

Mortality Works!

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Empty
Empty

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For several years I was assigned to home teach an older sister in my ward. She did not have an easy life. She had various health problems and experienced a lifetime of pain due to a childhood accident on the playground. Divorced at age 32 with four young children to raise and provide for, she remarried at age 50. Her second husband passed away when she was 66, and this sister lived an additional 26 years as a widow.

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Despite her lifelong challenges, she was faithful to her covenants to the end. This sister was an avid genealogist, a temple attender, and a collector and writer of family histories. Though she had many difficult trials, and without question she felt at times sadness and loneliness, she had a cheerful countenance and a gracious and pleasant personality.

Nine months after her passing, one of her sons had a remarkable experience in the temple. He learned by the power of the Holy Ghost that his mother had a message for him. She communicated with him, but not by vision or audible words. The following unmistakable message came into the son's mind from his mother: "I want you to know that mortality works, and I want you to know that I now understand why everything happened [in my life] the way it did—and it is all OK."

This message is all the more remarkable when one considers her situation and the difficulties this sister endured and overcame.

Brothers and sisters, mortalityworks! It is designed to work! Despite the challenges, heart-

aches, and difficulties we all face, our loving, wise, and perfect Heavenly Father has designed the plan of happiness such that we are not destined to fail. His plan provides a way for us to rise above our mortal failures. The Lord has said, “This is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.”

Nonetheless, if we are to be the beneficiaries of the Lord’s “work and ... glory,” even “immortality and eternal life,” we must expect to be schooled and taught and to pass through the refiner’s fire—sometimes to our utter limits. To completely avoid the problems, challenges, and difficulties of this world would be to sidestep the process that is truly necessary for mortality to work.

And so we should not be surprised when hard times come upon us. We will encounter situations that try us and people who enable us to practice true charity and patience. But we need to bear up under our difficulties and remember, as the Lord said:

“And whoso layeth down his life in my cause, for my name’s sake, shall find it again, even life eternal.

“Therefore, be not afraid of your enemies [or your problems, challenges, or the tests of this life], for I have decreed ... , saith the Lord, that I will prove you in all things, whether you will abide in my covenant ... that you may be found worthy.”

When we feel distraught or anxious about our problems or feel that we might be receiving more than our fair share of life’s difficulties, we can remember what the Lord said to the children of Israel:

“And thou shalt remember all the way[s] which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what [is] in thine heart, whether thou [would] keep his commandments, or no.”

As Lehi taught his son Jacob:

“Thou hast suffered afflictions and much sorrow. ... Nevertheless, ... [God] shall consecrate thine afflictions for thy gain. ... Wherefore, I know that thou art redeemed, because of the righteousness of thy Redeemer.”

Because this life is a testing ground and “dark clouds of trouble hang o’er us and threaten our peace to destroy,” it is helpful to remember this counsel and promise found in Mosiah 23 relating to life’s challenges: “Nevertheless—whosoever

putteth his trust in [the Lord] the same shall be lifted up at the last day.”

As a youth, I personally experienced great emotional pain and shame that came as the result of the unrighteous actions of another, which for many years affected my self-worth and my sense of worthiness before the Lord. Nevertheless, I bear personal witness that the Lord can strengthen us and bear us up in whatever difficulties we are called upon to experience during our sojourn in this vale of tears.

We are familiar with Paul’s experience:

“And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations [I have received], there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.

“For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.

“And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for 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.”

We don’t know what Paul’s “thorn in the flesh” was. He chose not to describe whether it was a physical ailment, a mental or emotional infirmity, or a temptation. But we don’t need to know that detail to know that he struggled and pleaded with the Lord for help and that, ultimately, the Lord’s strength and power are what helped him through it.

Like it was for Paul, it was through the Lord’s help that I was eventually strengthened emotionally and spiritually and finally recognized after many years that I have always been a person of worth and worthy of the blessings of the gospel. The Savior helped me to overcome my feelings of unworthiness and to extend sincere forgiveness to the offender. I finally understood that the Savior’s Atonement was a personal gift for me and that my Heavenly Father and His Son love me perfectly. Because of the Savior’s Atonement, mortality works.

While I was eventually blessed to recognize how the Savior rescued me and stood by me through those experiences, I clearly understand that the unfortunate situation of my teenage years was my personal journey and experience, the resolution of which and eventual outcome cannot be projected onto those who have suffered and continue to suffer from the unrighteous

behavior of others.

I recognize that life's experiences—good and bad—can teach us important lessons. I now know and bear testimony that mortality works! I hope that as a result of the sum of my life's experiences—good and bad—I have compassion for innocent victims of another's actions and empathy for the downtrodden.

I sincerely hope that as a result of my life's experiences—good and bad—I am kinder to others, treat others as the Savior would, and have greater understanding for the sinner and that I have complete integrity. As we come to rely on the Savior's grace and keep our covenants, we can serve as examples of the far-reaching effects of the Savior's Atonement.

I share a final example that mortality works.

Elder Hales's aunt, Lois VandenBosch, and his mother, Klea VandenBosch.

My mother did not have an easy journey through mortality. She received no accolades or worldly honors and did not have educational opportunities beyond high school. She contracted polio as a child, resulting in a lifetime of pain and discomfort in her left leg. As an adult, she experienced many difficult and challenging physical and financial circumstances but was faithful to her covenants and loved the Lord.

When my mother was 55, my next older sister passed away, leaving an eight-month-old baby daughter, my niece, motherless. For various reasons, Mom ended up largely raising my niece for the next 17 years, often under very trying circumstances. Yet, notwithstanding these experiences, she happily and willingly served her family, neighbors, and ward members and served as an ordinance worker in the temple for many years. During the last several years of her life, Mom suffered from a form of dementia, was often confused, and was confined to a nursing facility. Regrettably, she was alone when she passed away unexpectedly.

Several months after her passing, I had a dream I have never forgotten. In my dream, I was sitting in my office at the Church Administration Building. Mom entered the office. I knew she had come from the spirit world. I will always remember the feelings I had. She did not say anything, but she radiated a spiritual beauty that I had never before experienced and which I have difficulty describing.

Her countenance and being were truly stun-

ning! I remember saying to her, “Mother, you are so beautiful!” referencing her spiritual power and beauty. She acknowledged me—again without speaking. I felt her love for me, and I knew then that she is happy and healed from her worldly cares and challenges and eagerly awaits “a glorious resurrection.” I know that for Mom, mortality worked—and that it works for us too.

God’s work and glory is to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man. The experiences of mortality are part of the journey that allows us to grow and progress toward that immortality and eternal life. We were not sent here to fail but to succeed in God’s plan for us.

As King Benjamin taught: “And moreover, I would desire that ye should consider on the blessed and happy state of those that keep the commandments of God. For behold, they are blessed in all things, both temporal and spiritual; and if they hold out faithful to the end they are received into heaven, that thereby they may dwell with God in a state of never-ending happiness.” In other words, mortality works!

I testify that as we receive the ordinances of the gospel, enter into covenants with God and then keep those covenants, repent, serve others, and endure to the end, we too can have the assurance and complete trust in the Lord that mortality works! I testify of Jesus Christ and that our glorious future with our Heavenly Father is made possible by the grace and Atonement of the Savior. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.