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The Savior's Selfless and Sacred Sacrifice

*The Lord is always there.
He has suffered and paid the penalty
if you are willing to accept Him
as your Redeemer.*

We all live on spiritual credit. In one way or another, the account builds and builds. If you pay it off as you go, you have little need to worry. Soon you begin to learn discipline and know that there is a day of reckoning ahead.

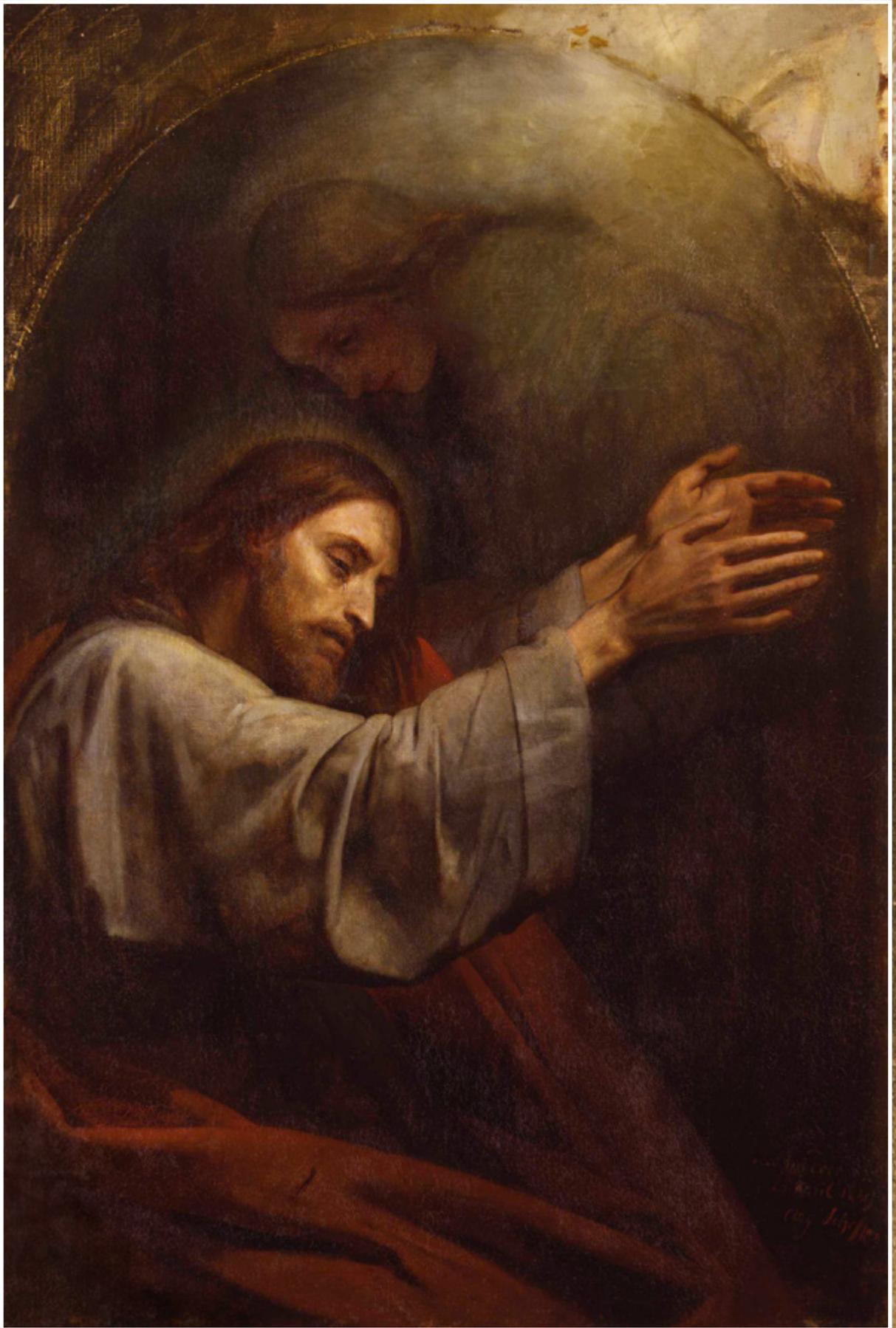
Learn to keep your spiritual account paid off at regular intervals rather than allowing it to collect interest and penalties.

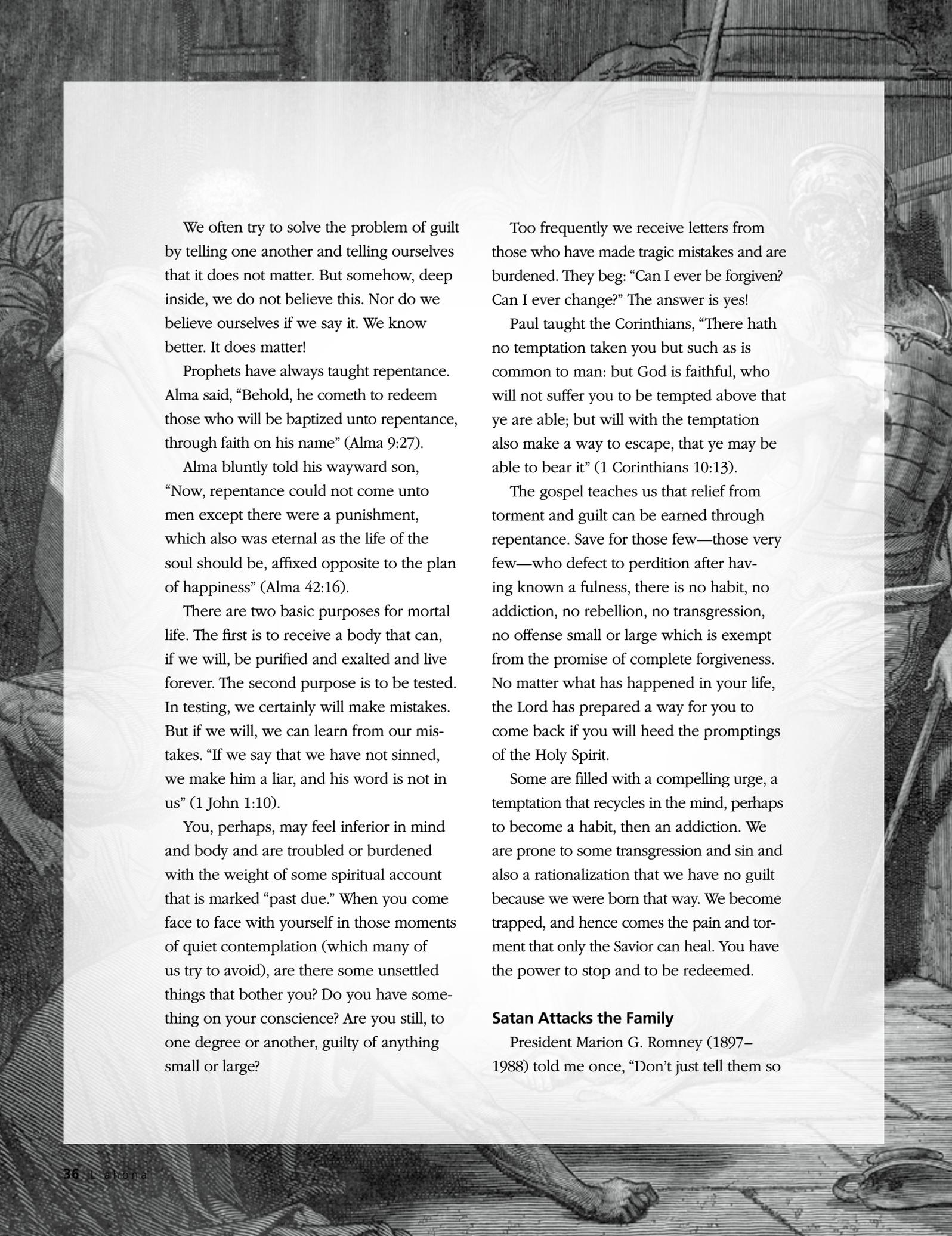
Because you are being tested, it is expected that you will make some mistakes. I assume that you have done things in your life that you regret, things that you cannot



even apologize for, much less correct; therefore, you carry a burden. It is time now to use the word *guilt*, which can stain like indelible ink and cannot easily be washed away. A stepchild of guilt is disappointment, regret for lost blessings and opportunities.

If you are struggling with guilt, you are not unlike the people of the Book of Mormon of whom the prophet said, “Because of their iniquity the church had begun to dwindle; and they began to disbelieve in the spirit of prophecy and in the spirit of revelation; and the judgments of God did stare them in the face” (Helaman 4:23).





We often try to solve the problem of guilt by telling one another and telling ourselves that it does not matter. But somehow, deep inside, we do not believe this. Nor do we believe ourselves if we say it. We know better. It does matter!

Prophets have always taught repentance. Alma said, “Behold, he cometh to redeem those who will be baptized unto repentance, through faith on his name” (Alma 9:27).

Alma bluntly told his wayward son, “Now, repentance could not come unto men except there were a punishment, which also was eternal as the life of the soul should be, affixed opposite to the plan of happiness” (Alma 42:16).

There are two basic purposes for mortal life. The first is to receive a body that can, if we will, be purified and exalted and live forever. The second purpose is to be tested. In testing, we certainly will make mistakes. But if we will, we can learn from our mistakes. “If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us” (1 John 1:10).

You, perhaps, may feel inferior in mind and body and are troubled or burdened with the weight of some spiritual account that is marked “past due.” When you come face to face with yourself in those moments of quiet contemplation (which many of us try to avoid), are there some unsettled things that bother you? Do you have something on your conscience? Are you still, to one degree or another, guilty of anything small or large?

Too frequently we receive letters from those who have made tragic mistakes and are burdened. They beg: “Can I ever be forgiven? Can I ever change?” The answer is yes!

Paul taught the Corinthians, “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it” (1 Corinthians 10:13).

The gospel teaches us that relief from torment and guilt can be earned through repentance. Save for those few—those very few—who defect to perdition after having known a fulness, there is no habit, no addiction, no rebellion, no transgression, no offense small or large which is exempt from the promise of complete forgiveness. No matter what has happened in your life, the Lord has prepared a way for you to come back if you will heed the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

Some are filled with a compelling urge, a temptation that recycles in the mind, perhaps to become a habit, then an addiction. We are prone to some transgression and sin and also a rationalization that we have no guilt because we were born that way. We become trapped, and hence comes the pain and torment that only the Savior can heal. You have the power to stop and to be redeemed.

Satan Attacks the Family

President Marion G. Romney (1897–1988) told me once, “Don’t just tell them so

that they can understand, tell them so that they cannot misunderstand.”

Nephi said: “For my soul delighteth in plainness; for after this manner doth the Lord God work among the children of men. For the Lord God giveth light unto the understanding” (2 Nephi 31:3).

So listen up! I will speak plainly as one called and under obligation to do so.

You know that there is an adversary. The scriptures define him in these terms: “That old serpent, who is the devil, . . . the father of all lies” (2 Nephi 2:18). He was cast out in the beginning (see D&C 29:36–38) and denied a mortal body. He has now sworn to disrupt “the great plan of happiness” (Alma 42:8) and become an enemy to all righteousness. He focuses his attacks on the family.

You live in a day when the scourge of pornography is sweeping across the world. It is hard to escape it. Pornography is focused on that part of your nature through which you have the power to beget life.

To indulge in pornography leads to difficulties, divorce, disease, and troubles of a dozen kinds. There is no part of it that is innocent. To collect it, view it, or carry it around in any form is akin to keeping a rattlesnake in your backpack. It exposes you to the inevitable spiritual equivalent of the serpent’s strike with its injection of deadly venom. One can easily understand, with the world being what it is, that you can almost innocently be exposed to it, read it, or view it without realizing the terrible consequences. If that describes you, I warn you to stop it. Stop it now!

The Book of Mormon teaches that all “men



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are instructed sufficiently that they know good from evil” (2 Nephi 2:5). That includes you. You know what is right and what is wrong. Be very careful not to cross that line.

Although most mistakes can be confessed privately to the Lord, there are some transgressions that require more than that to bring about forgiveness. If your mistakes have been grievous, see your bishop. Otherwise, ordinary confession, quietly and personally, will do. But remember, that great morning of forgiveness may not come all at once. If at first you stumble, do not give up. Overcoming discouragement is part of the test. Do not give up. And as I have counseled before, once you have confessed and forsaken your sins, do not look back.

The Savior Suffered for Our Sins

The Lord is always there. He has suffered and paid the penalty if you are willing to accept Him as your Redeemer.

As mortals, we may not, indeed cannot, understand fully *how* the Savior fulfilled His atoning sacrifice. But for now the *how* is not as important as the *why* of His suffering. Why did He do it for you, for me, for all of humanity? He did it for the love of God the Father and all mankind. “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13).

In Gethsemane, Christ went apart from His Apostles to pray. Whatever transpired is beyond our power to know! But we do know that He completed the Atonement. He was willing to take upon Himself the mistakes, the sins and guilt, the doubts and fears of all the world. He suffered for us so that we would not



have to suffer. Many mortals have suffered torment and died a painful, terrible death. But His agony surpassed them all.

At my age, I have come to know what physical pain is, and it is no fun! Nobody escapes this life without learning a thing or two about suffering. But the personal torment that I cannot bear is when I have come to know that I have caused another to suffer. It is then that I catch a glimpse of the agony the Savior experienced in the Garden of Gethsemane.

His suffering was different than all other suffering before or since because He took upon Himself all of the penalties that had ever been imposed on the human family. Imagine that! He had no debt to pay. He had committed no wrong. Nevertheless, an accumulation of all of the guilt, the grief and sorrow, the pain and humiliation, all of the mental, emotional, and physical torments known to man—He experienced them all. There has been only One in all the annals of human history who was entirely sinless, qualified to answer for the sins and transgressions of all mankind and survive the pain that accompanied paying for them.

He presented His life and in essence said, “It is I that taketh upon me the sins of the world” (Mosiah 26:23). He was crucified; He died. They could not take His life from Him. He consented to die.

Complete Forgiveness Is Possible

If you have stumbled or even been lost for a time, if you feel that the adversary

now holds you captive, you can move forward with faith and not wander to and fro in the world any longer. There are those who stand ready to guide you back to peace and security. Even the grace of God, as promised in the scriptures, comes “after all we can do” (2 Nephi 25:23). The possibility of this, to me, is the truth most worth knowing.

I promise that the brilliant morning of forgiveness can come. Then “the peace of God, which passeth all understanding” (Philippians 4:7) comes into your life once again, something like a sunrise, and you and He “will remember [your] sin no more” (Jeremiah 31:34). How will you know? You will know! (See Mosiah 4:1–3.)

This is what I have come to teach you who are in trouble. He will step in and solve the problem you cannot solve, but you have to pay the price. It does not come without doing that. He is a very kind ruler in the sense that He has paid the price necessary, but He wants you to do what you should, even if it is painful.

I love the Lord, and I love the Father who sent Him. Our burdens of disappointment, sin, and guilt can be laid before Him, and on His generous terms, each item on the account can be marked “paid in full.”

“Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” That is, Isaiah continued, “if ye be willing and obedient” (Isaiah 1:18–19).

Come unto Him

The scripture “learn wisdom in thy youth; yea, learn in thy youth to keep the commandments of God” (Alma 37:35) is an invitation attended by the promise of peace and protection from the adversary. “Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity” (1 Timothy 4:12).

Do not expect that all will go smoothly throughout your life. Even for those who are living as they should, it sometimes will be just the opposite. Meet each of life’s challenges with optimism and surety, and you will have the peace and faith to sustain you now and in the future.

For those who do not yet have all of the blessings you feel you want and need to have, I firmly believe that no experience or opportunity essential for redemption and salvation will be denied you who live faithfully. Remain worthy; be hopeful, patient, and prayerful. Things have a way of working out. The gift of the Holy Ghost will guide you and direct your actions.

If you are one of those struggling with guilt, disappointment, or depression as a result of mistakes you have made or blessings that have not yet come, read the reassuring teachings found in the hymn “Come unto Jesus”:

*Come unto Jesus, ye heavy laden,
Careworn and fainting, by sin oppressed.
He’ll safely guide you unto that haven
Where all who trust him may rest.*



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disappointment,
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*Come unto Jesus; He’ll ever heed you,
Though in the darkness you’ve gone astray.
His love will find you and gently lead you
From darkest night into day.*

*Come unto Jesus; He’ll surely hear you,
If you in meekness plead for his love.
Oh, know you not that angels are near you
From brightest mansions above?¹*

I claim, with my Brethren the Apostles, to be a special witness of the Lord Jesus Christ. That witness is reaffirmed each time I feel within myself or in others the cleansing effect of His sacred sacrifice. My witness, and that of my Brethren, is true. We know the Lord. He is no stranger to His prophets, seers, and revelators.

I understand that you’re not perfect, but you are moving along that road. Have the courage. Know that any person who has a body has power over one who has not.² Satan is denied a body; so if ever you are confronted with temptations, know that you outrank all those temptations if you will exercise the agency given to Adam and Eve in the garden and passed on to this very generation.

If you look forward with hope and desire to do that which the Lord would have you do—that is all that is expected. ■

From a devotional address, “Truths Most Worth Knowing,” delivered at Brigham Young University on Nov. 6, 2011. For the full text in English, go to speeches.byu.edu.

NOTES

1. See “Come unto Jesus,” *Hymns*, no. 117.
2. See *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 211.