

Australia Local Pages

That They Might Not Suffer

By Elder Kevin W. Pearson

As Easter approaches, our thoughts turn to Jesus Christ and our hearts are filled with love and gratitude for the great gift of the infinite Atonement. How can the Saviour's Atonement relieve our personal suffering? Why is it that personal trials and tribulation cause some to become hardened, bitter and disbelieving, while others find peace, solace and increased faith in their suffering?

It is difficult to fully understand the physical, emotional or spiritual pain of another unless one has personally experienced something similar. However, the infinite suffering that took place in the Garden of Gethsemane and on the cross at Calvary is beyond the finite capacity of man to comprehend.

Only the Son of God was capable of suffering on such an infinite scale. "Which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit—and would

that I might not drink the bitter cup, and shrink—Nevertheless, glory be to the Father, and I partook and finished my preparations unto the children of men" (Doctrine and Covenants 19:18–19).

Though I cannot fully comprehend it, I bear witness of the infinite Atonement of Jesus Christ. He is the Saviour and Redeemer of all mankind. His Resurrection is the greatest miracle in recorded history.

I have often wondered what portion of His incomprehensible suffering was necessary for my sake, and whether I am capable of enduring my own due portion. The Saviour spoke of this when He said: "Therefore I command you to repent—repent, lest I smite you by the rod of my mouth, and by my wrath, and by my anger, and your sufferings be sore—how sore you know not, how exquisite you know not, yea, how hard to bear you know not" (Doctrine and Covenants 19:15–16).

The Atonement provides a way to overcome physical death



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through a universal resurrection that will come freely to all men. It will ultimately right every wrong and inequity and provide a means whereby all men may become sanctified, pure and spotless, to return and dwell in the presence God. Significantly, these eternal gifts are lovingly offered in a way for us to avoid unnecessary suffering. "For behold, I, God, have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent; But if they would not repent they must suffer even as I" (Doctrine and Covenants 19:16–17).

The infinite Atonement is central to Heavenly Father's plan

of happiness. It provides a way for the unyielding demands of eternal justice to be met and fully satisfied by divine mercy, for every soul from Adam to the end of the world. The conditions that make this possible are central to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The first of these conditions is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. There are different types or degrees of faith, including desire, hope, belief and assurance. The Book of Mormon prophet Amulek taught:

“And thus he shall bring salvation to all those who shall believe on his name; this being the intent of this last sacrifice, to bring about the bowels of mercy, which overpowereth justice, and bringeth about means unto men that they may have faith unto repentance.

“And thus mercy can satisfy the demands of justice, and encircle them in the arms of safety, while he that exercises no faith unto repentance is exposed to the whole law of the demands of justice; therefore only unto him that has faith unto repentance is brought about the great and eternal plan of redemption” (Alma 34:15–16).

Repentance, evidenced by a broken heart and a contrite spirit, is the second condition

necessary for the Atonement.

Though we need not suffer as the Saviour suffered for our sins, some suffering is nonetheless necessary. Elder Dallin H.

Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has explained: “Sinners who are repenting will experience some suffering, but because of their repentance and the Atonement they will not experience the full, exquisite extent of eternal torment the Saviour suffered for those sins.” Then quoting President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985), he continued, “‘One has not begun to repent until he has suffered intensely for his sins . . . if a person hasn’t suffered, he hasn’t repented’” (“The Atonement and Faith,” *Ensign*, Apr. 2010, 33). True repentance requires personal pain and suffering for our sins. But there is a big difference between godly sorrow and mere regret or embarrassment. The purpose of suffering is to produce a broken heart and a contrite spirit.

Not all suffering however, results from personal transgression. By divine design mortality requires separation from the presence of God and necessarily occurs in a harsh environment where physical, emotional and spiritual suffering is a reality.

Mercifully the Saviour’s suffering was for the repentant sinner and the innocent victim. Both are promised relief from pain and suffering. Alma taught:

“And he shall go forth, suffering pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind; and this that the word might be fulfilled which saith he will take upon him the pains and the sicknesses of this people.

“And he will take upon him death, that he may loose the bands of death which bind his people; and he will take upon him their infirmities, that his bowels may be filled with mercy, according to the flesh, that he may know according to the flesh how to succour his people according to their infirmities” (Alma 7:11–12).

How can the Saviour’s Atonement help us avoid unnecessary personal pain and suffering?

1. By strict obedience to the commandments of God, we can avoid, altogether, much personal pain and suffering.

These commandments are an evidence of God’s love for us and help us avoid unnecessary personal pain and suffering. President Marion G. Romney (1897–1988) taught: “If all men would believe Jesus, take him at his word, and obey

his commandments, man-made troubles and sorrows would melt away as the hoarfrost before the rising sun” (“Christ’s Atonement: The Gift Supreme,” *Ensign*, Dec. 1973, 2).

Daily personal prayer and scripture study bring the influence of the Holy Ghost into our lives. “You will not make a major mistake without first being warned by the promptings of the Holy Spirit” (Boyd K. Packer, “Counsel to Youth,” *Ensign*, Oct. 2011, 18). The Holy Ghost will show us all things what we must do (see 2 Nephi 32:5). Making and keeping sacred covenants provide a daily shield and protection against much suffering. Blessings come through personal righteousness.

2. We can repent, become clean and bring an end to personal pain and suffering from our sins.

Again referring back to Alma’s teachings:

“And now, my brethren, I would that . . . ye come forth and bring fruit unto repentance.

“ . . . for behold, now is the time and the day of your salvation; and therefore, if ye will repent and harden not your hearts, immediately shall the great plan of redemption be brought about unto you” (Alma 34:30–31). President Romney

further explained: “When a person qualifies himself to receive the blessing of this aspect of Christ’s atonement, he is by the power of God forgiven of his sins; he is born again of the Spirit; he is a new person; he takes on the divine nature; he has ‘no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually’ (Mosiah 5:2); he has peace of conscience and is filled with joy” (“Christ’s Atonement: The Gift Supreme,” *Ensign*, Dec. 1973, 2). We are promised forgiveness as we truly repent with a broken heart and a contrite spirit.

3. As we come unto the Saviour He will lift our burdens, lighten our suffering and bring us perspective, peace and comfort.

Because we have agency we can choose to act and not be acted upon. When trials and difficulty come our way we can choose to soften our hearts, turn to Heavenly Father and seek help and comfort through His Son and the Holy Ghost. They have promised to comfort us and to lift our burdens and lighten our suffering. Or we can choose to suffer on our own, harden our hearts and even blame God for our suffering. The Saviour has promised:

“Come unto me, all ye that

labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

“Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

“For my yoke is easy and my burden is light” (Matthew 11:28–30). “I will not leave you comfortless, I will come unto you” (John 14:18). “In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” (John 14:27).

I bear witness of the reality of these blessings. Through personal experience I have learned that as we draw closer to Heavenly Father and to His Son when life’s inevitable challenges and difficulties come, They will draw very near to us. They will ease our burdens and bring peace, comfort and perspective. They “will not leave us comfortless”, they “will come unto us”.

May we ever remember and understand that we need not suffer if we would constantly repent and come unto the Saviour of the world. I testify of Jesus Christ. He is the Saviour and Redeemer of all mankind. I know that my Redeemer lives. ■

A Pioneer's Journey in Papua New Guinea

By Elder Robert Snow and Sister Theone Snow

In the early 1960s, Vaiba Rome, a young boy whose family was steadfast members of a local church in Papua New Guinea, had his first experience with the power of prayer when his heartfelt prayer was answered in a time of great need while he collected coconuts for the family.

The best coconuts were in the tallest trees, and he climbed up to collect both dry and green coconuts. While he was up high a strong wind arose, causing the coconut palm to swing and sway violently. Rome clung on tightly, realising that it would be difficult and dangerous to climb back down. Frightened, he decided to pray to Heavenly Father for guidance and help. After several minutes of praying a peace came over him and he knew he would be protected. He safely descended to the ground, and the experience became the beginning of a deep trust in Heavenly Father.

Thus began Rome's preparation to become one of the pioneers of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Papua New Guinea and an important leader and protector of the faith.

Years later, in 1980, Rome was living with his wife, Mauveri, and their three children at the 2 Mile settlement in Port Moresby. Elder Douglas Campbell and his wife, a missionary couple from the United States, visited the settlement. This missionary couple had found that the best way to meet the adults was to first become acquainted with the children, and as a result, they would often have several children holding their hands as they all walked through the settlement. Mauveri, like all caring mothers, wanted to know more about these people who had befriended her children, so she

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started talking to them. This led to both Rome and Mauveri being taught the gospel and, soon after, being baptised members of the Church.

Rome was hungry for knowledge about the gospel and made a practice of studying the scriptures every night. He found guidance and direction as he read and pondered the Doctrine and Covenants. About four months after his baptism, as he was studying the Holy Bible and reading about Jesus Christ and His Atonement, and how some people treated the Saviour up to His Crucifixion, the sweetest feeling came over him. Rome received a personal witness of the Saviour and His love for him. The experience was so intense that Rome states, "I cried like a little

Vaiba Rome with the Pacific Area President, Elder James J. Hamula, and Sister Joyce Hamula.

child, feeling the suffering the Saviour had to go through for us. I hid myself from my wife so that she would not see me crying.”

With his testimony burning in his bosom, Rome wanted to share it with his parents, so he returned to their village to tell them about the gospel. Although his parents were active in their own church, they listened to Rome’s message and were also touched by the Spirit. They were baptised, together with Rome’s uncles and auntie, and soon after that his three brothers and sister all joined the Church.

After their baptisms, there was a change in attitude towards them. The rest of the villagers became angry with them. The villagers would shout outside Rome’s parent’s home during sacrament meetings, and they threw stones at the building. The persecutions continued, with villagers breaking into the home and smashing cupboards and other possessions. They even threatened to shoot Rome and his parents. They placed logs across the road to try to prevent members from attending meetings. Although some of the early converts succumbed to the persecution and left the Church out of fear, Rome and his immediate and extended family became closely bonded together, knowing that they had the precious gift of the restored gospel, which was more precious than life itself.

When Rome joined the Church there were about 20 members attending sacrament meetings at the Red Cross building at 3 Mile, a suburb of Port Moresby. He willingly accepted callings to serve, and in 1985, while serving as a teacher in Primary, he was called to serve as the branch president of the Port Moresby Branch, which began a lifetime of faithful Church service. In 1990 he was called as the district president; and in 1995 he became the first stake president in Papua New Guinea.

Rome has had his testimony strengthened

by many spiritual experiences during his years of leadership in the Church. His desire to serve Heavenly Father has not dimmed or wavered with time. He continues to serve as a counsellor to the mission president and has the extremely important role of providing security for the Church. He is Port Moresby’s version of Helaman or Moroni as he protects the members, Church facilities, and all visiting Church leaders who come to Papua New Guinea to help in its growth. Many of these visits are to members who live in remote places.

Rome has maintained a strong testimony and often expresses his appreciation for the people with whom he has had the pleasure to associate with over the past 30 years. He has felt their influence through their dedication, sacrifice, and vision, not only for himself and his wife, but for all their children and grandchildren.

The Church has grown rapidly during Rome’s membership and service. From the 20 initial members, the Church has grown to include two stakes, 12 districts and one mission in 2011. Membership growth is averaging over 2,000 members a year as a result of missionary efforts. The opportunity for so many wonderful people in Papua New Guinea to hear the word of God would not have been possible without the strength and courage of pioneers such as Rome and his family.

The wonderful Saints of Papua New Guinea have prospered and thrived as they have followed the teachings of the Saviour, and many are great examples of the gospel in action in their communities and villages. They are indeed a light unto the people of Papua New Guinea.

Rome and Mauveri are the parents of eight children: seven daughters and one son. Three daughters, Vami, Renagi and Diane, have served missions in Australia and New Zealand, and Elder Rome Jr. is currently serving a mission in Fiji. ■

The Temple—a Refuge from the World

By Laura Hunter

In April 2011 President Thomas S. Monson urged members who have not yet been to the temple, or who have been but do not currently have a recommend, to qualify to enter the temple of God. He said, “There is no more important goal for you to work toward than being worthy to go to the temple” (“The Holy Temple—a Beacon to the World,” *Ensign*, May 2011, 93).

Recently, Connie Forster from Auckland attended the temple for the first time. When asked how she prepared for this experience, she explained that she immersed herself in the scriptures,

particularly the Book of Mormon. She also attended the temple preparation course, which, she said, was enormously helpful.

“I would go to the lessons as if they were especially for me,” she said. “After each lesson I would think of my life at that moment and focus on how I could put the lessons into practice. I truly felt that I was progressing week by week, and when it was time to enter the temple I felt calm and completely prepared.”

She also explained that it was a great blessing to have her mother with her. “It was wonderful to be with someone I love, because really, the temple is all

about families. If my mother had not been there, though, I would still have felt surrounded by love. The temple workers were amazing, so warm and kind, and I felt like I had known them all my life. I felt total calm inside the temple, and was able to listen to every single word. It was the best experience.”

Sandra Dallas, also of Auckland, spoke of her experience in preparing to attend the temple for the first time. “It is a spiritual preparation,” she said. “The temple preparation classes weren’t offered at the time I was preparing to go, but I prayed and read the scriptures as much as I could. I knew I was ready, and I embraced this huge commitment.”

“It really is a great commitment,” she continued, “and with it comes great responsibility. You must honestly consider your spiritual readiness, because breaking covenants has serious consequences. It is an eternal commitment that we make, with binding covenants. You need to be in the right spiritual headspace.”

“I was a young solo mother when I first attended,” she explained, “and I found an anchor in the blessings promised in the temple covenants. I started attending every month, and I would listen to those blessings, making a point of memorizing



The Perth Australia Temple was dedicated in May 2001.

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them. Those promises would carry me through when things got tough. They gave me so much hope.”

On this point, President Monson said, “The world can be a challenging and difficult place in which to live. We are often surrounded by that which would drag us down. As you and I go to the holy houses of God, as we remember the covenants we make within, we will be more able to bear every trial and to overcome each temptation. In this sacred sanctuary we will find peace, we will be renewed and fortified” (“The Holy Temple—a Beacon to the World,” 93).

The Church has a manual for those considering first-time temple attendance. It is called *Preparing to Enter the Holy Temple*. It contains this encouragement: “Come to the temple. If not now, come soon. Pray fervently, set your lives in order, save whatever you can in hopes that day may come. Start now that sometimes very difficult and discouraging journey of repentance. The temple transforms the individual and makes abundantly worthwhile any efforts made to get there. Keep your faith and your hope and determine that you will come—that you will be worthy and that you will come to the temple.” ■

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Members of the Perth Australia Southern River Stake participate in the annual graffiti clean-up in Belmont.

Church Members Boost Numbers of Community Service Day

By Linda Hawkins

Members of the Perth Australia Southern River Stake worked alongside missionaries from the Australia Perth Mission in a Helping Hands service project to clean up graffiti at Tomato Lake in Belmont. More than 165 Church members volunteered to help the City of Belmont in their Criminal Damage (Graffiti) Community Action Day, making it one of their most successful clean-up days so far.

Local businesses willingly donated paint and equipment; a staggering 1,200 square metres of fencing was hand painted, using about 200 litres of paint and every paint brush that was supplied.

The Southern River stake has been involved with the graffiti

clean-ups in the past; it appears likely to become a regular annual service project for them. The Belmont Council is delighted with the work they do, and is grateful for the Church’s service and participation. The Council said where members of the community join together to paint over graffiti, those areas stay freer from vandalism for longer than when painted by their council workers.

The City of Belmont published an article in their newsletter, which was distributed to all households within the city, expressing appreciation for the service donated by so many members of the Church; it included a photo of participants wearing Helping Hands shirts while they painted. ■

Helping Hands Clear Riddells Creek Cemetery

By Jeremy Nicholl

The Sunbury Ward was determined to fulfil the challenge that had been issued to the Melbourne Australia Deer Park Stake to find a community service project to work on as part of the Helping Hands programme.

They wanted something that all the members of the ward could participate in, and found the perfect opportunity to assist the community of Riddells Creek by cleaning up the overgrown grounds of the local cemetery. It became a personal project for several members of the stake who have family buried there.

Family groups worked hard weeding around the gravestones, removing rubbish, and clearing the overgrown grass. Children worked beside their parents to help transform the cemetery. Ward members enjoyed fellowshiping with one another as they laboured to honour and beautify the resting place of those who had once lived in their community.

The Cemetery Trust was delighted with the results, and were very appreciative of the Mormon Helping Hands programme that enables large groups of members to perform community service. ■



Ian Clinnick clears weeds at the Riddells Creek cemetery.



Barbara and Ian Clinnick participate in the Helping Hands service project.



Bishop David Hoare and his sister, Rachel Hoare, clear around the gravestones.

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