

Talk: Enduring to the End M6/M2 Oct 2015

I sat in my ward meeting a few weeks ago listening to a great and timely talk by the Stake Primary on how grandparents can help in teaching and raising their grandchildren, while at the same time attempting to wrestle two grandsons back onto our pew. As we listened and wrestled, I thought to myself .. I wonder if this is how my own grandparents and parents felt while trying to get me and my siblings to sit still all the way through church? This month, we have been assigned by the stake to speak on the topic of 'Enduring to the End'. Not just the end of my talk, nor of this meeting, but .. all the way to the end-end. I have chosen to base part of my remarks today on a conference talk referencing this topic by Elder L. Tom Perry ([“The Gospel of Jesus Christ” Apr 2008](#)).

Elder Perry started his talk by stating: “The gospel teaches us all we need to know to return to live with our Father in Heaven.” .. but, I asked myself, just what is “the gospel”? Christ's own words recorded 3 Nephi teach us His doctrine, the rock upon which we must build, His gospel. He taught them, saying: “And this is my doctrine, and it is the doctrine which the Father hath given unto me; [...] that the Father commandeth all men, everywhere, to **repent** and believe in me. And whoso believeth in me, and is **baptized**, the same shall be saved; and they are they who shall inherit the kingdom of God. [...] whoso believeth in me believeth in the Father also; and unto him will the Father bear record of me, for he will visit him with fire and with the **Holy Ghost**.” ([3 Ne 11:32-35](#)). So, the first part is that we must repent, be baptized into his church, and receive the gift of the holy ghost for ourselves.

A few short chapters later, Christ continues: “Behold there shall one be ordained among you, and to him will I give power that he shall break **bread** [and prepare the sacrament **water**] and bless it and give it unto the people of my church, unto all those who shall believe and be baptized in my name. And this shall ye always observe to do [...] And it shall be a testimony unto the Father that ye do always remember me. And if ye do always remember me ye shall have my **Spirit** to be with you.” ([3 Ne 18:5-7](#)). We must attend Sacrament meeting to witness that we 'always remember' Christ, to renew our covenants and to receive the Holy Spirit. As He stated: “And I give unto you a commandment that ye shall do these things. And if ye shall always do these things blessed are ye, for ye are built upon my rock.” ([3 Ne 18:10-11](#)). Remember Him in all ways .. always remember Him by keeping His commandments, repenting each week when we are weak, and trying to do the things that He would do. I particularly like verse 24: “Therefore, hold up your light that it may shine unto the world. Behold I am the light which ye shall hold up—that which ye have seen me do.” ([3 Ne 18:24](#)). Christ is our supreme example. We show our light by trying to do the things that He would do.

Christ's teachings continue: “Behold I have given unto you my gospel, and this is the gospel which I have given unto you—that I came into the world to do the will of my Father, because my Father sent me. And my Father sent me that I might be lifted up upon the **cross**; and after that I had been lifted up upon the cross, that I might draw all men unto me, that as I have been lifted up by men even so should men be lifted up by the Father, to stand before me, to be **judged** of their works, whether they be good or whether they be evil— [...] whoso repenteth and is baptized in my name shall be filled; and **if** he **endureth** to the end, [...] And he that endureth not unto the end, the same is he that is also hewn down and cast into the fire, from whence they can no more return, because of the justice of the Father. [...] because] no unclean thing can enter into his kingdom; therefore *nothing entereth into his rest save it be those who have washed their garments in my blood, because of their **faith**, and the **repentance** of all their sins, and their **faithfulness** unto the end*. Now this is the commandment: Repent, all ye ends of the earth, and come unto me and be baptized in my name, that ye may be sanctified by the reception of the Holy Ghost, that ye may stand spotless before me at the last day. [...] this is my gospel; and ye know the things that ye must do in my church; for the works which ye have seen me do that shall ye also do;

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for that which ye have seen me do even that shall ye do; Therefore, if ye do these things blessed are ye, for ye shall be lifted up at the last day.”

So now we know that if we have found faith, repented and been baptized, and received the gift of the Holy Ghost, and are now here at our Sacrament meeting repenting again, all that is left is that 'enduring to the end' part – the fun part.

Elder Perry notes: “Enduring to the end means being faithful to the end. This is not an easy task. It is intended to be difficult, challenging, and, ultimately, refining as we prepare to return to live with our Father in Heaven and receive eternal blessings.”

I heard a story once, it may have even happened in real life .. about a woman in a grocery store with an uncontrollable two year old in full breakdown mode. She had her crying child in the shopping cart. She was observed gripping the handle tightly and saying: “It's ok Sally, just a few more minutes and we will be at the check out” and then “It's ok Sally, just a short way to the parking lot and our car” and a few minutes later “It's ok Sally, we just need to load the groceries into the car and get us back home.” At this point, the observer approached her, to say: “I just wanted to tell you how impressed I was with your patience and self-control with your little Sally there.” The woman paused for a moment, looking confused, and then responded: “I'm not sure what you mean? .. MY name is Sally ..”.

This life is hard by design. Here we are subject to trials and danger – (disasters) flood, fire, wind, and drought – (physical) hunger, disease, age, and hardship – (emotional) loneliness, fear, loss, death of loved ones – (spiritual) temptation, sin and suffering. In the past my concept of 'enduring to the end' often implied a long, negative, arduous, unwanted, difficult thing. Encapsulating all that work and effort into such a simple short phrase – to say just 'endure to the end' somehow seems to oversimplify it's magnitude.

On top of that, we each have long lists of good things that we should be doing or bad things should stop doing. We have meetings to attend. Callings to magnify. We must: Work. Sleep. Eat. Clean. Fix. Study. Have you 'done' your home teaching and visiting teaching? Read your scriptures, said your prayers, cleaned your house, painted the house, fixed the car, attended 3 hour block of church and the meetings before and after? Firesides, devotionals. Family Home Evening. Indexing and Temple work? Have you Searched, Pondered, and Prayed? Have you finished raising your kids? Do you have any kids in School, in Sports, or out with Friends? Who needs a ride, a lunch, a hand, a listening ear? Did you make your bed? Read a book? Watch TV? Email/Google/Twitter/Facebook? Oh yes, have you endured to the end yet? We all seem to get a bit busy just doing all this stuff. How much of all this that we feel we have to do is 'the gospel'?

On the other hand, the very simplicity of the idea reflects the simplicity of the Gospel itself. He entreats: “Come unto me [ie Come unto Christ]”. “Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” ([Matt 11:29-30](#)). Just choose to have faith, to repent and get yourself and your family baptized and to the temple, and then strive to keep the commandments and to be faithful 'to the end'. The spirit will guide you in what is best and necessary for you and your family. He points out the consequences, but always lets us choose for ourselves.

The Church organization we have today helps us learn and live and implement the Gospel, but they are

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not one and the same. Yes, our long to-do lists have a bit to do with being 'faithful to the end' and enduring. The church was designed to give us opportunity to serve each other and to stretch and grow after teaching and implementing 'the gospel' in our lives. It is not that one is bad, it is just that they are two different good things. The Gospel is described in the scripture as the 'plan of salvation' but also as a 'plan of redemption', a 'plan of mercy', the 'great plan of happiness', a 'plan of deliverance from death'. It is only by this plan that true happiness can be obtained and appreciated. Through obedience and faith, we can start to enjoy it's benefits here and now, not just in the hereafter. Through activity in the Church and it's authorized priesthood leaders we share those benefits, and the Gospel, with others around us.

Last night I looked up at the beautiful stars. The sun rose this morning and will set again tonight, often with great beauty. We have flowers and trees, sun and breeze. In many ways we live in a 'garden of eden' type world, despite our need to work by 'the sweat of our brow' to earn a living and to eat. We have our family – ancestors and descendants – parents, siblings, and with luck a loving spouse, children and grand-children. We have a ward family to interact with and learn from. We have opportunity to share love with them and with others around us and to invite them to return to Christ with us. Because, Heaven would not be Heaven if you were sitting up there alone.

A few months back I was assigned to speak in Del Bonita – about a 30 minute drive from my home so, as is my habit, I left my house at 9:30 allowing just enough time to arrive for the 10am start. But I could make it if I drove quickly. As I rushed to that assignment, I found myself following a light colored van for most of the way. Then, just 5 minutes or so from the chapel, I found that van had pulled over to the side of the highway. As I passed by, I tried to see who might be in the vehicle – just some guy in a shirt and tie. I must admit that my first thought was to continue on – I was just on schedule to get to the church on time for my speaking assignment - but decided I better stop and at least ask if I could offer any assistance. That driver turned out to be my nephew, Elder Johnny Cook, as a newly returned missionary and my assigned speaking companion that day, also on his way to Del Bonita. Fortunately his car trouble was minor and temporary. I followed him as we drove on, in caravan style, the rest of the way to the church. Imagine what my embarrassment would have been had I not stopped to help. “So, Brother Davies, where is your speaking companion today?”

In a similar way, I can imagine what my feelings might be if (in theory) I qualified to show up at Heaven's gate - arriving alone yet on time. “So, Brother Davies, where's your family, your friends and neighbors, your home teaching families and ward members, those you could have helped but chose not to .. because you were too busy rushing to get yourself up here?” How is that enduring to the end? How could it be Heaven if we were alone there? Our Father designed His plan for us to be able to progress and become like him and to return home to be with him. Perhaps that is the reason He designed this plan for us in the first place. He does not want to be sitting up there alone either ..

Elder Perry summarized his talk in this way, saying: “[.. Remember: (after **first** joining the church through baptism and confirmation,)] We cannot return to our Heavenly Father’s presence unless we are clean, and so we must continue to repent. Ideally, we repent moment by moment, but we also attend sacrament meeting each week to partake of the sacrament and renew our baptismal covenants. **Second**, enduring to the end requires the Holy Ghost, who will both guide and sanctify us [and teach us what to do]. **Third**, we must be an integral part of a community of Saints, serving and receiving service from our brothers and sisters in the gospel. With baptism we become part of the body of Christ (see 1 Corinthians 12:11–13); each of us has [our own] role to play, each of us is important, but in order to succeed we must be unified in our Savior. **Fourth**, we must share the gospel with others [especially our

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own family and friends]. The promises of bringing even one soul unto the Lord are profound and eternal (see D&C 18:15). Moreover, the gospel takes deeper root in those who share it frequently.

Finally, we must always maintain faith and hope in Christ to endure to the end, and among the many ways we do this are praying, fasting, and reading the scriptures. These practices will fortify us against the subtle schemes and fiery darts of the adversary.” (From the April 2008 general conference address “[The Gospel of Jesus Christ](#)” Ensign or Liahona May 2008, 46; emphasis added).

I also love the gospel of Jesus Christ, for as Elder Perry testifies: “it defines the way we can partake of the fruits of the gospel, experience the “exceedingly great joy” (1 Nephi 8:12) that only it can bring, and endure to the end through all of the challenges of mortal life. The gospel teaches us all we need to know to return to live with our Father in Heaven as resurrected and glorified beings. May all of us maintain in our minds the vision of eternal life. May we be diligent in following the recipe for eternal life that is the gospel of Jesus Christ. May we endure to the end.”. I concur. To his words I add my own testimony. Amen.