

“Though Hard to You . . .”

*When the doctor said the words
“Down syndrome,” my world came to a
crashing halt.*

By Holly Scott Gamangasso

I remember being pushed down the hall to the operating room for an emergency cesarean section because our baby was in a dangerous breech position. They got us inside the operating room, but the baby came too fast—feet first—with no doctor in sight. I was relieved to hear the sound of his cry, but he was quickly taken to the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) because of some breathing problems.

A few hours later I had recovered enough to go down to the NICU to see our new baby boy. My husband and I were so excited to see the child we had eagerly awaited for months. As I looked at this tiny infant hooked up to tubes and breathing mechanisms, an overwhelming concern came over me as I studied his features. Something about his appearance did not seem normal, but I couldn't decide what was different. The nurse wasn't allowed to answer our questions until the pediatrician had a chance to examine the baby. We went back to our hospital room with an uneasy sense of anticipation.

Minutes later the doctor entered our room with a serious expression that made my heart sink. When she said the words *Down syndrome*, I was shocked. None of the prenatal testing or blood work throughout my pregnancy had indicated any problems. This was not supposed to happen to us. I felt as though someone had punched me in the stomach and I couldn't catch my breath. I felt that the Lord had grossly overestimated my ability to accept and love this baby.

We put on brave faces as our family and friends poured in throughout the day to show their love and support. I didn't want anyone to see the fear and disappointment on my face. I was ashamed of myself for the way I was feeling. I was his mother—if *I* would not love this child, who would?

My husband went home that night to be with our three-year-old daughter, and I was left alone with my thoughts for the first time. The room was dark and quiet, and I finally broke down and began sobbing. I was exhausted in every sense of the word, but I could not sleep. I felt as though I was watching as our son's possibilities—serving a mission, graduating from college, getting married, and having children—melted away. Panic for the future absorbed my every thought.

I needed help, so I began praying earnestly for the Lord's comforting Spirit. I didn't ask Him to change the circumstances—only to bless me with the strength to face my fears, overcome my initial heartache, and be at peace with the situation. I continued praying throughout the night until the words of a hymn came to my mind:

*Come, come, ye Saints, no toil nor labor fear;
But with joy wend your way.
Though hard to you this journey may appear,
Grace shall be as your day.
'Tis better far for us to strive
Our useless cares from us to drive;
Do this, and joy your hearts will swell—*

I went directly to the NICU, picked up our precious son, and put his soft cheek to mine. I could feel the strength of his spirit. Fear faded into understanding, and from that moment on I have loved him with all my heart.



All is well! All is well!

*Why should we mourn or think our lot
is hard?*

'Tis not so; all is right.

*Why should we think to earn a great
reward*

If we now shun the fight?

Gird up your loins; fresh courage take.

Our God will never us forsake;

And soon we'll have this tale to tell—

All is well! All is well!¹

As the sunshine began to peek through the window that morning, the Lord sent with it His warm, peaceful Spirit. I felt His love and concern for me. I decided to “gird up [my] loins” and “fresh courage take.” The Lord had not left me to deal with this alone. I began to understand how much faith He had in me as a mother. He had trusted me with this special spirit, our son—His son. I felt that this child would humble me, help me learn compassion, and thus help me become more like my Heavenly Father.

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Our son Carter has sharpened our perspective about what is important in life. He reminds us each day of the true reason we have come to earth. Things are not always easy, but the words of that hymn continue to inspire me. Now I truly know that “all is well.” ■

NOTE

1. “Come, Come, Ye Saints,” *Hymns*, no. 30.