

Podcast Episode 86: Endure It Well

DENVER: How can you know if the boils you receive in life are due to being like unto Job or because you are more akin to pharaoh?

It's a great question; I love the question. First, there's an interesting exercise that I would commend to any of you. Go to the account of Exodus, the early events, and only read the words of Moses. Just read Moses' responses—his reactions, his complaints, his fear, his doubts—and what you will realize is that it doesn't matter if someone occupies a great position, as Moses did, or the lives that each of us are now living. No one fits easily, or comfortably, or without anxiety into the work of the Lord. There's a measure that you take of yourself in which you look inward and say, "I'm not adequate to what needs to be done; I don't have the faith required," and you'll see that that's exactly what Moses was telling God—that looking inward he did not think himself equal to it.

In the Book of Mormon, Nephi gives us an account of their journey—after they had been delivered from Jerusalem, which was about to be destroyed, and they were migrating—here are some comments that he makes about their experience:

- *We have suffered much afflictions, hunger, thirst, and fatigue (1 Nephi 5:10 RE);*
- *...we did travel and wade through much affliction in the wilderness (vs. 11);*
- *...we had suffered many afflictions and much difficulty, yea even so much that we cannot write them all (vs. 14).*

This is Nephi explaining his experience in the wilderness. Afflictions, hunger, thirst, fatigue—so many afflictions that they can't even talk about 'em. We don't look at those words; we pass over them as if Nephi were somehow being modest, or Nephi were being self-deprecating. We pass over what Moses says when he's getting the responsibilities imposed upon him by the Lord, as if it's just common sense that he's heroic, and larger than life, and greater than the common man. When you read his reaction, he sounds like us; he sounds common; he sounds ordinary. And when you read the lamentation—we suffer because we are, because we're mortal, because we're here, because that's the common lot that is designed to be experienced as a consequence of the Fall. And there's no escaping that.

The question isn't: Are we going to suffer while we are here? The only question is: To what degree do we bear up under the troubles of this life, graciously and humbly? And acknowledging that God rules in the heavens above, He rules in the earth beneath, and He rules in your life, too. And that everything that you experience is designed to make you be added upon by the things that you suffer and the things that you experience here.

I was asked, verbally, if I would comment on some of the challenges that people of faith have in defending the Book of Abraham. And that's probably a subject that's worth writing about, rather than just talking off the cuff, but here's, generally, my observation: The people

want to know what Joseph did and how he did it, in order for them to understand maybe how **they** can do it.

So there's this relentless inquiry into: How did that process take place? What went on? When, in fact, the gifts of God are almost entirely incapable of being transferred from one to another. Each person has to come to God on their own.

Oliver Cowdery was a man of faith, and he believed in Christ and the possibility of the Second Coming of Christ being proximate (or in close proximity) to his life. He believed in and he got answers from God. And then he hears about what Joseph is doing, and he goes to become his scribe.

One of the early revelations that were given to Oliver talked about his own—Oliver's own—gift; that he had this gift in which Oliver could get yes or no answers by using the—what we would call a “divining rod”—or a stick that would respond positively or negatively to inquiry. And so he had this, and the revelation does not call it anything other than *a gift*. May seem like a peculiar gift to you and I, but it's nevertheless a gift, and it came from God.

Joseph had a gift in which he was capable of receiving revelation—sometimes through instrumentalities, sometimes by study, sometimes simply by God speaking through him in the first person in a spontaneous way. How he went about doing that is unique to him. The way in which you relate to God is unique to you. Running out and trying to replicate something in order for you to know the process by which God involved Himself in revelation in Joseph Smith's experience is not gonna teach you what Joseph Smith experienced.

The fact that I have concluded that Joseph Smith was a restrained man, in many respects a very modest man, whose defense of what he believed to be the truth was fierce, but who recognized that there were a lot of people, including his own wife, Emma Smith, who had a better education than did he—

Joseph was like a sponge when he thought he could get truth or help from others, and he was meek and humble in that respect. But if God had revealed something to him, he was an iron-fisted, immovable man for the truth, personally and privately, just as the scriptures say concerning Moses. Moses was the meekest of all men. If you just read the dialogue from Moses in Exodus, you'll see nothing but meekness in that man. If you'll read Joseph Smith's three documents in *A Man Without Doubt*, you'll see a meek man—**unbelievably frustrated** by some of the circumstances into which he was put, **searching** to find the right way out of the dilemma, **trying** to get God aroused to anger in the same way that the circumstances aroused Joseph to anger, but **submitting always** to whatever the will of God was for him. Ultimately, Joseph Smith left to go to be imprisoned in Carthage knowing he would not come back from there, or at least expecting that he would not, and commenting about how his life was no value to his friends, as he returned and he went back for the slaying.

Say what you want about those final moments in the life of Joseph Smith. He put himself in harm's way to prove his fidelity to his friends. He would not forsake **them**, as they claimed he was doing in **their** hour of need, and ultimately gave his life up. That's not the conduct of a con-man. That's not the way in which someone who's going to lie and cheat and steal and behave as an immoral exploiter of others would conduct their lives. Joseph, in my view, was not just a virtuous man but he qualified as one of those who hath no greater love, because he went back and surrendered at the behest of his brethren—in part, with the hope that by losing his life, Nauvoo would be spared the slaughter that had gone on at Far West, and Haun's Mill, and elsewhere.

And so, when you ask about the translation issues and the controversy over the Book of Abraham, the bottom line/the real issue is: However the mind of Joseph was set on fire with the restoration text of father Abraham's account of his search, you have to decide that the content either is from heaven or it's a lie.

There was a series (it's now been abandoned), but it's a series that was begun at Brigham Young University. The first volume of it—the Book of Abraham series—the first volume of it was pretty good. What they did was take concepts that are included in the text of the Book of Abraham which were completely unknown in the Christian world at the time that the Book of Abraham was put into print. They had to be **unique** concepts. If you could already find them in the Bible, or if you could already find them in what was available to the Christian world generally, then those weren't included. They had to be **unique** ideas. They took and gathered the unique ideas that come out in the Book of Abraham, about which Joseph Smith would have known nothing, and then they looked into other material that exists from diverse places about legends or stories concerning the life of Abraham. And what they found is that there were **Hindu** traditions that talked about Abraham, that preserved some of the very same incidents that are only found in the Book of Abraham at the time Joseph published the Book of Abraham. They found there were **Islamic** texts that were similarly describing the same kind of event, the same incident that's unique to the Book of Abraham. They found sources that were in **Coptic Egyptian** texts. They amalgamated into one volume (it's a pretty big volume) all of the parallel accounts from the life of Abraham in cultures from around the world or religious traditions from around the world that Joseph Smith nailed on the head in his account of the Book of Abraham.

That approach does not defend Joseph Smith as a translator of Egyptian, because it has nothing to do with the papyri, but it does a pretty good job of defending Joseph Smith as a **revelator**—as someone to whom God could reveal light and truth, and he could accurately record it—because echoes of the unique material in the Book of Abraham show up in the ancient world and in other cultures that date back nearly to the time of Abraham. So, the real question is, Do you trust Joseph?

I know of no more cheerful a Being in the universe than Christ. When He says, *Be of good cheer*, we ought to all accept that as the mantra. There is nothing that any of us will ever go through that He hasn't gone through with a considerable greater degree of difficulty. He lived with a higher 'specific gravity' than any of us had to ever fight against. And He won for

each of us a prize that is potentially eternal. It will be eternal, one way or the other; but if you take full measure of what He offers, it will be delightfully eternal.

Cowardice is largely predicated upon fear. Don't be cowardly. Don't be fearful. Fear is the opposite of faith. For goodness sake, you're already in the battle! You're already going to be overtaken. The fact of the matter is that no one gets out of here alive. Live this life nobly, fearlessly. When you take the wounds that come your way, you make sure that they come to your front! Don't let 'em shoot you in the back. Go about your life boldly, nobly, valiantly. Because it is only through valiance in the testimony of Jesus Christ that you can hope to secure anything—not valiance in your fidelity to anything other than Jesus Christ. The fact of the matter is that faith must be based in Him, and Him alone.

Turn back to Doctrine and Covenants section 121. This is a letter Joseph composed while he was in the Liberty Jail—mind you the Liberty Jail, and he'd been there suffering through wintertime. It was now in the spring when Joseph had no date in mind in which he would go free or even if he would go free, or whether the original order of execution would be carried out, even though he'd been kept in jail for many years without it having been carried out.

In these circumstances, verse seven and eight of D&C 121: *My son, [that alone ought to be reassuring to Joseph of course] My son, peace be unto thy soul; thine adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a moment; And then, if thou endure it well, God shall exalt thee on high; thou shalt triumph over all thy foes* (See also T&C 139: 9 RE). *Endure it well.* Joseph, in the extremity of Liberty jail being told, *endure it well.* You think you have challenges, you think you have difficulties, you think you face dilemmas in your life—*endure it well.* Your adversity and your afflictions are gonna be for a small moment, and then if you endure it well, something better is going to come.

And then, as if it weren't enough reason, turn to 122, verse eight: *The Son of Man hath descended below them all. Art thou greater than he* (See also T&C 139:10 RE)?

If you think that your burdens that you carry are great, remember the burdens that were carried by the Son. He faced burdens that were inordinately greater than yours. All of us should be tested to our limits. All of us should be **proven** by the experiences that we endure. The only way to test some things is to destroy them. The only way to test you through mortality is to cause mortality itself, with the eventual coming of death. That's the way it works.

Look at verse 4 of Ether chapter 3.

And I know, O Lord, that thou hast all power, and can do whatsoever thou wilt for the benefit of man; therefore touch these stones, O Lord, with thy finger, and prepare them that they may shine forth in darkness; and they shall shine forth unto us in the vessels which we have prepared, that we may have light while we shall cross the sea. Behold, O

Lord, thou canst do this. We know that thou art able to show forth great power, which looks small unto the understanding of men. (Ether 3:4-5; see also Ether 1:11 RE)

He's not asking for this in order to have a light show. He's asking for this out of pity and concern, charity and intercession for others who will be left in the dark. He is trying to do something to bless and benefit others in a very practical way. He hopes to make the lives of others better. He's not doing this for himself. He's doing it on behalf of his people.

Therein also lies something very important about the attitude of this man that tells you why it is that God had respect for this man.

Think about what it means to have the power of God. Think about what it means for God to be able to do all things, including sustaining you from moment to moment by lending you breath. And then for God to say you are free to choose to do, with what he's lending to you, whatever it is that you choose to do. Think of the patience of our God. Think of the meekness of our God. And think about the test that you are presently taking to prove who and what you are. And whether or not, in the circumstances of this test, you are proving that you can be trusted to have the meekness, to have the patience, to endure in humility what will be done. To endure the abuses that God allows to take place in order to permit His children to gain experience. So that in the long run they can ultimately know the difference between good and evil and on their own choose to love the good and to stay away from the evil.

Think about that. And think about this record, and think about the test that is currently underway, and think about what it is that you in your life should be choosing, and doing, desiring and holding to your breast.

And it came to pass that when the brother of Jared had said these words, behold, the Lord stretched forth his hand and touched the stones one by one with his finger (Ether 3:6; see also Ether 1:12). Now I want to pause because the only thing that the brother of Jared ever sees at this point, the only thing that comes—the Lord may stretch forth his hand—but the only thing that is seen is His finger.

It's not—I mean I really love Catherine Thomas. I love her books. I own them, I've read them, and I like what she did with the brother of Jared at the veil—but it's simply based upon a fanciful connection between the dialogue at the veil in the temple ceremony and this incident here. But the hand of God never emerges. What emerges—and you can read it, it's in this verse six; it's again in verse nine—the Lord asks him, 'Did you see more than this?' He says, 'No, it's the finger.' However, I put one of the stones in my hand. Let's assume for a moment that I have eight and eight, and let's assume that you touch it. It's impossible to touch the stone that's in your hand without feeling that the stone has been touched.

We read this record and we don't notice what's really going on. Here they are in my hands, eight and eight, and the finger of the Lord touches the stones one by one with his finger. Now, there is nothing in this record that suggests that after the last stone gets touched, or

after the stone the Lord was touching at the moment that the finger is seen that there are any more stones left to be touched. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve, thirteen, fourteen, fifteen, sixteen. This record read in fairness suggests to me that the brother of Jared stood there and witnessed 15 of the 16 stones, felt the touch on 15 of the 16 stones, before on the last stone he saw the finger of the Lord. Think about that for a moment. Think about coming into contact, admittedly through a stone, but coming into contact with the Lord when He manifests Himself for the first time to man physically. Think about that.

And the veil was taken from off the eyes of the brother of Jared, and he saw the finger of the Lord; and it was as the finger of a man, like unto flesh and blood.... [That's the way in which the Lord chose to manifest Himself because he came into contact with sixteen stones.]

And the brother of Jared fell down before the Lord, for he was struck with fear. And the Lord saw that the brother of Jared had fallen to the earth; and the Lord said unto him: Arise, why hast thou fallen? And he saith unto the Lord: I saw the finger of the Lord, and I feared lest he should smite me; for I knew not that the Lord had flesh and blood. (Ether 3:6; see also Ether 1:12 RE)

It frightened him to realize that the God who controls all things had flesh and blood. This was a great secret that ought not get out, and now he knows it, and knowing it, it frightened him. He's intruding into space that he didn't want to intrude into and he felt convicted that somehow that was something he ought not know.

The Lord said unto him: Because of thy faith thou hast seen that I shall take upon me flesh and blood; and never has man come before me with such exceeding faith as thou hast; for were it not so ye could not have seen my finger. Sawest thou more than this? [My finger. Sawest thou more than this?] And he answered: Nay. [Didn't see the hand, saw the finger, and he didn't see more than this.] Nay; Lord, show thyself unto me. The Lord said unto him: Believest thou the words which I shall speak? (Ether 3:9-10; see also Ether 1:12 RE)

This is a necessary prerequisite, because what the Lord is about to speak to him will be covenantal. When it comes to prophecy, covenants, commitments by God, what He's about to do requires that the brother of Jared have faith in what's going to happen. He's going to show him all things.

He answered: Yea, Lord, I know that thou speakest the truth, for thou art a God of truth, and canst not lie. And when he had said these words, behold, the Lord showed himself unto him, and said: Because thou knowest these things ye are redeemed from the fall; therefore ye are brought back into my presence; therefore I show myself unto you. Behold, I am he who was prepared from the foundation of the world to redeem my people. I am Jesus Christ. I'm the Father and the Son. In me shall all mankind have life, and that eternally, even they who shall believe on my name; and they shall become my sons and daughters. And never have I shown myself unto man whom I have created, for

never has man believed in me as thou hast. Seest thou that ye are created after mine own image? Yea, even all men were created in the beginning after mine own image. Behold this body, which ye now behold, is the body of my spirit; and man have I created after the body of my spirit; and even as I appear to thee to be in the spirit will I appear unto my people in the flesh. And now, as I, Moroni, said I could not make a full account of these things which are written, therefore it sufficeth me to say that Jesus showed himself unto this man in the spirit, even after the manner and in the same likeness of the same body even as he showed himself unto the Nephites. (Ether 3:12-17; see also Ether 1:12-14 RE)

What was the body that Jesus showed Himself unto the Nephites in? What is the difference between water as a solid, water as a liquid, and water as a gas? The difference between that, if you want to take a scriptural word, is temperature. Excuse me, that's a scientific word. Scriptural word is "quicken". In one condition it is *quicken*, in another condition it is less quick but in science the difference between the two is temperature.

God dwells in everlasting burnings. In order to be with or near Him, a man must be *quicken* in order to endure the presence. Does that mean that in a *quicken* state, it is impossible for a *quicken* being to manifest itself in a solid form? Well, take a look at Doctrine and Covenants section 131 verse 7: *There is no such thing as immaterial matter. All spirit is matter, but it is more fine or pure, and can only be discerned by purer eyes; We cannot see it; but when our bodies are purified we shall see that it is all matter.*

Doctrine and Covenants section 77:2 includes this statement: *That which is spiritual being in the likeness of that which is temporal; that which is temporal in the likeness of that which is spiritual* (See also T&C 74:2 RE).

D&C 88 verses 15 to 16: *The spirit and the body are the soul of man. And the resurrection from the dead is the redemption of the soul* (T&C 86:2 RE). This definition was given by revelation to Joseph Smith in 1832. Three years later in 1835, Chandler came through and sold the mummies to Joseph Smith. He did not bother translating the end part of the Book of Abraham as we have it, until the 1840's in Kirtland; excuse me, in Nauvoo. But when he translated it in Nauvoo, he knew the definition of what a *soul* was, that is a spirit and a body. When he translated the Book of Abraham, in Abraham chapter 3 verse 23, speaking of those in the pre-existence, he says: *God saw these souls that they were good, and he stood in the midst of them, and he said: These will I make my rulers; for he stood among those that were spirits* (See also Abraham 6:1 RE). They were souls, possessing therefore a spirit and a body. And they were spirits because they had not come down yet, in the beginning, to be in this condition. And it's speaking about *the noble and great*.

And by the way, I talked before about the definition of rulers in the Gentile world, and that's someone who exercises authority over them. In the vernacular of both the Book of Mormon and in the vernacular found here, *rulers* in the house of God have nothing to do with dominion over someone else. A ruler is someone who teaches. A ruler is someone who is able to give an accurate gauge by which to measure things. A ruler is someone who

teaches the truth. If you would want to be a ruler in the house of God, then you have to be someone who declares and teaches the truth.

Take a look at Alma chapter 13 because this is where it becomes very important for us. Alma chapter 13 beginning at verse 17:

Now this Melchizedek was a king over the land of Salem; and his people had waxed strong in iniquity and abomination; yea, they had all gone astray; they were full of all manner of wickedness. [This is his audience.] But Melchizedek having exercised mighty faith, received the office of the high priesthood according to the holy order of God, did preach repentance unto his people. And behold, they did repent; and Melchizedek did establish peace in the land in his days; therefore he was called the prince of peace, for he was a king of Salem; and he did reign under his father. (See also Alma 10:2 RE)

First, he received this priesthood. Second, he preached repentance. But nothing would have happened except for, third, the people who heard him did repent. And because of that people who are described as having waxed strong in iniquity, people who are described as being captivated by abominations, people who have all gone astray turned out to be the very people among whom this City of Peace got established. But they did it. They did it by repentance. This isn't something Melchizedek pulled off. This is something that the people accomplished, and they accomplished it because of their repentance.

I want you to contrast that with another group. This group is in Mosiah chapter 12. Mosiah chapter 12 beginning halfway through verse 12. This is people reacting to the message that Abinadi was delivering to them. They're accusing Abinadi, and they're saying,

And he [Abinadi] pretendeth the Lord hath spoken it. And he saith all this shall come upon thee except thou repent, and this because of thine iniquities. And now, O king, what great evil hast thou done, or what great sins have thy people committed, that we should be condemned of God or judged by this man? Now, O king, behold, we're guiltless, and thou, O king, hast not sinned; therefore, this man has lied concerning you, and he has prophesied in vain. Behold, we are strong, we shall not come into bondage, or be taken captive by our enemies; yea, and thou hast prospered in the land, and thou shalt also prosper. (See also Mosiah 7:14-15 RE)

Here is the pride. Here is the vanity. Here is the very thing which, had the people to whom Melchizedek spoken, had they done this, there would have been no City of Peace, there would have been no Salem, there would have been no second Zion.

You generally hail from a tradition that assures you that you're in the right way. You generally come from a tradition that says you're better than others. You're able to look down your nose at other people who stumble about in the dark, because they don't have all the great truths that you have. The fact of the matter is, you generally, not specifically,

because there are some to whom this absolutely does not apply, your hearts are right before God. But there aren't many.

You've been handed this tradition and the wicked one cometh, and he takes away Light and Truth, and he does it because of the false traditions you've been handed. The greatest among us is wholly inadequate. The greatest among us can't be trusted with the power of God, not yet anyway. The greatest among us is still in need of repentance. Every one of us should walk fearfully before God, not because God isn't generous, but because what He offers can turn you into a devil. The only way to be prepared and not fall is to realize the enormous peril that you present potentially to the universe. Before you get in a position to enjoy the status that God offers to us all, you need to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, exactly like Paul said. You need to purge, remove, reprove. This attitude we see in this man in this account, this is the man of God! Christ may be the prototype of the saved man, but I know of no record anywhere in scripture that exposes the heart of the real disciple of Christ as well as does this chapter expose the heart of this man. This is what we should become. This is why the Lord could open up to him. This is why this man became, in the history of the world coming up to this moment, despite the fact the Lord came to Adam-ondi-Ahman and administered comfort to Adam in the Valley of Adam-ondi-Ahman, here He came and showed Himself as He truly was—as a pre-existent spirit, possessing a soul as tangible as man's—and ministered to him in a way which, if you understood what it takes for a *quicken*ed being to condescend into the presence and make himself known as He does here, was an enormous sacrifice by our Lord.

The foregoing are excerpts taken from:

- Denver's Q&A session at the Keeping the Covenant Conference in Boise, ID on September 22, 2019
- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #1 entitled "Be of Good Cheer" given in Boise, ID on September 10th, 2013; and
- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #8 entitled "A Broken Heart" given in Las Vegas, NV on July 25th, 2014