

## Denver Snuffer Podcast 190: Suffering, Part 7

This is part seven of a series looking at the role of suffering in the life of the Savior, and how our own suffering brings us closer to Him.

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STEPHANIE: Okay. So, I am a “how” person. All of this stuff is great. And then there’s this gigantic disconnect about, “Okay, yeah, it all **sounds** really good. Now, what are we supposed to do?”

I’m not an expert, by any means, but I have recently embarked on a new journey which is full of all kinds of interesting and edifying things. And one of them is that the language of “good mental health” is basically just Scriptural, written in secular terms—so people who are not religious can understand the same concept. There is a universality about God and about connecting to God. And so, if the soul is the body and the spirit, then you want to connect with the spirit, right? Okay. Connecting to the spirit can be accomplished by learning about and practicing **mindfulness**, okay? So, I’m gonna give you a few things to think about so that as you think about his talk and start reading the Scriptures again from a new paradigm, you have in your mind this idea of mindfulness.

So, at our basic level, human beings are down here to do five things, pretty much consistently. We are down here to:

1. Seek pleasure,
2. Avoid pain,
3. Increase our social standing, self-esteem (or in the words of social media), “be liked,” okay? We like to be liked, right? and
4. Protect our loved ones, and
5. Think constantly about how to accomplish 1-4, okay?

Does that sound about right? Okay, these five things are pretty much the reason all human beings suffer—okay?—‘cuz we do; we suffer. It is why and how we find ourselves emotionally upset, emotionally dysregulated (these are therapy words; sorry, I got a new job), and there are a million reasons why we do this, okay? These are the basis upon which we do this (I’m not gonna write these down). So, here are a few of the ways we suffer as human beings:

- We worry about the future—yeah, all of the time, right?
- We regret our past: “Oh gosh, shoot, I shouldn’t have done that! I can’t believe I did that!”
- We are angry or we’re sad for any number of reasons.
- We suffer from guilt and shame because of the things that we do.
- We enjoy physical pain: hips, knees, joints, gallbladders, kidney stones—you know, whatever.

- We find ourselves often bored and stressed.
- We have anxious thoughts, or we're depressed, or we worry all the time, or
- We engage in addictions or other kinds of things that really bring us down.

So, lesson number one: "Being human" is really hard; "being human disconnected from our spirit" is even harder—it makes everything harder. So... Just I'll get this out here; this is words to live by: **Pain is inevitable**, okay? You are down here in your human form (dust, flesh)—you are going to be in pain. Any number of these things are gonna cause you pain, just like I said. But **suffering is optional**, okay? We do not have to make our pains worse by making them our focus. We **can** let go of some of this. So, the question then is: How do we avoid **suffering** when we are in pain?

So, the way to do that is to connect to your spirit and set aside our preoccupation with our bodies, okay? That stuff that you took a picture of [on the whiteboard before Stephanie started talking], that's exactly what I'm talking about: body, spirit, all right? So, we want to separate ourselves from that.

So, here's a couple of definitions of mindfulness. Mindfulness means "relaxed, embodied awareness." (Whatever.) It means "paying attention—on purpose—in the present moment without judging (as if your life depended on it)," okay? So, what does all that mean? Well, at the root of mindfulness—which is not sitting cross-legged in a room on a cozy cushion with your legs crossed, ohming and ahming or whatever—mindfulness is awareness, okay? It is being aware of the present moment.

So, you're all sitting here, and I would venture to say that most of you are thinking about something else other than what's going on here, okay?

- "Crap, I can't believe I was late."
- "I wonder if I'm gonna get out of here soon enough to do something with my friends."
- "I think there's food in the kitchen."
- "It's Friday—is it Friday?—I don't have homework on Friday."

**Denver:** It's Saturday.

**Stephanie:** "Oh, it's Saturday. Holy crap! I've lost a whole day!"

**Denver:** That's life.

**Stephanie:** "Oh, my gosh! I'm stressed out." Right? Yeah, okay, exactly. I can't remember what I was thinking over there... Oh, I do know: I was thinking, "Pretty good! That was pretty good."

**Denver:** You were here "in the moment"??

**Stephanie:** I was! That's what I was thinking.

Okay. So, there are some very specific things you can do to bring yourself into the present moment—whatever that present moment is—because "present" is **now**.

Oh, it's gone.

Oh, nope—it's now.

Oh, it's gone again.

See? You only have one moment—ever. Anything in the past is gone, anything in the future hasn't happened yet.

Oh, there we go! Another one's gone. (See? It's kind of mind-blowing, actually.)

So, there are some actual skills, exercises, and things you can do to bring yourself into the present moment. There's something called breath awareness, okay? Breath awareness is literally exactly what it sounds like: you **just** pay attention to your breathing. You don't have to "not think of anything," because your brain is absolutely **incapable** of not thinking of other things—but you can, "In, out; in, out," and just pay attention to your breathing. You'll be doing that, and you'll get one breath in, and you will think about whether there's food in the kitchen. You will get two breaths in, and you will think about, "Shoot, I didn't text that kid back!" You will get three breaths in, and your little "puppy brain" will be all over the place. And that's fine! Notice your puppy brain, and bring him back, and go, "In and out..."

My favorite breathing exercises go like this ([picking up a red marker and then changing to a black one] Okay this... Fine, fine, fine). There's visuals you can do. This is actually called "square breathing," but I prefer to turn it into a baseball diamond. And I go home to first (and I breathe in), and then I go first to second (and I breathe out), and then I go second to third (and I breathe in), and I go third to home (and I breathe out). And in my mind, I have this little diagram where I go up and over and down—and that helps me keep my brain at least focused on something else. Okay?

There's another one called "infinity breathing," and if you start to pay attention to your breath, you will notice that you breathe in, and you breathe out—and in the "in and out," there's a hitch—okay?—[breathing in...] and you kind of pause, and then you breathe out. Infinity breathing is working on breathing in a way where there's no hitch, so your breath looks like that [infinity sign] instead of like that [infinity sign with straight lines]. Okay? It's a really kind of interesting exercise because when you get here [to the pause] in your breathing (I'll just leave this to you to figure out), you want to make it smooth.

Now, I don't really care how you breathe. I mean, the object is not **how** you breathe; the object is to give your mind something to think about for the breath awareness. If this doesn't work, fine; whatever. Say "in and out," picture a tide, blow up a balloon, whatever—you know, just get something going in your mind so that you're focused on breath awareness. It actually calms you down, it changes the way your amygdala is activated, it puts you back in your prefrontal cortex, and it makes everything better immediately—even if just for a short time.

The other awareness is a body-scan awareness, where you literally sit in a chair, and you start at the top of your head, and you think about your head: "Can I feel anything in my head? Do I have a headache? No, I feel pretty good. What about my neck, my shoulders..."

Just go all the way through your body, however you want: arms, elbows, fingers, toes. And then, when you get all the way down to the bottom, you come back up to the top. And your mind is all over the place, and pretty soon you forget that you were at your elbow, or you don't realize how you got to your abdomen, or whatever. And you just bring it back, and you just do it again.

All of this is designed to do is just keep you **aware** of what's going on without being **everywhere** in your puppy mind or monkey mind, which is what we also call it. "Sensory awareness," same thing. Finish your body-scan awareness or finish your breathing meditation or mindfulness, and then say,

"What do I hear?" A kid. A fan. I was sitting by Chris; I could hear his thing go in and out, his... Okay? So, literally, what ~~are~~ [do] you hear?

What do you see? I see people. Pink. Just that simple.

What do you smell?

Can you taste anything?

I meditate in my car right after I get a Diet Coke. You would be shocked at how noisy Diet Coke is—just bubbles like crazy; carbonated Diet Coke. Very noisy.

**Denver:** Devil's brew.

**Stephanie:** ...very noisy when you're listening to it in your car.

Emotion awareness. This is... We don't like this one, **nobody** likes this one because **nobody** likes to think about how they **feel**! 'Cuz sometimes we don't feel very good. Sometimes we're sad. Sometimes we're scared. Sometimes we're angry (which is usually because we're sad or scared). Sometimes we're, you know, we feel depressed. Sometimes we feel like school sucks. Sometimes we feel like, "If I have to put a mask on, I'm gonna rip someone's freaking eyes out!" Okay? We feel ways that we are uncomfortable with because we're not good at feeling our emotions. So, emotion awareness is exactly that: being aware of how you feel at any given time, okay?

All of this is designed to keep you in a present moment. I'm gonna say it again: The present-moment awareness takes us out of what we call our monkey mind or our puppy mind (the part of us that is usually disconnected from our spirit). That's what disconnects us from our spirit. It disrupts our connection with the Divine or the Heavenly because it's all over the place thinking of things that are **not divine**. "Oh, I think there's food in the kitchen." "Damn, I'm **not** gonna get out of here before it's...in time to do anything with my friends," okay? The present moment is all we ever have because the past is literally gone, and the future has not arrived. It's pretty mind-blowing, actually, when you start to think about it.

So, mindfulness is the antidote to being consumed in mind and heart by the natural man (the part of us that **creates** our suffering). This is an element of Eastern religious practices that focus on the soul and the spirit (or the spirit instead of the body). At its highest and

best, mindfulness practices are designed to create a **path** for us to experience enlightenment, which is the connection to God ([addressing Denver] you used a whole bunch of different phrases)...

**Denver:** Oh, the truth of all things, the Record of Heaven...

**Stephanie:** Yeah, that's what it is. And if you read other things, honestly, like mental health books, the language is all over the place: Christ consciousness, enlightenment, they call it a mil... Oh, connecting with the universe, you know. I mean, there's a lot of non-godly words used to describe exactly the same thing, okay? This journey includes yogic traditions, as well, because yogi (or yoga) is not just stretching and contorting our bodies, okay? The word "yoga" actually comes from the Sanskrit root yuge or yuj (y-u-j), which means "to yoke or unite oneself with God," okay? So, yogis are the enlightened ones; yoga is what we do when we contort our bodies, but it is also uniting or yoking with God, okay? So, it's uniting or yoking with God, and it also refers to the practices and principles that are used to create this union.

So, mindfulness practices and yogic traditions have many benefits, the most important one being the ability to open ourselves up to higher states of spirituality, to have more direct experiences with God, and to begin to see things as God sees them. This is how we're making the connection. This is how we're moving (from his [Denver's] diagram) from the body to the spirit.

One of the obstacles of Western culture and Western Christianity is that we come from a "deficit model," meaning that Christianity in the Western world talks about mankind as deficient, all right? We are carnal, sensual, base; we have lust; we have appetite...

**Denver:** Enemy to God.

**Stephanie:** We are an enemy to God. We are a natural man, okay? And we need Christ as our Redeemer (who is the only perfect being to do all the heavy lifting, so that from our state of deficiencies, we can be redeemed). This kind of thing is offset by Mormon teachings where we learn that we are divinely created in the image of our Heavenly Parents, and we can actively participate (to some degree) in our salvation by repenting, being obedient, and living righteously. So, we **can contribute** to that.

The yogic tradition, on the other hand (which is the Eastern traditions), believe that human beings are whole and divine at their very core. Mormons tend to believe that, too—so Mormon teachings include the idea that we're born of Heavenly Parents, and we can live by that divine parentage—but we're down here in this cesspool of a mess pool (hah...that's funny), and we're disconnected from the divinity that is actually in us (again, which goes to the whole thing). So, the yogic tradition says that the Redeemer, our Savior, isn't necessarily **pulling** us from the depths of our deficiency, but He is **revealing** to us the true nature of God—which is the Record of Heaven, intelligence, light and truth, same thing that it says in the Scriptures, okay?

So, how do we tap into this principle of divinity and connection and awareness so that we can **pull ourselves** out of our natural state? Well, we begin by understanding the

Scriptures. *Men have become carnal, sensual, and devilish, and are shut out from the presence of God* (Genesis 4:7 RE), which he [Denver] explained in the last talk (so, you can go find that). Understand this Scripture about being *the natural man is an enemy to God* (Mosiah 1:16 RE)—because it's not an enemy to God; it is just disconnected from God. We are at odds with God. So, understand those two Scriptures, and then begin to practice mindfulness to quiet your monkey mind, to find the light and truth and intelligence, which is the glory of God which is **in you**—you just can't hear it or find it or see it because we're too busy trying to seek pleasure, avoid pain, be liked, protect our loved ones, and think **constantly** about how to make those happen.

So, I'm gonna end with recommending one thing—'cuz if I can recommend one thing to help you get in touch with your spirit, it would be to practice quieting your mind. Because the One whom we worship says, *Be still and know that **I am God*** (T&C 101:3).

If you want to strengthen a muscle you have to lift a weight, okay? If you want to run a marathon, you have to run a block or, you know, a mile. If you want to increase your connection to the spirit through mindfulness, you have to practice mindfulness every day for some amount of time, and the **distillation** of the **improvement** will go more or less unnoticed **except that** you will find **connection**; you will find **peace**; you will find that you have **quieted** even your **inherited anxious tendencies**. You will find that you have risen above even your **legitimate** physiological/biological depressing thoughts or depression. It doesn't make it go away, it just makes **suffering less interesting**.

DENVER: In the testimonies that we have in the four Gospels, we learn about the sacrifice that Christ made, His passion, His death, His resurrection. But apparently, the four Gospel accounts do not give prominent enough explanation of the Atonement suffering that the Lord had, because in the early days of the Restoration through Joseph Smith, Christ gave a more fulsome explanation of what it was that He went through in atoning for mankind's sins. This is language from a revelation that was given in 1830:

*I command you by my name, and...my almighty power that you repent, repent lest I smite you by the rod of my mouth, and by my wrath, and by my anger, and your sufferings be sore — how sore you know not, how exquisite you know not, yea, how hard to bear you know not. For behold, I, God, have suffered these things for all that they might not suffer, if they would repent. But if they would not repent, they must suffer even as I, which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit, and would that I might not drink the bitter cup and shrink. Nevertheless, glory be to the Father, and I partook and finished my preparations unto the children of men. (T&C 4:5; see also D&C 19:15-19)*

Not one word of the suffering the Lord describes in this revelation talks about the cross. He's talking exclusively about the experience that He had in Gethsemane—which is one of the curiosities about the Restoration, with Christendom having crosses everywhere (yeah, that being the result historically of Constantine and the battle on the bridge, in which his troops painted the cross on their shields and won an unlikely victory over the adversary when the leader—the idiotic leader—of the opposition rode out in full armor onto the bridge and fell into the water, and gravity took care of the rest). So, here we have the Lord,

after talking about eternal punishment and endless punishment, giving you a description of what it was that He went through and telling us that that was rather exquisite.

So, why does the Lord want us to comprehend something about what He endured in Gethsemane? In Isaiah, there's a passage that says:

*When you shall make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed; he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see...the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied; **by his knowledge** shall my righteous Servant justify many, for he shall bear their iniquities.* (Isaiah 19:3 RE, emphasis added; see also Isaiah 53:10-11 KJV)

What Christ acquired through His suffering was knowledge and understanding of **everything** you have or will ever go through or suffer. He understands. But He doesn't understand that in order for you to simply be the passive recipient of a blessing that He confers as a consequence of what He went through. He went through it so He can guide **you to the same end**. There is no magic fairy dust. **You** must rise up. **You** must overcome sin. **You** must leave behind you the things that bring about guilt and remorse. **He** has finished His preparations. And now the Righteous (who has **knowledge** of how to bring you through that) can guide you, can lead you, **can succor you in your affliction** so that you too can overcome that portion of the world that you have to contend with.

Listen to the words that the Lord gives us in an answer concerning the covenant that He's renewed again in our day:

*Although a man may err in understanding concerning many things, yet he can view his brother with charity and come unto me, and through me he can with patience overcome the world. **I can bring him to understanding and knowledge**. Therefore, if you regard one another with charity, then your brother's error in understanding will not divide you. **I lead to all truth**...*

This is Christ talking: "I lead to all truth."

*I will lead all who come to me to the truth of all things. The fullness is to receive the truth of all things, **and this too from me**, in power, by my word, and in very deed...*

...the same thing that Nephi had prophesied would happen in this day. Christ is saying He'll do it; we will get it from Him "in power, by my word, and in very deed."

*For I will come unto you if you will come unto me.* (T&C 157:53, emphasis added)

There's this passage that we've got—it's probably recitable by all of you who are here. I want to look at that as I conclude and put it in the context of everything that you face and everything that you will face, through and including your own ultimate final disease and death. Okay?

*The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not lack. He makes me to lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside the still waters...*

You know, the waters are going to be turbulent! That's just the way it's gonna be. But **if He is by your side, the turbulence is of no moment**. He leads you beside the still waters because "Peace, be still" is His message, even when you are in the midst of the hurricane itself.

*He restores my soul. He leads me in the [path] of righteousness for his name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil...*

You're going to walk through the valley of the shadow of death. But if death has no claim on **you** because of promises He has given **to you**, what is there to fear? Why not look forward to what comes next? It's gonna be far more interesting than what you're going through lying in your final illness or coping with whatever they do to you in the medical industry on your way out.

*I will fear no evil, for you are with me. Your rod and your staff...*

Well, what's the rod, and what's the staff? They're things you use to beat or steer or grab or jerk the animal to get the animal back on the right path. These are implements of (frankly) cruelty—not because you're trying to hurt your sheep; you're trying to keep them from falling off the cliff; you're trying to keep them from injury and death. You may have to discipline with a rod or with a staff. But the discipline is designed to correct, improve, and pull them away from an even greater danger or their own destruction.

*Your rod and your staff — they comfort me...*

And why is that? Because you understand the purpose of the Lord behind what it is that He's doing for you. It's designed to make you ultimately live.

*You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies...*

You're gonna have enemies. Well, okay. They can do you no harm. Christ said, "Don't worry about those who can destroy the body. Worry about those things that can destroy the soul." He's literally saying, "Don't be afraid of death." There are gonna be enemies. They're going to conspire. They're gonna do things purposefully to try and inflict and to injure, to set back, to harm, and ultimately to kill you. And He's saying, "You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies." It's of no moment.

*You anoint my head with oil. My cup runs over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever. (Psalms 23:1-2 RE; see also Psalms 23:1-6 KJV)*

...in the midst of potentially turbulent waters, valley of death, and enemies surrounding you. Why is that? Because Christ overcame the world. He understands anything and everything that we will be put through. And when He says, "Peace, be still," and counsels and comforts and guides you, He does it from a position in which He understands everything. "Art thou greater than He? The Son of Man hath descended below it all" (see T&C 139:8; see also D&C 122:8).



Expect turbulent waters. But you can still be at peace because of Him. **This** is the message that Joseph Smith's restored gospel is trying to get across to us: an immediate, accessible, proximate Lord and Savior who understands and comprehends what you are going through and what you will go through and has the ability to succor you in your every need. It doesn't mean your burdens are gonna go away. It means your burdens are gonna be made understandable to you so that what you experience is acceptable and does not harm your soul.

The Lord is ever willing to forgive us. But once we are forgiven, then the obligation is imposed upon us to forsake our sins and then go on as worthy as we would be had we not sinned in the first place. We have to leave that behind us. He readily forgives. But once forgiven, we're supposed to not only confess but to forsake our sins. And the forsaking of the sin and the leaving of the temptation behind becomes an enormous challenge for us—and it was the challenge that He faced in Gethsemane. And it's **the place He goes to**—now that He's gotten through the entirety of this Atonement, and He's worked it all through. He doesn't go to the cross; He doesn't go to somewhere else. He goes to this moment—this profound, jarring disassociation that existed between Him and the Father that He had to find a way to overcome and to reconcile in order to be, once again, in harmony with Him—and He facilitates our ability to do exactly the same thing by taking upon Him (vicariously, through that suffering/through that price that He paid) the ownership and forgiveness for everything so that He **can** forgive.

But forgiving is the limit of what He can do. He can't make us better. He finished His preparations. And then, having finished His preparations, He says, "Therefore I command you to repent. I don't want you to go through what I went through. I'll forgive you, but I command you: Repent, confess them, forsake them, leave them behind you, and become something bigger, better, more reconciled to God through the love that you ought to have in your heart," for the fact that He has been willing to re-accept you, He has been willing to comfort you, take you in and embrace you as a member of His family, able to stand clean before Him because you've abandoned what it was that separated you.

If you read through that section 161 material (which I'm not going to do; I've done it just recently, reading an excerpt in one of the conferences recently), you'll find that the Lord overcame the separation that drove Him away from the presence of the Father—because of guilt and because of shame, because of this intense feeling of unworthy betrayal—He overcomes that through love. He overcomes that through finding His way back to the harmony that preceded all of this. So, I'm not gonna read 161 any further, but I would commend it to you.

What I find interesting is that we have discussions that brush up against what the Lord had done (in Alma and in Isaiah and other places) that talk about how He goes through what He went through in order to understand and gain the knowledge necessary in order to succor

us and to reconcile us. So, He's not coming to minister as the forgiving Savior, ignorant of what it takes in order to overcome sin. He comes fully understanding the nature of what it is that makes us recoil from the presence of God. He gets it. He's been there. He's been through that. And when He looks upon us, He can look upon us with compassion **and understanding** because by His knowledge, He can justify us by leading us from this state of disharmony (and this state of opposition, shame, and guilt) back into a state of cleanliness and the feeling of reconciliation with God.

And then on the first day of the week as it was then reckoned—it was actually the seventh day, but we were off by a day ever since the fall of Adam because the day of rest was disrupted by the fall—but on the first day of the week according to what they reckoned at that point (the actual intended day of rest according to the creation that was disrupted by the fall), the Lord came forth out of the tomb and was resurrected while it was still dark. We have an account of that also in that section 161 about how once He had come out of the grave...

*When I saw His resurrection, I was surprised to see it was still dark. When Mary realized it was Jesus, she embraced Him joyfully. She did not timidly reach out her hand, but she readily greeted Him with open arms, and He, in turn, embraced her. It is difficult to describe what I saw of the incident, apart from saying the Lord was triumphant, exultant, overjoyed at His return from the grave! She shared His joy. I was shown the scene and do not have words to adequately communicate how complete the feelings of joy and gratitude were which were felt by our Lord [on] that morning. As dark and terrible were the sufferings through which He passed, the magnitude of which is impossible for man to put into words, these feelings of triumph were, on the other hand, of equal magnitude in their joy and gratitude. I do not think it possible for a mortal to feel the fullness of either. And, having felt some of what He shares with His witnesses, I know words are inadequate to capture His feelings on the morning of His resurrection. He had the deep satisfaction of having accomplished the most difficult assignment given by the Father, knowing it was a benefit to all of His Father's children, and it had been done perfectly.*

*Mary and Christ embraced. There was nothing timid about the warm encounter she had with Him. Then He said to her, "Hold me not" because he had to ascend, return and report to His Father. (T&C 161:29-30)*

...and so on. You really don't get Easter and understand what Easter represents until we have begun in Gethsemane and ended at the resurrection and the joy that was experienced there. It's as if the Atonement takes the scale of negativity and the scale of positivity and it drives the needle as far down as it is possible to drive the needle down to one extremity at the end of the worst, most awful, most dreadful possibility that exists in the entire universe—and then takes that same needle and drives it on the scale upward to the point

that it exceeds joy so great that when men are exposed to a little of it, they are overcome, and their physical body faints from the exultation of what it was that the Lord experienced.

Easter represents all of that. Easter represents the great and the dreadful, the magnificent and the awful, the most terrible, the most wonderful; it represents it all. And our Lord—after having gone through all of that—continues to bear testimony to us in the Restoration Scriptures to say, "Here's, now, what I've done. I've accomplished all my preparations, and I've made it possible now for you."

*I command you to repent — repent, lest I smite you by the rod of my mouth, and by my wrath, and by my anger, and your sufferings be sore — how sore you know not, how exquisite you know not, yea, how hard to bear you know not. For behold, I, God, have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer **if they would repent**; But if they would not repent they must suffer even as I; which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, ...to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit — and would that I might not drink the bitter cup, and shrink — Nevertheless, glory be to the Father, and I partook and finished my preparations unto the children of men. (JSH 17:5, emphasis added)*

That's all He could do. That's all He has done. That's the great accomplishment that He has obtained for us. He finished His preparations unto the children of men; it's all been prepared. So now that it's all been prepared and He's told us, I've given you... It's all ready to go. Wherefore, now—as a result of this preparation, as a consequence of everything I just told you:

*Wherefore, I command you again to repent lest I humble you by my almighty power, and that you confess your sins, lest you suffer these punishments of which I have spoken. (Ibid.)*

See, He wants us to be freed from the valley of the shadow of death through which we will pass. And He promises us that no matter how bitter death may be, He's gonna wipe away every tear, and He's gonna defeat the grave. But that can't make us individually worthy. The only way that we can become individually worthy is if we do as He instructs us to do, acknowledge our own many shortcomings, and then turn around to face God and leave behind us all the things that are unworthy, unacceptable, disobedient; all of our jarrings; all of our contentions; all of our pride; all of our efforts to raise ourselves at the expense of others; all of our ambition, our desire for control and compulsion and dominion, our desire to be profiting at the expense of others. In many respects, it requires Zion for us to fully repent, and yet Zion requires us to be something very different than what we are because we **don't** treat one another the way that equality imposes upon us. We **do** cheer against one another and look to get ahead and then to leave others behind. We **do** falsely assume ourselves to be something bigger and greater and more holy than we are when, in fact, if we are serviceable to the Lord and we're able to move something along in His era and it turns out to be something great, **that isn't us**. We don't have anything of which to boast. None of us ever have; none of us ever will—no matter how great a thing the Lord may cause to happen through the service that He asks you to provide. In the end, you probably don't do as good a job of doing what He's commanded as He could do it Himself. And yet, if it's

serviceable, and it works, and it accomplishes something good, then the gratitude and the praise and the rejoicing of all that belongs to God, not to us. I think we've accomplished many, many remarkable, wonderful things. **But that's not us.** We've been led along by a merciful, kind, guiding light that has made the task doable by the light that He has provided to us, and we have nothing of which to boast for ourselves.

In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

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The foregoing excerpts were taken from:

- Stephanie's talk titled "Understanding Your Soul, Part 2," delivered in Highland, Utah on March 6, 2021
- Denver's talk titled "True Blue Mormon: Independent Faithfulness," presented at the Rescuing the Restoration conference held in Boise, Idaho on February 26, 2022; and
- Denver's comments about Easter, made during a fireside held on April 3, 2022