

George Albert Smith, Lesson 17: The Strengthening Power of Faith

Monte F. Shelley, 14 Oct. 2012

Quotes

- One's life ... cannot be both faith-filled and stress-free. (Neal A. Maxwell)
- We can and must write in a language which sows among the masses hate, revulsion and scorn toward those who disagree with us. (Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, Soviet Dictator 1870-1924)
- If ... the voice of the people doth choose iniquity, then ... the judgments of God will come upon you. (Mos 29:27)
- [Gadianon robbers] seduced the more part of the righteous ... to believe in their works and partake of their spoils. ... Thus they did obtain the sole management of the government, insomuch that they did trample under their feet ... the poor and the meek, and the humble followers of God. (Hel 6:38-39)

1. Requesting more missionaries in England (GAS)

The Church had sent very few missionaries to Europe during the war, and now food shortages and other economic problems made European government officials unwilling to grant visas to foreigners. President George Albert Smith's difficult task was to persuade these officials to allow missionaries into their countries.

"Our American Ambassador has been very kind and succeeded in securing an interview for us with Sir Robert Horne, the Minister of Labour for Great Britain. When we presented ourselves at his office, we handed our letter from the Ambassador to Sir Robert's secretary, who asked us if our business would hold over as his chief was leaving in a few minutes for Scotland to be gone three weeks. I assured him that we would greatly appreciate five minutes of his time now as we did not live in London and our business was urgent. The secretary went in to Sir Robert and soon returned with the information that he would postpone his trip and meet us at four o'clock that day. I had prayed most fervently that morning that our way might be opened and when we were invited to return I felt most grateful to our Heavenly Father."

At the appointed hour, President Smith and his companions were invited into Sir Robert Horne's private office. "We tried to tell him what we needed and assured him that Great Britain needed what we were asking. For an hour and nearly a half he was a most interested listener to part of the history of the Church and our belief, etc.

"When I had finished he again asked what we wanted of him and when we told him we wanted the privilege of recruiting our missionary forces up to two hundred and fifty, the same as before the war, he said it would afford him pleasure to issue instructions to his department to allow that number to land as fast as they should arrive. Of course we were much pleased and left him with the assurance that he had lifted quite a burden from our minds.

"I feel sure we made a friend of one of England's most influential men and I would not hesitate to go to him at any time if necessity required."

2. Examples of faith in the scriptures (GAS)

We are informed that without faith we cannot please God [see Heb 11:6]. It is the moving cause of all action, and Scripture is replete with evidences of the power of faith.

Noah built an ark and his family was saved while others died.

Lot's family was saved when fire destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah

Daniel prayed to God contrary to law and was saved in lion's den.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused to worship an idol, were cast into a fiery furnace, and they were saved from death. Elijah called down fire from heaven in contest with Baal's priests. Moses led Israel from bondage through the Red Sea, provided food and water in the desert, and led Israel to the Promised Land.

Brother of Jared's friends kept language and were led here.

Lehi brought his family to their promised land.

Christ's disciples endured persecution and spread gospel.

Christ and his disciples worked miracles.

3. Examples of faith in this dispensation (GAS)

Joseph prayed and had his First Vision, received the plates and translated Book of Mormon, received the revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants, led Saints from Kirtland to Missouri and to Nauvoo.

Brigham Young led saints to the Salt Lake valley.

Early saints endured persecution and hardship, crossed the plains and built temples, had crops saved from crickets.

Church leaders have given inspired instructions to edify saints, received understanding, remembered past, and saw future.

Elders left families to serve missions.

Saints have seen their sick healed and their dead raised.

4. Faith in God → life, liberty, prosperity, blessings?

These examples seem to suggest that faith eventually results in good things (e.g., lives saved, Promised Lands, miracles).

Any examples of faith leading to death, prison, and poverty?

5. The Lord trieth their patience and faith (Mosiah 23:21)

²¹ The Lord seeth fit to chasten his people; yea, he trieth their patience and their faith. ²² Nevertheless—whosoever putteth his trust in him the same shall be lifted up at the last day.

SOED **Try**: test, prove, experiment; refine, purify

SOED **Patient, patience**: [L. *pati* suffer] 1. Suffering or enduring (pain, trouble, or evil) with calmness and composure ... (b) Long-suffering, forbearing under provocation of any kind; esp. bearing with others, their faults, limitations, ... (c) Quietly awaiting the course or issue of events, etc. (d) Persistent, constant, unwearied in the face of difficulties and hindrances.

How do the examples of faith illustrate "trials of faith"?

6. Dictionary Meanings

Nouns often have a related verb.

What is the verb form of *faith*?

What is the difference between *faith* and *belief*?

Believe (NT=278); Belief (NT=1); Faith (NT 243)

Noun	Verb
Confidence	Confide
Trust	Trust
<i>pístis</i> (GR)	<i>pisteúō</i> (GR)
Belief	Believe
Faith	

What is the opposite of faith in Christ?

Doubt (mind), fear (heart), disobey (body), or not sacrifice (might). Also to obey grudgingly (heart), murmur.

What do the Greek words for *faith* and *believe* mean?

pístis: 1. That which causes trust and faith— a. *faithfulness, reliability*, b. *solemn promise, oath, truth*, c. *proof, pledge*. 2. *trust, confidence, faith* in God's commandments and promises. It refers to making and keeping covenants / contracts. (Bauer)

What are dictionary meanings of *faith* and related words?

Faith [Latin *fidus* trustworthy, *fidere* trust.] 1. confidence, reliance, trust. 2. That which produces confidence or trust: evidence, assurance, token, pledge, promise. 3. Fidelity, faithfulness, loyalty. It meant 'loyalty to a person to whom one is bound by promise or duty, or to one's promise or duty itself,' as in 'to keep faith, to break faith.' (OED, SOED *faith, belief*)

SOED **faithful** 1. Full of faith. 2. Firm in fidelity or allegiance to a person to whom one is bound by any tie; constant, loyal, true. 3. True to one's word. 4. Conscientious in the fulfillment of duty. 5. Trustworthy, reliable.

Meaning related words include *rely on* (merits), *trust*, *confidence in* (promises), *willing to submit*.

Root (*fides*) related words: *fidelity* (faithfulness), *fiducial*, *fiduciary*, *confidence*.

SOED **confidence** [L. *con* + *fidere* trust + *-ence*] 1. The mental attitude of trusting in or relying on; firm trust, reliance, faith.

SOED **fidelity** 1a. The quality of being faithful; faithfulness, loyalty to a person, party, etc. 1b. Conjugal faithfulness

¹ Faith is the substance [GR, JST *assurance*] of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. (Heb 11:1)

SOED **assurance** 1. A promise making a thing certain: an engagement, pledge, guarantee. ... 3. A declaration intended to give confidence. ... 8. Subjective certainty; confidence, trust.

What is the Hebrew word for *faith*?

Amen is the best known form of the Hebrew word ('*mn*) for faith. It is in the OT 113 times as *faithful, believe, sure*. It is in the NT 152 times as *verily* or *amen*. In Rabbinic writings, to believe in God and to obey God are equivalent.

7. Faith in God → Seek, Hear and Obey God's Will

"Faith is confidence and trust in Jesus Christ that lead a person to obey him" (GS Faith) and to make covenants with him.

Faith in God → seek to know His will, obey willingly His commandments (go and do), and believe His words (e.g., all things shall work together for your good).

Nephi: I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded, for I know that the Lord giveth no commandments ... save he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them. (1 Ne 3:7)

The Holy Ghost tells, prompts, or shows us what we should do, confirms the written or spoken words of others, and brings things to our remembrance (2 Ne 32:3–5; 33:1; Jn 14:26).

How do the examples of faith illustrate this meaning?

It is the responsibility of prophets to prophesy.

It is our responsibility to help fulfill those prophecies.

Brigham and apostles fulfilled prophecy (D&C 118:5) by going to Far West at midnight because enemies were determined to stop them (HC 3:339).

8. Faith in Christ cycle

↗	Seek God's will	↘
Learn of and trust Christ		Hear & Obey
↖	Learn from experience	↙

Nephi: I will go and do ... for I know ... he shall prepare a way

How is this faith cycle illustrated by Nephi's experiences with the brass plates, the Liahona, and building the ship?

"Faith comes from doing the will of God." (GAS)

If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself. (Jn 7:17)

Learn about Christ: (a) who Christ was, is, and will be; (b) what he has done, does, and will do for us. Like Nephi, we increase our faith in Christ with each personal experience.

9. Covenants with God

Covenants help us "understand and know how to worship, and know what you worship, that you may come unto the Father in my name, and in due time receive of his fulness." (D&C 93:19)

Covenants have 6 basic parts: Author, Blessings, Curses, Duty, Entering ritual, and Remember (see GAS lesson #8). I like to look for the ABCDER parts of covenants (e.g., sacrament, temple).

Mosaic Covenant
Author: Moses saw and talked with the LORD; Moses saw earth and inhabitants; LORD revealed to Moses the creation of heaven and earth, fall of Adam, Adamic covenant (obedience, sacrifice, baptism, Holy Ghost), atonement of Christ (Moses 1–6)
Blessings: prosper in goods, children, cattle, crops; lender nation; peace in the land; no war or evil beasts in land; LORD will <u>fight your battles and walk among you</u> . (Lev 26:4–12; Dt 28:1–14)
Curses: Famine, drought; plagues, disease, pestilence; killed by wild beasts; anarchy, lawlessness; wives violated; children enslaved; many killed by sword (war); bondage; plundered and pillaged; birds eat unburied bodies; debtor nation; eat children; enemies destroy cities and property; taken captive to other nations; scattered among all people. (Lev 26:14–39; Dt 28:15–68)
Duty: Love the LORD with heart, might, mind, strength; Love neighbor; 10 commandments; 613 commandments; "keep the judgments, ... statutes, and the commandments of the LORD ... according to the law of Moses" (2 Ne 5:10)
Enter: Sacrifices; Moses read "book of the covenant" to people who said they would obey the words of the LORD. (Ex 24)
Remember: <i>Signs or tokens:</i> ark of the covenant with tablets inside; <i>Written record</i> of covenant; <i>Renewal rituals:</i> daily temple sacrifices; Sabbath day; public reading of the Law (Torah); public renewal of covenant; <i>Reminders:</i> <i>Shema:</i> "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: and thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." "And these words ... shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children" and talk of them when you sit, walk, lie down, and rise up. "And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and ... as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates" (Dt 6:4–9). Put fringes (<i>tzitzit</i>) on the corners of garments (<i>tallit</i>) to remember commandments and do them. (Num 15:37)

10. Faith as related to Covenants

Faith → trust God enough to make covenants and to keep His commandments willingly. As we do this, our faith will increase.

Faith in Christ (covenant) → *trust* (past, Author, Enter), *obedience* (present, Duty, Remember, be trustworthy), *hope* (future, Blessings), *fear* (future, Curses).

Some people are motivated by love of God and his promised blessings, but others by fear of promised curses/consequences.

Nothing ... [except] harshness, ... prophesying of wars, ... and continually reminding them of death, ... and the judgments ... of God ... to keep them in the fear of the Lord ... would keep them from going down speedily to destruction. (Enos 1:23)

11. Covenant cycle (many scriptural examples)

Trials of faith, adversity ➔	Blessings peace, prosper, deliver ➔	Forget forsake, fall away, disobey, break
	Covenants Commandments	
Remember obey, keep, return, repent ↵	Curses cut off from LORD, famine, pestilence, war, captivity	↵ God sends prophets to warn people to repent or be cut off

Trials and blessings often lead people to forget their covenant until adversity or warnings “stir them up in remembrance of their duty” to love God and neighbor (Mosiah 1:17; Hel 12:1–3).

In the scriptures, the marriage covenant between a husband and a wife is likened to God’s covenant with His people.

Christ is referred to as the bridegroom and the church is his bride. “The husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church. ... Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church” (Eph 5:23, 25). Husbands have the duty to cherish, provide for and protect their wives.

Spouses covenant to be faithful to each other. We covenant to love God and have no other gods before Him. A husband is jealous when his wife is unfaithful with other man. God is a jealous when his covenant people worship other gods. Worshiping other gods is likened to adultery and results in being cut off or divorced like an unfaithful spouse.

Trials test faith and faithfulness: It is easy to be faithful when a marriage is going well. What will a spouse do during difficult times or when tempted (e.g., Joseph and Potiphar’s wife)?

12. Confronting difficult obstacles (GAS)

It is [faith] ... that points us heavenward, that gives us hope in the battle of life. When we become confused, and find ourselves confronted by obstacles we, seemingly, cannot overcome, having faith in the Redeemer of the world, we can go to Him and know that our prayers will be answered for our good.

If you have something that the Lord asks or expects you to do and you don’t know just how to proceed, do your best. Move in the direction that you ought to go; trust the Lord, give him a chance, and he will never fail you.

What a wonderful thing it is to know that we can, if we will, hold our Heavenly Father’s hand and be guided by him. No other people ... have the assurance that this group of people has.

13. God will prepare a way (GAS)

One day I was impressed to say to a missionary who was going to a certain town where they would not let us hold street meetings:

“Now remember, give the Lord a chance. You are going to ask a favor. Give the Lord a chance. Ask him to open the way.”

The young man went to that city, went into the office of the mayor ... to ask if they might change the rule. ... The mayor was out of town. The young man came out of the office ... and saw on a door ... “Chief Constable’s Office.” ... Something said to him: “Give the Lord a chance.” He walked into the chief constable’s office and told him what he had come for. When he finished the man said: “Well, what street corner would you like?”

He said: “I don’t know this city as well as you do. I would not ask for a corner that would be undesirable, or where we would block the traffic. Would you mind going with me to select a corner?” ... The constable said: “Surely, I will go with you.”

In fifteen minutes they had one of the best corners in town, with permission to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ where it had not been preached on the streets since before [World War I]. ...

The Lord has a way of accomplishing things that we are unable to do. ... He will not require anything without preparing the way.

14. Faith is a gift to the righteous (GAS)

We know that faith is a gift of God; it is the fruitage of righteous living. It does not come to us by our command, but is the result of doing the will of our Heavenly Father. If we lack faith let us examine ourselves to see if we have been keeping His commandments, and repent without delay if we have not. ... May the Lord increase our faith, and may we live to be worthy of it.

Our faith is conditioned upon our righteous lives. We cannot live improperly and have faith as we should, but if we keep the commandments of the Lord, we can have faith, and it will grow and increase as our righteousness increases.

Quotes

Neal A. Maxwell: While faith is not a perfect knowledge, it brings a deep trust in God, whose knowledge is perfect! ... Faith in God and in the Lord Jesus Christ includes not only faith in Their existence but also in Their redemptive capacities. ... Faith also includes trust in God’s timing. ... Faith likewise includes faith in God’s developmental purposes, for ‘the Lord seeth fit to chasten his people; yea, he trieth their patience and their faith.’ (Mosiah 23:21) Still, some of us have trouble when God’s tutoring is applied to us! We plead for exemption more than we do for sanctification. (*Ensign*, May 1991, 90)

Neal A. Maxwell: Patience is not indifference. Actually, it is caring very much, but being willing, nevertheless, to submit both to the Lord and to what the scriptures call the ‘process of time.’ Patience is tied very closely to faith in our Heavenly Father. ... When we are unduly impatient, we are suggesting that we know what is best—better than does God. Or, at least, we are asserting that our timetable is better than his. Either way we are questioning the reality of God’s omniscience, as if, as some seem to believe, God were on some sort of postdoctoral fellowship. (*Ensign*, Oct ‘80)

Howard W. Hunter: Orson F. Whitney ... [said] “No pain that we suffer, no trial that we experience is wasted. It ministers to our education, to the development of such qualities as patience, faith, fortitude and humility. All that we suffer and all that we endure, especially when we endure it patiently, builds up our characters, purifies our hearts, expands our souls, and makes us more tender and charitable, more worthy to be called the children of God ... and it is through sorrow and suffering, toil and tribulation, that we gain the education that we come here to acquire and which will make us more like our Father and Mother in heaven.” (*Ensign*, Nov 1987, 60)

Bruce R. McConkie: Sacrifice and consecration are inseparably intertwined. The law of consecration is that we consecrate our time, our talents, and our money and property to the cause of the Church: such are to be available to the extent they are needed to further the Lord’s interests on earth. The law of sacrifice is that we are willing to sacrifice all that we have for the truth’s sake—our character and reputation; our honor and applause; our good name among men; our houses, lands, and families: all things, even our very lives if need be. (*Ensign*, May 1975)