

JUST WHAT THE DOCTOR ORDERED



ILLUSTRATION BY ALBERTO RUGGERI

By Charlotte Larcabal

Church Magazines

I hate going to the doctor. I always dread the fuss, the wait time, the shots, the orders to “take it easy.” When I was really little, I thought nurses and doctors were just mean people who thought I was a pin cushion, but as I got older I figured out they weren’t evil; they were helping. And I almost always felt better soon after seeing them. No matter how boring the waiting room was, how much I yelped getting a shot, or how disappointed I was when the doctor told me I needed to stay off my feet, in the end, it was always worth it.

Sometimes repentance might feel a bit like to a trip to the doctor.

A Joy or a Pain?

Instead of cringing when you think about gross-tasting medicine or sharp needles, do you cringe a little when you hear the phrases “racked with eternal torment,” “tormented with the pains of hell,” and “the gall of bitterness”? (see Alma 36:12–18). That’s how Alma described the beginning of his repentance, wasn’t it?

After the angel appeared to Alma and the sons of Mosiah, Alma remembered all of his sins and saw how he had rebelled against God. He was so miserable that he wished he could “become extinct both soul and body” (Alma 36:15). Ouch. That almost makes a doctor’s shots seem like getting a high five from Grandma. So why would Alma go on to labor “without ceasing, that [he] might bring souls unto repentance”? (Alma 36:24). Why would he want other people to experience something that had been so painful for him?

Perhaps it was because of what happened next.

He remembered his Savior, Jesus Christ.

“I cried within my heart: O Jesus, thou Son of God, have mercy on me. . . .

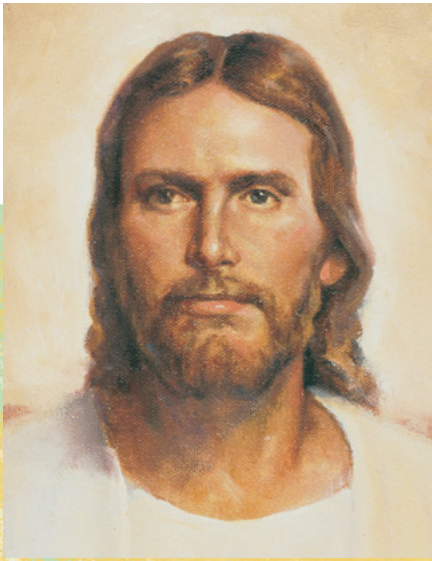
“And now, behold, when I thought this, I could remember my pains no more; yea, I was harrowed up by the memory of my sins no more.

“And oh, what joy, and what marvelous light I did behold; yea, my soul was filled with joy *as exceeding*

as was my pain!” (Alma 36:18–20; emphasis added). Alma learned that as difficult and even painful as it can be to face our sins, the joy we experience after is worth it. The joy he felt was more exquisite and sweet than anything he had ever felt before (see Alma 36:21).

Nothing to Fear

If people cringe at the thought of repentance, it may be because they focus on the painful part. Often repentance does require time and sometimes making amends takes a lot of humility and hard work, but as Elder Richard G. Scott (1928–2015) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught, “Repentance is not punishment. It is the hope-filled path to a more glorious future.”¹ President Russell M. Nelson, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, calls it “the sweet *blessing* of repentance.”² In other words, there is no reason to fear or avoid any aspect of repentance. No matter how difficult it is to face and make amends for our sins, the healing power of the Savior



through His Atonement will always be there to carry us through, and the joy we feel will completely overpower and overshadow any feelings of pain, embarrassment, or sorrow we may have had before.

For Your Own Good

Do you know what the phrase *Primum non nocere* means? If you're a doctor, you probably do. *Primum non nocere* is Latin for "first do no harm." It's a guiding principle for all medical practitioners, a promise they make. That doesn't mean they promise to never cause pain, but instead that everything they do will always be for their patient's well-being.

Do you think God and Jesus Christ make any promises like that? You better believe it! Just take a look at Isaiah

1:18; Isaiah 41:13; Romans 8:28; and 3 Nephi 13:14. (Seriously, look them up. And these are only a few of them!) The difference is, humans can sometimes make mistakes. But Jesus Christ and Heavenly Father are perfect, so you can be absolutely certain that everything They ask of you will be for your own good. Always. So when God prescribes a dose of repentance, it's because He knows it will bless your life. Repentance isn't about punishment. It's about healing, triumphing over weakness, putting off the natural man, and turning away from sin in order to turn to God.

"Embrace the Atonement of Jesus Christ and repentance as things that are to be welcomed and applied daily according to the Great Physician's orders," said Elder Jörg

Klebingat of the Seventy. "Establish an attitude of ongoing, happy, joyful repentance by making it your lifestyle of choice."³

When the Great Physician, Jesus Christ, writes you a prescription for repentance, don't let your fear of pain or humiliation get in the way. Trust His promises that even though it may hurt for a little while, with great mercies will He gather you (see 3 Nephi 22:7), and just like Alma, you will be filled with joy as exceeding as your pain (see Alma 36:19–20). ■

NOTES

1. Richard G. Scott, "Personal Strength through the Atonement of Jesus Christ," *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2013, 84.
2. Russell M. Nelson, "Repentance and Conversion," *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2007, 104; emphasis added.
3. Jörg Klebingat, "Approaching the Throne of God with Confidence," *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2014, 36.