

## Suffer It Well

“What Have We Learned? What Ought We to Have Learned” General Conference

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Hey, how's it going? I'm gonna be using this whiteboard, so if you just give me two minutes, we're just gonna move it.

So for those who don't know me, my name is Leroy Smedley. I come from Leeds, England, and I've come quite a way to be here. And I'm currently scratching my head asking how this happened. So we had a good friend of ours, Tausha Larsen, came to stay at our house probably a couple of months ago. (Is that right?) We were sat around the dining room table having a discussion about some of the things that I wish to discuss with you all today. And Tausha said, “You know, you should really come to the conference and maybe share some of this stuff.” So after some encouragement/pressure—we'll call it encouragement, some love and encouragement—she leaned on me and convinced me to do so. And what I wanted to offer was something that was polished, something that was pre-planned and prepared, because then maybe you'd get to see the best of me, right? No mistakes, no errors... Yeah, bollocks to that! That didn't happen, and it's probably not gonna happen.

So I use this as a legitimate way of trying to get myself out of the way, if that makes sense, and to communicate with the Lord and say, “What do You want me to say? My vocal cords, perhaps, but Your will.” Nobody wants to know what I've got to say, really. And so there's been fasting, and there's been prayers, and it's been a legitimate exercise in me trying to remove myself and trying to channel, I guess (for want of a better word), what it is that the Lord might want me to say. And I'll be honest, I was expecting floods of information. I was expecting something perfect and polished, which is kind of what I was hoping and asking for. What I got... Well, I'll show you what I got. I got this [holds up two 3x5 cards], so... And a flip chart (well, a whiteboard).

And so I guess what we've actually got is vulnerability and, hopefully, just some realness. And I'd like us to discuss the things that I want to discuss today in this similar frame of mind. So the only thing that I feel that I was given by way of inspiration was the title to this talk. And I'm sure that I'm kind of preaching to the converted here, and a lot of you will know what I mean, but there's times when I receive things and I hear a voice—it's not my own voice—and it tells me things that I don't arrive at through the, you know, the thought process. It drops things in my head. And it's happened maybe only a handful of times. And I feel like the only thing that was kind of given to me by way of inspiration was the title—again, not at a time when I was kind of thinking and contemplating this, but just at a time when I think I was cleaning the house or something—and three words just popped into my head: Suffer it well. And I was like, “Okay...next line? What does that mean?” So I don't know whether that's a command for me to suffer this well or for you guys to suffer ME well, but either way, we'll figure it out together and see how that goes.

So the reason why I was so slow, I guess, in accepting this was because, in all honesty, I knew that this was gonna bring things up for me that I'd rather not bring up. I knew this

was gonna stir up things, particularly emotions/thoughts that I'd rather not go to. I feel like the Lord wanted me to go there, and I'm legitimately thankful for the opportunity to do things that scare me. For those of you that don't know—and I don't say this by way of bragging or impressing anybody or anything like that—in a prior life, I used to be a professional boxer. Let me just... When I say "prior life," obviously I'm not talking about multiple mortal probations or anything; I'm talking about like 10, 15 years ago (that's me trying to read the room). And looking at me, you wouldn't think that that was a way that I would earn my money, right? And I was grateful for that because, like many people, my childhood was traumatic, and a lot of that trauma resurfaced when I had my own family, and the Lord said, "Think you can do better than your own dad? There's your own kids." And so boxing gave me a framework by which to train my mind.

Adrian and I were—and Tausha and my wife who sat at the back—they were kind of briefly discussing this in the car yesterday. When I stepped in the ring with somebody, I was essentially stepping in the ring with myself. And there's brutality and beauty in the spot box in an equal measure, in my opinion. What I found in the opposite corner was a carbon copy of me, somebody that likely had a similar upbringing—because nobody with a sound mind wants to go into that sport, right? If I was good at anything else, if I was good at, like, I don't know, tennis, golf, or anything, maybe but... So I found somebody with a similar height, same weight, similar experience, win/loss records; I found somebody that understood ME (for all intents and purposes) and was willing to oblige me in a conversation that we would engage in with our fists about who was better. And since walking away from the sport, that's been difficult. It's almost been like walking away from a girlfriend that I never wanted to break up with. My heart kind of still longs for that. You kind of lose that identity. Boxing's not something that you do. You don't say, "I do boxing." You say, "I'm a boxer." It's a mentality. It's a mindset. And I am really grateful to the Lord for providing me with the knowledge of the gospel that I've got and for the family that's in front of me, for me to kind of continue building that mindset, and for opportunities like this to do things that frighten me. It's surprising, actually, how much walking down here felt like a ring walk. And I apologize, because there's been a few people this week have said, "I've seen you randomly shadowboxing," and that's just how I deal with my nerves. If you see me randomly throwing punches and stuff, it's not that I'm cra[zy]—well, it is that I'm crazy, but I'm safe.

So I want to kind of start from, not from where Adrian left off, but it kind of piggybacks on the back of Adrian's last talk; I think it was at the Sawtooth Mountains. (Is that correct? "Sacrifice"?) And that was a talk that really resonated with me, and I've listened to it two or three times. Adrian went into the text on the Lectures on Faith where we know that a religion that does not require the sacrifice of all earthly things does not have the power to connect us with Heaven, essentially, right? (I'm paraphrasing.) And then he gave the example of Christ in the garden and asked the question: What is it exactly that we're sacrificing? It's easy to think that, like Nephi and Lehi and his family, that we can sacrifice all our worldly possessions, our cars, our homes, our PlayStations (whatever it is), our iPads—and that may be true enough. But what about the other things that this world makes us believe about ourselves? What about the cognitions that give us thoughts? (Well, cognitions ARE thoughts.) But what about those cognitions and those thoughts that give us emotional experiences? What about the behaviors that come off the back of those

emotional experiences? Essentially, they could be described as the fruit of who we are, what we do. And so maybe there's more to this idea of sacrificing all earthly things. And that's kind of what I want to touch on today.

So in the preceding chapters of the Lectures on Faith, we also learn that we must know God's character, attributes, and perfections, and we also need to know that our life is in accordance to His will. And so let's go back and look at this interplay, right? Let's go back and look at this conversation (for lack of a better term) between Christ and the Lord in the garden, when Christ gives us His will essentially, and says, "I don't want to drink from the bitter cup; that's difficult. Nevertheless, Your will be done." And it's that word, isn't it? It's the "nevertheless"—you know, "despite that," "in spite of myself," and "forget what I want; Your will be done." And so what was the will of the Father in that instance? Well, the will of the Father in that instance, as we all know—right?—it was that the Lord be nailed to a cross innocently and die for the sins of the world. And Adrian and I, again, were discussing this briefly in the car, and he said, "But it wasn't suffering for suffering's sake. It's because it advanced the Lord's plans." The Lord became exalted because of that, and we potentially have an opportunity to carry on in our path because of that sacrifice. *It pleased the Lord to bruise him* (Isaiah 19:2) kept coming to my mind.

So what does this tell us about His character, His attributes, and perfections? We come from a prosperity gospel that taught me to pray like a shopping list: I thank you for a bunch of stuff (just so I can, like, not seem too rude) before I ask you for a bunch of stuff, as well. So here's all the things I'm thankful for, and here's the shopping list of things I'd be even more thankful for if you keep blessing me in the way that I want to be blessed, right? I'm gonna pray for the house. I'm gonna pray for the car. I'm gonna pray for that job that I want. I'm gonna pray for my suffering to be removed—because I don't want that! Yet at the same time, I want to be like Christ; at the same time, I want to be like the suffering servant—but don't give me blood; don't give me sweat; don't give me tears. I want to know Christ, but I don't want to know what He went through. I don't want to have those experiences. I just want to go to Sunday School and pay my tithing.

So, here we've got an all-loving, all-powerful God and an innocent Savior. Yet still, suffering was necessary. So what does that say about our lives? What does that say about us knowing that our life is in accordance to His will? Perhaps that suffering is an integral part of that? Perhaps we need not pray for this suffering to be removed, essentially, but maybe the strength to get through that.

I'm mindful of Joseph in jail where the Lord says to him, "Suffer it well." And again, here we've got Joseph, the Lord's servant, doing the Lord's work; here we've got an all-loving, all-powerful God. Why the suffering? Why suffer this well? Why not just break me out of here, and we'll just laugh at the guards? We'll one-up them. We're more powerful than them, right? So why the suffering? What does "suffer it well" even mean? How do we suffer something well? How do we suffer something unwell or not well? What's the difference between the two? I think these are questions that may be worth asking ourselves.

So I asked myself. I don't have any answers, only thoughts to share to potentially get us all thinking as a group, perhaps.

Maybe suffering it well is the opposite of suffering this in vain; and suffering in vain means that at the end of that suffering, we're not left with anything, only bitterness; maybe an ability to accuse the person that caused our suffering; maybe even more suffering because of that. So the antithesis of that—right?—the opposite of that would be to suffer these things well. It would be that we learn, that we grow, that the will of the Father is advanced through us, that we become more like Him, that we understand our Savior because in a small microcosm in our lives, we experience similar things to what He experienced: betrayal, lies, abuse, other such things.

So, the only one thing I did print out was a quote, because this got me thinking about (I think it was) Enoch (somebody shout at me if I'm wrong) that had a vision of the world bound up in chains in the latter days; and Satan and his angels were laughing. So these guys think this is funny: Satan and his angels laughing at the chains which have got us all bound. So I just wanted to read this quote. This was from Denver's website, and it was entitled, "Email: Depression." I'm not gonna read all of it for time's sake, but it said:

I got an email from a young person about her peers. She explained her concerns, including, in part the following: *"It breaks my heart to know what emotions and thoughts my [friends experience], because I've [also] had a taste of them. Other friends and loved ones I know deal with depression, anxiety, loneliness, ...worthlessness, suicidal thoughts, PTSD—some of [these people are] under [the age of] 18."*

I responded to her as follows:

I'm pulling out certain parts from this, and it said,

...There is a vision that Enoch had.

(Now, there we go; it was Enoch.)

There is a vision that Enoch had, Moses restored, and is now part of the Old Covenants in Genesis... [So] Genesis 4:15, [and that reads,] "And he beheld Satan, and he had...great chain[s] in his hand, and he veiled the whole face of the earth [in] darkness; and he looked...and he laughed, and his angels rejoiced."

And Denver goes on to say,

[This] great chain is not physical, but mental. The chain used by our common enemy is made of lies and deceit.

From the father of all lies, right? That would make sense.

People are not depressed irrationally. They are responding in a normal way to an abnormal perception made of lies. They despair because...there is a reason to be despairing. But [this] is because that they accept what the world is telling them about our present condition. Part of waking up is realizing that most of what is said, taught, claimed and broadcast in society is filled with

lies about mankind's condition, the state of society, and lies designed to inspire envy, jealousy and discouragement.

I have tried to awaken people to the reality that God lives and cares very much for those who respond to His voice. He intends to protect and care for His sheep. His commandments are calculated to [us free] from the imprisonment of worldliness and sin. He is trying to free us, not to impose [on] us. I think God intends for you and those now living to participate in the building of a society, a New Jerusalem, a place of peace apart from the world. ...for now, we await further command from Him, while still living in a society evermore in the chains of the enemy.

Thank you for your email. I will join you in praying for your friends. The Lord's advice to people, both in [this] day and [the day to come] is, "Be of good cheer." ("Email: Depression," February 3, 2020, denversnuffer.com)

So that got me kind of thinking about these lies. What are they? How is he telling these lies? How do they spread? And there are those global lies, right? There are those lies that we as a global community might digest. But then, perhaps, the most potent ones are those ones that we believe ourselves, those things that we're told, those things that we believe, those core beliefs that we hold on to because of the sins of our fathers or because of our own sins (maybe an amalgamation of both), because of the things that we've done, because of the regret, because of the guilt that we harbor sometimes.

And so I was mindful of when Satan appeared to Moses. Can anybody remember what he called Moses? (Feel free to shout at me.) I think someone whispered back there; yeah: son of man. "You're just a son of man. You're not a Son of God. You ain't anything special. There's nothing about you, son of man." He had responded and called himself the Son of God because he knew his worth, and he knew who he was. There's an example of a lie that Satan tells people.

Another one that came to mind: When Satan appears to Christ three times and tries to tempt Him. He puts that word out there: "if." "IF you're the Son of God, why don't you do X, Y, and Z? IF you're the Son of God..." IF—that word, to cast doubts and dispersions in His mind. Because "If I can get the Lord..." (not me; Satan), if he can get the Lord to doubt, he can get the Lord to fear. When I'm walking into a boxing ring, and if you guys were coming to watch me fight, and I was there saying, you know, "I don't think I can win; this kid punches hard. I don't think I can do this," there's a very high chance that you're probably not gonna put your money on me to win that fight. And so the idea and the power and the weight and the gravity of a thought is huge. And so now it makes sense why we should guard our thoughts unceasingly. *[Let] virtue garnish [our] thoughts unceasingly* (T&C 139:6)—every word, every thought, every deed, right? This stuff matters.

So what I wanted to do is: My own struggles with my own emotions ("mental health," let's call it), my own anxieties/my own depressions led me, after boxing, to pursue a master's degree in cognitive behavioral therapy, where I currently work for the National Health Service in the U.K. as a cognitive behavioral therapist. And I feel a little bit as if I've been

allowed to kind of peek behind the curtain, somewhat, and see what's going on with these lies and how he gets us to ingest them and believe them and then act them out and perpetually go round and round on this cycle—right?—until we think it's a character trait; until we believe that we're "just a son of man, there's nothing about us, there's no divine potential in any of us; we can't do this." And so what I wanted to do was discuss that, kind of briefly. And in my clinical background and experience, one of the conclusions that I've reached—well, I *\*think\** I've reached, because every time I reach a conclusion, I always shelf it because it could change. But anyway...

The vast majority, if not all, of the mental health conditions that I treat come from sin—and that sin equates to fear. And if we operate on fear, we're capable of some pretty shitty things. If we operate on fear, this idea of falling short is easy to us. And so Satan wants us to be fearful, wants us to be doubtful, wants us to be miserable. And so, let's look at some of the common mental health conditions that kind of affect all of us:

- Let's look at depression: fear I'm not good enough.
- Let's look at anxiety: fear catastrophe is about to happen, and fear that I won't be able to cope with that.
- Let's look at PTSD: something bad did happen, and I'm trying to avoid those memories, and I'm fearful that I might not be able to do that forever.
- Health anxiety: fear of ~~health~~, well, ill health.

We could go on. There seems to be a common denominator amongst all these things. And maybe there's something about this which is synonymous with these chains that Enoch saw—right?—the lies. Maybe these are some of the personal lies that we, as individuals, believe about ourselves, believe about other people. And so if Satan can hijack our minds with thoughts... Like I already said, the weight and the gravity of a thought is great because it can lead to our behaviors through the corresponding emotions that they create.

So what I wanted to do is just spend a few minutes with you, kind of looking at this. I think one of the things that perpetuates this fear that we feel—these mental illnesses that we experience, to call them that—is our lack of knowledge. We're easily fooled if we're not smart. And so how is it that Satan gets you to *think* something? And then when we think something, we *feel* something. And oftentimes those feelings are so incredibly difficult that I'll do almost anything to get them to stop. I may hurt myself; I may hurt somebody else. I may become an accuser and blame My father for the things that I'VE had to suffer—because that was HIS fault, right? And what I'm saying in that instance is, "Lord, it's not MY heart You need to change. I'm good. But if you could go back and have a word with my dad, that would be good. If you could heal him, that would be good." And so we put ourselves out of the equation somewhat. So what I wanted to do is kind of maybe increase our knowledge on some of this stuff. The old adage of "knowledge being power," if we have some knowledge, then perhaps we are more powerful; if we're more powerful, then perhaps Satan has less power over us, and that can only be a good thing.

[walked away from mic; indecipherable]

So, let's look back at those scriptural—um, I was gonna say quotes, but I didn't quote—my paraphrasing. Let's look back at some of those scriptures that I just mentioned. Let's look at Satan calling Moses a son of man. Let's look at Satan saying to Lord, "IF... I'm not convinced you are what you say you are, but IF..." What's going on there is that Satan speaks to us oftentimes through our own thoughts, okay? And so in cognitive behavioral therapy... A cognition is just a word for a thought, okay, so... But you think about the term "cog," you think about a cog in a machine, and when one cog turns, the rest of the machine turns, and so it can produce something. So if we think about [writing on the whiteboard]... You're probably not gonna be able to see that, but that says, "past events" (or sins of the fathers—right?—or past sins of our own). And then from there, [writing again on the whiteboard], that says, "situation." So pick the situation: I don't know, maybe you're asked to come and speak at a conference, perhaps. And then when given, in any particular situation, we're gonna start developing thoughts or cognitions. And this was where Satan kind of started: "If I can get you to think something... You don't even need to think what I want you to think entirely; I only need to get you to think enough to DOUBT what you already think." And then there's cracks that start appearing.

So, let's have a look at some of these thoughts. I might start thinking:

- I can't.
- I've got nothing to offer.
- I'm not good enough.
- Why me?
- Why not somebody else?

(I was gonna write them down, but I'm not gonna bother.) And so from these thoughts—not very nice thoughts (I guess you could say "negative thoughts")—so from these thoughts, we're gonna start experiencing emotions. And one of kind of the cardinal questions that we ask in therapy is, when somebody experiences an emotion, we say, "What were you thinking?" And oftentimes, "I wasn't thinking anything." And some of these thoughts that we experience can be core beliefs that maybe lie not dormant, but maybe lie deep, buried; and so we're not consciously aware of them. But it's kind of a background operating system that we already run off. And so, if I'm having these kind of thoughts—or somebody's having these kind of thoughts about not being good enough—and that's bringing up all this past stuff or the sins of my fathers when I was treated like I wasn't good enough, how am I gonna start feeling? What emotions is that gonna bring up? Well, anger, perhaps; doubt. (I don't know why I'm scribbling on this, because you can't read that at all, can you? Let's be honest. I can barely read this, and I've stood next to it. But anyway... Maybe it'll look good on the video, who knows?)

**Congregation Member:** [indecipherable]

**LS:** So, say that again, sorry?

**Congregation Member:** I said, it reduces your anxiety.

**LS:** Hmm... Yeah, what we will do, though, is put “anxiety” on the board. Yeah, anxiety. So these kind of thoughts might start producing anxiety. Thanks for that, mate. Dread, doubt, fear. Now let’s imagine... ([writing on the whiteboard] One second; bear with me.)

That says, “body sensations.” How do you know that you’re experiencing these things? How do you know that it’s anxiety that you’re experiencing? How do you know you’re afraid? How do you know this is dread? This is doom? Well, I often say to people that come and see me for therapy—right?—imagine that I’m an alien or something, right? And I don’t have the same vocabulary as you; I don’t understand these words, but what I do have is slightly different, but I have a physical body. So when you say, “anxiety,” explain that to me: What do you mean? Where do you feel that? How do you feel that? When you say, “depression,” when you say, “I’m heavy,” when you say any of the things that we’ve got listed there—right?—where do you feel that? Well, I feel that in my body. I feel heavy; my jaw’s tight. I can’t stop shaking. My stomach is churning. My heart rate increases. I’m sweating. Okay, so now we can see this almost hijacking that occurs, right? Satan gets us to just think something. (Again, the power of a thought.) He gets us to think something. Now I’m thinking something, I’m feeling something, and now that’s internalized; now that’s part of me. Now that’s—in that moment, at least—that’s who I am. This is what I’m experiencing and what I’m feeling. And now that spirit has entered my physical tabernacle, right?—uninvited! Now that’s my body—that’s been created by God—my body is full of fear. Now I’m resonating on an entirely different frequency than the one I want to be resonating on, and that can be dangerous.

(I’ve only gone and lost my pen. How do I lose my pen when I’m literally... You’re kidding... Found it! Don’t worry. Got more pens just in case [holding up a package of pens], so we’re good.)

So from these body sensations, how do they feel? Somebody tell me, how does this feel? If anyone’s got any experience of this—these thoughts and these feelings that are kicking off in our physical tabernacle that’s now been overtaken by this spirit of fear, right?—how does that feel? Someone give me a word.

**Congregation Member:** Pulled apart.

**Congregation Member:** Shut down.

**LS:** “Pulled apart”; yeah, okay. Somebody else said something. (I feel like I’m at an auction here now.) Go on.

**Congregation Member:** Shut down.

**LS:** Shut down. Yeah.

**Congregation Member:** Overwhelmed.

**LS:** Who said that? Yeah, that’s a massive one, isn’t it? “Overwhelmed.” Overwhelmed, I guess, meaning that in that instant, there is nothing that I can do but put up with this shit. (Excuse my French.)



**Congregation Member:** I'm French!

**LS:** If I've just offended a French person, I apologize!

But in all honesty, I do think that cuss words and swearing, at least in my experience, that is the language of mental health. Seldom do I have anybody come and sit in a room with me and I go, "Okay, mate, so when you're experiencing this, how does this thing go?"

"It's preposterous."

It's not usually the words they... "Shit" is one of the ones that comes up. So can we use that word? It does feel pretty shit, to be fair. [Audience response] Say that again, sorry.

**Congregation Member:** That may be the best word.

**LS:** "It may be the best word." I agree with you. Yeah, thank you. Yeah. It's weird to be up here talking about this stuff and using a swear word. I'm thinking if I was back in the LDS Church doing this, they'd like me even less!

[Writing on the whiteboard] Does anyone know what that says?

**Congregation Members:** Behaviors!

**LS:** Behaviors, yeah. Okay, and so... ([indecipherable] why'd I put my pen away?)

So now we've got these past events, the sins of our fathers, the way that we are treated by people that loved us less than we deserved to be loved, right? Put us in a situation in our lives, there's a high chance that that might come up, that those gods from the past might start haunting us again in the present. That's gonna come to us with thoughts... When the Scriptures talk about every word, every thought, every deed—let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly—the Lord knows what He's talking about. Our thoughts are vitally important when it comes to this.

And then we go into these emotions. We spoke about our physical tabernacle being overtaken by the spirit of fear. And the reason why that's such a precarious situation to be in, let's say, is because now we're gonna *act* something out. I woke up this morning with a terrible migraine, so the first thing I did is get out of bed, go and take two tablets to try and get that pain to stop because I didn't appreciate it. I didn't want it. I had plans for the day, and a migraine wasn't part of that, right? So I wanted that pain to stop. And oftentimes, if we're not careful, we can add to that shopping list of speaking to the Lord, "Thank You for all this stuff, and by the way, make this pain stop." Okay?

So we go into these behaviors, and like I said, initially, these behaviors can be the fruit of who we are. You're not gonna get the fruit that's produced by the husbandman without doing the work of a husbandman, right? But this has got the ability to potentially sabotage us from doing that. So what are some of the behaviors that we can potentially go to to get this stuff to stop? Again, feel free to shout out at me. It makes my job easy.

[Audience response] Say that again?

**Congregation Member:** Medication.

**LS:** Yeah, medication. Anybody else? Saves me a trip if I get three or four and then...

**Congregation Member:** Prayer.

**Congregation Member:** Suicide.

**LS:** Okay, yeah. [Audience response] Say that again? Social media is a huge one, mate; yeah, absolutely. Mean words; absolutely, yeah. Okay, so...

[Stepping away from the mic] We can accuse. (Can everybody hear me if I'm just shouting?) We can accuse. We consider this is somebody else's fault, and then we almost refuse to do the work, because the work was somebody else's to do. Yes, mate, go on.

**Congregation Member:** [indecipherable] ...it's always somebody else's problem.

**LS:** Exactly right, yeah; somebody else's problem. And when people come and see me in therapy, one of the things that's always said in, well, pretty much the first session, I get people that sit there and they want to go round and round this thing, right? Like, "this isn't my fault!" And there's anger, and I get it, and I understand that. There's anger at the person that maybe put you in these situations, and it might not be your fault—but it is your responsibility. And if we tolerate this, then our children will be next. (That's a song; I don't know if anybody knows that song. Welsh band. No? Okay, tough crowd.) So yeah, we accuse other people. We lash out at other people. We procrastinate. We put things off. Again, think of the Scriptures: *[Do] not procrastinate the day of your repentance* (Alma 10:4 RE)—one of the messages that shouts out of us, right? Do this stuff now. We avoid, which I think is a huge one. This is frightening. This is scary. I'll sort it tomorrow. "Do not procrastinate the day of your repentance."

Somebody else said prayer. Who was that? Yeah, and that's really the crux of what I'm trying to get at, essentially, is that when we get to this part of these behaviors, we need to kind of choose carefully what it is that we do and, then, what we're advancing in our behavior. So we could go into that, and we could probably have a conference that spanned a couple of days just talking about this stuff. But in the interest of time, I won't keep boring you with it.

There's a saying in boxing that a happy fighter is a dangerous fighter, and I think that's the same with us—that a happy Christian, so to speak, is potentially a dangerous one; a danger to darkness, maybe (I don't know). And so I'm mindful of Denver's first talk, "Be of Good Cheer," in which he says when you take the shots (again, I'm paraphrasing)... That we're gonna get hit, essentially. Fighters get hit, swimmers get wet—it's to be expected; we don't need to panic. But let's make these decisions about our behaviors. If we know that this is where we're going, we get to make these decisions beforehand—like our Lord did, so that when Satan comes to us and says, "IF you're this," there's no "if." There's no doubt in my mind that when he comes along and says, "You're just a son of man," there's no doubt in my mind that we can be more than that. We get to set our face like a flint and know beforehand how we're gonna act/how we're gonna react and make those choices first. And one of the things that I've found that facilitates me in making good choices, better choices, is this idea

of being of good cheer. And, kind of, one of the hacks, I guess—for want of a better word—if I could share that with you is I'm of good cheer when I'm suffering—that might sound crazy, and it's not all the time, and I'm not saying I'm superhuman or anything like that; there's nothing special about me—because it gives me an opportunity to sit with myself. It gives me an opportunity to sit with Christ. It gives me an opportunity to sit with my dad and to say, “Shit, Dad. I'm sorry. I forgive you.”

Now in boxing, there's this idea of, like, “boxing clever,” right? Jabbing and moving and, like, being elusive and not getting involved. And that was my kind of thing. I just wanted to make you look stupid—ducking and diving, blowing kisses, all that kind of nonsense. I'd like to say I've been humbled since then, but not really. Darnell will tell you that. She's just my sparring partner now; she gets the brunt of most of it.

And if I can share a story with you, my wife and I sat on a bed a few years back at home, and we sat down, and we read Answer to Prayer for the Covenant, and I had a very physical, visceral feeling in the pit of my stomach—and it terrified me, if I'm honest, because it said “every word, every thought, and every deed.” And I think, in that moment, I understood something. We also read in that text that “You've heard it said that Satan will be bound, but you fail to understand that it is you that will bind that spirit in yourself” (see T&C 157:10). I'd never even thought of that. I thought Zion was gonna be the place—kind of like Disneyland, right?—where Satan's kind of just bound up, and the Lord's done that because He's all great, He's all-powerful; all I had to do was arrive there. But what a beautiful and, again, brutal truth; what a terrifying responsibility that we've got to bind this spirit in ourselves. And I think that one of the ways that we do that, like I've said, is this idea of being thankful for these opportunities that we've got to fight. Because when we fight, we learn something about ourselves, like I've said; we learn something about our Savior. We learn who He is.

I think we're all trying to seek the Second Comforter; that means we're gonna be a people that need comforting. From what? Let's voluntarily descend into the darkest abyss that Joseph spoke of. In my opinion, that's our own hearts and our own minds. A heart can run off maybe two things, one of two things: fear or love. And maybe there's... Maybe it's synonymous with changing our heart to a heart of love. Maybe suffering is the gateway to that. Maybe when we suffer something well, it changes our heart.

And I'd like to share just a little bit of an experience with you if I can, and then I'll shut up.

Like I said, we read the Answer to Prayer for Covenant, and the way I interpreted that in my mind was that it was not time to “box clever” anymore. A “point's victory” wasn't gonna suffice. It was me versus the sins of my fathers—the sins that I committed because of that. It was me versus all those things, and this was a fight to the death. One of us is welcome in Zion, the other one isn't. One of us is welcome in Zion, and the other one would infect everybody else. And so it was time to stop boxing clever. It was time to stop the fancy footwork and to grip your feet onto the canvas and bite down on the gum shield and start throwing punches back until one of us couldn't stand up anymore. And that's been brutal if I'm honest. But there are these moments that are equally beautiful because of the brutality

from which they're born out of—and they say that, you know, shit makes the best compost, right? So maybe there's something in that.

And so when it came to this fight, like, how did that kind of play out in my life? Well, I thought I was doing okay. There was a lot of domestic abuse in my home, right? There's been no domestic abuse in *my* marriage. There was a lot of abuse my father put on his children; *my* children don't know such abuses. So I'm doing better than my dad; I'm okay! It suddenly dawned on me that "Your dad is not the bar by which you are going to be measured, Leroy. It's Christ"—slightly higher than my dad.

And so I had to stop dancing around the ring and start fighting, and I had to voluntarily descend below those things. And so what I tried to do is voluntarily feel all these things. And I went through a lot of anger, a lot of difficulties, a lot of pain. And then the most remarkable thing happened, that whilst I was sat in the midst of this pain one night, ([choking up] excuse me), it was about three o'clock in the morning, and I was by myself on the kitchen floor, curled up in the fetal position; and I wanted to pray, but I didn't have a freaking clue how to do it because the pain was just too much. His name was all I could muster, and that seemed enough for Him because my mind was carried back to seeing my dad as an eight-year-old child being hurt and abused, in and out of the care system his entire life. Then all of a sudden, my suffering wasn't about me anymore; it didn't matter what I was going through. That suffering was a vehicle and a gift from Christ to get me to understand my dad and the long line of fathers and forefathers that go probably all the way back, and this nonsense has been in my family for a long, long time. And it allowed me to offer intercessory prayer for and on behalf of the guy that hurt me so much and, in many ways, continues to bless him.

And there's something transformative about that. I don't say this to elevate myself in any way, shape, or form; please believe that. But there's something Christlike about that. There's something about us being like Christ—Christ-ish—and it's my belief, it's my experience, and it's my testimony that that stuff comes from us voluntarily sitting with this suffering. So my prayer for us moving forward is that we can maybe revisit some of that suffering if we need to. The time to run to the Lord is now. Let's not procrastinate the day of our repentance. The fear is bullshit. It's just fear. It's just a feeling. It's just a thought. This is just an emotional experience. And these things are our greatest blessings, if we see them like that and we allow ourselves to live them like that.

And so I just want to—sounds so Mormon—"I just want to bear my testimony." But I do, that this stuff is true, that when the Scriptures teach that suffering is a way for us to know our Savior, there's wisdom in that. And that our cognitions, these thoughts, these accompanying emotions, and these body sensations that go along with that, and these behaviors, this is a well of wisdom for us to become more like Him. This is how we change our hearts.

All therapy, essentially... (I'm looking at Stephanie because I know she's gonna come after me afterwards and go, "Yeah, you're wrong about that!" Maybe.) In my experience anyway, all of this therapy stuff is just exposure. Come and see me. Tell me what you're scared of. Let's make a plan together to stand in front of it and knock the shit out of it so that it stops

knocking the shit out of you. Let's do that together. You're scared of dogs? Well, how do we know you're over your fear? You're scared of roller coasters? How would you know we're over that fear? There's work to be done. And so, not that I have any authority whatsoever to answer these questions—right?—but “What have we learned?” That we as a people have a way to go, right? And it's so easy to look at somebody else and go, “We've got a way to go because *that* guy's an asshole or *that* guy or *that* woman...” (I had to include the women, as well; it's 2024; someone's gonna be offended, right?)

Um, so what have we learned? We've got a way to go. We're not there yet. What ought we to have learned? Perhaps, let me offer this, for whatever it's worth—that not just the collective “we” but the individual “we” (me, you, we as individuals) also have a long way to go, and that the Lord loves us enough to give us these opportunities to suffer it in His name, to suffer it for Him, to suffer it so that we advance His causes—essentially, to suffer it well.

How do you end this thing? Do you say, “And I'd like to say these things in the name of Jesus Christ”? Do we still do that, like, or do I just say, “Cheers”? But I don't know. But Cheers!