

# The Atonement of Jesus Christ Provides the Ultimate Rescue

Elder Quentin L. Cook—Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles—April 2025

**1** The Atonement of Jesus Christ provides the ultimate rescue from the trials we face in this life.

**2** President James E. Faust provided this marvelous summary: “In the heroic effort of the handcart pioneers, we learn a great truth. All must pass through a refiner’s fire, and the insignificant and unimportant in our lives can melt away like dross and make our faith bright, intact, and strong. There seems to be a full measure of anguish, sorrow, and often heartbreak for everyone, including those who earnestly seek to do right and be faithful. Yet this is part of the purging to become acquainted with God.”

**3** Without the Atonement, we cannot save ourselves from sin and death. While sin can play a significant role in our trials, life’s adversities are compounded by mistakes, bad decisions, evil actions by others, and many things outside of our control.

**4** *Preach My Gospel* teaches: “As we rely on Jesus Christ and His Atonement, He can help us endure our trials, sicknesses, and pain. We can be filled with joy, peace, and consolation. All that is unfair about life can be made right through the Atonement of Jesus Christ.”

**5** I share three recommendations which I think are particularly relevant for our day.

First, do not underestimate the importance of doing what we can to rescue others from physical and especially spiritual challenges.

**6** Second, gratefully accept the Savior’s Atonement. We all should strive to exhibit joy and happiness even as we face the challenges of life. Our goal should be to live optimistically on the sunny side of the street. I have observed my precious companion, Mary, do this her entire life. I have appreciated her sparkling, uplifting approach even as we have faced problems throughout the years.

**7** My third counsel is to set aside consistent time to faithfully contemplate the Savior’s Atonement. There are many ways to do this in our personal religious observance. However, attending sacrament meeting and partaking of the sacrament are especially significant.

**8** Equally important is regular attendance in a temple where possible. The temple provides a continuing remembrance of the Savior’s Atonement and what it overcomes. And, even more important, temple attendance allows us to provide a spiritual rescue for our deceased loved ones and more distant ancestors.

**9** President Russell M. Nelson, at our last conference, emphasized this principle and added, “[Temple] blessings ... help to prepare a people who will help prepare the world for the Second Coming of the Lord!”

## A What Is a "Refiner's Fire"?

A refiner’s fire melts down a metal, such as gold or silver, for purification purposes. Once a metal is in its melted down state, the dross in the metal rises to the top and is then removed from the metal before it cools.

God spoke this analogy through the prophet Malachi to describe how he purifies our hearts. Just as a refiner’s fire, God will draw out our dross – our broken, sinful ways – so that we will stand pure and righteous before him.

A refiner’s fire does not destroy the metal, rather it allows the junk within to come up so that it can be removed. A refiner’s fire does not consume, it makes the metal better and more valuable. This comparison helps make sense of what God’s redemptive work may look like and accomplish in each of us.

God will purify us in similar ways. He does not consume us, rather, being in relationship with God draws us to righteousness and away from sinfulness. God uses our suffering, our sinfulness, and our shortcomings to refine us just as a refiner’s fire, so that the dross within our hearts will rise to the surface and can then be removed. How humbling to stand before God with hearts made pure.

**Pamela Palmer** *What Is the Refiner's Fire in Malachi?*

<https://www.biblestudytools.com/bible-study/topical-studies/what-is-the-refiners-fire-in-malachi.html>

## B Challenges

**[B1]** There are many kinds of challenges. Some give us necessary experiences. Adverse results in this mortal life are not evidence of lack of faith or of an imperfection in our Father in Heaven’s overall plan. The refiner’s fire is real, and qualities of character and righteousness that are forged in the furnace of affliction perfect and purify us and prepare us to meet God.

**[B2]** When the Prophet Joseph Smith was a prisoner in Liberty Jail, the Lord declared to him that multiple calamities can befall mankind. The Savior stated in part, “If thou be cast into the deep; if the billowing surge conspire against thee; if fierce winds become thine enemy; ... and all the elements combine to hedge up the way; ... these things shall give thee experience, and shall be for thy good.” The Savior concluded His instruction: “Thy days are known, and thy years shall not be numbered less; therefore, fear not ... , for God shall be with you forever and ever.”

**[B3]** Some challenges result from the agency of others. Agency is essential for individual spiritual growth and development. Evil conduct is an element of agency. Captain Moroni explained this very important doctrine: “The Lord suffereth the righteous to be slain that his justice and judgment may come upon the wicked.” He made it clear that the righteous are not lost but “enter into the rest of the Lord their God.” The wicked will be held accountable for the atrocities they perpetrate.

**[B4]** Some challenges come from disobedience to God’s laws. Health problems resulting from smoking, alcohol, and drug abuse are staggering. Incarceration in jails and prisons as a result of alcohol- and drug-related crime is also very high.

**Quentin L. Cook** *The Songs They Could Not Sing*

<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2011/10/the-songs-they-could-not-sing>

## C The Refiner's Fire

[C1] I wish to speak this morning to all, but especially to those who feel they have had more trials, sorrows, pricks, and thorns than they can bear and in their adversity are almost drowned in the waters of bitterness. My message is intended as one of hope, strength, and deliverance. I speak of the refiner's fire. ...

[C2] Into every life there come the painful, despairing days of adversity and buffeting. There seems to be a full measure of anguish, sorrow, and often heartbreak for everyone, including those who earnestly seek to do right and be faithful.

[C3] The thorns that prick, that stick in the flesh, that hurt, often change lives which seem robbed of significance and hope. This change comes about through a refining process which often seems cruel and hard. In this way the soul can become like soft clay in the hands of the Master in building lives of faith, usefulness, beauty, and strength.

[C4] For some, the refiner's fire causes a loss of belief and faith in God, but those with eternal perspective understand that such refining is part of the perfection process.

[C5] In our extremities, it is possible to become born again, born anew, renewed in heart and spirit. We no longer ride with the flow of the crowd, but instead we enjoy the promise of Isaiah to be renewed in our strength and "mount up with wings as eagles" (Isa. 40:31).

**James E. Faust** *The Refiner's Fire*

<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/1979/04/the-refiners-fire>

## D Adversity

[D1] One essential purpose of our earth life is to learn from the great teacher, experience. That learning can come firsthand or vicariously. If we learn our lessons well, we can be strengthened against sin and the fiery darts of the adversary and become more deeply committed disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ.

[D2] Of life's many kinds of experiences, adversity is most like a refiner's fire. If we allow it to do so, adversity can remove the impurities from our souls and make us more like our Savior, who "shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness" (D&C 128:24). ...

[D3] Adversity generally comes as a consequence of one or more of the following: our own foibles and sins, someone else's inhumanity, or the higher purposes of a loving Father's wisdom. Regardless of why they may come, trials offer us an opportunity to strengthen and refine ourselves, to trust in or to reject our God. Each struggle fortifies us against the next siege, if we endure. And the antidotes to adversity's accompanying discouragement and despair are ever the same: faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, repentance, obedience, endurance, and communion with the Infinite, whereby forgiveness and comfort come.

[D4] We can be sure that in the end God will always give us what we need to make us whole—if we turn to Him. That wholeness is burned into our hearts by the refiner's fire, which, if allowed to work its miracle, will, among other things, enable our "confidence [to] wax strong in the presence of God" (D&C 121:45).

**Roydon S. Olsen** *Adversity: The Refiner's Fire*

<https://rsc.byu.edu/vol-8-no-1-2007/adversity-refiners-fire>

## E Strength in Adversity

[E1] What are the sacrifices that might be in similitude of the Atonement, the most important event that has ever happened in the history of all the universe? Christ suffered more than we can contemplate. He descended below anything that we know. He took "upon him the pain and the sicknesses of his people." He suffered physically, mentally, and spiritually. There is no suffering that we know of that the Savior did not know, that he did not feel, that he did not pass through during that time (see Alma 7:11–12).

[E2] We will have opportunities to be called upon to suffer. There will be times when we will have feelings of hurt and pain—physical and mental as well as spiritual—and then we will know what adversity is, and we will know a little better what Jesus Christ might have suffered, and we will have done in *similitude* that which Jesus Christ did.

What does this mean to us? We will know Jesus better. It also means that when we are called on to suffer, when we have afflictions in our lives, we will know that we are not alone. The Savior has already passed through those times. As we partake of the sacrament, we might be able to understand the sufferings of the Savior as we remember our own challenges, pains, hurts, and adversities. We might be able to understand that in *similitude* it is somewhat the same as what Abraham, Isaac, Adam and Eve, and Joseph F. Smith understood. ...

[E3] In speaking of adversity, could I just tell you now that it is one of those things that is going to happen in your life and in my life. We are all going to pass through adversity. It is a requirement. ...

Let me read what the Lord told us:

*Yet I will own them, and they shall be mine in that day when I shall come to make up my jewels. Therefore, they must needs be chastened and tried, even as Abraham, who was commanded to offer up his only son.* [D&C 101:3–4]

The Lord is talking about the members of his church. We will be tried as was Abraham. "For all those who will not endure chastening, but deny me, cannot be sanctified" (D&C 101:5).

*My people must be tried in all things, that they may be prepared to receive the glory that I have for them, even the glory of Zion; and he that will not bear chastisement is not worthy of my kingdom.* [D&C 136:31]

Brothers and sisters, we all will have that opportunity. The Lord is going to tutor us. He is going to train us and he is going to prepare us.

[E4] Elder Maxwell said, "God, as a loving Father, will stretch our souls at times. The soul is like a violin string: it makes music only when it is stretched. (Eric Hoffer.) God will tutor us by trying us *because* He loves us, not because of indifference!" (Neal A. Maxwell, *All These Things Shall Give Thee Experience* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1979], p. 28; emphasis in original). We will know of God's love when we have that tutoring.

[E5] Now, when the trials come, what should we do? First of all, we must resist murmuring. We must not criticize or rise up against our Heavenly Father. We should study the scriptures so that we know the doctrine and receive from it that comfort that only our Heavenly Father can give. As the man I mentioned who knew Jesus Christ, we should pray mightily. We should be on our knees constantly so that we can receive from our Heavenly Father the assurance that this is part of our trial. Then we should seek to recognize our need to be tutored. We do not know what Heavenly Father has in store for us.

**Harold G. Hillam** *Strength in Adversity*

<https://speeches.byu.edu/talks/harold-g-hillam/strength-adversity/>