



Stand Fast through the Storms of Life

“Stand fast, ye Saints of God, hold on a little while longer, and the storm of life will be past, and you will be rewarded by that God whose servants you are.”

From the Life of Joseph Smith

On the night of March 24, 1832, Joseph Smith had stayed up late caring for his 11-month-old son, Joseph, who was sick with the measles. The Smith family was then living in the John Johnson home in Hiram, Ohio. The Prophet had finally gone to sleep on a trundle bed when a mob of a dozen or more men who had been drinking whiskey broke into the home. The Prophet later described the events of that terrible night:

“The mob burst open the door and surrounded the bed in an instant, and . . . the first I knew I was going out of the door in the hands of an infuriated mob. I made a desperate struggle, as I was forced out, to extricate myself, but only cleared one leg, with which I made a pass at one man, and he fell on the door steps. I was immediately overpowered again; and they swore . . . they would kill me if I did not be still, which quieted me. . . .

“They then seized me by the throat and held on till I lost my breath. After I came to, as they passed along with me, about thirty rods from the house, I saw Elder Rigdon stretched out on the ground, whither they had dragged him by his heels. I supposed he was dead. I began to plead with them, saying, ‘You will have mercy and spare my life, I hope.’ To which they replied, ‘. . . Call on yer God for help, we’ll show ye no mercy.’ ”

After some discussion, the mob “concluded not to kill me,” the Prophet related, “but to beat and scratch me well, tear off my shirt and drawers, and leave me naked. . . . They ran back and



On the night of March 24, 1832, in Hiram, Ohio, Joseph Smith was dragged out of his home by an infuriated mob and covered with tar and feathers.

fetched the bucket of tar, when one exclaimed, with an oath, 'Let us tar up his mouth;' and they tried to force the tar-paddle into my mouth; I twisted my head around, so that they could not; and they cried out, '. . . Hold up yer head and let us giv ye some tar.' They then tried to force a vial into my mouth, and broke it in my teeth. All my clothes were torn off me except my shirt collar; and one man fell on me and scratched my body with his nails like a mad cat. . . .

"They then left me, and I attempted to rise, but fell again; I pulled the tar away from my lips, so that I could breathe more freely, and after a while I began to recover, and raised myself up, whereupon I saw two lights. I made my way towards one of them, and found it was Father Johnson's. When I came to the door . . . the tar made me look as if I were covered with blood, and when my wife saw me she thought I was all crushed to pieces, and fainted. . . .

"My friends spent the night in scraping and removing the tar, and washing and cleansing my body; so that by morning I was ready to be clothed again."

Even after this ordeal, the Prophet stood fast in carrying out his responsibilities to the Lord. The next day was the Sabbath. "The people assembled for meeting at the usual hour of worship," the Prophet recorded, "and among them came also the mobbers. . . . With my flesh all scarified and defaced, I preached to the congregation as usual, and in the afternoon of the same day baptized three individuals."¹ Joseph and Emma's son, Joseph, died five days after the mob attack as a result of being exposed to the cold night air while suffering from the measles.

Wilford Woodruff, the fourth President of the Church, said: "The Lord told Joseph that He would prove him, whether he would abide in His covenant or not, even unto death. He did prove him; and although [Joseph] had the whole world to contend against and the treachery of false friends to withstand, although his whole life was a scene of trouble and anxiety and care, yet, in all his afflictions, his imprisonments, the mobbings and ill treatment he passed through, he was ever true to his God."²

Teachings of Joseph Smith

Those who follow Jesus Christ will be tried and must prove themselves faithful to God.

“There is no safety, only in the arm of Jehovah. None else can deliver, and he will not deliver unless we do prove ourselves faithful to him in the severest trouble. For he that will have his robes washed in the blood of the Lamb must come up through great tribulation [see Revelation 7:13–14], even the greatest of all affliction.”³

“The destinies of all people are in the hands of a just God, and He will do no injustice to any one; and this one thing is sure, that they who will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution [see 2 Timothy 3:12]; and before their robes are made white in the blood of the Lamb, it is to be expected, according to John the Revelator, they will pass through great tribulation [see Revelation 7:13–14].”⁴

“Men have to suffer that they may come upon Mount Zion and be exalted above the heavens.”⁵

While suffering greatly during his imprisonment in Liberty Jail during the winter of 1838–39, Joseph Smith wrote to members of the Church: “Beloved brethren, we say unto you, that inasmuch as God hath said that He would have a tried people, that He would purge them as gold [see Malachi 3:3], now we think that this time He has chosen His own crucible, wherein we have been tried; and we think if we get through with any degree of safety, and shall have kept the faith, that it will be a sign to this generation, altogether sufficient to leave them without excuse; and we think also, it will be a trial of our faith equal to that of Abraham, and that the ancients will not have whereof to boast over us in the day of judgment, as being called to pass through heavier afflictions; that we may hold an even weight in the balance with them.”⁶

“Trials will only give us the knowledge necessary to understand the minds of the ancients. For my part, I think I never could have felt as I now do, if I had not suffered the wrongs that

I have suffered. All things shall work together for good to them that love God [see Romans 8:28].”⁷



John Taylor

John Taylor, the third President of the Church, said: “I heard the Prophet Joseph say, in speaking to the Twelve on one occasion: ‘You will have all kinds of trials to pass through. And it is quite as necessary for you to be tried as it was for Abraham and other men of God, and (said he) God will feel after you, and He will take hold of you and wrench your very heart strings, and if you cannot stand it you will not be fit for an inheritance in the Celestial Kingdom of God.’ . . . Joseph Smith never had many months of peace after he received the truth, and finally he was murdered in Carthage jail.”⁸

**God will support and bless those who trust Him
in their times of trial.**

“The power of the Gospel will enable us to stand and bear with patience the great affliction that is falling upon us on all sides. . . . The harder the persecution the greater the gifts of God upon his church. Yea, all things shall work together for good to them who are willing to lay down their lives for Christ’s sake.”⁹

“My only hope and confidence is in that God who gave me being, in whom there is all power, who now is present before me, and my heart is naked before his eyes continually. He is my comforter, and he forsaketh me not.”¹⁰

“I know in whom I trust; I stand upon the rock; the floods cannot, no, they shall not, overthrow me.”¹¹

After the Prophet was delivered from his imprisonment in Liberty Jail, he said the following about his experience: “Thank God, we have been delivered. And although some of our beloved brethren have had to seal their testimony with their blood, and have died martyrs to the cause of truth—

“Short though bitter was their pain,
Everlasting is their joy.

“Let us not sorrow as ‘those without hope’ [see 1 Thessalonians 4:13]; the time is fast approaching when we shall see them again and rejoice together, without being afraid of wicked men. Yes, those who have slept in Christ, shall He bring with Him, when He shall come to be glorified in His Saints, and admired by all those who believe, but to take vengeance upon His enemies and all those who obey not the Gospel.

“At that time the hearts of the widows and fatherless shall be comforted, and every tear shall be wiped from their faces. The trials they have had to pass through shall work together for their good, and prepare them for the society of those who have come up out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. [See Romans 8:28; Revelation 7:13–14, 17.]”¹²

The Prophet wrote the following in a letter to the Saints on September 1, 1842, later recorded in Doctrine and Covenants 127:2: “And as for the perils which I am called to pass through, they seem but a small thing to me, as the envy and wrath of man have been my common lot all the days of my life. . . . Deep water is what I am wont to swim in. It all has become a second nature to me; and I feel, like Paul, to glory in tribulation; for to this day has the God of my fathers delivered me out of them all, and will deliver me from henceforth; for behold, and lo, I shall triumph over all my enemies, for the Lord God hath spoken it.”¹³

The faithful do not murmur in affliction, but are thankful for God’s goodness.

On December 5, 1833, the Prophet wrote to Church leaders presiding over the Saints who were being persecuted in Missouri: “Remember not to murmur at the dealings of God with His creatures. You are not as yet brought into as trying circumstances as were the ancient Prophets and Apostles. Call to mind a Daniel, the three Hebrew children [Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego], Jeremiah, Paul, Stephen, and many others, too numerous to mention, who were stoned, sawn asunder, tempted, slain with the sword, and [who] wandered about in sheep skins and goat skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented, of whom the world

was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and in mountains, and hid in dens and caves of the earth; yet they all obtained a good report through faith [see Hebrews 11:37–39]; and amidst all their afflictions they rejoiced that they were counted worthy to receive persecutions for Christ’s sake.

“We know not what we shall be called to pass through before Zion is delivered and established; therefore, we have great need to live near to God, and always to be in strict obedience to all His commandments, that we may have a conscience void of offense toward God and man. . . .

“. . . Our trust is in God, and we are determined, His grace assisting us, to maintain the cause and hold out faithful unto the end, that we may be crowned with crowns of celestial glory, and enter into the rest that is prepared for the children of God.”¹⁴

Five days later, the Prophet wrote to Church leaders and Saints in Missouri: “Let us be thankful that it is as well with us as it is, and we are yet alive and peradventure, God hath laid up in store great good for us in this generation, and may grant that we may yet glorify His name. I feel thankful that there have no more denied the faith; I pray God in the name of Jesus that you all may be kept in the faith unto the end.”¹⁵

The Prophet’s journal for January 1, 1836, records: “This being the beginning of a new year, my heart is filled with gratitude to God that He has preserved my life, and the lives of my family, while another year has passed away. We have been sustained and upheld in the midst of a wicked and perverse generation, although exposed to all the afflictions, temptations, and misery that are incident to human life; for this I feel to humble myself in dust and ashes, as it were, before the Lord.”¹⁶

About his recovery from an illness in June 1837, the Prophet said: “This is one of the many instances in which I have suddenly been brought from a state of health, to the borders of the grave, and as suddenly restored, for which my heart swells with gratitude to my heavenly Father, and I feel renewedly to dedicate myself and all my powers to His service.”¹⁷



“Our trust is in God, and we are determined, His grace assisting us, to maintain the cause and hold out faithful unto the end.”

Confidence in God’s power, wisdom, and love will help us avoid discouragement in times of trial.

“All difficulties which might and would cross our way must be surmounted. Though the soul be tried, the heart faint, and the hands hang down, we must not retrace our steps; there must be decision of character.”¹⁸

“Having confidence in the power, wisdom, and love of God, the Saints have been enabled to go forward through the most adverse circumstances, and frequently, when to all human appearances, nothing but death presented itself, and destruction [seemed] inevitable, has the power of God been manifest, His glory revealed, and deliverance effected; and the Saints, like the children of Israel, who came out of the land of Egypt, and through the Red Sea, have sung an anthem of praise to his holy name.”¹⁹

“I know that the cloud will burst, and Satan’s kingdom be laid in ruins, with all his black designs; and that the Saints will come forth like gold seven times tried in the fire, being made perfect through sufferings and temptations, and that the blessings of

heaven and earth will be multiplied upon their heads; which may God grant for Christ's sake."²⁰

"Stand fast, ye Saints of God, hold on a little while longer, and the storm of life will be past, and you will be rewarded by that God whose servants you are, and who will duly appreciate all your toils and afflictions for Christ's sake and the Gospel's. Your names will be handed down to posterity as Saints of God."²¹

George A. Smith, who served as a counselor to President Brigham Young, received the following counsel from the Prophet Joseph Smith at a time of great difficulty: "He told me I should never get discouraged, whatever difficulties might surround me. If I was sunk in the lowest pit of Nova Scotia and all the Rocky Mountains piled on top of me, I ought not to be discouraged but hang on, exercise faith, and keep up good courage and I should come out on the top of the heap at last."²²

Just a few days before the Prophet was martyred, at a time when he and the Saints knew that his life was in danger, Joseph took the hand of Abraham C. Hodge and said: "Now, Brother Hodge, let what will, come; don't deny the faith, and all will be well."²³

Suggestions for Study and Teaching

Consider these ideas as you study the chapter or as you prepare to teach. For additional help, see pages vii–xii.

- Review the account on pages 227–29. Why do you think the Prophet Joseph Smith was able to endure the trials he experienced? What are your thoughts or feelings as you picture him with his "flesh all scarified and defaced," teaching a congregation?
- Read the third paragraph on page 230. How do you think suffering helps us prepare for exaltation? (For some examples, see pages 230–31.) What have you learned from your trials?
- Three times in this chapter, Joseph Smith assures us that "the trials [we] have had to pass through shall work together for [our] good" (page 232; see also page 231). How have you seen the truth of this statement?

- Read the third and fourth full paragraphs on page 231. What experiences can you share in which the Lord has comforted you in times of trial? What does it mean to you to “stand upon the rock”?
- Joseph Smith counseled the Saints not to murmur, or complain, about God’s dealings with us (pages 232–33). In what ways can murmuring affect us? What are some ways we should respond to trials? (For some examples, see pages 232–35.)
- What does it mean to have “decision of character” when facing difficulties? (page 234).
- Read the Prophet’s counsel to George A. Smith (page 235). How might this counsel help you when you face trials?

Related Scriptures: Psalm 55:22; John 16:33; Alma 36:3; Helaman 5:12; D&C 58:2–4; 90:24; 122:5–9

Notes

1. *History of the Church*, 1:261–64; italics deleted; from “History of the Church” (manuscript), book A-1, pp. 205–8, Church Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah.
2. Wilford Woodruff, *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly*, Oct. 18, 1881, p. 1; punctuation and capitalization modernized.
3. Letter from Joseph Smith to William W. Phelps and others, Aug. 18, 1833, Kirtland, Ohio; Joseph Smith, Collection, Church Archives.
4. *History of the Church*, 1:449; from a letter from Joseph Smith to Edward Partridge and others, Dec. 5, 1833, Kirtland, Ohio.
5. *History of the Church*, 5:556; from a discourse given by Joseph Smith on Aug. 27, 1843, in Nauvoo, Illinois; reported by Willard Richards and William Clayton.
6. *History of the Church*, 3:294; from a letter from Joseph Smith and others to Edward Partridge and the Church, Mar. 20, 1839, Liberty Jail, Liberty, Missouri.
7. *History of the Church*, 3:286; from a letter from Joseph Smith to Presendia Huntington Buell, Mar. 15, 1839, Liberty Jail, Liberty, Missouri; Sister Buell’s last name is incorrectly spelled “Bull” in *History of the Church*.
8. John Taylor, *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly*, Aug. 21, 1883, p. 1.
9. Letter from Joseph Smith to William W. Phelps and others, Aug. 18, 1833, Kirtland, Ohio; Joseph Smith, Collection, Church Archives.
10. Letter from Joseph Smith to William W. Phelps, July 31, 1832, Hiram, Ohio; Joseph Smith, Collection, Church Archives.
11. *History of the Church*, 2:343; from a letter from Joseph Smith to William Smith, Dec. 18, 1835, Kirtland, Ohio.
12. *History of the Church*, 3:330–31; punctuation modernized; from “Extract, from the Private Journal of Joseph Smith Jr.,” *Times and Seasons*, Nov. 1839, p. 8.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 127:2; a letter from Joseph Smith to the Saints, Sept. 1, 1842, Nauvoo, Illinois.
14. *History of the Church*, 1:450; from a letter from Joseph Smith to Edward Partridge and others, Dec. 5, 1833, Kirtland, Ohio.

15. *History of the Church*, 1:455; paragraph divisions altered; from a letter from Joseph Smith to Edward Partridge and others, Dec. 10, 1833, Kirtland, Ohio.
16. *History of the Church*, 2:352; from a Joseph Smith journal entry, Jan. 1, 1836, Kirtland, Ohio.
17. *History of the Church*, 2:493; from “History of the Church” (manuscript), book B-1, pp. 762–63, Church Archives.
18. *History of the Church*, 4:570; from a discourse given by Joseph Smith on Mar. 30, 1842, in Nauvoo, Illinois; reported by Eliza R. Snow.
19. *History of the Church*, 4:185; from a letter from Joseph Smith and his counselors in the First Presidency to the Saints, Sept. 1840, Nauvoo, Illinois, published in *Times and Seasons*, Oct. 1840, p. 178.
20. *History of the Church*, 2:353; from a Joseph Smith journal entry, Jan. 1, 1836, Kirtland, Ohio.
21. *History of the Church*, 4:337; from a report from Joseph Smith and his counselors in the First Presidency, Apr. 7, 1841, Nauvoo, Illinois, published in *Times and Seasons*, Apr. 15, 1841, p. 385.
22. George A. Smith, “History of George Albert Smith by Himself,” p. 49, George Albert Smith, Papers, 1834–75, Church Archives.
23. *History of the Church*, 6:546; punctuation modernized; from “History of the Church” (manuscript), book F-1, p. 147, Church Archives.