

# JOHN TAYLOR

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“We have learned many things through suffering. We call it suffering. I call it a school of experience. I never did bother my head much about these things. I do not today. What are these things for? Why is it that good men should be tried? Why is it, in fact, that we should have a devil? Why did not the Lord kill him long ago? Because he could not do without him. He needed the devil and a great many of those who do his bidding just to keep men straight, that we may learn to place our dependence upon God, and trust in him, and to observe his laws, and keep his commandments. When he destroyed the inhabitants of the antediluvian world, he suffered a descendant of Cain to come through the flood in order that he might be properly represented upon the earth. And Satan keeps busy all the time, and he will until he is bound; and I expect they will then have good times until he is loose again. The time will be when he will be cast into the bottomless pit, and he will not be able to deceive the nations any more until the thousand years have expired. I have never looked at these things in any other light than trials for the purpose of purifying the Saints of God, that they may be, as the scriptures say, as gold that has been seven times purified by the fire” (*The Gospel Kingdom*, sel. G. Homer Durham [1943], 334).

Above text is an excerpt from "The Divine Purpose of Trials" a Church Education Symposium handout from 1998. Randy L. Bott, BYU religion instructor, is the author. Text is a photocopy of portions of page 1 and 2 of the handout.



# THE DIVINE PURPOSE OF TRIALS

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## M. RUSSELL BALLARD

"One cannot look at suffering, regardless of its causes or origins, without feeling pain and compassion. I can understand why someone who lacks an eternal perspective might see the horrifying news footage of starving children and man's inhumanity to man and shake a fist at the heavens and cry, 'If there is a God, how could he allow such things to happen!'" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1995, 30; or *Ensign*, May 1995, 23).

## JAMES E. FAUST

"Unfortunately, some of our greatest tribulations are the result of our own foolishness and weakness and occur because of our own carelessness or transgression. Central to solving these problems is the great need to get back on the right track and, if necessary, engage in each of the steps for full and complete repentance.

Through this great principle, many things can be made fully right and all things better. We can go to others for help. To whom can we go? Elder Orson F. Whitney asked and answered this question: 'To whom do we look, in days of grief and disaster, for help and consolation? . . . They are men and women who have suffered, and out of their experience in suffering they bring forth the riches of their sympathy and condolences as a blessing to those now in need. Could they do this had they not suffered themselves?'

" . . . Is not this God's purpose in causing his children to suffer? He wants them to become more like himself. God has suffered far more than man ever did or ever will, and is therefore the great source of sympathy and consolation.' (*Improvement Era*, Nov. 1918, p. 7.)" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1979, 78; or *Ensign*, May 1979, 54).

## RICHARD G. SCOTT

"No one wants adversity. Trials, disappointments, sadness, and heartache come to us from two basically different sources. Those who transgress the laws of God will always have those challenges. . . .

"If you are suffering the disheartening effects of transgression, please recognize that the only path to permanent relief from sadness is sincere repentance with a broken heart and a contrite spirit. Realize your full dependence on the Lord and your need to align your life with His teachings. There is really no other way to get lasting healing and peace. Postponing humble repentance will delay or prevent your receiving relief. Admit to yourself your mistakes and seek help now. Your bishop is a friend with keys of authority to help you find peace of mind and contentment. The way will be opened for you to have strength to repent and be forgiven" (in Conference Report, Sept–Oct. 1995, 18; or *Ensign*,

Nov. 1995, 16; this entire talk gives great insight into the purpose and place of suffering in the lives of Latter-day Saints).

"Just when all seems to be going right, challenges often come in multiple doses applied simultaneously. When those trials are not consequences of your disobedience, they are evidence that the Lord feels you are prepared to grow more (see Proverbs 3:11–12). He therefore gives you experiences that stimulate growth, understanding, and compassion which polish you for your everlasting benefit. To get you from where you are to where He wants you to be requires a lot of stretching, and that generally entails discomfort and pain" (in Conference Report, Sept–Oct. 1995, 18; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 16–17).

## SPENCER W. KIMBALL

"Suffering can make saints of people as they learn patience, long-suffering, and self-mastery. The sufferings of our Savior were part of his education.

"Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered;

"And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.' (Hebrews 5:8–9.) . . .

"On the other hand, these things can crush us with their mighty impact if we yield to weakness, complaining, and criticism.

"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. . . ." (Orson F. Whitney) (*Faith Precedes the Miracle* [1972], 98).

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### HENRY D. MOYLE

"Unfortunately, many in the world, both individuals and nations, will ignore the teachings of Christ and deny his divinity. With two powers upon earth exerting their influence upon mankind this result is inevitable. They, through their own conduct, their own choice, do not qualify for the enjoyment of peace, and peace will not be theirs. The history of the world has already altogether too clearly demonstrated that the farther we depart from the gospel of Jesus Christ, the greater is the distress and tribulation under which we live" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1960, 20).

### JOSEPH SMITH

"It is an unhallowed principle to say that such and such have transgressed because they have been preyed upon by disease or death, for all flesh is subject to death" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [1976], 162-63).

### DAVID O. MCKAY

"The gospel, the glad tidings of great joy, is the true guide to mankind; and that man or woman is happiest and most content who lives nearest to its teachings, which are the antitheses of hatred, persecution, tyranny, domination, injustice—things which foster tribulation, destruction, and death throughout the world. What the sun in the heavenly blue is to the earth struggling to get free from winter's grip, so the gospel of Jesus Christ is to the sorrowing souls yearning for something higher and better than mankind has yet found on earth" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1968, 9).

### RICHARD G. SCOTT

"To exercise faith is to trust that the Lord knows what He is doing with you and that He can accomplish it for your eternal good even though you cannot understand how He can possibly do it. We are like infants in our understanding of eternal matters and their impact on us here in mortality. Yet at times we act as if we knew it all. When you pass through trials for His purposes, as you trust Him, exercise faith in Him, He will help you. That support will generally come step by step, a portion at a time. While you are passing through each phase, the pain and

difficulty that comes from being enlarged will continue. If all matters were immediately resolved at your first petition, you could not grow. Your Father in Heaven and His Beloved Son love you perfectly. They would not require you to experience a moment more of difficulty than is absolutely needed for your personal benefit or for that of those you love" (in Conference Report, Sept.-Oct. 1995, 19; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 17).

### BRIGHAM YOUNG

"He led this people in different parts of the United States, and the finger of scorn has been pointed at them. Officers of the Government of the United States have lifted their heel against them, and this people have been driven from town to town, from county to county, and from state to state. The Lord has his design in this. You may ask what his design is. 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?" (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe [1941], 346).

"Let any people enjoy peace and quietness, unmolested, undisturbed,—never be persecuted for their religion, and they are very likely to neglect their duty, to become cold and indifferent, and lose their faith" (in *Journal of Discourses*, 7:42).

### M. RUSSELL BALLARD

"The plan of happiness is available to all of his children. If the world would embrace and live it, peace, joy, and plenty would abound on the earth. Much of the suffering we know today would be eliminated if people throughout the world would understand and live the gospel" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1995, 30; or *Ensign*, May 1995, 23).

### BOYD K. PACKER

"The crucial test of life, I repeat, does not center in the choice between fame and obscurity, nor between wealth and poverty. The greatest decision of life is between good and evil.

"We may foolishly bring unhappiness and trouble, even suffering upon ourselves. These are not always to be regarded as penalties imposed by a displeased Creator. They are part of the lessons of life, part of the test.

"Some are tested by poor health, some by a body that is deformed or homely. Others are tested by handsome and healthy bodies; some by the passion of youth; others by the erosions of age.

"Some suffer disappointment in marriage, family problems; others live in poverty and obscurity. Some (perhaps this is the hardest test) find ease and luxury.

"All are part of the test, and there is more equality in this testing than sometimes we suspect" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1980, 29; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1980, 21).