Hope is among the most blessed of all gospel virtues. I am reminded of a story President Packer told me about Sister and Elder Tuttle, a former member of the Seventy. The Tuttles had stopped to eat at a restaurant owned by a Greek proprietor who was struck by Sister’s Tuttle’s seemingly Greek profile. He said to them, “I’ll buy you dinner if you can tell me the greatest thing in the world.” They thought about it and said, “love.” The Greek man said “No. You can live without love. The greatest thing in the world is hope. You can’t live without hope.” Knowing his immigrant background, they sensed that he spoke from personal experience.

Hope truly is a blessed condition. “Were it not for hope the heart would break.” Yet it is also among the most neglected of Christian virtues. We hear relatively few sermons on hope as compared to, say, faith or charity. Further, unlike faith and charity, hope is seldom presented prescriptively, as a duty disciples need to actively cultivate, rather than merely descriptively, as an attribute believers simply passively enjoy. This, in spite of the fact that both the Bible and modern revelation are replete with injunctions to hope, and in spite of the acute shortage of hope in a world drowning in despair. I hope that my talk will help us all embrace hope more fully and firmly, especially during dark hours when we may be tempted to give in to hopelessness.

It is during such tribulation that hope feels most blessed and needed. The scriptures suggest that tribulation not only calls for hope but can call forth hope. According to Paul: “tribulation worketh patience, and patience, experience; and experience, hope.” Here as elsewhere in scripture, hope is closely paired with patience. Likewise, hope figures as the middle member in that great triad “faith, hope, and charity.” To understand hope, we need to grasp its intimate interrelation with linked gospel principles such as patience, faith, and charity, as well as apprehend its opposite, despair, and its antidote, the Atonement. So I shall speak of all these interrelated principles today as we consider what scripture calls “blessed hope,” which we enjoy in and through the Lord Jesus Christ. Such hope is indeed among the most blessed of all gospel virtues.

A NEGLECTED CORE VIRTUE

Hope is a core Christian doctrine. Traditionally, hope has been regarded as one of three so-called “theological” Christian virtues: faith, hope, and charity. The theological virtues were thought to be fully available only through God’s grace, as contrasted to the four “cardinal” or “moral” virtues—prudence, justice, temperance, fortitude—which could be acquired by human effort.

1. Scottish Proverb. Also attributed to Thomas Fuller.

John S. Tanner was academic vice president when this address was delivered at a BYU-Idaho devotional on May 16, 2006.

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The world thinks that the Apostle Paul invented this famous formulation “faith, hope, and charity” in his First Epistle to the Corinthians. We know, however, that this triplet appears in discourses by Amulek, Mormon, and Moroni, not to mention many times in the Doctrine and Covenants. Modern revelation thus confirms that the triad faith, hope, and charity, far from being Paul’s invention, defines an inspired gospel grouping in all ages. Further, even if it is considered separately as a single godly virtue, hope must be regarded as core doctrine of the Restored gospel. Fully a third of the scriptural references to hope appear in modern revelation, and almost always they appear in theologically drenched contexts.

I mention all this at the outset of my talk simply to establish that hope is a crucial concept both in Christianity generally and specifically in the Restored gospel. So I was surprised a couple years ago to discover that the LDS Bible Dictionary has no entry for “hope.” It has an entry for faith and charity but none for hope. I am not sure why. Maybe the editors figured that everyone already knows what hope is. After all, it is such a common little word and one which often bears no special religious meaning—as in “I hope we don’t have a quiz after Devotional today!” or “I hope this talk ends soon.” Still, it strikes me as telling that of the three so-called “theological” Christian virtues (faith, hope, and charity) only hope is left out of our Bible Dictionary. I fear that sometimes “hope” is left out of the lexicon of our lives as well.

HOPE AND FAITH

Although hope often seems dwarfed by the towering theological terms that frame it, hope is not a whit less important than its big sisters faith and charity, and in some respects is even more demanding than its near twin, faith. Many Latter-day Saints find it comparatively easy to express faith in the foundational truths of the gospel—that God lives, that Jesus is the Christ, that Joseph was a prophet, and so forth. But to feel hope. . . . Well, here the Lord seems to be expecting something rather more personal of us. For hope is more than belief in propositional truths. Hope bids us not only believe but feel. It is an attitude of the heart more than of the mind. It is telling that in English “hope” functions not only as a noun, like “faith,” but as a verb. Hope is the act of a soul expectantly reaching out toward the future. Belief can attach itself to the past, the present, or the future. Hope, by contrast, is oriented emphatically toward the future.

And not just to the future in general but to our own futures. Hope focuses on deeply personal possibilities about our own lives rather than on impersonal facts. As we all know, it is possible to believe wholeheartedly that God’s purposes will prevail and yet lack what the scriptures call a “lively hope” that the Lord’s purposes will prevail in our own lives or in the lives of our loved ones. To summon up this bright and blessed hope for our own lives can test the capacity of even the faithful, like Abraham, who according to scripture “against hope believed in hope”—that is he hoped even when things seemed hopeless. In dark nights of the soul, such blessed hope can be so hard to hold on to.

HOPE AND DESPAIR

Nonetheless, we are instructed to “lay hold on the hope set before us; Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul.” In order to grasp hold of this anchor, we need to understand it. For me, this is best achieved by gazing into the dark realm hope’s antithesis: despair. The distinction between faith and hope comes most clearly into focus for me when I think about their antonyms. The opposite of faith is doubt; the opposite of hope is despair. Mormon declares quite precisely, “if ye have no hope ye must needs be in despair, and despair cometh because of iniquity.”

This last phrase may seem like hard doctrine. I cite it not to add guilt to those already suffering from a sense of hopelessness but because Mormon’s words can help us understand despair and shun it. Despair is, as Mormon precisely notes, to have no hope: *desperare*. This is what despair means etymologically: to be without hope; or, even more precisely, to be against hope in the sense of denying hope. Therefore, traditionally despair has been thought to be both caused by sin and also to be sinful in itself. Why? Because despair is not only to be without hope but to set oneself against hope. To despair is ultimately

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7. 1 Peter 1:3.
8. Rom. 4:18.
10. Moro.10:22.
to deny the power of Christ and his Atonement, at least with respect to one’s own life. It is to say that Christ cannot, or will not, redeem me, heal me, bless me. It is to believe that the future is closed against the possibility of blessedness, at least for oneself; that things will never get better, that the dawn will never come. Religious despair is thus even darker than discouragement, despondency, and even depression—those miserable kindred which prepare the soul for despair. Truly “despair cometh from iniquity”–and not just sin in general but particularly from the sin of denying the power of the Atonement in one’s own life.

Again, this is hard doctrine but I’ve found it to be helpful for those tempted by the Evil One to sink into despair. It is important to see this as a temptation which should be resisted. Despair is Satan’s attempt to make us miserable like himself. Realizing this can help us say, “No! I will not go there. I will not despair. For there is hope. There is hope because of Christ. However dark the night, the dawn will come.” Or, in the words of one of my favorite Victorian poets, we can say: “Not, I’ll not, carrion comfort, Despair, not feast on thee; . . . I can; / Can something, hope, wish day come, not choose not to be.” As believers, we ought to exclaim with Paul: “We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair.”

For despair is the Devil’s dominion. It defines the internal essence of Hell. You may remember that Dante portrays the Gates of Hell inscribed with the dreadful words, “Abandon All Hope Ye Who Enter Here.” He believed that the wretched souls who dwell therein live without hope, in eternal despair of salvation. Dante thought that, worlds without end, they could never be redeemed, never enter paradise.

Likewise, taking a cue from Dante, Milton describes the “dungeon horrible” of Hell as a dark realm where “hope never comes.” Milton, however, makes it very clear that this is not a result so much of where Satan and his minions live but who they are. Although Milton’s Satan escapes Hell physically to come to earth to tempt mankind, he can no more flee from Hell “than from himself can fly,” Milton explains, “for within him Hell / He brings.” Satan himself confesses, “myself am Hell.” Milton understands that those who suffer the pangs of the damned are punished not simply for their sins but by their sins—particularly by the sin of despair. Let us resolve never to enter this awful diabolic domain but to seize the anchor of hope if ever we feel drowning in a sea of hopelessness.

YOU CAN GET THERE FROM HERE

Brothers and sisters, Satan is enticing too many today to let go of this anchor and drown in a sea of hopelessness. Too many are succumbing to his diabolic lie that there is no hope for them—including young people who have their whole adult lives in front of them, yet somehow come to feel that the future is foreclosed, that things will never get better but only get worse.

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11. Note that Paul differentiates between being distressed and in despair: 2 Cor. 3:8.
12. 2 Ne. 2:27.
14. 2 Cor. 3:8.
15. Dante, Inferno, Canto 3.
17. Paradise Lost, 4.20-23, 75.
A friend of mine tells the story of coming to BYU for a job interview a few years ago when there was a huge hole in the middle of campus for the underground addition to the library. This meant that many sidewalks were closed off and there were fences and detour signs everywhere. My friend had an appointment in the Administration building but had parked by the student center. So he asked a freshman how to get there. The puzzled freshman furrowed his brow, thought about this for a moment, and then said: “You can’t get there from here.”

Too many young people feel this way nowadays about their own lives. They feel they can’t get through this assignment, class, or major; that they can never reach their goal to go on a mission, get married, have a family, qualify for a career, and so forth. In short, they can’t get there from here. So they are tempted to give up, feeling there is no hope; things will never get better; in fact, they’ll only get worse.

But there is hope! There is always hope! You CAN get there from here. Sadly, however, sometimes people take irreversible, permanent actions in response to reversible, temporary crises. The Deseret News recently ran a week-long series of grim reports on the rash of suicides among young people in our area. What a devastating tragedy, not only for the individuals involved but for their families and friends as well!

TWO LITERARY EXAMPLES OF OVERCOMING DESPAIR

Sadly, it is often the best among us—those precious, hypersensitive souls so eager to be good—who are most vulnerable to hopelessness. Modern psychologists have demonstrated a strong correlation between perfectionism and hopelessness. In fact, however, this insight has been long understood by religious thinkers. Let me share two examples from my study of Renaissance religious literature. Edmund Spenser and John Bunyan each wrote Christian allegories about good men who are afflicted by and then overcome despair. I share these allegories because they have helped me, and I believe they can help you, understand both the seductive psychology of this dread spiritual pathology, despair, and its antidote, gospel hope in Jesus Christ.

In Pilgrim’s Progress, John Bunyan illustrates how pious people are particularly vulnerable to bouts of discouragement, despondency, and even despair. His hero, named Christian, no sooner starts on his pilgrimage to the Celestial City than he falls into a Slough of Despond. Despondency is the first peril to be overcome for the wayfaring Christian who turns his back on the world and sets forth on a journey to God.

After being helped out of the Slough of Despond, Christian continues on his way, only later to be taken prisoner by the Giant Despair, who casts him into a filthy dark dungeon, beats him incessantly, and bids him take his life. Finally, after praying all through a dark night with a fellow pilgrim named Hopeful, Christian discovers the means for escape. This occurs, symbolically, on Sunday morning at dawn:

Now a little before it was day, good Christian, as one half amazed, brake out in this passionate speech, “What a fool, quoth he, am I, thus to lie in a stinking Dungeon, when I may as well walk at liberty? I have a Key in my bosom called Promise, that will, I am persuaded, open any Lock in Doubting-Castle. Then said Hopeful, That’s good news; good Brother pluck it out of thy bosom, and try.”

Bunyan’s didactic message is clear: Believers can expect to battle despondency and despair on their journey heavenward. Nonetheless, each soul has the key to unlock the prison of despair in the promise of eternal life. It lies within reach for it lies within
our hearts. Note, however, that Bunyan does not say we create the key by positive thinking. The key has been fashioned by God for us through Christ. It is given us. Yet it also must be grasped.

Now a second example. Edmund Spenser’s character Redcrosse Knight, who represents holiness, learns a similar lesson at the Cave of Despair. The figure of Despair looks at first like an easy enemy for a bold knight of holiness to dispatch. Despair is, after all, a grisly, horrid-looking wretch who dwells in a “darksome cave” surrounded by the corpses of those he has induced to kill themselves. Who could possibly be attracted to such a vice? I often think of this when I see people choosing to give way to doom and gloom. From the outside, it is easy to think: Who would choose to go there? Who could possibly find wallowing in self-pity and self-loathing attractive.

Then Despair talks and “the knight much wondered at his sudden wit.” For Despair makes suicide sound good! His words are calculated to appeal precisely to those who, like Redcrosse, embrace the quest for holiness and perfection. Despair’s rhetoric is aimed at those who want so much to be good. So like Satan, Despair makes Redcrosse remember his many mistakes and faults; the many times he has strayed from his mission; how often he has disappointed and betrayed those who love him and stained his soul with sin. He then concludes:

“Then do no further go, nor further stray, But here lie down, and to thy rest betake, . . . For what hath life, that may it loved make, And gives not rather cause it to forsake?”

Spenser here exposes the subtle psychology of despair which Satan has ever deployed to deceive, if he can, even the very elect. Spenser helps us see how a good man, a man who fervently desires perfection, can be induced to contemplate suicide through the Adversary’s distortion of his otherwise righteous desire to be pure and holy. Hypnotized by Despair’s words, Redcrosse, like too many modern perfectionists, with trembling hand takes out a dagger and prepares to kill himself.

Suddenly, however, Despair’s dark spell is broken when Redcrosse’s lady-fair, named Una, “snatched the curséd knife” and rebukes her knight. Una is a Christ figure, a figure of grace. She reminds Redcrosse of his mission to slay the dragon:

Fie, fie, faint hearted knight, What meanest thou by this reproachful strife? Is this the battle, which thou vaunt’st to fight With that fire-mouthed Dragon, horrible and bright?

Further, Una reminds Redcrosse that, though a sinner, he can still hope for God’s tender mercies, because “Where justice grows, there grows [also] greater grace.”

This literary example has often come to my mind when counseling those who are sinking into hopelessness. It is important to help those so afflicted to feel the Spirit. The Holy Ghost, like Una, can break through the darkness and become an agent of grace. It is also often useful to remind them of their divinely appointed mission—as set forth in the Scriptures, gospel covenants, and personal patriarchal blessings. These contain promises that can rekindle hope. And, most of all, it is critical to testify to perfectionists of God’s perfect love for them. Yes, He is perfectly just. But He is also perfectly merciful.

Moreover, He is our Father, who loves us more abundantly than we can imagine. As a father I know how I feel about my children when they stumble
and stray. I want to lift them back up. I want to bring them home. Yet my fatherly love is but a pale shadow of Our Father in Heaven’s love for his errant children. We worship a God whose whole purpose is to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of his children. He, too, wants to lift us up and bring us home. Yes, the Heavens sometimes thunder but they also weep over wayward humanity. This divine love gives us great cause to hope.

Jesus sought to help us imagine and feel Our Father’s loving kindness in the Parable of the Prodigal Son. The climax of the story occurs when the returning prodigal “was yet a great way off,” and his father “had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.” I can scarcely read this without emotion. BYU’s Museum of Art has recently acquired the picture of this moment that you see on the screen. Note that the Father has come down from his home above, descending an entire flight of stairs to embrace his returning son, who has barely placed his foot on the first stair on his ascent upward to his father’s house. Note, too, the Father’s tender embrace. O, how great is “the condescension of God,” who reaches out to all his children with open arms! It “grieveth” our God that he should lose what he loves. And He loves his children so deeply that He gave His Beloved Son so that we could become whole and holy. His arms are outstretched in mercy to us. To despair is to turn our backs on this divine embrace. To hope is to allow ourselves to be loved and forgiven.

HoPe and the atonement

I trust it is abundantly clear by now that the antidote for despair lies in the hope we have through the Atonement. The gospel, or good news, gives us hope. Gospel hope is centered in the Atonement of Jesus Christ. “What shall we hope for?” asks Mormon, “Behold I say unto you that ye shall have hope through the atonement of Christ and the power of his resurrection, to be raised unto life eternal . . . according to the promise.” This hope is sure because this promise is sure. It has been written in the blood of Christ.

In ordinary usage, hope often conveys “a hint of uncertainty. For example we say we hope for a change of the weather. . . . In the language of the gospel, however, the word hope is sure, unwavering, active.” Gospel hope is anchored on the ultimate reality of the Atonement rather than on our often illusive proximate desires.

28. 1 Ne. 11:16.
29. See the Parable of the Olive Tree, in Jacob 5.
30. 2 Cor. 4:6, 8.
31. Moro. 7:41.
32. True to the Faith: A Gospel Reference (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2004), 85.
Elder Maxwell draws an important distinction between our ultimate hope in Christ and our proximate hopes for the future. I sometimes think of this as a distinction between Hope (with a capital “H”) and hopes (with a small “h”). Our proximate hopes and wishes can be the invention of human desires, the offspring of nothing deeper or sturdier than mere optimism. While optimism is a good thing, in my view, gospel Hope is even more profound and more resilient than optimism for it is anchored upon the bedrock reality of the Atonement.

The Czech playwright and nation’s president Vaclav Havel observed: “Hope is definitely not the same thing as optimism. It is not the conviction that something will turn out well, but the certainty that something makes sense, regardless of how it turns out.” I would alter this slightly. Hope is not only the certainty that things make sense, it is also the assurance that, for those who love the Lord, things ultimately will turn out well through the Atonement of Christ.

We are not promised that nothing will go wrong in this life. In fact, we know that sometimes things do not seem to turn out well, forcing us to confess, with Nephi, that we “do not know the meaning of all things.” Nevertheless, we can still be certain, regardless of how things turn out in the near term, that “all things” make sense to God, and that in the long term, “all things” shall ultimately work together for good for those that love the Lord, according to the Lord’s “immutable” promise. We are assured, in deeply consoling language, several times in scripture, that the Lord:

> giveth this promise unto you, with an immutable covenant that they shall be fulfilled; and all things wherewith you have been afflicted shall work together for your good, and to my name’s glory, saith the Lord.

When severe trials come, like the death of a loved one, this “immutable covenant” fills us with powerful ultimate hope.

I think, for example of my dear nephew Clark who is just your age. Last year he fell in love with a beautiful girl named Megan. Clark was shy at first. He needed a little encouragement. After their first date Megan told him: “This was fun. You should ask me out again.” Well he did, and they got married in the Bountiful Temple last December. They were so in love, so full of hope. But three weeks later Megan was killed in a car accident while they were driving to a reception in Arizona and Clark was badly injured.

Over the past five months as he has been recovering from his injuries, physical and spiritual, Clark has had to cling to ultimate hope. His former proximate hopes for the reception, his return to school with Megan, a life together with her, etc. have all been dashed. Yet he still has ultimate Hope, through the atonement of Christ, in a glorious resurrection and reunion.

This past Fast Sunday Clark returned to BYU where, I was told, he blessed the sacrament and bore testimony of the hope he feels through the Atonement of Jesus Christ. His new single student ward did not know about Megan. Only his cousins in the audience knew the tragic experience that made Clark’s sweet, simple expression of hope so poignant. They knew that Clark had hope through the Atonement that he would be with Megan again and eventually understand the Lord’s purposes in his afflictions. They also knew, however, that this reunion and this understanding would likely not come in this life.

35. 1 Ne. 11:17.
PATIENCE AND HOPE

This brings me to patience. Since gospel hope is ultimate, we must await its perfect fulfillment until some future day. This same holds true for those many righteous proximate hopes for which we so frequently and fervently pray. Hope is future-oriented. This means that patience is required for the present. No wonder, then, that the scriptures frequently link patience with hope. “Patience” describes how we are to endure the intervals while we wait upon Providence to fulfill our hopes, both ultimate and proximate.

This can be really trying because most of us are by nature impatient. We are like my grandchildren who often say “I want it now, grandpa.” Or like an unmarried young woman I know with a delightful Anne-of-Green-Gables flair for the dramatic. She is wont to say: “My life is a perfect graveyard of buried hopes.” I understand her real if somewhat rhetorically theatrical desperation. It is so hard to be patient when opportunities like marriage, or jobs, or having children are delayed.

When I think of “patience” I remember that the word derives from the Latin “to suffer.” (Think about this next time you agree to be a hospital patient!) To be patient in the gospel sense is to be long-suffering, like Job. Patience is the ability to suffer suffering well. It teaches us to endure affliction with grace and good cheer.

This includes enduring what I call the hidden trial within our trials—that is, the trial of not knowing if and when the trial will end. If you are like me, the suffering incident to not knowing if and when suffering will end can be even more trying than the immediate occasion of the suffering. If we only knew if and when we would pass the class, find a job, get married, have a wayward child or spouse return, recover from cancer, and so forth—why then we could pluck up the courage to bear our present portion of pain. It is the uncertainty as much or more than the actuality of suffering that most vexes us and tries our patience. Tellingly, the most frequent cry of the faithful in scripture during adversity is not “Why?” nor even “Let this pass!”, but “How long, O Lord, how long!”

To endure the hidden timing trial within our trials demands both patience and hope. No wonder that the scriptures so frequently link patience and hope. Or that within a few verses, the Lord is called both the “God of Patience” and the “God of Hope.”

HOPEFUL PATIENCE, PATIENT HOPE

In this sanctifying process by which tribulation both calls forth and calls for patience and hope, each virtue can and should modify the other. What kind of hope should we have in affliction? Why, patient hope. Not off-and-on again hope, not wavering hope. But “enduring” or “steadfast” hope, which are synonyms for the word often translated as “patience” in the King James Version. Patience hope then is steadfast hope—“steadfast in Christ.”

Likewise, what kind of patience or endurance does the Lord expect from us? Why, hopeful patience. Not mere grim and grudging resignation; not gritting our teeth while cursing under our breath. But expectant, hopeful perseverance. Hopeful patience or endurance expects the dawn, trusting in the Lord’s repeated “immutable” promise that all things shall ultimately work together for good for those that love the Lord.

The gospel thus encourages us to be both enduring (patient) and expectant (hopeful) in our trials—exer-

38. The Psalms alone contain this plea eight times. It also occurs in Isaiah, Habukkuk, Zechariah, Revelation, 2 Nephi, Alma (three times), and the Doctrine and Covenants (twice).
39. E.g., Rom. 5:4; 8:25; 15:4; 1 Thes. 1:3; Alma 32:41; D&C 6:19.
41. 2 Ne. 31:20.
42. D&C 98:3.
cising hopeful patience and the patient hope. We should strive to be like the people of Alma, who submitted “cheerfully with patience to all the will of the Lord.” And like the much-afflicted Zoramite poor, whom Amulek counseled to “have patience, and bear [their] afflictions, with a firm hope.” There you have it: cheerful patience, firm hope. This is the gospel prescription for how we should bear tribulation. Hope lends patience a smile. Patience gives hope a spine.

**FAITH, HOPE, AND CHARITY**

As you can see, there is an intimate interrelation between patience and hope. The same applies to the relationship of hope to faith and charity. Sister Elaine Jack calls these three “good friends,” which become stronger because of their close association with each other. According to Elder Russell M. Nelson they support one another like legs on a three-legged stool.

We often think of faith, hope, and charity as standing in linear relation to each other: as if first one obtained faith, then hope, then charity. But this does not correspond to what Mormon teaches nor to what we know from our own experience. In scripture as in life, the relationship among faith, hope, and charity is circular and interactive. Thus, while charity may be the crowning virtue of the three, it is not necessarily successive to hope or faith. Indeed, charity may be foundational to hope and faith, just as hope and faith may provide a catalyst for the pure love of Christ. Mormon presents all three virtues as dynamically interdependent. Understanding their dynamic, circular interaction can help us both appreciate and cultivate hope. So let me probe these interrelationships just a bit with you.

Mormon explains that hope not only follows from faith, it enables it: “how is it that ye can attain unto faith, except ye have hope?”, says Mormon. This reverses the normal sequence of faith and hope.

Similarly, Mormon, describes faith and hope as evidence one has charity rather than the cause of charity. A person full of charity “believeth all things, hopeth all things.” Likewise, Mormon states that where there is faith and hope, “there must also be charity”—as if the first two virtues cannot be present without the last.

Clearly for Mormon, these three virtues are indeed good friends. Each virtue seems to be both a cause and result of the others, and none stands entirely separate from the other. Now all this is not just abstract doctrine. It is useful information to know when we decide to work on hope. Mormon implies that we can do so only in concert with working on faith and charity. Only by striving to believe and love more fully will we be able to hope more fully.

The interdependence among these virtues is easiest to see with faith and hope, which Elder McConkie calls “inseparable,” and Elder Maxwell describes as “constantly interactive.” Less obvious is the interactive relationship between hope and charity. Nonetheless, hope is intimately bound up with charity. Hope helps open the heart to the pure love of Christ; likewise that the pure love of Christ kindles hope. Let me explain.

Think how hope readies your heart to feel love. When we are full of hope, we tend to be able to love ourselves and others better. We are able to reach out to others, as the pure love of Christ requires. By contrast, when we feel hopeless, we tend to be self-critical and self-preoccupied and therefore incapable of giving love. It is hard for the hopeless to get outside themselves and approach others with pure love, or to accept possibility in themselves and others for change, as Christ does. Without hope, we feel unloveable and unloving. Hope makes us receptive to the pure love of Christ.

By the same token, charity, or the pure love of Christ, readies the heart for hope. Charity causes us to look with hope upon ourselves and others. Perfect love

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44. Mosiah 24:15.
45. Alma 34:41.
48. Moro. 7:40.
49. Moro. 7:45.
50. Moro. 10:20.
leads us to be expectant about the future, to have hope for change. As the scriptures affirm, “Perfect love casteth out all fear.” By casting out fear, perfect love makes room in the heart for hope. Truly, as the scriptures testify, the soul possessed of charity “hopeth all things.”

I know about the intimate relation between hope and charity from personal experience. When I feel hope, I am better able to love. Similarly, when I feel the pure love of Christ, I am better able to hope. The world brightens. Blessed hope is kindled in my heart. And I am reminded of the old truth that the night is darkest just before dawn.

A PERFECT BRIGHTNESS OF HOPE

When I imagine hope, I think not only of the scriptural image of an anchor to secure and steady us when we are beaten by the waves on “life’s tempestuous sea.” I also think of light, especially the light of dawn that dispels dark night. In particular, I imagine a dawn long ago which lighted an empty tomb. “Hope caused disciples to go quickly and expectantly to an empty garden tomb.”

Several years ago, a dear friend (and former president of this school) gave me a print of a painting by a Swiss artist named Eugene Burnand that captures for me this image of hope. It depicts Peter and John running to the tomb on Easter morning. In it, we see the faces of two men, one old and one young, each pressing forward toward the dawn. We do not see the empty tomb, nor the angel. Only their expectant faces. And the dawn.

I love the symbolism of this moment. Youth and age, innocence and experience, each leaning into the early morning light. Both faces full of eagerness, longing, love, and expectation. Yet Peter’s face also lined with care, some furrows perhaps deepened by anxiety over what the Master, whom he had recently thrice denied, will say to his great-hearted, if imperfect, apostle. Yet still he rushes toward that rendezvous with his beloved Redeemer. I love this image of hope. It portrays your youth and my age, as we all with our varied experiences “press forward” toward Christ, with a “brightness of hope.”

I especially love the fact that Burnand chooses to depict this pivotal moment in salvation history—Resurrection morning—from a very human point of view. He tells the story through the experience of Peter and John. Moreover, he captures them in a moment in time comparable to our own—before they have seen the risen Christ, in an posture of intense hope for reunion with him.

We, too, live before a longed-for embrace from our risen Lord. We live on this side of the Second Coming but in eager expectation of a great morning of resurrection and reunion. We, too, can “press forward” towards that remarkable rendezvous with a “perfect brightness of hope.” We can hope for a glorious embrace when we shall see the wounds in his hands, feet, and side, and be taken again into his arms—and “all shall be well, and every manner of thing shall be well.”

The scriptures tell us that in that day, those who “have come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb” shall “serve [God] day and night in his temple: and he . . . that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any

53. Moro. 8:16; cf. 1 John 4:18. Note that Mormon is even more categorical than John: love casts out all fear.
54. “Jesus, Savior, Pilot Me” (LDS Hymns, no. 104).
56. 2 Ne. 31:20.
57. 2 Ne. 31:20.
58. This phrase comes from Julian of Norwich, in A Book of Showings, ch. 27. It was made famous by T. S. Eliot in Four Quartets, “Little Gidding.” For both authors, these words express profound hope, in the face of evil, that God shall make all things right. I am struck by the similarity to the refrain sung by the Mormon pioneers, who also expressed their faith and hope that “all is well.”
more. . . . For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.”⁵⁹

Brothers and sisters, this is my hope. It is the perennial hope of saints in every age called to undergo “great tribulation.” Let us cling to this blessed hope. Let us develop the patience to endure trials. Let us eschew despair and embrace hope no less than we do faith and charity, holding fast to this sure anchor on “life’s tempestuous sea.”¹ And no matter how dark the night, let us always orient our lives toward the dawn. For the day shall dawn when the Lord will receive us again in his arms and wipe away all tears. “And all shall be well, and every manner of thing shall be well.”

In the name of one who calls himself the “God of hope,” even Jesus Christ, amen.⁶⁰

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⁵⁹. Rev. 7: 14-17.  
⁶⁰. Romans 15:15.