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Start where you are

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Hello my friend,

How are you doing today?

I learned from a good friend that when times are difficult some days are better than others, but all you can do is focus on today and try to make it the best you can. So, instead of asking about how you are always doing, I'm just interested in today. I hope you can feel some divine love from God today to help you in whatever difficult circumstance you are facing.

Today is a new day.

And that means you can take action and become more in Christ. We all have different struggles and also different privileges. We start from different places, whether that is what family we were born into or what schools we went to or what place or country we live in, all these things affect different opportunities we might be given due to no effort or fault of our own. But, since we have the gift of agency, the ability to choose, we all have the opportunity to become what we desire.

The things we gain in this world, whether money, things, power, friends, or security, they can all be taken away, but who you become can never be taken away from you.

And if you are striving to become more like Christ, it doesn't matter where you are in your journey, it only matters what direction you're headed. That is why I loved the talk by Elder Clark G. Gilbert of the Seventy during General Conference, "Becoming More in Christ: The Parable of the Slope".

<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2021/10/16gilbert?lang=eng>

I highly recommend studying it carefully.

He uses the formula of a line on a graph and talks about how we all start at different places or intercepts and that our success is based more on the slope of the line rather than our starting point. He says,

"We all have different intercepts in life—we start in different places with different life endowments. Some are born with high intercepts, full of opportunity. Others face beginning circumstances that are challenging and seem unfair. We then progress along a slope of personal progress. Our future will be determined far less by our starting point and much more by our slope."

Elder Clark teaches us that Jesus Christ sees your divine potential no matter where you start. "He saw it in the beggar, the sinner, and the infirm. He saw it in the fisherman, the tax collector, and even the zealot. No matter where we start, Christ considers what we do with what we are given. While the world focuses on our intercept, God focuses on our slope. In the Lord's calculus, He will do everything He can to help us turn our slopes toward heaven."

God knows our circumstances. He knows the situations we have been put in that seem unfair. But he also knows our strengths, and gives us challenges that test us and help us grow stronger.

At one of Joseph Smith's lowest points in his life, when he was in prison, and the saints were driven from their homes, and when the success they seemed to have built was all falling apart, Joseph pleaded with the Lord, "O God, where are thou? And where is the pavilion that covereth thy hiding place?" (D&C 121:1) It seemed that the Lord had left Joseph and the Saints to suffer horribly without His help (and of course, this wasn't the first time.)

But the Lord answered Joseph, "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." (D&C 121:7-8)

"And if thou shouldst be cast into the pit, or into the hands of murderers... if the heavens gather blackness, and all the elements combine to hedge up the way; and above all, if the very jaws of hell shall gape open the mouth wide after thee,

know thou, my son, that all these things shall give thee experience, and shall be for thy good. The Son of Man hath descended below them all. Art thou greater than he?" (D&C 122:7-8)

I know it's hard to see or believe, when you're in the midst of your trials and suffering, that they are for your good, and that they help you be more like Christ, if you endure them well, but it's true. Christ experienced the most unfairness possible. He was the God of the universe, and yet was mocked and suffered the most cruel and shameful death because of a completely false accusation. All to show us the way to live, and to take our pains upon Him.

So, put your trust in Him. Don't focus on your past or the unfairness and difficult situations you have been given, but start where you are, and focus on your future and the direction you want to go, or the slope of your line. These things have been given to you for your good, so you can learn to depend on Christ. Because none of us, no matter where we start, can make it without Him.

Elder Clark remembered a quote from Elder Godoy, "The Lord will help you more than you can help yourself."

He is there for you. And loves you dearly.

And as His disciple, I do too.

Take care.

Bishop Williams

P.S.

- Read, listen, and study Elder Gilbert's talk: <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2021/10/16gilbert?lang=eng>
- Invite your friends to our Ward Halloween Party, Oct 29th, 6:30-8:30pm, See attached flyer for info.

You received this email because you made your email address available to your local Church leaders. It was sent by Rex Williams, whose calling is Bishop.

 **party flyer 2021.pdf**
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