

Chaos

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"Stand Forever" Episode 6

Hello, my name is Larry Corbridge, and this is Episode 6 of the *Stand Forever Series*. In the last episode we considered God's greatest gifts: His Son, His Spirit and His Life, without which chaos, darkness, and death prevail. The next three episodes are about those awful conditions, and as a result they are gloomy, but take heart that there is Light at the end of the tunnel beginning in Episode 9. Speaking of Adam and Eve, Lehi taught that they could not know joy without also knowing misery.¹ Similarly we can't appreciate light without passing through darkness along the way as well.

Chaos, Darkness, and Death Prevail without God and His Son, without His Spirit and Life.

Without God and His Son, without His Spirit and Life, chaos, darkness, and death prevail. **Without intervention all things trend toward disorder and chaos.**

Chaos is a state of confusion and disorder without meaning, purpose, or direction. The natural state of all things trends toward chaos. That process of degradation is broadly defined as "entropy." Without the intervention of focused energy to counteract entropy, all things are continually breaking down, trending toward disorder.

A man remembered that when his parents' membership in the Church was withdrawn there followed "a complete absence of the Spirit in (the) home, and the violence and abuse reached higher proportions and increased in frequency, making life hell." The absence of God and His Spirit leads to chaos.

God not only offsets entropy but also creates order out of chaos.

The best example of divine energy counteracting entropy and creating order out of chaos is the creation of the heavens and earth. "And then the Lord said: Let us go down. And they went down at the beginning, and they, that is the Gods, **organized** and formed the heavens and the earth ... and the Gods **organized** the lights in the expanse of the heaven, and caused them to divide the day from the night; and **organized** them to be for signs and seasons, and for days and for years; And the Gods **organized** them to be for lights in the expanse of the heaven to give light upon the earth ... And the Gods **organized** the two great lights, the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser

¹ 2 Nephi 2:23

light to rule the night ... So, the Gods went down to **organize** man in their own image, in the image of the Gods to form they him, male and female to form they them."²

Another example of divine order over chaos is the Resurrection restoring "all things ... to their proper order." Alma taught: "I say unto thee, my son, that the plan of restoration is requisite with the justice of God; for it is requisite that all things should be restored to their proper order. Behold, it is requisite and just, according to the power and resurrection of Christ, that the soul of man should be restored to its body, and that every part of the body should be restored to itself."³

While God builds up, Satan tears down. While God's house "is a house of order," Satan's realm is confusion and chaos.⁴ While God is the Creator, Satan is the destroyer.⁵

Without intervention, entropy and chaos prevail spiritually and individually as well as physically and universally. As surely as a truck parked in a field will rust and eventually turn to dust, we also trend toward spiritual decay and disorder without God's intervention.

Disobedience to God's Commands Leads to Chaos

Chaos, darkness, and death are all consequences of not keeping God's commandments. "Behold, mine house is a house of order, saith the Lord God, and not a house of confusion."⁶

How blessed we are to have God's commandments! What safety, protection, and order come from keeping them!

Pick any commandment and consider the consequences of not keeping it. For example, disregard for "Thou shalt not kill" or "Thou shalt not commit adultery" or "Thou shalt not steal" or "Thou shalt not bear false witness" all lead to chaos, darkness, and death.

As for "Thou shalt not bear false witness," after nearly thirty years of practicing law, I asked myself what I had observed, and the most prominent trend was a greater propensity among people generally to lie and to do so even under oath. The result is

² Abraham 4:1, 14-16, 27, *emphasis added*

³ Alma 41:2

⁴ Doctrine and Covenants 132:

⁵ *Destroyer*, Guide to the Scriptures; Exodus 12:23; Doctrine and Covenants 61:19; 101:51-54

⁶ Doctrine and Covenants 132:8

chaos in commerce, in the judicial system, and life in general. If you can't rely on what someone says, chaos is the consequence.

Think of pornography or the Word of Wisdom and the consequences of addictions resulting in broken lives and broken families, chaos, darkness, and death.

Think of the law of chastity. God has granted to his children in mortality the power of procreation, the power to create life. What greater trust could be given? I wonder which is greater—the power to create worlds or the power to create life? Worlds are just orbs in space without life. Life is what gives everything meaning.

What would be the consequence if all of God's children had the power to procreate with whomever, whenever throughout all of eternity? Chaos! Chaos would be the consequence. Total, absolute chaos.

Would it make sense for God to endow us with that godly power throughout eternity if we do not learn to use it appropriately here/now? God's house is organized by families. We are given these few years of mortality to learn to use this sacred power appropriately that we might retain the same power throughout eternity.

God's house is a house of order and disregard for the rules of the house leads to chaos. Truth is absolute and leads to order and stability while living by "one's own truth," marching to the beat of one's own drum ... doing your own thing leads to chaos. It is one of the primary reasons for the restoration.

Speaking of the conditions of the world at the time of the Restoration, the Lord said:

they ... will not hear the voice of the Lord, neither the voice of his servants For they have strayed from mine ordinances, and have broken mine everlasting covenant; They seek not the Lord to establish his righteousness, but every man walketh in his own way, and after the image of his own god, whose image is in the likeness of the world, and whose substance is that of an idol, which waxeth old and shall perish in Babylon, even Babylon the great, which shall fall. ... Wherefore, I the Lord, knowing the calamity which should come upon the inhabitants of the earth, called upon my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., and spake unto him from heaven, and gave him commandments."⁷

⁷ Doctrine and Covenants 1:14-17

And if that were not enough, the Lord has promised to give us all more commandments as we obey those we now have, saying, “Yea, blessed are they whose feet stand upon the land of Zion, who have obeyed my gospel; for they shall receive for their reward the good things of the earth, and it shall bring forth in its strength. And they shall also be crowned with blessings from above, yea, and with commandments not a few, and with revelations in their time—they that are faithful and diligent before me.”⁸

Lack of Purpose Leads to Chaos.

Lack of purpose leads to chaos. Without God, life has no meaning other than what we may conjure up on our own, and without purpose we wander. You can’t go where you don’t know to go.

“What is life’s purpose?” is a question of the ages. Without a destination people can’t chart a course. They are buffeted by the blows and circumstances of life randomly knocking them in one direction and then another. They drift with the winds as Paul said, “tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine and the sleight of men and cunning craftiness.”⁹ The winds don’t blow, and the currents don’t flow toward home. You can’t drift into the presence of God.

Some people prefer to drift. Just go with the flow, and less will be expected. The fewer the expectations, the fewer the disappointments. They prefer to keep things vague and foggy, so they are never off course. You can’t be off course if you never set one. You can’t miss if you don’t aim. Free and easy, they avoid the disappointment of failure until they have failed so badly there is no way to ignore it.

Other people drift without knowing it. They think they have a destination toward which they are sailing. They believe they have charted the course of their life. They can tell you what it is if you ask, but it is usually something formulated in the moment. It is a star in their sky sure enough, but it is not really their North Star. They are vaguely aware it is there. They can point it out if you ask, but they don’t really take their bearings from it, at least not often. Their course is not fixed on it. They think it is, but it isn’t. They drift without knowing it.

Unless checked against the North Star, the winds blow, and the currents flow toward the shores of desolation, waste and chaos.

⁸ Doctrine and Covenants 59:3, 4

⁹ Ephesians 4:14

One evening I lay on my bed in hopes of getting some relief from pain in my back. My wife, Jacque, was close by in an adjoining room. As I rested, I drifted into another dimension and a wave of profound regret washed over me.

Although I was fully awake, my state of mind was dreamlike. I was aware of other people overcome by extreme, overwhelming sadness and regret, and I felt what they were feeling. The despair was so overwhelming I unconsciously began to moan and, hoping to find relief from something far greater than the pain in my back, I stood for a moment and then dropped to my knees unable to stand. Jacque rushed into the room to find me on my knees with my head in my hands trying to understand what was happening. She was understandably alarmed, but I could not explain to her what was happening because I didn't understand.

Words can never adequately describe the depth of this despair. This was not mere despondency. It was a million times more than the blues. This was profound, irreparable, paralyzing, debilitating, unrelenting sorrow. It was hell, but not the hell of the wicked, rather the hell of regret. This was the desolation of waste, wasted talents, wasted time, wasted opportunities that had come and gone never again to return. It was the clear realization of what could have been, but what will never be because the time to act had passed forevermore.

Jacob wrote: "But wo unto him that has the law given, yea, that has all the commandments of God, like unto us, and that transgresseth them, and that wasteth the days of his probation, for awful is his state!"¹⁰ For some reason, I know something about the awfulness of that state. I know what "wo" feels like. I'm not sure why, but I know about the hell of waste.

An Italian composer, Gian Carlo Menotti, said: "Hell begins on the day when God grants us a clear vision of all that we might have achieved, of all the gifts which we might have wasted, of all that we might have done which we did not do. For me that conception of hell lies in two words: Too late!"

The Lord has said: "For behold, this life is the time for men to prepare to meet God; yea, behold the day of this life is the day for men to perform their labors. And now, as I said unto you before, as ye have had so many witnesses, therefore, I beseech of you that ye do not procrastinate the day of your repentance until the end; for after this day of life, which is given us to prepare for eternity, behold, if we do not improve our time while in this life, then cometh the night of darkness wherein there can be no labor performed.

¹⁰ 2 Nephi 27:27

“Ye cannot say, when ye are brought to that awful crisis, that I will repent, that I will return to my God. Nay, ye cannot say this; for that same spirit which doth possess your bodies at the time that ye go out of this life, that same spirit will have power to possess your body in that eternal world. For behold, if ye have procrastinated the day of your repentance even until death, behold, ye have become subjected to the spirit of the devil, and he doth seal you his; therefore, the Spirit of the Lord hath withdrawn from you, and hath no place in you, and the devil hath all power over you; and this is the final state of the wicked.”¹¹

A few months later, I spoke with a mission president about three disobedient missionaries. He recently learned about their most recent escapades and was wondering if he should send them home with a dishonorable release. One had already gone home having completed the term of his mission and the other two had only three weeks remaining. I referenced the forgoing scripture and observed that the time for them to repent and perform their labors, the time to prove their faithfulness and qualify for the supreme blessings of heaven as missionaries had sadly passed and awful was their state regardless of what decision was made relative to how and when they return home. Time had passed them by.

I recalled talking to missionaries on one occasion about the opportunities of their mission and how their performance as missionaries would largely determine their performance in all aspects of life after their missions. As we broke for lunch, two missionaries in different parts of the chapel remained transfixed in their seats after everyone else had left. They sat alone in different parts of the empty chapel.

Both had the same catatonic stare. They both were at the end of their missions, and both had been marginal in their commitment and performance as missionaries. Neither had given the full measure of devotion. I knew why they remained glued to their seats, and I knew what they were thinking. I mourned for them but there was little I could do because to some extent they had wasted the days of their mission. Awful was their state, and there was nothing I could do to change it.

Trying to Go in Multiple Directions Leads to Chaos.

Trying to go in too many directions is as bad a strategy as drifting. In a BYU Devotional address Tyler J. Jarvis, Professor of Mathematics at BYU, described the astounding mathematical difficulty of plotting the best route among multiple destinations, which is

¹¹ Alma 34:32-35

especially important for delivery companies like UPS. With tens of thousands of trucks on the road every day, tens of millions of dollars would be saved annually if each driver could shave just one mile off the daily route.

The problem is how to find the best route with multiple destinations. With 3 destinations there are 6 possible routes. With four destinations there are 24 possible routes; with 5 stops, 120 routes; 10 stops, 3,268,800 routes. If there are 20 stops, there are 2,432,902,008,176,640,000 routes. If a computer could check a billion routes per second, it would still take 27 years to check all possible routes for 20 destinations.

An average UPS driver makes 120 deliveries a day. For 120 destinations there are so many routes they cannot be stored in all the memory of any computer in existence. If we had a computer with as many processors as particles in the universe and if it could check a trillion routes per second, it would still take more than the age of the universe to calculate.

This dilemma has been dubbed the “Traveling Salesman Problem,” and a million-dollar prize has been offered for anyone who can find an algorithm that solves this problem in a reasonable amount of time.¹² We will solve the “Traveling Salesman Problem” later in Episode 10 and see if we can claim the million-dollar prize.

Many people are also trying to determine the best course to multiple destinations such as being a good spouse, parent, and family member, career success, church service, development of talents, recreation, financial security, education, community service, personal development, physical fitness and health, personal time and more. Each one of those thirteen destinations or objectives subdivides into a dozen more for a total of 156 destinations. That’s more than a UPS driver! How best to do all of that is a much greater problem than the dilemma facing delivery companies. Imposing order to something inherently chaotic is a hard knot to untie.

Some people drift, while others try to go in too many directions. While some are content with doing little, others are trying to do too much, racing all over the map, trying to go everywhere but arriving nowhere. Either strategy is flawed. They both lead to chaos.

Information Overload Leads to Chaos.

¹² Tyler J. Jarvis, Professor of Mathematics at BYU, BYU Devotional (July 9, 2013)

Information overload also leads to chaos. Too much information is like trying to go in too many different directions. The struggle to stay afloat, if not swim in the daily tsunami of information, misinformation, and disinformation, is a life and death struggle. More than ever before, we are flooded with messages that are good or bad, true or false, and much in between. Most people are “plugged into” messaging in one form or another most of the time.

“If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after these things” if we are smart, because we become what we consume.¹³ But even in the category of “virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy,” there is much more than what we can begin to swallow, much less assimilate. Whether we drown in good clear water or brackish dark water, either way we drown.

We live in the Dispensation of the Fulness of Times, and it is really full. There is so much available to us that is good and uplifting, but overall, it is more than we can assimilate. So much so, that even if we had our own personal security system that only permitted the truth and the good to filter through, we would still be overwhelmed and at risk of drowning in good things, because there is so much. One good thing dilutes another, which diluted and obscured the one before, and then another comes along pushing to the back everything else, and on and on until nothing makes a difference. We can be awash and even drown in good things.

We are bombarded by so much that the whole of it is chaos. Whether the messaging is good or bad, overall it is chaos and chaos is never good. God’s house is a house of order, but how does one order a tsunami? How does one sift through it all, not only separate good from bad and truth from error, but recognize and clutch the few most important things among all the good things?

A diagram of the problem of going in many directions, dealing with the daily tsunami and a life without clear purpose, might look like this:

¹³ The Articles of Faith, No. 13.



Only God can tell us who we are, show us who we can become and how to do it. Only He can reveal what is most important. Only He can offset spiritual decay, disorder, and chaos, and also edify, build up and “organize man” in His image, spiritually as He did physically. Only He can give us the strength to bear up the burdens of life. Only He can bless us. Without God, chaos prevails. The essential problem in life is separation from God our Father.