

## Podcast Episode 80: Hope, Part 2

**This is the second part of a series on “Hope,” in which Denver addresses the questions: What is hope? How can hope be an anchor for the soul in times of tribulation?**

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DENVER: Before the creation, Christ was the great high priest of heaven who would redeem the creation by his sacrifice. The strength of their teaching was focusing on the individuals' relationship with Christ and no organization could replace that individual relationship.

The idea of the love of Christ was preserved in Johannine Christianity. Spirit, knowledge, and ritual were designed to preserve knowledge of Christ. Although lost to western Christianity, John taught that man would become divinized—or ascend in stages of progression—to become just like God. His teachings have been lost, but two passages in the New Testament writings of John preserve that teaching still. First John 3, beginning at verse 1:

*Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope . . . purifieth himself, even as he is pure. (1 John 3:1-3; see also 1 John:13 RE).*

And then in Revelation chapter 3, beginning in verse 20, it is Christ who is speaking:

*Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.*

Paul was a strict pharisee who followed the law. Paul persecuted Jesus' followers, even assisting when Stephen was killed for his testimony of Christ. He had a great many things to regret. Everything in his life, before his conversion to Christ, gave him a context for understanding Christ and Christ's message. Paul wanted grace, reconciliation, and justification because he needed these to have hope.

*As the Lord knelt in prayer, His vicarious suffering began. He was overcome by pain and anguish. He felt within Him, not just the pains of sin, but also the illnesses men suffer as a result of the Fall and their foolish and evil choices. The suffering was long and the challenge difficult. The Lord suffered the afflictions. He was healed from the sickness. He overcame the pains, and patiently bore the infirmities until, finally, He returned to peace of mind and strength of body. It took an act of will and hope for Him to overcome the affliction which had been poured upon Him. He overcame the separation caused by these afflictions and reconciled with His Father. He was at peace with all mankind.*

*The Lord's suffering progressed from a lesser to a greater portion of affliction; for as one would be overcome by Him, the next, greater affliction would then be poured out. Each wave of suffering was only preparation for the next, greater wave.*

*The pains of mortality, disease, injury and infirmity, together with the sufferings of sin, transgression, guilt of mind, and unease of soul, the horrors of recognition of the evils men had inflicted upon others, were all poured out upon Him, with confusion and perplexity multiplied upon Him.*

*He longed for it to be over, and thought it would end long before it finally ended. With each wave He thought it would be the last, but then another came upon Him, and then yet another.*

*But the Lord was determined to suffer the Father's will and not His own. Therefore, a final wave came upon Him with such violence as to cut Him at every pore. It seemed for a moment that He was torn apart, and that blood came out of every pore. The Lord writhed in pain upon the ground as this final torment was poured upon Him.*

*All virtue was taken from Him. All the great life force in Him was stricken and afflicted. All the light turned to darkness. He was humbled, drained and left with nothing. It is not possible for a man to bear such pains and live, but with nothing more than will, hope in His Father, and charity toward all men, He emerged from the final wave of torment, knowing He had suffered all this for His Father and His brethren. By His hope and great charity, trusting in the Father, the Lord returned from this dark abyss and found grace again, His heart being filled with love toward the Father and all men. (T&C 161:3, 7-9, 11-12 RE)*

Every night as the sun sets, God does something on the mountains that is never the same, always beautiful, and greater in beauty and splendor than anything Monet ever put on canvas.

We ought to love life, and we ought to love one another, and we ought to pursue our education; and we shouldn't bunker down with guns and ammo, fearfully waiting for a direful end to things. Of all people, Christians should have the most hope, the most optimism, the most vitality, and greatest amount of joy in life. We ought to celebrate every day.

Be like Christ—hopeful, and helpful, and positive. He went about doing good. That's who we're supposed to follow, and that's what we're supposed to do. That's how we're supposed to live. Be hopeful. Be helpful.

I hope you realize that God is real, and that He is as concerned about you, and your day, and in your life, as He was concerned about Peter, or Paul, or John, or Mary, or Elizabeth, or Abraham, or Sarah. Every one of you matter to Him. And if He were to speak to you out of heaven today, He would call you by name; just as He has done with everyone to whom He's ever spoken. And if the Lord calls you by name, it's not going to be by your full legal name. It's not going to be by what's on your birth certificate. He will call you by that name your best friend knows you, because God is intimate with every one of us. He knows everything, including the desires of your heart. And even though we are all rough customers, the fact is, the only reason you're here is because your heart is inclined to follow Him. Your aspirations, your desires, and your hopes can be perfect and your conduct can be reprehensible. God takes into account the perfection of your hope, and He evaluates you based upon your most noble aspirations. And he's cheering you on to try and get you to move a little closer, throughout your life, to that ideal—that perfection that you would like to have. We get hungry, we get tired, we get ill, we get weak, and so we excuse ourselves. But through it all, we can maintain the aspiration, the hope, the love of Christ. If you do that, He will take that into account as He deals with you.

When the apostle John wrote his epistle, he described those who had come in by way of conversion through him, and received from him what the Lord had given to him; and he says:

*Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.*

*And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure. (1 John 3:1-3; see also 1 John:13 RE)*

I would like to suggest that the Holy Order after the Order of the Son of God includes the fact that those who inherit the Holy Order *are* sons of God. Therefore, in a way, calling it the Holy Order after the Order of the Son of God, is a way of identifying the recipient as someone who has become one of God's sons. Now I think it's appropriate to regard the primary identifier—that is the subject of who the Son of God is—to be Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ alone. Because quite frankly, He's the only one that attained to the resurrection, and it is through the power of the resurrection that we're going to come forth. We do not have the power in ourselves to rise from the dead. The wages of sin are death. We've earned those wages. We will die—we all will die. The Savior did not earn those wages. He died and therefore, His death was unjust; and the law of justice got broken when He died. And therefore, whenever justice makes a claim on any of us, He can point to the fact that justice extracted from Him eternal life—and that is an infinite price for Him to have paid. Therefore, He has compensated for all of mankind's shortcomings, failures; and Christ is the means by which we lay hold upon the promises, but it is His intention to make, of us all, sons of God. Therefore, the Holy Order after the Son of God is when the name is announced, self-identifying the person holding such a Holy Order as one of God's sons; even though they may be mortal; even though they may be in the flesh—the Holy Order is for that very purpose and is after the Order of the Son of God...

“And all other priesthoods are only parts, ramifications, powers and blessings belonging to the same, and are held, controlled and directed by it. It is the channel through which the Almighty commenced revealing His glory at the beginning of the creation of this earth, and through which He has continued to reveal Himself to the children of men to the present time, and through which He will make known His purposes to the end of time.” (Joseph Smith)

Therefore, among other things, the purpose of the Holy Order is to put in place a mechanism by which God can reveal, from heaven, what is necessary for the salvation of man on earth, in every generation; in order to fix what is broken; in order to restore what has been lost; in order to repair, heal, forgive, and reconnect those who are willing to give heed to the message sent from heaven, so that they can rise up to become sons of God.

Joseph Smith writes a letter while he's in exile in Nauvoo, and the letter also tracks what he did in his histories; but he mentions something that is not mentioned in the histories:

*And again, what do we hear? Glad tidings from Cumorah! Moroni, an angel from heaven, declaring the fulfilment of the prophets—the book to be revealed. A voice of the Lord in the wilderness of Fayette, Seneca county, declaring the three witnesses to bear record of the book! The voice of Michael on the banks of the Susquehanna, [directing] the devil when he appeared as an angel of light! [...or detecting.] The voice of Peter, James, and John in the wilderness between Harmony, Susquehanna county, and Colesville, Broome county, on the Susquehanna river, declaring themselves as possessing the keys of the kingdom, ... of the dispensation of the fulness of times! (D&C 128:20; see also T&C 151:15 RE)*

I have the keys to my dodge truck. Do you have the keys to my dodge truck? Well, they declared themselves as possessing the keys.

*And again, the Father of God in the chamber of old Father Whitmer...and at sundry times, and in divers places throughout all the travels and tribulations of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints! And the voice of Michael, the archangel; the voice of Gabriel, and of Raphael, and of divers angels, from Michael or Adam down to the present time, all declaring their dispensation, their rights, their keys, their honors, their majesty and glory, and the power of their priesthood; giving line upon line, precept upon precept; here a little, and there a little; giving us consolation by holding forth that which is to come, confirming our hope! (D&C 128:21; see also T&C 151:15-17 RE)*

So Joseph Smith is saying that he was in possession of great knowledge, but he also came into possession of greater knowledge; because Joseph was going to be called upon, in a very serious role, to achieve something that involved trying to bring back nations into the Holy Order that makes sons of God. Therefore, Joseph could not accomplish what needed to be accomplished without having greater knowledge than existed on the earth. And despite the discovery of Dead Sea scrolls, and Nag Hammadi, and research, and translation of texts that were not available in English at the time of Joseph Smith's lifetime, the fact remains that much of that material was simply corrupted. If you are going to try and understand the truth, the way in which that is brought about is by having possession of a *channel through which all knowledge, doctrine, the plan of salvation, and every important matter is revealed from Heaven* (T&C 140:2 RE). Joseph needed to not only be in possession of that channel, but the channel, therefore, needed to respond to—and did respond to—Joseph's petitions and inquiries, in order for him to be able to function in the position that he held.

Just like Joseph, we have perpetual conundrums and contradictions. We all face them. Some are of our own making, but others are just inherent in living in this existence. When we thoughtfully consider the challenges, just like Joseph, it seizes the mind; and like Joseph in Liberty Jail, makes us reflect upon so many things with the “avidity of lightning.” That was Joseph’s word. The mind is in this frenzied state, and with the avidity of lightning, he’s jumping from subject to subject, offence to offence; from things that console, to things that outrage you. From things you know to be true, to things that offend you. Back and forth, and back and forth until, as Joseph puts it: “...finally all enmity, malice and hatred, and past differences, misunderstandings and mismanagement are slain victorious at the feet of hope; and when the heart is sufficiently contrite, then the voice of inspiration steals along and whispers[.]” It’s almost poetry the way Joseph describes what he went through there. But it is poetry describing the actual bona fides of Joseph receiving answers from God.

I am certain we will see Zion, because it’s been promised, and it’s been prophesied from the beginning of time. When father Adam prophesied, being overcome by the Spirit in the valley of Adam-ondi-Ahman, and foretold what would happen to his posterity down to the latest generations, Zion was pointed to. And therefore, from the days of Adam on, all the holy prophets have looked forward to that as the essential moment in the history of the world, because Christ will come and will redeem the world. It will be the end of the wicked; it will be the beginning of something far better. That’s been the hope. That’s been the promise. That’s been what they’ve looked forward to. I wonder how many of us share that same longing, that same hope, that same desire that originated in the beginning; because if we don’t subdue our desires, appetites, and passions enough to try and deal peaceably one with another—choosing deliberately to not contend, even when we know people are wrong. When Christ was confronted and he corrected the error, he corrected only that error. He didn’t go on with a list of other weaknesses, failings and challenges. He only addressed the one that was put to him.

We have an opportunity. We have a bona fide, actual offer from God to allow us to be that generation in which the promises get fulfilled. But we have the freedom of choice that allows us to elect to be severed, to be contentious, to be agents of disruption; and to discourage and break the hearts of those who would willingly accept the challenge to repent and follow God.

Accordingly, we must all decide what to make of Joseph Smith. All our fear, wonder and hope rests on resolving what to make of the life of Joseph. This frames the dichotomy in the legacy of that man. With hope in his authenticity, we see him as God’s messenger. With

doubts about him, we see him as a charlatan. These polar opposites are inherent in his life, and were foretold at the beginning and reconfirmed toward the end of his life.

The angel who appeared to Joseph in September 1823 said:

“He called me by name, and said unto me that he was a messenger sent from the presence of God to me and that his name was Nephi, that God had a work for me to do, and that my name should be had for good and evil among all nations, kindreds, and tongues, or that it should be both good and evil spoken of among all people.”  
(Times & Seasons, 15 April 1842, p.753)

My mother taught me to hold Joseph for evil. I’ve studied his life carefully, read what his critics and admirers have claimed for and about him. I’ve tried not to be hasty in reaching a conclusion. After four-and-a-half decades I’ve decided to hold Joseph for good. I’m all in. To me he is the real thing—a messenger sent from God to deliver a message that we reject at our peril and accept for our blessing. He had a great soul that searched, stretched, believed, hoped, fought fiercely, defied pain and persecution; and bore the hallmarks we should expect from a prophet messenger from God. He was a brilliant light—rough; cut; homespun; and rustic—but he was ablaze with insight, keen and penetrating; able to capture, with a phrase, a glimpse of the infinite.

Learn from these words Joseph wrote, while in Liberty Jail, about how to set aside all that distracts us to hear God’s voice:

*We received some letters last evening: one from Emma, one from Don C[arlos] Smith, ... one from bishop ... Partridge, all breathing a kind and consoling spirit. We were much gratified with their contents. We had been a long time without information, and when we read those letters, they were to our souls as the gentle air is refreshing. But our joy was mingled with grief because of the suffering of the poor and much injured saints, and we need not say to you that the floodgates of our hearts were hoisted, and our eyes were a fountain of tears. But those who have not been enclosed in the walls of a prison without cause or provocation can have but little idea how sweet the voice of a friend is. One token of friendship from any source whatever awakens and calls into action every sympathetic feeling. It brings up in an instant everything that is passed. It seizes the present with a vivacity of lightning. It grasps after the future with the fierceness of a tiger. It retrogrades from one thing to another, until finally all enmity, malice, and hatred, and past differences, misunderstandings, and mismanagements, lie slain victims at the feet of hope. And when the heart is sufficiently contrite, then the voice of inspiration steals along and whispers, My son, peace be unto your soul, your*

*adversity and your afflictions shall be but a small moment, and then, if you endure it well, God shall exalt you on high[.]* (T&C 138:11)

This world is a place of trial and testing. Before creation, it was planned that when we came here we would be *proven* by what we experience. That happens now. Prove yourself by listening to God, hearing His voice, and obeying. Sometimes we are like Alma and want to do greater things to help God's work; but the greatest work of all is to respond to God's voice, and prove you are willing to listen and obey Him.

Take all that you know about nature, take all that you know about this world and the majesty of it all. Take all that you know that informs you that there is hope, there is joy, there is love. Why do you love your children? Why do your children love you? These kinds of things exist. They're real. They're tangible. And they're important. And they're part of what God did when He created this world. Keep that in mind when you're studying. And search the scriptures to try and help inform you how you can better appreciate; how you can better enjoy; how you can better love; how you can better have hope. What do they have to say that can bring you closer to God? Not, can I find a way to dismiss something that Joseph said or did? As soon as Joseph was gone off the scene, people that envied the position that he occupied took over custody of everything, including the documents. And what we got, as a consequence of that, is a legacy that allowed a trillion dollar empire to be constructed. Religion should require our sacrifice. It should not be here to benefit us. We should have to give—not get. And in the giving of ourselves, what we get is in the interior; it's in the heart. It's the things of enduring beauty and value. If your study takes you away from an appreciation of the love, the charity, the things that matter most, reorient your study.

The voice of God came to Joseph in Liberty jail when his mind came to peace.

Finally, hope and peace, and then comes the answer. We have a lot of reasons to be anxious in every one of our lives. There is so much that troubles us, but the voice of inspiration steals along and whispers—when we finally are calm enough. Be still, and know that I am God, gets read as: Be Still!! And know that I am God!! When what it's really saying is: “If you would like to know that I am God, quiet it all down, because whatever pavilion I may occupy, I also occupy part of you.” You live and breathe and move because God is sustaining you from moment to moment by lending you breath. He's in you, and He's with everyone of us.



In Jacob chapter 3 verse 2 there's another reference: *We obtain a hope and our faith becometh unshaken, insomuch that we truly can command in the name of Jesus and the very trees obey us, or the mountains, or the waves of the sea.*

That's Jacob illustrating that the faith they have has this effect. He doesn't describe that effect having occurred, simply that it's there. Nephi explained, this is the power that God entrusted him with in Helaman:

*For behold, the dust of the earth moveth hither and thither, to the dividing asunder, at the command of our great and everlasting God. Yea, behold, at his voice doth the hills and the mountains tremble and quake, and by the power of his voice are broken up and become smooth, yea, even like unto a valley. ( Helaman 4:10 RE)*

He was given the sealing power. He was told that the earth will obey you—because he knew that he would not do anything with that power other than what God willed. And shortly after being entrusted by God to this, Nephi prays to God and asks God to send a famine to stop the people from killing one another. So here is someone who can speak the word of God, and the earth itself will obey him, and he uses that to get on his knees and pray and ask God. He doesn't command anything.

That kind of endowment of priestly authority is done because God expressed His faith in the man. Can God have faith in you? Can God trust you?

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The foregoing excerpts were taken from:

- Denver's *Christian Reformation Lecture Series*, Talk #2 given in Dallas, TX on October 19th, 2017
- Denver's *Christian Reformation Lecture Series*, Talk #3 given in Atlanta, Georgia on November 16, 2017
- A fireside talk entitled "The Holy Order", given in Bountiful, UT on October 19, 2017
- A fireside talk entitled "That We Might Become One", given in Clinton, UT on January 14th, 2017
- The presentation of Denver's paper entitled "The Restoration's Shattered Promises and Great Hope", given at the Sunstone Symposium in Salt Lake City, UT on July 28, 2018
- Denver's remarks entitled "Keep the Covenant: Do the Work" given at the Remembering the Covenants Conference in Layton, UT on August 4, 2018

- Denver's remarks entitled "Book of Mormon as Covenant" given at the Book of Mormon Covenant Conference in Columbia, SC on January 13, 2019; and
- Denver's lecture entitled "Signs Follow Faith" given in Centerville, UT on March 3, 2019

Today's podcast addresses important questions about Hope, but is only an introduction to ideas that listeners of any denomination may find important and relevant. These topics are more fully addressed in Denver's blog, including the entry titled "[Alma 13:29](#)" posted June 20, 2010, and in chapter 4 of his book [Eighteen Verses](#).