and the other disciples. Jesus helped them realize they could do more than catch fish—they could become, with His help, “fishers of men.”⁶

As we recognize our weakness, desire to change, and rely on Jesus Christ, our very natures can change. We too can experience the promise found in 2 Nephi 3:13: “Out of weakness he shall be made strong.”

Discontent can be divine.

I have spoken before of divine discontent.⁷ Calls to action from prophets, seers, and revelators or from the Holy Ghost, along with our innate sense that we can do and be more, sometimes create within us what Elder Neal A. Maxwell called “divine discontent.” Divine discontent comes when we compare what we are to what we have the power to become. Each of us, if we are honest, feels this gap. We yearn for greater personal capacity; we want to do more and be more. We have these feelings because we are daughters and sons of God, born with the Light of Christ, yet we live in a fallen world. These feelings can be a blessing because they can propel us to action and greater discipleship.

Satan knows this as well and would have us see our weakness as a sign of failure. He would have us wallow in despair and discouragement, focusing on all that we are not—lacking in capacity, looks, finances, personality, health, talent—you name it. We all come up short in something. Our discontent can become destructive when we listen to and believe the messages Satan bombards us with, or it can become divine when we turn to Jesus Christ with humility.

One of my earliest memories is coming face to face with my shortcomings. I remember starting kindergarten with the goal to be perfect, to never make a mistake—ever. I remember getting the very first worksheet—my first chance to do something perfectly. There were two

columns of pictures that we were to match Goldilocks on one side of the paper and three bears on the other. I took my time but wasn't quite sure I had done it right. At recess in the kindergarten courtyard some of us compared notes, and to my horror, I realized I had done something wrong. My very first worksheet on my very first day, and I had already made a mistake. So I ran and hid. I stayed in my hiding spot when the bell rang, and everyone went inside. It wasn't long before the teacher came looking and assured me that all was not lost. I was going to be okay.

Fast forward a few years to my baptism day. I had a goal. You've got it—I was going to be perfect. I was never going to make a mistake—ever. Well, I was pretty good for an hour or two. I can't remember exactly what happened, but I do remember being outside with a lot of family and getting mad at one of my brothers. I probably said something unkind. I don't remember the words, but I do remember the sinking feeling that came as I realized I had sinned. It had only been a few hours, and I had already blown it. So what did I do? Yes, I ran and hid. But this time, no one came looking. After some time, I realized I must eventually come out of my hiding place. The message to *run and hide* comes directly from Satan's playbook. We see this pattern in scripture and in the temple.⁸ We are taught the Lord's solution to mistakes and sin in those very same places.

Faith is a principle of action; the Lord loves effort.

Back to the account of the brother of Jared: he had a problem, and he took that problem to the Lord. The barges he had built to cross the ocean had no light. "Behold, O Lord, wilt thou suffer that we shall cross this great water in darkness?"⁹ After crying unto the Lord in prayer, the brother of Jared did not go home and wait for an angel to deliver the solution—he went to work. As disciples of Jesus Christ, we must remember that "it is not meet that [the Lord] should

command in all things.”¹⁰ Like the brother of Jared, we must carefully evaluate those things in our lives that we need to start doing, stop doing, and continue doing. There will not be a “one size fits all” answer to most of our needs. The same words of the Lord given to the brother of Jared as he was instructed to build those barges—“go to work and build”¹¹—apply to each of us. We aren’t in the business of building barges, “but we are in the business of building up people and building up testimonies as we invite others to come unto Christ.”¹² Take your plans to the Lord in prayer. This will require faith and effort on your part. Living as a disciple of Jesus Christ requires work. As He did with the stone offerings of the brother of Jared, the Lord will touch your efforts as you seek His assistance. The brother of Jared showed us how faith is exercised by moving our feet. President Harold B. Lee taught: “If you want the blessing, don’t just kneel down and pray about it. Prepare yourselves in every conceivable way you can in order to make yourselves worthy to receive the blessing you seek.”¹³

The brother of Jared climbed up a mountain, a mountain of “exceeding height,” to find some stones. And he didn’t take the first rocks he found, but rather he did “molten out of a rock sixteen small stones; and they were white and clear, even as transparent glass.”¹⁴ He did everything he could do on his own, and then he took it to the Lord. To turn the rock into smooth, clear stones, he had to subject it to great heat—a refining process that could be compared to life. As we trust God, strive to live the commandments, make and keep sacred covenants, and serve others, the rough edges become smoothed. We become like the stones presented to the Lord by the brother of Jared—stones that were ordinary, meager offerings that were set aflame with enduring light when touched—one by one—by the Lord.

I love the account of Enoch in latter-day scripture. Enoch had received a call from the Lord that overwhelmed him. “Why is it that I have found favor in thy sight, and am but a lad,

and all the people hate me; for I am slow of speech; wherefore am I thy servant?”¹⁵ The Lord’s advice: “Open thy mouth, and it shall be filled, and I will give thee utterance.”¹⁶

How many of us feel similar to Enoch at times? We are called by the Lord to do something that is hard. Sometimes that hard is because we live in a fallen world. We feel that what is being asked of us is beyond our abilities and capacity.

Perhaps we want to run and hide. More than once I have cried out to the Lord with my lack. How can my rocks, my five loaves and fishes, possibly be enough for what is being asked of me? All of us come up short. We simply don’t have enough time, patience, energy, brain power, or capacity.

We do not see any suggestion that Enoch doubted the promise given by the Lord. He simply went to work with obedience and faith.¹⁷ President Thomas S. Monson taught: “Remember that this work is not yours and mine alone. It is the Lord’s work, and when we are on the Lord’s errand, we are entitled to the Lord’s help. Remember that whom the Lord calls, the Lord qualifies.”¹⁸

Power to convert a weakness to a strength is possible through the grace of Jesus Christ.

Enoch’s story reveals the amazing power of God’s grace—power that each one of us can experience to some degree as we move forward with faith in Him. “As Enoch spake forth the words of God, the people trembled, and could not stand in his presence.”¹⁹

“So great was the faith of Enoch that ... he spake the word of the Lord, and the earth trembled, and the mountains fled, even according to his command; and the rivers of water were turned out of their course; ... and all nations feared greatly, so powerful was the word of Enoch, and so great was the power of the language which God had given him.”²⁰

All this from a “lad” who was “slow of speech.”²¹ The grace of Jesus Christ transforms and protects.

When Adam and Eve were found naked in the Garden of Eden, the Lord made coats of skins to cover them.²² These coats can symbolize the covering we can experience because the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ, atoned for our sins and shortcomings. The Hebrew word for atonement is *kaphar*—it literally means “to cover” or “a covering.”

The temple garment is a covering that I carry out of the temple with me—a physical representation of Jesus Christ, His atoning sacrifice, His grace, and my covenant relationship with Him. It is a gift.

I bear testimony that the verse found in Philippians 4:13, the youth theme this year, is true: “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.” The power to convert a weakness to a strength, to accomplish those things we are asked to do, is possible through the grace of Jesus Christ.²³

Miracles can come from our meager offerings.

The story of 16 small stones is a story that teaches us our Savior can do anything and can bring His light into the most unexpected places in the most unexpected ways. He can do extraordinary things with a rock! So, on those days when you feel ordinary, when you feel like your best maybe isn’t good enough, remember that God isn’t asking any of us to be perfect before blessing us for our imperfect efforts. What He requires from us is our hearts and a willing mind.²⁴ What He is asking from us is that we do all that we can—we offer our loaves and small fishes, our rocks—and we give them willingly to Jesus Christ. He magnifies and touches our offerings and they become enough—and to spare.

Elder Lawrence E. Corbridge taught: “For those of us who feel wanting when it comes to talents and gifts, it is encouraging to know that [the Savior’s invitation to ‘let your light so shine before men’] is not to dazzle others with who *we* are or what *we* know. Rather, our light is the Light of the World [our Savior, Jesus Christ,] reflected in us as we simply strive to do as He did. That’s it. The Lord tells us to follow Him and not be ashamed or unwilling to stand out. Do not be ashamed to hold up His light. Do not be afraid to shine. Do not worry about the outcome.”²⁵

President James E. Faust taught: “Occasionally ... you are too hard on yourselves. You think that if your offering is not quite perfect, it is not acceptable. I tell you, however, that if you have done your best, which you usually do, your humble offering, whatever it may be, will be acceptable and pleasing to the Lord.”²⁶

A witness comes after the *trial* of our faith.

The brother of Jared faced a trial of faith, and the witness he received was twofold. The desired blessing came: the stones were touched, and they were filled with light. But even more important was what happened in the process. As the Lord touched the stones, the brother of Jared saw the finger of the Lord. Because of his great faith, the Lord showed Himself to the brother of Jared, saying, “Behold, I am he who was prepared from the foundation of the world to redeem my people. Behold, I am Jesus Christ.”²⁷

When we trust God and allow Him to prevail in our lives, the end result will be better than we could possibly imagine. When the brother of Jared climbed the mountain and presented his best effort, 16 stones, he probably was not expecting to see Jesus Christ. But he did.

Notwithstanding our weakness, like the brother of Jared, the most important miracle we can experience is a knowledge that Jesus Christ lives—that His light can shine in our lives and in

the lives of those we serve. I bear testimony that He is the Light of the World, our Bright Morning Star, our Advocate, and our Shepherd.

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

¹ 2 Nephi 33:11.

² Richard G. Scott, "Personal Strength Through the Atonement of Jesus Christ," *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2013.

³ Luke 5:4.

⁴ Luke 5:8.

⁵ Ezra Taft Benson, "Jesus Christ—Gifts and Expectations," *Ensign*, Dec. 1988.

⁶ Matthew 4:19.

⁷ See Michelle D. Craig, "Divine Discontent," *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2018.

⁸ See Moses 4:14.

⁹ Ether 2:22.

¹⁰ Doctrine and Covenants 58:26.

¹¹ Ether 2:16.

¹² See *Preach My Gospel* (2019), 1, 6, 12, 144.

¹³ Harold B. Lee, *Stand Ye in Holy Places* (1974), 243–44.

¹⁴ Ether 3:1.

¹⁵ Moses 6:31.

¹⁶ Moses 6:32.

¹⁷ See Moses 6:42.

¹⁸ Thomas S. Monson, "Duty Calls," *Ensign*, May 1996.

¹⁹ Moses 6:47.

²⁰ Moses 7:13.

²¹ Moses 6:31.

²² See Moses 4:27.

²³ See 2 Corinthians 12:9.

²⁴ See Doctrine and Covenants 64:34.

²⁵ Lawrence E. Corbridge, "Valiant in the Testimony of Jesus Christ," *Ensign*, Sept. 2011.

²⁶ James E. Faust, "Instruments in the Hands of God," *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2005.

²⁷ Ether 3:14.