

1 Proving moments are not evidence that the Lord has abandoned you. Rather, they are evidence that He loves you enough to refine and strengthen you.

2 Long ago I sought to learn physics and mathematics in my college years. I felt overwhelmed. I began to feel that I was trying to learn something that was beyond me. The more I felt overwhelmed, the less I felt the strength to keep trying. My discouragement led me to feel that my efforts were almost fruitless. I began to think of quitting, of doing something easier.

I felt weak. As I prayed, I felt the quiet assurance of the Lord. I felt Him say to my mind, "I am proving you, but I am also with you."

I did not know then all that those words meant. But I knew what to do—I went to work.

By pondering and working during the years that followed, I came to understand this message of encouragement in the scriptures: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

3 I learned that my struggle with physics was actually a gift from the Lord. He was teaching me that with His help, I could do things that seemed impossible if I had the faith that He would be there to help me. Through this gift, the Lord was working to prove and strengthen me.

4 The word *prove* has several meanings. To prove something is not simply to test it. It is to increase its strength. To prove a piece of steel is to place it under strain. Heat, weight, and pressure are added until its true nature is enhanced and revealed. The steel is not weakened by the proving. In fact, it becomes something that can be trusted, something strong enough to bear greater burdens.

5 The Lord proves us in much the same way to strengthen us. That proving does not come in moments of ease or comfort. It comes in moments when we feel stretched beyond what we thought we could bear. The Lord teaches that we are to continue to grow and never tire in our efforts, that we never give up, that we keep trying.

When we continue to have faith in Jesus Christ—even when things might feel impossible to us at the moment—we become spiritually stronger. The sacred scriptural records emphasize this truth.

6 Jacob, was proved and strengthened as a child who experienced afflictions and much sorrow. But his father, Lehi, taught him God would bless him through his trials.

A The Proving of Abraham

[A1] My name was not known among My creatures, and thou hast made it known among them," said God to Abraham. "I will regard thee as if thou wast associated with Me in the creation of the world." (Midrash Rabbah Genesis 43:7) "As many as receive this Gospel," said the Lord, "shall be called after thy name, and shall be accounted thy seed" (Abraham 2:10). "God said to Abraham: As I put Adam and then Noah in charge of all my creatures, I now put you in charge of them, and order you to give my blessing to them." (Micha J. bin Gorion, *Die Sagen der Juden*, Frankfurt am Main: Rütten & Loening, 1914, 2:137).

[A2] Before we get any further we must see the rest of the picture, for this superman is simply Everyman. What office did he hold? We know of none. What miracles did he perform? What dazzling appearances? He lived in the heroic age, a time of great migrations, of epic literature, but we read of no mighty combats, blow-by-blow, or challenges boasting heroic genealogy. His ten trials were Everyman's trials. He was in trouble in business. The grass, water, and grazing rights on which he depended were often withheld from him. He never drove a hard bargain, not even with the king of Sodom, or the generous Ephron the Hittite, who would have given him the burial cave for nothing. He yielded to Lot's greedy cattlemen and gracefully withdrew. We never hear of him punishing anyone, though when the time came to get back his nephew's property, he struck the marauding chieftains with brilliant strategy and knockout force. He forbade his children to marry into alien races, but they promptly went ahead and did so.

[A3] He seemed to be generous to the point of lacking common sense. He first sent out his servant Eliezer to look for lost wanderers, but he found none. Then Abraham on his one hundredth birthday, old and very sick, went out alone on the hottest day of the year because he thought he might find some wanderer lost in the desert. ...

Hugh Nibley *Abraham's Temple Drama* (1999)

<https://scripturecentral.org/archive/books/book-chapter/abrahams-temple-drama>

B Power from Abrahamic Tests

[B1] As modern revelation states, we must be "chastened and tried, even as Abraham" (D&C 101:4). Do you remember how after that more than 900-mile march from Kirtland to Missouri, which we call Zion's Camp - a march that from all mortal appearances achieved nothing, someone came to Brigham Young and asked, "What did you get out of that fiasco?" He replied, "Everything we went for - experience."

He could say that, because only hours before, he had been with the Prophet Joseph in a meeting where the Prophet had declared in substance,

"Brethren, some of you are angry with me because you did not fight in Missouri. But let me tell you, God did not want you to fight. He wanted to develop a core of men 'who had offered their lives and who made as great a sacrifice as did Abraham.'" (continue)

Now God has found his leaders, and those of you who are called to positions who have not made that sacrifice will be required to make it hereafter" (DHC, II, p. 182).

[B2] There is the recorded testimony of Wilford Woodruff and John Taylor, who described the Kirtland Temple experience - an outpouring of the Spirit, so rich that some of those who were there thought the Millennium was being ushered in, for they were so filled with the spirit of blessing and love.

In that setting, the prophet arose and said, "Brethren, this is the Lord that is with us, but trials lie ahead. Brethren [he was speaking to the Twelve], God will feel after you, and he will wrench your very heartstrings. If you cannot stand it, you will not be fit for the kingdom of God."

All too prophetic was that statement. Half of the original Council of Twelve later, as the Prophet put it, "lifted up the heel" against him and against Christ. Four others were at least temporarily disaffected. Only two, Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball, did not buckle under the pressure, and they were severely tried.

"And behold, in thy childhood thou hast suffered afflictions and much sorrow, because of the rudeness of thy brethren. (continue)

6 (next) "Nevertheless, Jacob, my firstborn in the wilderness, thou knowest the greatness of God; and he shall consecrate thine afflictions for thy gain.

"Wherefore, thy soul shall be blessed, and thou shalt dwell safely with thy brother, Nephi; and thy days shall be spent in the service of thy God. Wherefore, I know that thou art redeemed, because of the righteousness of thy Redeemer; for thou hast beheld that in the fulness of time he cometh to bring salvation unto men."

7 The Prophet Joseph Smith experienced such proving and strengthening when he was in Liberty Jail. In the depths of his anguish, the Prophet Joseph cried out:

"O God, where art thou? ...

"How long shall thy hand be stayed?"

The Lord saw in Joseph's suffering the sanctifying effect of his enduring it well when He replied:

"My son, peace be unto thy soul; thine adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a small moment;

"And then, if thou endure it well, God shall exalt thee on high; thou shalt triumph over all thy foes."

8 The greatest example of proving and strengthening occurred through the Savior's Atonement. He took upon Him the sins of the world. He bore our pains and our sorrows. He drank the bitter cup. He proved faithful in every moment.

Because of His glorious Atonement, Jesus Christ can strengthen us in our times of trial. He knows how to succor us because He has felt all the challenges that we will ever feel in mortality. "He will take upon him the pains and the sicknesses of his people ... that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities."

9 Brothers and sisters, your proving and strengthening may not look like Moroni's or Jacob's or the Prophet Joseph's. But it will come. It may come quietly, through the trials of family life. It may come through illness or disappointment or grief or loneliness.

I bear witness that these moments are not evidence that the Lord has abandoned you. Rather, they are evidence that He loves you enough to refine and strengthen you. He is making you strong enough to carry the weight of eternal life.

<https://8ward.eu>

[B3] Let us look at the implications for us. We live in a time when many are saying we need commitment, total commitment, a "risk-everything" kind of commitment. But on the question, "To what does one commit?" often vagaries are all that are offered.

Someone asked me once, "What is the definition of a fanatic?" I answered in Santayana's phrase, "A fanatic is a person who doubles his speed when he has lost his direction."

But what about a person who doubles and quadruples his effort when he has found his direction? That is commitment.

[B4] We have been told that we are of Abraham. We are his children. And those of us who have joined the Church by conversion are just as much Abraham's seed as those who are born into the covenant (See D&C 84:33-34).

But those who are Abraham's descendants must also bear the responsibility of Abraham (See D&C 132:30-32).

[B5] Someone was complaining about how difficult it was to follow a certain leader. In answer to this complaint, J. Golden Kimball, says the legend, replied, "Well some of them are sent to lead us and some of them are sent to try us."

After the laughter and delight of that statement passes, the truth of it becomes apparent. All of us are sent to lead and to try each other. And the priesthood is given to try us to the core because of what it demands of us. John Taylor said the Prophet taught that if God could have found a deeper way to test Abraham he would have used that (JD 24:264). ...

[B6] He cannot bless us until we have been proved, cannot even pull out of us the giant spirit in us unless we let him. If we come offering what we think he wants, without having testimony that we are doing what he really does want, we are not yet prepared.

Truman G. Madsen *Power from Abrahamic Tests* (1971)

<https://www.davidvanalstyne.com/pg-powerfromabrahamic.html>

C Abrahamic Tests for All

[C1] Everyone who achieves exaltation must successfully pass through an Abrahamic test. The Prophet Joseph Smith, in speaking to the Twelve Apostles in Nauvoo, said: "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. . . . 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. (JD 24:197) That is not a particularly comforting thought, but it is one that cannot be ignored if the scriptures are taken seriously. ...

[C2] It is interesting to review the Lord's own statements about His intent to test and try His people. In the very beginning, in the planning stages of this earth, the Lord said, "We will take of these materials, and 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" (Abraham 3:24-25). All things, not just some things! ...

[C3] What about us? How are we to be tested "even as Abraham"? Being asked to offer a child as a sacrifice just does not relate to our time and circumstance. ... Consider the teachings of President Ezra Taft Benson, as he spoke to regional representatives of the Church in 1977, while he was President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:

"Every generation has its tests and its chance to stand and prove itself. Would you like to know of one of our toughest tests? Hear the warning words of President Brigham Young, "The worst fear I have about this people is that they will get rich in this country, forget God and His people, wax fat, and kick themselves out of the Church and go to hell. This people will stand mobbing, robbing, poverty and all manner of persecution and be true. But my greatest fear is that they cannot stand wealth."

[C4] Ours, then, seems to be the toughest test of all, for the evils are more subtle, more clever. It all seems less menacing and it is harder to detect. While every test of righteousness represents a struggle, this particular test seems like no test at all, no struggle and so could be the most deceiving of all tests.

Larry E. Dahl *The Abrahamic Test* (2005)

<https://rsc.byu.edu/sperry-symposium-classics-old-testament/abrahamic-test>