Selected Quotes on

Trials and Tests

General Statements

N. Eldon Tanner

It has ever been so, the chosen of the Lord must serve
an apprenticeship in suffering even as Job, Paul, and
Christ himself. [“President Hugh B. Brown of the First
Presidency,” The Improvement Era (Aug. 1961),572]

Joseph F. Smith, Anthon H. Lund, Charles W. Penrose,
First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

God, doubtless, could avert war, prevent crime, destroy
poverty, chase away darkness, overcome error, and make all
things bright, beautiful and joyful. But this would involve the
destruction of a vital and fundamental attribute in man -- the
right of agency. It is for the benefit of His sons and daughters
that they become acquainted with evil as well as good, with
darkness as well as light, with error as well as truth, and with
the results of the infraction of eternal laws. Therefore he has
permitted the evils which have been brought about by the acts
of His creatures, but will control their ultimate results for His
own glory and the progress and exaltation of His sons and
daughters, when they have learned obedience by the things
they suffer. The contrasts experienced in this world of mingled
sorrow and joy are educational in their nature, and
will be the means of raising humanity to a full appreciation of
all that is right and true and good. The foreknowledge of God
does not imply His action in bringing about that which He
foressees, nor make Him responsible in any degree for that
which man does or refuses to do. The comprehension of this
principle makes clear many questions that puzzle the
uninformed as to the works and power of Deity. (Messages of
the First Presidency, 4:325-326)

Selected Statements

D&C 98:12-15

12 For he will give unto the faithful line upon line,
precept upon precept; and I will try you and prove you
herewith.

13 And whoso layeth down his life in my cause, for
my name's sake, shall find it again, even life eternal.

14 Therefore, be not afraid of your enemies, for I
have decreed in my heart, saith the Lord, that I will prove
you in all things, whether you will abide in my covenant,
even unto death, that you may be found worthy.

15 For if ye will not abide in my covenant ye are not
worthy of me.

D&C 101:4-5

4 Therefore, they must needs be chastened and tried,
even as Abraham, who was commanded to offer up his
only son.

5 For all those who will not endure chastening, but
deny me, cannot be sanctified.

Joseph Smith

• After a person has faith in Christ, repents of his sins,
and is baptized for the remission of his sins and
receives the Holy Ghost, (by the laying on of
hands),which is the first Comforter, then let him
continue to humble himself before God, hungering
and thirsting after righteousness, and living by every
word of God, and the Lord will soon say unto him,
Son, thou shalt be exalted. When the Lord has
thoroughly proved him, and finds that the man is
determined to serve Him at all hazards, then the man
will find his calling and his election made sure, then
it will be his privilege to receive the other Comforter,
which the Lord hath promised the Saints, as is
recorded in the testimony of St. John, in the 14th
chapter, from the 12th to the 27th verses. [History of
the Church, 3:379-381]

• God said, "Thou shalt not kill;" at another time He
said, "Thou shalt utterly destroy." This is the
principle on which the government of heaven is
conducted—by revelation adapted to the
circumstances in which the children of the kingdom
are placed. Whatever God requires is right, no matter
what it is, although we may not see the reason thereof
till long after the events transpire. If we seek first the
kingdom of God, all good things will be added. So
with Solomon: first he asked wisdom, and God gave
it him, and with it every desire of his heart, even
things which might be considered abominable to all who understand the order of heaven only in part, but which in reality were right because God gave and sanctioned by special revelation. [Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, p.256]

Brigham Young

- We are placed on this earth to prove whether we are worthy to go into the celestial world, the terrestrial, or the telestial or to hell, or to any other kingdom, or place, and we have enough of life given to us to do this. (Discourses of Brigham Young, p.87)

- This is a world in which we are to prove ourselves. The lifetime of man is a day of trial, wherein we may prove to God, in our darkness, in our weakness, and where the enemy reigns, that we are our Father’s friends, and that we receive light from him and are worthy to be leaders of our children -- to become lords of lords, and kings of kings -- to have perfect dominion over that portion of our families that will be crowned in the celestial kingdom with glory, immortality, and eternal lives. (Discourses of Brigham Young, p.87)

- Since we are permitted by our Father and our God to do good, let us never suffer ourselves to be tempted, to be drawn aside, to be overcome, or thwarted in the pure and holy purpose that the pure spirit of intelligence (the spirit that is in us) reveals to the understanding. Not but that it is necessary in the very nature of things, in the economy of heaven, that we should be tried and tempted in all things, in order to prove ourselves and prepare ourselves to enjoy that eternal life that is prepared for the just. The time will be when people will not be tempted as they now are--when there will be no Tempter upon the earth. The knowledge and intelligence that will be diffused among the people will enable them to live a time and a season without the Tempter. But we live in a day when the power and rule of that evil principle is more excessive upon the earth that it ever has been. As the Prophet said, “For every one, from the least even unto the greatest, is given to covetousness; from the prophet even unto the priest, every one dealeth falsely.” Mankind, in the present day, are further from the intelligence, the light, the glory, and the power of the Invisible than ever they were before, from the days of Adam until now. There never was a day of such heathen darkness and unbelief as now prevails. We have had the privilege of receiving those holy principles calculated to give us power to secure to ourselves eternal life and happiness, if we follow out those principles. It is a constant warfare. As the apostle expresses it, “The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.” The spirit that is put into man is pure and holy; but through the power of evil with the flesh, it is more or less contaminated, influenced, seduced, and brought into bondage by the evil that exists upon the earth. Let the spirit overcome and come off conqueror. (Journal of Discourses, 7:268)

- All intelligent beings who are crowned with crowns of glory, immortality, and eternal lives must pass through every ordeal appointed for intelligent beings to pass through, to gain their glory and exaltation. Every calamity that can come upon mortal beings will be suffered to come upon the few, to prepare them to enjoy the presence of the Lord. If we obtain the glory that Abraham obtained, we must do so by the same means that he did. If we are ever prepared to enjoy the society of Enoch, Noah, Melchizedek, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, or of their faithful children, and of the faithful Prophets and Apostles, we must pass through the same experience, and gain the knowledge, intelligence, and endowments that will prepare us to enter into the celestial kingdom of our Father and God. How many of the Latter-day Saints will endure all these things, and be prepared to enjoy the presence of the Father and the Son? You can answer that question at your leisure. Every trial and experience you have passed through is necessary for your salvation. (Discourses of Brigham Young, p.345)

The reason of our being made subject to sin and misery, pain, woe, and death, is, that we may become acquainted with the opposites of happiness and pleasure. The absence of light brings darkness, and darkness an appreciation of light; pain an appreciation of ease and comfort; and ignorance, falsehood, folly, and sin, in comparison with wisdom, knowledge, righteousness, and truth, make the latter the more desirable to mankind. Facts are made apparent to the human mind by their opposites. We find ourselves surrounded in this mortality by an almost endless combination of opposites, through which we must pass to gain experience and information to fit us for an eternal progression. Those who are enlightened by the spirit of truth, have no difficulty in seeing the propriety and the benefit to us of this state of things. Like heavenly beings, we are endowed with the power of free volition; for God has given to mankind their agency, making them amenable to him for their sins, and entitling them to blessings and rewards for the good they do, and according to their faith in him. It is the wish of our Heavenly Father to bring all his children back into his presence. The spirits of all the human family dwelt with him before they took tabernacles of flesh and became subject to the fall and to sin. He is their spiritual Father, and has sent them here to be clothed with flesh, and to be subject, with their tabernacles, to the ills that afflict fallen humanity. When they have proved themselves faithful in all things, and worthy before Him, they can then have the privilege of returning again to his presence, with their bodies, to dwell in the abodes of the
blessed. If man could have been made perfect, in his double capacity of body and spirit, without passing through the ordeals of mortality, there would have been no necessity of our coming into this state of trial and suffering. Could the Lord have glorified his children in spirit, without a body like his own, he no doubt would have done so. (*Journal of Discourses, 11:42-43*)

- If the Scriptures are true, it proves that sin is in the world, and the question arises, Is it necessary that sin should be here? What will the Latter-day Saints say? Is it necessary that we should know good from evil? I can answer this to suit myself by saying it is absolutely necessary, for the simple reason that if we had never realized darkness we never could have comprehended the light; if we never tasted anything bitter, but were to eat sweets, the honey and the honeycomb, from the time we come into this world until the time we go out of it, what knowledge could we have of the bitter? This leads me to the decision that every fact that exists in this world is demonstrated by its opposite. If this is the fact—and all true philosophy proves it—it leads me to the conclusion that the transgression of our first parents was absolutely necessary, that we might be brought in contact with sin and have the opportunity of knowing good and evil. It may be deemed strange and singular by the Christian world that we should believe such a thing; but the Scriptures inform us, in Genesis iii., 22, that the Lord God said, “Behold, the man has become as one of us, to know good and evil.” (*Journal of Discourses 14:70-71*)

**Heber C. Kimball**

This people must come to a position where they will be tested, every one of them; . . . that is, you will be tested as to whether you are of the religion of Christ or not. [*Journal of Discourses, 4:138-139*]

**Orson Pratt**

We will bring up an example. For instance, suppose you had never tasted anything that was sweet—never had the sensation of sweetness—could you have any correct idea of the term sweetness? No. On the other hand, how could you understand bitter if you never had tasted bitterness? Could you define the term to them who had experienced this sensation, or knew it? No. I will bring another example. Take a man who had been perfectly blind from his infancy, and never saw the least gleam of light—could you describe colors to him? No. Would he know anything about red, blue, violet, or yellow? No; you could not describe it to him by any way you might undertake. But by some process let his eyes be opened, and let him gaze upon the sun beams that reflect upon a watery cloud, producing the rainbow, where he would see a variety of colors, he could then appreciate them for himself; but tell him about colors when he is blind, he would not know them from a piece of earthenware. So with Adam previous to partaking of this fruit; good could not be described to him, because he never had experienced the opposite. As to undertaking to explain to him what evil was, you might as well have undertaken to explain, to a being that never had, for one moment, had his eyes closed to the light, what darkness is.

The tree of knowledge of good and evil was placed there that man might gain certain information he never could have gained otherwise; by partaking of the forbidden fruit he experienced misery, then he knew that he was once happy, previously he could not comprehend what happiness meant, what good was; but now he knows it by contrast, now he is filled with sorrow and wretchedness, now he sees the difference between his former and present condition, and if by any means he could be restored to his first position, he would be prepared to realize it, like the man that never had seen the light. Let the man to whom all the beauties of light have been displayed, and who has never been in darkness, be in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, deprived of his natural sight; what a change this would be to him; he never knew anything about darkness before, he never understood the principle at all; it never entered the catalogue of his ideas, until darkness came upon him, and his eye-sight was destroyed: now he can comprehend that the medium he once existed in was light. Now, says he, if I could only regain my sight, I could appreciate it, for I understand the contrast; restore me back again to my sight, and let me enjoy the light I once had; let me gaze upon the works of creation, let me look on the beauties thereof again, and I will be satisfied, and my joy will be full. It was so with Adam; let the way be prepared for his redemption, and the redemption of his posterity, and all creation that groans in pain to be delivered—let them be restored back again to what they lost through the fall, and they will be prepared to appreciate it. (*Journal of Discourses, 1:285-286*)

**John Taylor**

- Nevertheless, as I have said, it is necessary that we pass through certain ordeals, and that we be tried. But why is it that we should be tried? There is just the same necessity for it now that there was in former times. I heard the Prophet Joseph say, in speaking to the Twelve on one occasion: "You will have all kinds of trials to pass through. And it is quite as necessary for you to be tried as it was for Abraham and other men of God, and (said he) God will feel after you, and He will take hold of you and wrench your very heart strings, and if you cannot stand it you will not be fit for an inheritance in the Celestial Kingdom of God." Some people have wondered why so many of the Twelve fell away. God tries people according to the position they occupy. [*Journal of Discourses, 24:197*]

- I speak of these things to show how men are to be tried. I heard Joseph Smith say—and I presume
Brother Snow heard him also—in preaching to the Twelve in Nauvoo, that the Lord would get hold of their heart strings and wrench them, and that they would have to be tried as Abraham was tried. Well, some of the Twelve could not stand it. They faltered and fell by the way. It was not everybody that could stand what Abraham stood. And Joseph said that if God had known any other way whereby he could have touched Abraham’s feelings more acutely and more keenly he would have done so. [Journal of Discourses, 24:264]

**George Q. Cannon**
- We have got to be watchful, for I tell you God has sent us here to test us and to prove us. We were true in keeping our first estate. The people that are here today stood loyally by God and by Jesus, and they did not flinch. If you had flinched then, you would not be here with the Priesthood upon you. The evidence that you were loyal, that you were true and that you did not waver is to be found in the fact that you have received the Gospel and the everlasting Priesthood.

Now you are in your second estate, and you are going to be tested again. Will you be true and loyal to God with the curtain drawn between you and Him, shut out from His presence, and in the midst of darkness and temptation, with Satan and his invisible hosts all around you, bringing all manner of evil influences to bear upon you? The men and the women that will be loyal under these circumstances God will exalt, because it will be the highest test to which they can be subjected. (Gospel Truth, 1:7)

- It is necessary, in His wisdom and according to the laws of exaltation, that we should descend from our heavenly abode and come here and take upon us mortal tabernacles and forget all that we knew. The reason of this is that we should be tempted, that we should be tried, that we should be purified, that the dross of our nature should be cleansed by obedience to the laws of God and that by obedience to His laws these tabernacles which we have received and which belong to this fallen world may be redeemed and be fitted and prepared to dwell in a higher and purer abode—in an element that is far beyond anything that we know anything of at the present time. These tabernacles of ours, which are so full of humanity and its weaknesses, God has given unto us, and He has told us how we can redeem them—by obeying the laws He has taught. (Gospel Truth, 1:12)

**Spencer W. Kimball**
- Blind obedience! How little they understand! The Lord said through Joseph Smith: "Whatever God requires is right, no matter what it is, although we may not see the reason thereof until long after the events transpire." (Scrapbook of Mormon Literature, vol. 2, p. 173.)

When men obey commands of a creator, it is not blind obedience. How different is the cowering of a subject to his totalitarian monarch and the dignified, willing obedience one gives to his God. The dictator is ambitious, selfish, and has ulterior motives. God's every command is righteous, every directive purposeful, and all for the good of the governed. The first may be blind obedience, but the latter is certainly faith obedience.

The patriarch Abraham, sorely tried, obeyed faithfully when commanded by the Lord to offer his son Isaac upon the altar. Blind obedience? No. He knew that God would require nothing of him which was not for his ultimate good. How that good could be accomplished he did not understand. [The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball, p.59]

Now, this mortal life is the time to prepare to meet God, which is our first responsibility. Having already obtained our bodies, which become the permanent tabernacle for our spirits through the eternities, now we are to train our bodies, our minds, and our spirits. Preeminent, then, is our using this life to perfect ourselves, to subjugate the flesh, subject the body to the spirit, to overcome all weaknesses, to govern self so that one may give leadership to others, and to perform all necessary ordinances. Secondly comes the preparation for the subduing of the earth and the elements. In Genesis we read: “And God said, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion.” (Genesis 1:28.) [The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball, p.31]

**Ezra Taft Benson**
- The prophet is not limited by men's reasoning. There will be times when you will have to choose between the revelations of God and the reasoning of men—between the prophet and the politician or professor. Said the Prophet Joseph Smith, "Whatever God requires is right, no matter what it is, although we may not see the reason thereof until long after the events transpire." [Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson, p.134]

The great test of life is obedience to God. “We will prove them herewith,” said the Lord, “to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them” (Abraham 3:25). The great task of life is to learn
the will of the Lord and then do it. (Conference Report, Apr. 1988, p. 3; or Ensign, May 1988, p. 4)

Bruce R. McConkie

As we understand the plan of salvation, we came into this sphere of existence for two purposes. First: We came to gain this natural body, this tangible body, this body which here in this life is a temporary house for the eternal spirit, but which body we will receive back again in immortality through the atoning sacrifice of Christ. Second: We came here to see if we would have the spiritual integrity, the devotion to righteousness, to overcome the world, to put off the natural man, to bridle our passions, to curb and control the appetites that are natural in this type of existence. (Conference Report, April, 1955, p. 115)

Richard G. Scott

Mortal life is a proving ground. God said, “We will make an earth whereon these may dwell; And we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them.” (see Abraham 3:24–26.)

Our proving grounds vary. Some of us are born with physical limitations; others are lonely or do not enjoy good health. Some are challenged by economic conditions, the lack of good parental example, or a myriad of other things that test our mettle. While much of the pain and sorrow we endure is the result of our own stubborn acts of disobedience, many of the things that appear to be obstacles in our path are used by a loving Creator for our own personal growth.

Life never was intended to be easy. Rather, it is a period of proving and growth. It is interwoven with difficulties, challenges, and burdens. We are immersed in a sea of persistent, worldly pressures that could destroy our happiness. Yet these very forces, if squarely faced, provide opportunity for tremendous personal growth and development. The conquering of adversity produces strength of character, forges self-confidence, engenders self-respect, and assures success in righteous endeavor.

One who exercises free agency by faith grows from challenges, is purified by sorrow, and lives at peace. In contrast, one who frantically seeks to satisfy appetite and worldly desire is driven in a downward spiral to tragic depths. Temptation is the motivating influence in his exercise of free agency. (Conference Report, Oct. 1981, p. 13; or Ensign, Nov. 1981, p. 11)