

NO HARD FEELINGS

Bryant Thompson

“No Hard Feelings” is an inspiring folk ballad about finding peace in dying. The Avett Brothers ask: “When my body won’t hold me anymore. And it finally lets me free. Will I be ready?” and “When my feet won’t walk another mile. And my lips give their last kiss goodbye. Will my hands be steady?”¹ Amid these weighty questions, the songwriters offer a consistent theme—a determination to endure the anguish of this life with no hard feelings.

I reflected on the depth of this song as my brother, Erik Thompson, was in the throes of his battle with ALS, a progressive neurodegenerative disease that can rob you of your ability to function—to eat, drink, move, sit, stand, walk, talk, swallow, and even breathe.² This song caught my attention because ALS lends itself to hard feelings: It is fatal, but it is cruel and punishing well before that. If today is bad, tomorrow will be worse, almost assuredly. As your body withers, your hope holds on for dear life. Lisa Genova noted that ALS results in a “paralytic crawl to death,” while Mitch Albom wrote this harrowing description: “ALS is like a lit candle: it melts your nerves and leaves your body a pile of wax. . . . [Y]ou cannot support yourself standing. . . . [Y]ou cannot sit up straight. By the end, if you are still alive, . . . your soul, perfectly awake, is imprisoned inside a limp husk.”³

1. The Avett Brothers, “No Hard Feelings,” on *True Sadness*, American Recordings, 2014.

2. Robert H. Brown and Ammar Al-Chalabi, “Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis,” *New England Journal of Medicine* 377 (2017): 162.

3. Lisa Genova, *Every Note Played* (Simon & Schuster/Scout, 2018), 216.; Mitch Albom, *Tuesdays with Morrie: An Old Man, a Young Man, and Life’s Greatest Lesson* (Doubleday 1997), 10.

Drawing on the work of Paul Tillich, David Brooks noted that just when we think we have reached the lowest of lows, agony smashes through and thrusts us down to a new bottom floor with new pain that is as unfamiliar as it is agonizing.⁴ Life was once so promising—that is, before the bewildering incongruities and bitter ironies arrived. We start to ask: “Why me? Why this? Why now? . . . Did not God notice this torturous turn of events? And if He noticed, why did He permit it?”⁵ C. S. Lewis wrote that feeling neglected in our suffering can seem like we are in a long and desolate valley, only to discover that we are actually in a “circular trench” where there is no relief and no end.⁶ Anger enters. We hurt, we cry, and we might even rage. We become overwhelmed and completely exhausted. Just when we think we have reached our limit, hope finds us again and lets us catch our breath. We bask in the warmth of a compensatory blessing—but, soon, the storm clouds return. Anger enters again—as if through a revolving door. We are cast down to a new level of misery and we are not sure whether to be more dismayed at the persistence of our suffering or delighted at the tenacity of our hope.

Writing about the intersection of suffering and hope, Francine Bennion told a story about talking with a friend who, following brain surgery, had been left paralyzed on one side of her body and had severely impaired speech and sight. Bennion mentioned to her friend that she had been preparing to give a talk at the Brigham Young University Women’s Conference on the theology of suffering. Bennion’s friend replied that she would rather have the talk be about the “theology of—courage—hope—like looking out a window.” Bennion replied,

4. David Brooks, *The Second Mountain: The Quest for a Moral Life* (Random House, 2019), 64–65. See Paul Tillich, *The Shaking of the Foundations* (Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1955), 52–61.

5. Neal A. Maxwell, “Irony: The Crust on the Bread of Adversity,” *Ensign*, May 1989, 63.

6. C. S. Lewis, *A Grief Observed* (Harper and Row, 1961), 6.

“I hope it will be the same thing.” In the talk, Bennion noted that a useful theology of suffering helps us make sense of suffering in order to proceed with hope, compassion, and understanding. Bennion made the astute observation that learning to become more like our heavenly parents and living as they live will entail understanding and processing suffering in healthy and hopeful ways—suggesting that suffering does not just go away as we become more like God. Instead, as we start to become more similar to our heavenly parents, we develop an increased capacity to engage in, and triumph over, moments of suffering. To this point, she noted that the pathway to becoming more like our heavenly parents passes through—not around—suffering and that it is amid such suffering wherein we can learn to develop a better understanding of God and of ourselves.

According to Bennion, we chose to come to this earth because “we were willing to know hurt” and it is in knowing this hurt that helps us become more like our heavenly parents: they know hurt and, as a result, feel “more abundantly alive, with ultimate fulness of truth, joy, and love.” Bennion also suggests that “nobody is manipulating every human decision that would affect every human experience” because, if that were the case, “we would have the kind of existence now that Lucifer offered permanently”—one absent of suffering but also devoid of agency, choice, vitality, and joy.⁷

Our heavenly parents allow us to suffer because they want us to learn to know reality and to begin to enact and navigate daunting environments—and learn to find joy even amid such tribulation. This is the essence of mortality. Bennion noted: “If we are to be like God, we cannot live forever in fear that we may meet something that will scare us or that will hurt us. We have to be able, as he is able, to meet what comes of others’ agency, and of living in a lawful universe that allows

7. Francine R. Bennion, “A Latter-day Saint Theology of Suffering,” Brigham Young University Women’s Conference, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, Mar. 28, 1986, 212–231.

creation of a habitable planet only when it allows also the difficulties that come in natural operations of such a planet.”

As taught by Jeffrey R. Holland, suffering is the price we pay for divine growth. If we aspire to become like our heavenly parents, we must go through the type of suffering they have endured—and learn to endure it well just as they have learned to do. Holland makes this point as follows: “Lord, give me all thy choicest virtues, but be certain not to give me grief, nor sorrow, nor pain, nor opposition. . . . Lord, be careful to keep me from all the experiences that made Thee divine. And then, when the rough sledding by everyone else is over, please let me come and dwell with Thee, where I can boast about how similar our strengths and our characters are as I float along on my cloud.”⁸ Of supreme importance, in addition to learning how to endure hardship, we need a redeemer to overcome the harmful effects of this world—we need him if we are to endure the suffering that comes to us in mortality. Bennion wrote that the atonement of Jesus Christ allows us to endure “the falling, the hungering, the screaming, the crawling on the floor, the being disfigured and scarred for life psychologically or physically, and still survive and transcend it.”⁹

One way Erik tries to transcend his circumstances and awaken his hope is by taking a break in his in-home sauna. He turns up the heat to warm his aching body and turns on the music to comfort his weary mind. One evening, I sent the song “No Hard Feelings” to him to listen to as part of his nightly sauna routine. A few hours later, I received a text from him that filled me with awe. He had a veil-piercing experience as he listened to the song. Erik wrote: “I immediately made it my goal to simply live, and choose to have a mindset of, no hard feelings to the end!” He elaborated on his daily battles with anger, noting that “sometimes anger wins, but not today.” He said: “I know it will get

8. Jeffrey R. Holland, “Waiting on the Lord,” *Liahona*, Nov. 2020, 117.

9. Bennion, “Latter-day Saint Theology of Suffering.”

very difficult in the future to have this mindset, but I am determined to be grateful even when I suffer.” Reading Erik’s message was a vivid reminder that I have a front-row seat to watch a remarkable human being work through his suffering with heroic determination.

This front-row seat is both heartbreaking and awe-inspiring. It is heartbreaking because I continually think of what my brother is going through mentally, emotionally, and physically, and wish I could do something to soften the pain. I cry almost every day when I think about Erik’s plight. As I imagine his circumstances, I feel his pain sharply. The emotional contagion between us as close siblings feels overwhelmingly gripping. I have often hoped that I would eventually wake up and this would all be a bad dream. But that has not happened. This is all too real—and the tears seem to flow even when I would least expect them: watching one of my sons play a ball game where I quickly put on my sunglasses to hide my tears, sitting in a work meeting where I suddenly start to take copious notes so I can shield my watery eyes from view, eating dinner with my family where I immediately take a long sip from my cup hoping the tears will retreat back into my eyes, or even teaching a class where I jump to a class exercise earlier than anticipated just to buy a few minutes for my emotions to settle down. Tender feelings sneak up on me with such a great force that it feels emotionally violent.

It is heartbreaking because I think of what we used to do together. Oh, what I would give to see Erik hit an ace serve on the pickleball court and hear his clever trash talk, watch him dive into the corner of the racquetball court to make an acrobatic shot and hear him laud his athleticism, or observe him beat out a slow-rolling ground ball on the softball field and listen to him wonder out loud how he got such impressive genetics in the speed category (when I did not). I never realized how much I could long for what used to be regular occurrences—I yearn for the return of such idyllic days.

If I could have my wish, Erik would be fully healed. He would not have to deal with such physical misery and emotional angst; he would

not have to face such frequent bouts of fear. A few years ago, I was almost sure such healing would be his. One night, I knelt for several hours and pleaded with Heavenly Father for relief for my brother. I was certain that an answer came—an answer that promised relief. The spiritual confirmation felt so real and valid. Later, I felt impressed to give Erik a blessing of healing and, on a different occasion, participated in a blessing where a revered family member promised Erik that he “would be okay.” In as much as Erik still faces daunting daily struggles, I spend some time contemplating what it means to “be okay” because I still believe that promise but I am unsure as to what that means in terms of mortality. To this point, the suffering that comes along with seemingly unfulfilled spiritual expectations feels like a special form of suffering. It is quite jarring and unsettling when petitions to heaven do not go as your heart told you they would.

Nevertheless, I find great solace in this counsel from Holland: “There will be times in our lives when even our best spiritual effort and earnest, pleading prayers do not yield the victories for which we have yearned. . . . So while we work and wait together for the answers to some of our prayers, I offer you my apostolic promise that they are heard and they are answered, though perhaps not at the time or in the way we wanted. But they are always answered at the time and in the way an omniscient and eternally compassionate parent should answer them.”¹⁰

I have absolute confidence in our loving heavenly parents. I feel them beckoning to us with gentle and reassuring warmth: signaling they are here, they see us, they know us, and they love us in ways we cannot yet begin to understand.

In speaking about the nature of suffering and of our tendency to feel that nobody cares when we suffer, Holland expressed his belief that, during the atonement of Jesus Christ, the “father may never have been

10. Holland, “Waiting on the Lord,” 116.

closer to His Son than in these agonizing final moments of suffering.”¹¹ This is reassuring, even though the hurt remains very real. For Erik, he really does have some difficult days—and such days are only getting worse and more frequent. These are not fun days; they are not the days you post about on social media, share with friends, or even write about in your journal. These are hard days, excruciating days, even ugly days that are only seen by his innermost circle. As difficult as these days are, they are also bonding, connecting, and sacred. Our love for each other feels supported by unseen and holy beings. Even if our heavenly petitions are not always received as we had once hoped, our confidence in the existence of a benevolent, involved, and loving God has increased.

Even as our hearts feel more broken than ever, our love feels deeper. This experience is allowing for our souls to commune with each other at a different level. It feels loved-based and unifying. Even my crying has taken on a different form. I have gone from frequent crying that hurts my heart to daily crying that calms my mind and relieves my negative emotions. I am even becoming more willing to cry without taking cover behind my sunglasses. I have come to see crying as a self-soothing practice that flushes out stress, restores peace of mind, and clarifies my thinking even as it produces deep reflection and feelings of gratitude. I welcome a good cry. Crying helps me feel closer to heaven.

There is so much about Erik’s circumstances that is awe-inspiring. And there is ample evidence that the windows and doors of heaven have swung wide open. Therefore, these struggles do not deter me from continuing to seek for answers, miracles, and divine intervention. For me, there is a vibrant and emerging narrative regarding Erik’s immortal existence. That does not mean that I never grapple with hard feelings: The battle is real and it is often daily. Yet in my pursuit to resist the hardening of my own feelings, I am looking to my brother, Erik. Abundant are his reasons to cleave to hard feelings, but I see him beating

11. Jeffrey R. Holland, “None Were with Him,” *Ensign*, May 2009, 88.

them back. Even if human in his efforts, he is remarkably persistent in striving to resist hard feelings—and he is holding onto gratitude with everything he has.

Gratitude can be classified into at least two different types: episodic and persistent.¹² Episodic gratitude is a feeling of appreciation in response to a desired outcome. This type of gratitude is emotional and event-based—it can be intense but also fleeting. Persistent gratitude, however, is “a stable tendency to feel grateful” across contexts. Persistent gratitude emerges as a function of multiple and interrelated episodes of gratitude. Those with persistent gratitude develop appraisal tendencies based on the repeated pairing of a stimulus with an emotion—with future events often being interpreted through the lens of gratitude.

Dieter F. Uchtdorf encourages us to embrace “an overall spirit” of gratitude and points us to the Book of Mormon prophet Nephi, who, notwithstanding his immense suffering, did praise God “all the day long.” The positive effects of gratitude are abundant: It is liberating, helps us see things as they are, and enhances our perspective. Gratitude can “make life sweeter, more joyful, even glorious” while helping us “find a purifying drink of healing, peace, and understanding.”¹³ Empirically, gratitude can lead to increased psychological well-being, life satisfaction, sense of purpose, positive emotion, and relational connection as well as decreased shame, anxiety, and depression, especially if we also allow ourselves to experience the natural, even if difficult, emotions that come into our lives.¹⁴

12. Ryan Fehr, Ashley Fulmer, Eli Awtrey, and Jared Miller, “The Grateful Workplace: A Multilevel Model of Gratitude in Organizations,” *Academy of Management Review* 42 (2017): 361–381.

13. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “Grateful in Any Circumstances,” *Ensign*, May 2014, 70.

14. Martin E. P. Seligman, Tracy A. Steen, Nansook Park, Christopher Peterson, “Positive Psychology Progress: Empirical Validation of Interventions,” *American Psychologist* 60 (2005): 410–421. Sonja Lyubomirsky, *The Myths of*

Although gratitude is a potent predictor of positive outcomes, it cannot simply vanquish pain. Gratitude does not override the harsh conditions of mortality nor does it replace suffering—but it can accompany suffering as a nurturing companion.¹⁵ The interaction between suffering and gratitude is more of an “and” instead of an “or.” Erik can be grateful in his circumstances “and” wish he never had to go through such soul-crushing sorrow. He can be delighted by his joys “and” devastated by his distress. He can also rejoice that ALS will not be his unwelcomed companion forever. To this point, in a gathering with friends and family, Erik said, “My mortal body has ALS, but my immortal spirit does not. Holland wrote that “one day the dawn will break brightly and all shadows of mortality will flee” where we will become glorified and complete.¹⁶ The atonement of Jesus Christ makes the “and” possible in our lives—it offers a basis to be grateful and a reason to hold on to ultimate hope.¹⁷

Gratitude has a close connection with awe, the “feeling of being in the presence of something vast that transcends your current understanding of the world.”¹⁸ Awe is a powerful emotion that can be experienced through nature, birth, death, music, sacred mantras, spiritual experiences, intellectual epiphanies, athletic and artistic performances, collective effervescence, and moral beauty.¹⁹ John B. Bingham describes awe as relating to profound reverence and divine surprise while Ulisses Soares teaches that awe is “inspired by the

Happiness: What Should Make You Happy, but Doesn't, What Shouldn't Make You Happy, but Does (Penguin, 2013), 3–4.

15. Uchtdorf, “Grateful in Any Circumstances,” 70.

16. Jeffrey R. Holland, “Like a Broken Vessel,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2013, 40.

17. Neal A. Maxwell, “Hope Through the Atonement of Jesus Christ,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1998, 61.

18. Dacher Keltner, *Awe: The New Science of Everyday Wonder and How It Can Transform Your Life* (Penguin, 2023), xvi.

19. Keltner, *Awe*, xxv.

influence of the Holy Ghost” in that it encourages heavenly wonder, amazement, and righteous enthusiasm.²⁰

Our most potent experiences of awe tend to relate to moral beauty: observing others overcome adversity with courage.²¹ Moral beauty is something I see frequently when I spend time with Erik. He and I had a recent opportunity to attend the temple together. Given his inability to use his arms, I had the privilege of helping him through the session. At a key moment of our temple worship, we were making covenants by raising our right hand. I observed Erik struggle with all of his might to raise his hand. He did not get his hand all of the way up, but it was his humble determination that was so impressive. His quiet resolve was an act of holy consecration. He was giving everything he had to commune with his maker.

Another time I experienced awe with Erik was when I sent a question to him about football. Erik is a one-of-a-kind football genius. I was coaching the defense on my son’s football team and wanted to get Erik’s expertise about the best way to cover a certain offensive alignment. Erik replied by sending a picture of a hand-written note he drew on his phone. Typically a highly talented artist, Erik’s scribbles looked similar to what a toddler might draw—ALS had taken away his ability to use his hands. It was not an elegant drawing, but it was an act of love. I wept as I looked at it.

Then, there was the transcendent experience I had at Erik’s fiftieth birthday party. I had walked out to the parking lot to get something. As I walked back into the party, I heard a beautiful song, a sentimental and childhood favorite, carrying through the large speakers. The song was “Lord, I Hope This Day is Good” by Don Williams. I felt a very powerful spirit wash over me. I was hearing with my spiritual ears and seeing

20. John B. Bingham, “In Awe: The Astonishing Goodness of God,” *BYU Speeches*, Aug. 2021, 2; Ulisses Soares, “In Awe of Christ and His Gospel,” *Liahona*, May 2022, 115.

21. Keltner, *Awe*, xxv.

with my spiritual eyes for a time. Tears were streaming down my cheeks as I walked. It was as if my ancestors had descended on the party from the heavens above. And it was not just a few of them: It felt more like all of them at once. It was very overwhelming, but profoundly peaceful. The message was simple. God loves all of us very much and our ancestors are here to help us understand that. It was incredibly connecting and an unforgettable reminder that we are not forgotten.

In all instances, I felt part of something much larger than my self—I felt part of a shared space that I believe was occupied by Erik and heavenly beings. I felt tenderness and transcendence. I saw moral beauty and experienced collective effervescence. Scholars who study awe refer to these types of experiences as the “vanishing self” where we feel absorbed by a powerful force that is good, safe, protective, and loving. In this way, awe is paradoxical: We feel smaller in the vastness but bigger because the master of the vastness loves us.²² Awe increases self-knowledge and helps us become kinder, calmer, and more compassionate. Awe is also an antidote to emotional pain—it quiets chatter and hushes anxiety.²³

Suffering can facilitate instances of awe because it sets the stage for moments of moral beauty. We begin to see the many ways in which others suffer: We start to see that suffering is as complex as it is universal. To this point, this essay does not attempt to list the many ways in which we suffer nor does it seek to romanticize suffering. Suffering is miserable—and not all suffering leads to positive outcomes. Moreover, some suffering may require use of law enforcement and legal systems as well as changes in social norms and institutional structures. Suffering

22. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “You Matter to Him,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 19.

23. Maria Monroy and Dacher Keltner, “Awe as a Pathway to Mental and Physical Health,” *Perspectives on Psychological Science: A Journal of the Association for Psychological Science* 18, no. 2 (2023): 309–320.

can be soul crushing, with some forms of suffering being too difficult to talk about or even imagine. My heart extends to all who suffer.²⁴

I will also note my major reticence in writing this essay about suffering. I started writing it well over two years ago, but I wondered whether I had the audacity to write about suffering—such a sensitive and tender topic. Paralyzing is a word to describe my inability to get this essay going. I asked myself whether I had suffered enough to write about suffering. I really wrestled with this. I revisited this paper dozens and dozens of times but could only write a paragraph or so, if that, and would have to stop due to feeling very unsettled. Then, after listening to Dacher Keltner's book on awe and thinking of the power of the Atonement in ways I had not fully examined at that depth, I concluded that writing this essay had nothing to do with whether I had suffered enough and everything to do with the fact that Jesus Christ has suffered enough.²⁵ He certainly has and the ramifications of that are huge. Then, everything inside me, everything I had read on this topic, and everything I had reflected on, just seemed to start flowing.

My intention in writing this essay is to highlight two potential avenues to help mitigate the negative effects of suffering—gratitude and awe—and to affirm my belief that Jesus Christ is the ultimate deliverer from all suffering. In my view, adding gratitude and awe to the suffering equation facilitates a clearer pathway to escape hard feelings which, as noted by the Avett Brothers, “haven’t done much good for anyone” except to keep them “afraid and cold.”

The Avett Brothers are right: Harboring hard feelings does not help us. But how do we overcome them? Susan David's research on emotional agility helps us understand that we can learn to process difficult emotions in healthy ways—we can become familiar with painful emotions without being captivated by them and we can develop an

24. Bryant S. Thompson, “The Joy and Burden of Serving as Bishop: An Open Letter to Bishops,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 54, no. 3 (2021): 119.

25. Keltner, *Awe*.

increased awareness of their impact on us without being defined by them.²⁶ We can learn to distance ourselves from these difficult emotions while labeling them with precision and without judgment. As we do, we will begin to move away from embattled bitterness and toward gratitude and awe, even when our streams of suffering run deep.

As noted by Tillich, “Suffering introduces you to yourself and reminds you that you are not the person you thought you were.” Suffering offers “a larger narrative of change and redemption” wherein “we can suffer our way to wisdom” and experience our “first taste of nobility”—not because of the suffering per se, but because of our response to the suffering.²⁷ As we lean heavily on gratitude, welcome ways to experience awe, and allow ourselves to feel even our most difficult emotions, we might see that suffering really has dragged us to a different version of ourselves—a more sanctified version. Instead of breaking us, our bottom floor of suffering can break us open as we strive to “redeem something bad by turning it into something sacred”—turning darkness into holiness, trading beauty for ashes. Richard G. Scott taught, “So that the period of mortal testing and growth would yield its greatest benefit, you were taught and prepared for the circumstances you would personally encounter in mortality.”²⁸

Notwithstanding this beautiful truth, it is not always easy to remember the lessons we learned from our heavenly parents in the premortal realm. Mortal life is messy and suffering is aversive. If suffering came as a gentle request, I cannot think of anyone who would welcome it. In fact, the next time suffering knocks at my door, I will not want to answer. If it decides to come in anyway—not because a benevolent God wants me to suffer, but because I chose to live in a fallen world laden with infuriating unfairness—I will try to be like my

26. Susan David, *Emotional Agility: Get Unstuck, Embrace Change, and Thrive in Work and Life* (Penguin Random House, 2016), 5–7.

27. Tillich, *Shaking of the Foundations*, 52–61.

28. Richard G. Scott, “Truth Restored” *Ensign*, Nov. 2005, 78.

brother, Erik: cleave to genuine gratitude with all of my might and savor moments of awe while giving myself permission to feel the very difficult and raw emotions associated with this life.²⁹ I will also strive mightily to remember the premortal lessons I received from God. I know the Holy Ghost will help me remember what I learned about the exalting nature of suffering.³⁰ In fact, I feel that I get glimpses of this from time to time—and I am eternally grateful for such glimpses. I don't suppose any of this will take away my suffering, but I do think it will help me feel God's immense love for me. I also believe it will help me access latent reservoirs of divine strength that can come to each of us because we are children of God.

As noted by Holland, it is difficult to even imagine the type of joy that awaits us in our eternal home, yet, even in mortality, we can have a “sacred, revelatory, profoundly instructive experience with the Lord,” even in “the most miserable experiences,” even “when facing the most insurmountable odds and opposition.”³¹ Such transcendent outcomes are possible because the Savior has divine influence and inherent goodness—he is all-powerful and fully merciful.³² He “knows, understands, and feels every human condition, every human woe, and every human loss. He can comfort as no other. He can lift burdens as no other. He can listen as no other. There is no hurt he cannot soothe.”³³ He “intimately understands our every pain, affliction, sickness, sorrow, separation” and is deeply committed to ensuring all things work together for our good. To this point, Gerrit W. Gong recently told a Chinese story: “A man's

29. Gerrit W. Gong, “All Things for Our Good,” *Liahona*, May 2024, 41; Dale G. Renlund, “Infuriating Unfairness,” *Liahona*, May 2021, 41.

30. Jeffrey R. Holland, “‘Suffering is Exalting’ - Elder Jeffrey R. Holland (Q&A 2012),” posted Feb. 19, 2023, by True Millennial, YouTube, 4 min., <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CRLDdNk5G4Y>.

31. Jeffrey R. Holland, “Lessons from Liberty Jail,” BYU Speeches, Sept. 2008, 3–4.

32. Jeffrey R. Holland, “The Laborers in the Vineyard,” *Ensign*, Apr. 2012, 31–33.

33. Tad R. Callister, *The Infinite Atonement* (Deseret Book, 2000), 209.

son finds a beautiful horse. How fortunate, the neighbor says. We'll see, says the man. Then the son falls off the horse and is permanently injured. How unfortunate, the neighbors say. We'll see, says the man." This story continues where what appears to be an unfortunate turn of events becomes a fortunate circumstance. We can have confidence that all things can eventually work together for our good because, notwithstanding the very real trials of mortality, we have a savior who is good.³⁴

I can think of no better example of moral beauty than our Savior, Jesus Christ—he suffered beyond our ability to comprehend and he did not shrink. He wanted to shrink, but he didn't. Strengthened by the covenant he made with Heavenly Father to atone, Jesus Christ held on because of the joy that was set before him: to rescue us from despair, succor us with divine love, and absorb all of our wounds that we might enjoy an eternal connection with those who have tenderly nurtured us (and us them) through the crucibles of mortality.³⁵ We will forever cleave to, cherish, and appreciate our compassionate co-suffers in mortality—and we will forever adore He who delivered us from that suffering. Our Savior took upon himself “the weight and agony of ages and generations” that he might heal us completely—with no lingering scars, no lasting bitterness, and no hard feelings.³⁶

34. Gong, “All Things for Our Good,” 41.

35. Callister, *Infinite Atonement*, 209. Russell M. Nelson, “Joy and Spiritual Survival,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2016, 81; Renlund, “Infuriating Unfairness,” 41.

36. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: John Taylor* (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2011), 39.

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