

# "I Can Do All Things through Christ"

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Dear sisters, and a few brethren, it is with great joy and enthusiasm that I speak to you today. Frightening though the task may be, I view it a real blessing to share with you my thoughts and ideas and my testimony. We have had a glorious time in the last two days and have learned many good things. We have felt the Spirit of the Lord touch our hearts and whisper to our minds the truth of what we have heard.

I want to thank Emily and Tyler Castleton for the beautiful song they have sung to us with its marvelous message: "Hold on; the light will come." I hope you listened to every word.

A few years ago a young boy was lost in a cave for several days. Searchers spent frantic hours trying to find him in the total blackness of the cave. Finally, he was found and brought to safety. It was learned that he had gotten separated from those with lights and had wedged himself into a crevice—not seeing anything or knowing which way to go.

During the time of searching for this boy, I tried to imagine what it would be like to be in total darkness. How terrifying and disorienting it would be. This life experience we are all having right now can get to be pretty dark at times. I have been by the side of my elderly mother as she laid her husband of fifty years (my father) to rest and wondered how she could go on without him. I have been with my sister as she suffered the sudden, unexpected death of her eight-year-old son—her firstborn—and wondered, *How could this happen to such a lovely, lively boy?* I have listened to the pain of a woman who wanted desperately to be a mother and yet did not get the wish of her heart. I know single women who want to be married and have a family, and year after year there is no realization of this desire. As we visit with women all over the world, we learn that no one is immune to sorrow and suffering of all kinds. In fact, I have come to realize that challenges and adversity, as Joseph Smith said, are "at the very core of saintliness" and are an integral part of God's plan for us. When Joseph Smith was in Liberty Jail, he cried to the Lord for comfort, and the Lord gave it to him, saying, "If the very jaws of hell shall gape open the mouth wide after thee, know thou, my son, that all these things shall give thee experience, and shall be for thy good" (D&C 122:7).

There is a lot of the "natural man" attitude in me and there are times when I have

thought, *This certainly does not feel like it's for my good.* Then I think of other women and what they have done. For example, think of Eve. Her calling was to be the "mother of all living" (Genesis 3:20). A rather daunting task, don't you think? I have only four children, and yet there have been times when I have felt like "the mother of all living." And it's not as if she had a handbook to rely on! Yet she was steadfast and true, pushing on despite hardship and heartbreak. And in the end she "blessed the name of God" and "was glad, saying: Were it not for our transgression we never should have had seed, and never should have known good and evil, and the joy of our redemption, and the eternal life which God giveth unto all the obedient" (Moses 5:11–12).

I think also of Noah's wife, whose name is not recorded for us. Sometimes we forget that she must have stood by him during all the years of preaching and building, and I cannot even begin to imagine what housekeeping was like on the ark! And then, when they were once again on dry ground, she and her family began all over again. She, too, was a faithful daughter of God who endured and overcame by faith.

Surely all of us are moved by the fortitude and faithfulness of the women of the Restoration, whose calling it was to lay the foundations of the Church in the latter days. Many of them repeatedly sacrificed their homes in Kirtland, in Missouri, in Nauvoo, and elsewhere. They packed up their households and began again and again, with more than mortal courage.

Faithful women in every age have learned they could "do all things through Christ." And that is the subject of my talk today, taken from Philippians 4:13: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

In my backyard is an extensive rock garden with huge rocks. My grandchildren love to climb these rocks. For them, it is like mountain climbing because the rocks are so big and they are so small. One day five-year-old Will was scrambling up and down with relative ease, but his younger brother, James Patrick, who was only two at the time, was having a great deal of difficulty. The rocks were so large compared to his little two-year-old body. Now, James Patrick is a determined young man and was not about to give up, but he was making no progress, and his hands were getting scratched and beginning to bleed from his attempts. His knees got banged every time he slid back down a rock.

His wise and watchful mother was surveying the scene from the kitchen window. As she saw his frustration about to overtake him, she stepped outside and said, "You can do it, James Patrick. Keep trying. You can do it. I know you can." Spurred on by her words of encouragement, he gritted his teeth, made one more attempt, and got himself to the top. His mother went back into the house, and James Patrick played at the top of the yard for a while, where I was pulling weeds. When he decided he'd had enough and started to climb down, I heard him quietly whisper to himself as his foot started to slip, "I can do it. I can do it."

Sisters, we live in a world filled with rocks of all sizes. It was created that way by divine design, as a proving ground for our faith and a vital step in our eternal progression. One of the great tasks of our mortal life is to learn that, through the grace and mercy of

Jesus Christ, we can climb every rock, or overcome every challenge, that we encounter.

Some of the rocks in our lives are self-chosen. For example, most mothers would admit that their children can be both their greatest blessing and their greatest trial. Many of the things mothers slog through on a daily basis—fixing meals, doing laundry, running the perpetual carpool, helping with homework, sitting up late at night with sick babies or heartsick teenagers—are natural outgrowths of the choice to have children. It's not always convenient to be a mom, and it's certainly not always easy. Yet we would make that choice again if we were starting from scratch, rocky though it may be at times. Sometimes it helps to remind ourselves that we really wanted those children.

I remember when I was wheeled out of the delivery room after giving birth to my first child. I had two thoughts. The first one was, *Did anyone get the license number of the truck that just hit me?* My second thought was, *Wow, my mother did this for me.* Suddenly I had an incredible increase in appreciation and love for my mother and realized I had a tremendous debt to repay her in love, respect, devotion, and service.

The same idea of self-chosen challenges applies to single women. I know many who have chosen professions that are rewarding, but I don't know one whose job is problem-free. Climbing over rocks is part of the mortal experience.

Another mortal reality is that we will encounter in our earthly sojourn some climbs that we would not have chosen for ourselves, over rocks that leave our hands and knees scraped and bleeding. This will happen even to faithful, tithe-paying, temple-attending, scripture-reading, Homemaking-meeting-supporting, 100-percent-visiting-teaching Latter-day Saint women. In the words of Carlfred Broderick, "The gospel of Jesus Christ is not insurance against pain. It is [a] resource in [the] event of pain" (*My Parents Married on a Dare* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1996], 123).

My friend Chris Stevens, a beautiful young mother of six who lost her beloved husband to cancer two years ago, knows something of the resources available to those who trust in the Lord. "Never forget that the Lord sees the big picture," she writes. "Never, ever doubt how intricately the Lord can be involved in your life if you allow him. He knows exactly when and where to place the next piece in the puzzle of life to best complete the picture." Chris goes on to bear testimony of the Lord's loving, guiding hand in putting together puzzle pieces that made it possible for her young family to go on without their father. Here is one of the many faith-promoting incidents she relates:

"In the fall, just three weeks before his death, one of Robert's colleagues at work called to tell me of their concern and love for him. They all wanted to do something for him that would relieve his mind of concerns for his family. They had learned that we were in a new home that did not have any landscaping, and they wanted to put in our front yard. A couple of days later this same man called back to report that the response had been so good they would also be doing the side yard. The next day he called to say, 'Be ready for a lot of people to show up Saturday; we have enough sod coming to do your whole yard.' On Saturday, about seventy-five of Robert's co-workers and family members showed up ready

to work. When they left three hours later our whole yard was sodded, there was money left over for trees, tulip bulbs had been planted, and a new lawn mower and weed eater had been put together."

Chris continues: "On Sunday, October 29, our oldest child, Ryan, had his missionary farewell. Two days later, as Robert lay dying, his boss came to our home to hand-deliver a letter from the president of the company. He hand-delivered the letter so that it would arrive before Robert passed on. The company had voted to forgo a Christmas party and had placed the money that would have been spent on that party in an account for us. The balance of the account was \$10,000. The tremendous burden of the cost of the funeral was lifted off my shoulders with this unbelievably generous gift."

Chris closes her letter: "No, I don't doubt the love of my Father in Heaven. I don't doubt what part he can play in our lives. He may bless us through other people, but he is the director. Bitterness and doubt have no place in trials when we know that all experiences are for our good in the eternal perspective" (used by permission).

I think it's safe to say that none of us would choose to scale the rock that Chris faced, that of losing a husband or other loved ones. Yet sometimes such rocks surface in our paths, and we have no choice but to find a way over. Chris's letter displays a great deal of faith and hope.

Elder Neal A. Maxwell has said: "Daily hope is vital, since the 'winter quarters' of our lives are not immediately adjacent to our promised land. An arduous trek still awaits, but hope spurs weary disciples on. Jesus waits with open arms to receive those who finally overcome by faith and hope. His welcome will consist not of a brief, loving pat, but, instead, being clasped in the arms of Jesus" (*Ensign*, November 1994, 36).

I love to work in my garden and plant things and then watch them blossom into something wonderful. I have learned that one must get to know one's garden in order to have success in cultivating it. There is a spot where for years I planted one thing after another without much success. When, over time, I came to understand the subtleties of that spot—how long the sun shone on it each day, when it fell into shade, how much water could be expected there, and the characteristics of the soil—then I was able to select plants that could flourish there.

There is another Garden we must come to understand in order to experience the fullness of its import in our lives. We must all come to realize in a profound way what Jesus did for us in the Garden of Gethsemane and on Calvary's hill.

Consider the account preserved for us of Christ's last hours on earth. In Matthew 26 we read of how he approached Gethsemane with his disciples, "and he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me" (Matthew 26:37–38). What do you suppose it means to be "sorrowful . . . unto death?" Perhaps there are those listening today who have felt that same kind of soul-crushing

sorrow. Try to imagine the weight of that sorrow, and notice that even Christ, who obviously had a strong and loving relationship with his Father in Heaven, sought additional strength from his earthly friends. Jesus pleads, "Tarry ye here and watch with me." Has there ever been a time in your life when you have said to someone, "Don't leave me; stay with me"? We crave a loved one's presence when a spiritual night falls.

The scripture continues, "And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed." Now, this is not the peaceful, contemplative prayer we often see in the paintings: Christ "fell on his face." "And [then Jesus] prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matthew 26:39). The Savior clearly knows what it is like to come up against a rock that seems too hard to climb. And, as in all things, his response is the perfect example for our own response to trials: "Not as I will, but as thou wilt." Almost two thousand years later, the Lord described the pain of that experience: "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; which suffering caused myself . . . to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit" (D&C 19:16–18).

Sometimes when we come up against adversity, it helps us just to know someone else understands what we are going through.

In the book of Alma in the Book of Mormon, chapter 7, we read of Christ and his mission on earth. Verse 11 tells us, "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 his people."

Verse 12: "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 succor his people according to their infirmities."

When we tremble, when we bleed, when we suffer, either in body or in spirit, he understands. None is better qualified to see us through our mortal trials than he who "descended below all things" (D&C 88:6). If we truly understand what happened in the Garden of Gethsemane, we will have confidence in his sure promise found in Hebrews 13:5: "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

Just as my little grandson's mother did not immediately rush out and lift him up over the rocks, so our Savior does not remove our trials from us, though he clearly could. We are promised our trials will not be more than we can handle, but they cannot be less if we are to fulfill the measure of our creation.

President Spencer W. Kimball, who experienced so many severe trials in his life, said: "I am positive in my mind that the Lord has planned our destiny. Sometime we will fully understand. And when we see back from the vantage point of the future, we shall be satisfied with many of the happenings of this life that are so difficult for us to comprehend"

(*Faith Precedes the Miracle* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1969], 105).

The landscape of Southern Utah is filled with spectacular reminders of the refining nature of trials. In Arches National Park, harsh elements—wind, ice, and rain—have penetrated cracks in stone and dissolved the weaker materials, leaving the stronger materials, to create structures so magnificent that people travel from all over the world to see them.

Similarly, the hardships we encounter in our life are the very tools the Lord uses, like a master sculptor, to shape us into the divine creations we are destined to become.

C. S. Lewis says, "God who foresaw your tribulation has specially armed you to get through it, not without pain, but without stain" (*Letters of C. S. Lewis*, ed. W. H. Lewis [New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1966], 219).

President Howard W. Hunter said: "Every generation since time began has had things to overcome and problems to work out. Furthermore, every individual person has a set of challenges which sometimes seem to be earmarked for him individually. We understand that in our premortal existence.

"When these experiences humble, refine, and teach us, they make us better people, more grateful, loving, and considerate of other people in their own times of difficulty.

"Even in the most severe of times, problems and prophecies were never intended to do anything but bless the righteous and help those who are less righteous move toward repentance" (*New Era*, January 1994, 6).

In Romans 5:8 we read, "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Think of the tremendous trust he shows in us. He trusted us that his anguish in the Garden of Gethsemane and his sacrifice on Calvary's hill would not have been in vain.

Sometimes our earthly vision is limited. It is difficult for us to understand fully Christ's promise. In 1 Corinthians 13:12 we read, "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known." When we come face to face with our Savior, we will understand every rock in our mortal path, why they were placed there, and how they helped sculpt us. Then we will more fully understand the Atonement and we will thank him—oh, how we will thank him—for his sacrifice on our behalf. We will also gain perspective and realize that the actual size of our rocks was much smaller than it appeared to be when we faced them.

My grandson Peter once held a small pebble in front of his eye as he looked into the evening sky and said to his father, "Look, Dad, this rock is as big as the moon!" Like Peter's pebble, trials often block our vision and seem "as big as the moon." With eternal perspective, we see each trial only as a tiny piece of a beautiful mosaic made up of a variety

of earthly experiences.

When Moses complained to the Lord that he was slow of speech and therefore ill-equipped to lead the children of Israel, God replied, "Who hath made man's mouth? . . . have not I, the Lord?" (Exodus 4:11). In similar tone, the Lord comforted Moroni's fear of inadequacy in writing the record of his people by reminding him that "I give unto men weakness that they may be humble; and my grace is sufficient for all men that humble themselves before me; for if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them" (Ether 12:27). The Savior trod the rockiest ground of all, the path of Calvary. Having experienced mortality, he is "acquainted with grief" (Isaiah 53:3) and asks only our meek petition for his rescuing arm.

When it seems we cannot climb any further, and we slide to the bottom of the rocks with banged and bloodied knees, he whispers, "You can do it!" And he knows that we can, because his grace is the enabling power that makes all things possible.

As Bruce Hafen explains in his book *The Broken Heart*: "The Savior's victory can compensate not only for our sins but also for our inadequacies; not only for our deliberate mistakes but also for our sins committed in ignorance, our errors of judgment, and our unavoidable imperfections. Our ultimate aspiration is more than being forgiven of sin—we seek to become holy, endowed affirmatively with *Christlike* attributes, at one with him, like him. Divine grace is the only source that can finally fulfill that aspiration, *after all we can do*" (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1989, 20; emphasis added). His words echo Nephi's testimony, "We know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do" (2 Nephi 250:23). These words give us the proper perspective on the interweaving of grace and agency: we must do what we can, knowing that the Lord will make up what must surely be a huge deficit.

When Jesus lived on the earth he taught using uncomplicated words and stories that all could understand, knowing that open hearts would receive the full impact of his message (Matthew 13:3–16). His sermons and parables provide elegantly simple instructions that we might compare to a mountain climber's tools: They are compact, multipurpose, and applicable to any number of possible situations. We can distill from the New Testament a selection of these tools to carry in our spiritual backpack as we hike the steep and rocky, as well as the smooth, trails of our earthly excursion. Here are a few I have chosen, though Christ's teachings afford a wealth of others.

The first tool I recommend: *Seek God's peace*. The world teaches us to seek peace in possessions, wealth, and physical comforts and pleasures. As Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God" (1 Corinthians 3:19). God's peace transcends worldly peace, for it is not based on conditions which are subject to change unexpectedly. As Christ consoled his disciples prior to his crucifixion, "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).

Joseph F. Smith describes the difference between the Lord's peace and that of the

world. He writes: "There is no such thing as physical rest in the Church of Jesus Christ. Reference is made to the spiritual rest and peace which are born from a settled conviction of the truth in the minds of men. We may thus enter into the rest of the Lord today, by coming to an understanding of the truths of the gospel." He further writes that those who seek peace "will not find satisfaction in the doctrines of Men. Let them seek for it in the written word of God; let them pray to him in their secret chambers, where no human ear can hear, and in their closets petition for light; let them obey the doctrines of Jesus. . . . This course will bring peace to their souls, joy to their hearts, and a settled conviction which no change can disturb" (*Gospel Doctrine* [Salt Lake City: 1939], 126).

Another tool: *Trust in the Lord*. Christ has traversed the route we are now climbing and knows where the obstacles lie. Brigham Young taught departing missionaries "that he who goes forth in the name of the Lord, trusting in him with all his heart, will never want for wisdom" (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1954], 323).

How completely our unnamed sister in the New Testament exhibited her trust when more than wisdom was wanting. Having suffered illness for twelve years, depleted as to her physical strength and worldly goods, she said, "If I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole" (Mark 5:28). Jesus, not seeing her but feeling her use of his power, sought her in the throng: "Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole: go in peace" (Mark 5:34). By remembering and trusting the Divine One who wishes to shape us in his image, we gain courage to overcome the obstacles we encounter in life and receive a promise of exaltation described in Alma 36:3: "Whosoever shall put their trust in God shall be supported in their trials, and their troubles, and their afflictions, and shall be lifted up at the last day."

The next tool: *Forgive an enemy*. Forgiveness is a cleansing act that softens our heart and frees us from the past, allowing us to focus on the present—the only time in which we can take action. Grudges we carry are additional weight that slows us as we climb, an unnecessary burden we must shed if we are to progress. Knowing this, Christ instructed that if someone should "trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him" (Luke 17:4). The apostles were as challenged by the difficulty of this simple admonition as we are. "Lord," they responded, "Increase our faith" (Luke 17:5). Joseph Smith taught us to "ever keep in exercise the principle of mercy, and be ready to forgive our brother on first intimations of repentance . . . ; and should we even forgive our brother, or even our enemy, before he repent or ask forgiveness, our Heavenly Father would be equally as merciful unto us" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1938], 155).

Another tool: *Give thanks*. Give thanks for God's gifts to you. Do you recall the story of the ten lepers who called to Jesus as he passed through their village, pleading, "Master, have mercy on us"? (Luke 17:13). Jesus did, and he caused them to be healed. "And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back . . . and fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks. . . . And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine?" (Luke 17:15–17). No matter how bleak the landscape of our lives may



periodically appear, grateful eyes can find a spot of beauty somewhere. Searching for the beauty in our lives, finding it, and giving sincere thanks is invigorating and refreshing exercise for the soul.

The last tool I recommend today: *Feed my lambs*. When the risen Christ sat with his disciples on the shore of the Sea of Tiberias, he asked Peter if Peter loved him. The response was quick and heartfelt: "Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee." Jesus responded, "Feed my lambs." He repeated that injunction to Peter: "Feed my sheep." "Feed my sheep" (John 21:15–17). We may sometimes feel burdened and overwhelmed by the multitude of duties jostling for our attention. We feel pressure to keep up with standards real and imagined, external and self-imposed.

But remember that the gospel in its purest form consists of the simple teachings of one wearing tattered clothes and having bare feet, speaking without pretense and in gentle tones the loving message of his Father: Trust in me. Love one another. Forgive him. Go in peace. Feed my lambs. These are simple tools he has provided us to help us find our way back to him.

Toward the close of his ministry, the apostle Paul said, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing" (2 Timothy 4:7–8). Notice that he says nothing about winning the fight or the race, only about completing it honorably. In fact, he implies that all the contestants can be winners, that a crown is laid up "not to [him] only" but to all who look forward to the coming of Christ. Indeed, "the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong" (Ecclesiastes 9:11) but "unto him that endureth to the end will [the Lord] give eternal life" (3 Nephi 15:9). We don't have to be fast, we don't have to show great prowess, but we do have to keep climbing. You can do it!

In his book, *Believing Christ*, Stephen Robinson tells us: "In making the gospel covenant, we become part of a team whose captain and quarterback is Jesus Christ, a cosmic Heisman Trophy winner who throws nothing but touchdowns. If we are on his team, we will go undefeated." But we have "to be on *his* team, not [our] own and not somebody else's." Brother Robinson says further, "When we become one with Jesus Christ, spiritually we form a partnership with a joint account, and his assets and our liabilities flow into each other" (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992, 29, 25).

In her book *The Story of My Life*, Helen Keller relates snatches of memories of the illness that took her sight and hearing when she was nineteen months old, and dim recollections of how the world looked and sounded. She writes: "Gradually I got used to the silence and darkness that surrounded me and forgot that it had ever been different, until she came, my teacher, who was to set my spirit free. During the first nineteen months of my life I had caught glimpses of broad, green fields, a luminous sky, trees and flowers which the darkness that followed could not wholly blot out. If we have once seen, 'the day is ours, and what the day has shown'" (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1954

My dear sisters, we have once seen. Every now and then the Spirit whispers to us of remembered light. We are not lost in a black cave. We know the source of all light! If we could truly recall for even a few moments some dim memory of our premortal existence, we would do anything to assure our return to the Father who sent us here. If we could thrust aside the veil and get even an inkling of who we were before we came to earth, we would be that much closer to knowing ourselves as Christ knows us.

Remember little James Patrick and his mother? Just as he repeated to himself over and over, "I can do it," we need to trust the Lord when he promises that we can overcome our mortal trials. "God is faithful," Paul reminds us, "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). Like the child's mother who recognized his ability to climb the rocks if he would just keep trying, the Lord knows you individually and personally. He knows what you can bear. He knows what strengths you have; and, even though many of us foolishly try to hide them, he knows your weaknesses as well. He would not ask you to climb any rock without preparing a way for you to accomplish it (see 1 Nephi 3:7). He knows that you can succeed, because he has already paid the price that covers all the conditions of mortality, including the rocks.

I love this year's conference theme, "May Christ lift thee up, and may his sufferings and death, and the showing his body unto our fathers, and his mercy and long-suffering, and the hope of his glory and of eternal life, rest in your mind forever" (Moroni 9:25). We've talked about Christ's "sufferings and death." We need to remember that none of the rest of what has been said here has any meaning in the absence of that infinite and eternal atonement.

Bruce Hafen writes: "The Atonement . . . makes possible the infusion of spiritual endowments that actually change and purify our nature, moving us toward that state of holiness or completeness we call eternal life or Godlike life. At that ultimate stage we will exhibit divine characteristics not just because we think we should but because that is the way we are" (*Broken Heart*, 18). Hence we have hope of his glory and of eternal life, not because we have finally climbed high enough all by ourselves but because we have "come unto Christ, and [become] perfected in him" (Moroni 10:32).

The next phrase of our theme, though, is a more obscure one. What does Christ's "showing his body unto our fathers" have to do with our hope of eternal life? To fully understand the import of this passage, we can turn to 3 Nephi 11, which details the Savior's appearance to the Nephites following his resurrection. After he had introduced himself as "Jesus Christ, whom the prophets testified shall come into the world," he invited the people to "arise and come forth unto me, that ye may thrust your hands into my side, and also that ye may feel the prints of the nails in my hands and in my feet, that ye may know that I am the God of Israel, and the God of the whole earth, and have been slain for the sins of the world. And it came to pass that the multitude went forth, and thrust their hands into his side, and did feel the prints of the nails in his hands and in his feet; and this they did do, going forth one by one until they had all gone forth, and did see with their eyes and did feel with their hands, and did know of a surety and did bear record, that it was he, of whom it was

written by the prophets, that should come" (3 Nephi 11:10, 14–15).

Then he called for one of those faithful prophets, Nephi, who was among the multitude, to come forward, and in one of the tenderest scenes imaginable, "Nephi arose and went forth, and bowed himself before the Lord and did kiss his feet" (3 Nephi 11:19).

There are many lessons in those few verses of scripture. First, we learn from Christ's own testimony that he is the God not just of the Israelites but of every one of the children of earth. We understand that he was slain as a sacrifice for our sins and that the body he took up out of the grave was the same one that had been laid down, with the prints of the nails and the sword still evident as a witness of his identity. This is one chief element of our hope of eternity: the indisputable reality of his own resurrection.

Now, picture the multitude—a "great multitude," we read in verse 1 of the chapter—going forth to feel the nail prints and to thrust their hands into his side. They didn't just send a representative up to the front to do this for them. Every one of them, one by one, filed past and experienced this solemn ritual. It would have taken many hours. Can you imagine the patience and love of our Savior to submit to such a thing? I can envision him looking lovingly into the eyes of each person who came forth, saying a few kind words to heal each soul and ignite the flame of testimony in every heart. Can there be any question of his concern for us as individuals? Can we suppose that "borrowed light" would ever be enough for us, when he took such great pains to be sure that every single person there could bear a personal witness?

Finally, let's think about Nephi for a minute. This was the faithful prophet whose ministry had begun more than thirty years earlier, when the lives of the faithful were threatened unless the sign of Christ's birth were given. He had been with them through that crisis, through the terrible and frightening era of the Gadiantons, and through the subsequent deterioration of the Church due to pride. He had borne powerful testimony and cried repentance to a generation steeped in abomination, raising his brother from the dead and performing many other mighty miracles, which only made the wicked people angrier. For more than thirty years he had remained faithful to the cause to which he had been called.

Picture him now among the multitude. The Lord whom he had served all these long, persecution-filled years had finally come, as he promised.

Can you imagine the feelings of Nephi's heart when the Savior called him by name and invited him to come forward? Was there any question in his mind that Jesus Christ knew him personally and recognized the work he had done?

My dear sisters, to each individual one of you, I testify that our Savior's knowledge of you is no less personal. He knows the sacrifices you have made and are making. He recognizes the efforts you make to keep a Primary class in order, to teach a two-year-old to pray, to help out at the cannery so that his children will be fed, to get a concept through to a Sunday School class full of teenagers. He knows how you've worked and the discipline required to be worthy to attend his temple. Won't all those efforts seem worth it when one

day he calls you to come before him?

His knowledge of you goes beyond a catalog of your deeds. He knows you individually and completely. He understands your darkest hours when things seem as black as the cave mentioned earlier. He understands when you are feeling unworthy or forgotten or depressed or desperate or alone. He constantly and gently invites you to open up those dark recesses of your heart to him that he may fill them with his light. You can't shock him. You can't surprise him. He won't turn away from you in disgust, shaking his head and saying, "Oh, this is worse than I thought. There's nothing I can do here." When he healed the sick, he often forgave their sins as well. His healing extends to the crippled heart just as surely as to the crippled leg.

All this we learn because of "the showing his body unto our fathers." How grateful I am for the Book of Mormon, which preserves for us this miraculous account! "Hold on; the light will come."

A composer by the name of Paul Manz adapted the twenty-second chapter of Revelation to music using these words:

*E'en so, Lord Jesus, quickly come,  
And night shall be no more;  
They need no light, nor lamp, nor sun,  
For Christ will be their all.  
E'en so, Lord Jesus, quickly come.*

Now, as we leave this wonderful conference, may "his mercy and long-suffering, and the hope of his glory and of eternal life, rest in [our minds] forever" (Moroni 9:25). May we feel the peace, his peace, that comes from a true knowledge of our Lord and his atoning sacrifice. May we be lifted up in him, that we may lift each other over all the rocks we encounter in the paths of our mortality. May you never forget that you can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth you is my humble prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.