

went off, and I am almost afraid of another [mission] call.' Sure enough, a few hours later some of my neighbors, who had been to a meeting in Salt Lake City called in and told me that my name was amongst a number of names who were called today to go south on a mission to make a new settlement and raise cotton. We were to start right away."

He records, "*I looked and spit, took off my hat and scratched [my head] and thought and said; 'All right'*" ("Robert Gardner Jr. Self History and Journal," 35; italics added).

Robert Gardner knew what it meant to deal with change in his life. He followed the counsel of the Brethren, accepting calls to serve when it was not convenient. He had a great love for the Lord and demonstrated strong, unbending faith with amazing good humor and grace. Robert Gardner Jr. went on to become a leading pioneer in the colonization effort of southern Utah. It is he and countless pioneers like him who give us inspiration to carry on and confront fearlessly the many changes and challenges which come into

our lives. As we move forward and "get on with our lives," may we be obedient, faithful, and cheerful is my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

I might add to Brother Snow's comments that a descendant of Brother Gardner, Hal Gardner, came to my mission in Canada. The first assignment he had was to go to the area where the original Brother Gardner joined the Church and then came to the United States. Elder Gardner who was in our mission also served as the president of a mission.

The choir and congregation will now sing "Redeemer of Israel." Following the singing, we will be pleased to hear from Sister Barbara Thompson, second counselor in the Relief Society general presidency. Following her remarks, Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will address us.

The choir and congregation sang
"Redeemer of Israel."

Barbara Thompson

"His arm is sufficient"

Many years ago while serving on the Relief Society general board, I was on an assignment to teach and train some Relief Society and priesthood leaders. We had arrived just in time for the meeting to begin, after having spent the morning teaching in another city.

I was the first speaker, following the opening song and prayer. The opening song was announced as "The Time Is Far Spent."

I was not familiar with the title of this hymn and thought that it was odd that this was to be the opening song. I hadn't even

spoken, and already they were singing that the time was far spent!

As we began singing the song, I soon realized that it referred to the little time that is remaining to publish the gospel message and bring souls to Christ. The words of the fourth verse ran through my mind the whole evening and many times since then. It says:

Be fixed in your purpose, for Satan will
try you;
The weight of your calling he perfectly
knows.
Your path may be thorny, but Jesus is
nigh you;

His arm is sufficient, tho demons oppose.

His arm is sufficient, tho demons oppose.¹

The message of that verse is that whatever happens in life, Jesus Christ has the power to save. Through His divine sacrifice, He has provided the way for us to gain eternal life. Truly, His work is “to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.”² He has asked for our assistance in helping one another do the things that will lead to eternal life.

Last September in the general Relief Society meeting, Sister Beck outlined three things to help us in our goal to obtain eternal life. They are:

1. “Increase in faith and personal righteousness.”
2. “Strengthen families and homes.”
3. “Serve the Lord and His children.”³

This also means to seek out and care for the poor and needy.

We know Satan will tempt and try us as we seek to do these things, but the Lord has promised that He will strengthen us. He will help us.⁴

Increase in faith and personal righteousness

As a child I was taught by my parents that my Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ love me. I was taught that “I am a child of God.”⁵ I can’t remember when I didn’t know this. They taught me that Jesus Christ is our Savior and only through Him can we be saved.⁶

I was also taught that in order for my faith to increase, I needed to pray every day. In fact, I needed to pray always.⁷ I was taught that as I read and studied the scriptures, my knowledge and testimony of the truthfulness of the gospel would grow. I was taught to love God and that I could show my love by keeping His commandments.⁸ I also learned as a child about the importance of the temple. In my

youth I learned that making and keeping sacred temple covenants would keep me on course to eternal life.

Each of us must follow these principles throughout our lives to increase our faith and personal righteousness.

Strengthen families and homes

It is the responsibility and blessing of each of us to strengthen our families and homes. Each of us is in a different family situation. Some families have a mother and father with children at home. Some couples no longer have children at home. Many members of the Church are single, and some are single parents. Others are widows or widowers living alone.

No matter what our family looks like, each of us can work to strengthen our own families or help in strengthening others.

Some ways to strengthen families are illustrated by the following example. I had an assignment in the Boise, Idaho, area. After training on Saturday afternoon, I stayed in the home of my niece and her family. That evening before the children went to bed, we had a short family home evening and a scripture story. Their father told about the family of Lehi and how he taught his children that they must hold fast to the iron rod, which is the word of God.⁹ Holding fast to the iron rod would keep them safe and lead them to joy and happiness. If they should let go of the iron rod, there was danger of drowning in the river of dirty water.

To demonstrate this to the children, their mother became the “iron rod” that they must cling to, and their father played the role of the devil, trying to pull the children away from safety and happiness. The children loved the story and learned how important it is to hold fast to the iron rod.

After the scripture story it was time for family prayer. Their mother reminded the children to pray for the bishop, who was having serious eye problems. Three-year-old Brooklyn offered the prayer that

evening. She thanked Heavenly Father for their blessings, and then she fervently asked Him to “bless the bishop because his eyes are broken.”

The next morning we got to sacrament meeting and got seated. Brooklyn and her five-year-old sister, Kennedy, looked up on the stand and saw the bishop standing there. The girls pointed to the bishop and excitedly said to their mother, “Look, there’s the bishop.” Then a knowing look passed between these two little girls that seemed to say “We prayed for the bishop, and now he is better.” They prayed in faith, knowing that Heavenly Father would hear their humble prayers.

Scriptures, family home evening, and family prayer will strengthen families. We need to take every opportunity to strengthen families and support one another to stay on the right path.

Serve the Lord and His children, and seek out and care for the poor and needy

Throughout His mortal life the Savior taught that we should care for one another and help one another. He healed the sick, caused the lame to walk, restored sight to the blind, and unstopped the ears of the deaf. He taught the people the gospel. He blessed the people and performed many mighty miracles.¹⁰

There are opportunities everywhere to help those in need. I submit to you that at some time in our lives, each of us will be poor in some way and will need the help of another person. For “are we not all beggars?”¹¹

President Spencer W. Kimball said: “God does notice us, and he watches over us. But it is usually through another person that he meets our needs. Therefore, it is vital that we serve each other.”¹²

Last summer when I was away from home, a fierce wind and rainstorm blew through our neighborhood. A huge tree had fallen from my neighbor’s yard, filling my yard and knocking down power lines.

The tree needed to be removed before the damage could be repaired and power restored to my home.

Early in the morning I called my brother, who planned to find some equipment and come as soon as he could. I also called my bishop. Within minutes my bishop, home teacher, former stake president, and 10 men from my ward were there with their chain saws and made quick work of this disaster. My visiting teachers brought in dinner that evening. Many more men from the high priests group, the elders quorum, and the neighborhood came on subsequent evenings to assist me and my family in cleaning up the mess.

I was needy on that occasion. I needed help from others. My discouragement turned into joy and gratitude. I felt loved and cared for. These people were quick to recognize one in need. They lived their testimony and demonstrated the reality of their covenants.

At Church headquarters we often receive thank-you notes from people not of our Church who have been served by you after a flood, hurricane, earthquake, or other disaster. Thank you for always being willing to serve, love, give, and thus be a true disciple of Jesus Christ.

We must be “fixed in [our] purpose”¹³ as we seek to increase in faith and personal righteousness, strengthen our families and homes, and serve the Lord and His children. Though Satan may oppose our efforts, I testify of Jesus Christ and the power of His atoning sacrifice, enabling us to do His will and magnifying our efforts in the process. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. “The Time Is Far Spent,” *Hymns*, no. 266.
2. Moses 1:39.
3. See Julie B. Beck, “Fulfilling the Purpose of Relief Society,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2008, 109–11.
4. See Isaiah 41:10–14.

5. "I Am a Child of God," *Hymns*, no. 301.
6. See Mosiah 3:17.
7. See 3 Nephi 18:15, 18–19; Doctrine and Covenants 10:5.
8. See John 14:15.
9. See 1 Nephi 8:2–37.
10. See Matthew 4:23; 9:35; Luke 4:40; John 2:23; Mosiah 3:5; 3 Nephi 17:7–9; 26:15; Doctrine and Covenants 35:9.
11. Mosiah 4:19.
12. Spencer W. Kimball, "The Abundant Life," *Ensign*, July 1978, 4.
13. "The Time Is Far Spent," *Hymns*, no. 266.

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland

Thank you, Sister Thompson, and thanks to the remarkable women of this Church.

The Savior's solitary task

Brothers and sisters, my Easter-season message today is intended for everyone, but it is directed in a special way to those who are alone or feel alone or, worse yet, feel abandoned. These might include those longing to be married, those who have lost a spouse, and those who have lost—or have never been blessed with—children. Our empathy embraces wives forsaken by their husbands, husbands whose wives have walked away, and children bereft of one or the other of their parents—or both. This group can find within its broad circumference a soldier far from home, a missionary in those first weeks of homesickness, or a father out of work, afraid the fear in his eyes will be visible to his family. In short, it can include all of us at various times in our lives.

To all such, I speak of the loneliest journey ever made and the unending blessings it brought to all in the human family. I speak of the Savior's solitary task of shouldering alone the burden of our salvation. Rightly He would say: "I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me. . . . I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold [me]."¹

Rejection and betrayal

As President Uchtdorf so beautifully noted earlier, we know from scripture that Jesus's messianic arrival in Jerusalem on the Sunday preceding Passover, a day directly analogous to this very morning, was a great public moment. But eagerness to continue walking with Him would quickly begin to wane.

Soon enough He was arraigned before the Israelite leaders of the day—first Annas, the former high priest, then Caiaphas, the current high priest. In their rush to judgment these men and their councils declared their verdict quickly and angrily. "What further need have we of witnesses?" they cried. "He is [worthy] of death."²

With that, He was brought before the gentile rulers in the land. Herod Antipas, the tetrarch of Galilee, interrogated Him once, and Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor in Judea, did so twice, the second time declaring to the crowd, "I, having examined him before you, have found no fault in this man."³ Then, in an act as unconscionable as it was illogical, Pilate "scourged Jesus, [and] delivered him to be crucified."⁴ Pilate's freshly washed hands could not have been more stained or more unclean.

Such ecclesiastical and political rejection became more personal when the citizenry in the street turned against Jesus as well. It is one of the ironies of history