

New Zealand 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. ■

Visiting Apostle Expresses Love and Concern to People of Christchurch

By Richard Hunter

More than 500 people listened to Elder Quentin L. Cook of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles as he expressed his love and concern for the people of quake-ravaged Christchurch at a special meeting in January 2012.

Among those in attendance were: Hon. Amy Adams, Associate Minister of Canterbury Earthquake Recovery; Hon. Lianne Dalziel, Labour Spokesperson for Canterbury Earthquake Recovery; four other members of parliament; members of the Christchurch Interfaith Council; and other community leaders. They shared a common concern for the recovery of Christchurch and were undeterred by a 4.1 magnitude earthquake that struck 20 minutes into the meeting.

Elder Cook's message that Christchurch will recover and be "magnificent" was well received and left a feeling of hope and reassurance. He encouraged people to not only focus on rebuilding the city, but also to strengthen and look after each other.

"Parents, love and look after your children," he said. "Couples, love and look after each other."

The Apostle has a special empathy for Christchurch. In 1989 he was a stake president in San Francisco, California, USA, at the time of their 6.9 magnitude earthquake, which resulted in multiple deaths. His personal experience supporting that community through their natural disaster motivated him to visit Christchurch as part of his tour of the Pacific Area. ■



IMAGE COURTESY OF KAREN LARSEN AND USED WITH PERMISSION

Brothers Elijah and Brigham, along with their father, David McQueen, meet Elder Quentin L. Cook after the meeting in Christchurch.



IMAGE COURTESY OF KAREN LARSEN AND USED WITH PERMISSION

Christchurch stake president Jared Ormsby, together with Elder Tad R. Callister of the Presidency of the Seventy, Elder Quentin L. Cook of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and Bishop Keith B. McMullin of the Presiding Bishopric inspect the damaged Avonside meetinghouse.

The Temple Is a Refuge from the World

By Laura Hunter

This month marks the 54th anniversary of the dedication of the Hamilton New Zealand Temple. Even though it has been open for more than half a century, every day the temple is the setting for new experiences of joy and inspiration.

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

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Zealand Temple**



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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 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.” ■

Community Service—an Important Part of Youth Conference

By Angela McKee

Community service work was an important component of the Multistake Youth Conference held in Hawke’s Bay, New Zealand, in January. Over 150 youth between the ages of 14 and 17 from Palmerston North, Flaxmere, Napier and Hastings stakes attended the conference.

Because of the large numbers, the teens were split into two groups; one group picked up rubbish along Marine Parade while the other worked at Pakowhai Country Park. Some 70 teens and their leaders filled refuse bags with debris that other people had left behind

along a one-kilometre stretch of the beachfront.

Under the direction of

Maurice Smith, the Co-ordinator of Community Groups for the Hawke’s Bay Regional Council,



Jameikka H. and Juleighanne P. enjoyed meeting up again at the conference.

IMAGE COURTESY OF ANGELA MCKEE AND USED WITH PERMISSION

a group of youth trampled tall weeds down to expose the young native trees at Pakowhai Country Park. This enabled other volunteers from the council to then use weed eaters around the bases of the trees.

Mr Smith said: “This work makes a huge difference. What the youth did in a couple of hours can take volunteers two weeks.” For the Hawke’s Bay Regional Council, maintenance takes the most work. “Many people come and plant trees, but there is a lot of ongoing maintenance as well, which volunteers do,” he said.

Fifteen-year-old Juleighanne P. from Flaxmere agreed with her friend, Jameikka H., also 15, from Foxton, that Sunday was the best day of the conference. “The spiritual workshops brought all the youth together as one” she said. Juleighanne and Jameikka first met while attending the EFY in Auckland early last year, and they enjoyed seeing each other again.

The conference organising committee met regularly over the past year to plan this “Arise and Shine Forth” themed conference, which also included a talent show and dance. The youth were encouraged to “be the best they could be—at everything they do”. ■



A presenter leads a discussion with Auckland Latter-day Saint youth at the careers evening.

Auckland Youth Plan for the Future

By Richard Hunter

Youth and young adults from across Auckland, New Zealand, gathered at the Pah Road, Mt Roskill chapel in Auckland recently to learn about career pathways open to them.

Elder F. Michael Watson of the Pacific Area Presidency and his wife, Jolene Watson, attended the careers evening and spent time with several young people, encouraging them and giving them advice.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints operates an Employment Resource Centre in Auckland. Part of the Church’s worldwide emphasis is to assist youth and adults to prepare and qualify for employment opportunities.

The Church’s Newsroom

website states: “Employment resource service centres located throughout the world provide opportunities to those who are unemployed or who desire to learn job skills. The centres are available to those of all faiths, not just members of the Church.”

Last year the Church launched a website that helps connect job-seekers with employers. ■

Elder F. Michael Watson and his wife, Jolene Watson, meet with Teuila Ta’ala after the careers event.



IMAGE COURTESY OF SHANE TA'ALA AND USED WITH PERMISSION

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Belonging to a Latter-day Saint Ward is Something to Celebrate

By Melanie Riwai-Couch

For the current and former members of New Zealand's Masterton Ward, belonging to a Latter-day Saint congregation is something to celebrate. In fact, such are the bonds of brotherhood and sisterhood forged through years of worshipping and associating together, that former members have travelled from other parts of New Zealand and from Australia to attend a special reunion.

The reunion for individuals and families who have attended

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Masterton took place over the 2012 New Year period. Local Latter-day Saint leader, Bishop James Aporo, said the reunion was “an opportunity for families and friends to once again reunite and celebrate the long legacy of the Masterton Ward.”

More than 350 current and former members of the ward participated in a variety of events over five days. Activities included a bus tour, dance,

“Aunty Putu” took part in a victory lap after the sports tournament at the Masterton Ward reunion.

talent show, dinner, historical tours of the region and sacrament meeting (worship service) at the Opaki Road chapel. This chapel was built by local members of the Church who completed it in 1965. The chapel enabled members to gather for more than 2,000 sacrament meetings and weekly youth activities, and provided a venue for numerous weddings and funerals.

Jared Riwai-Couch attended church in Masterton as a teenager. Now living in Christchurch, he returned with his wife and five children to attend the reunion. His grandfather, Ben Couch, was Member of Parliament and a well-known Latter-day Saint in Masterton.

The reunion commenced with a *pōwhiri*; an appropriate event given the strong relationship between the Church and the local Māori community.

In 1881 at Te Oreore Marae, Paora Potangaroa, the wisest Chief and a well-known Māori prophet, announced the coming of the Church to the Wairarapa region. Many of his descendants remain in the Wairarapa area and attended the reunion. This and many other aspects of Latter-day Saint history in the Wairarapa have been captured in a print publication entitled *He Hokinga Mahara: Linking the Past to the Future*. ■



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