

The Enabling Power of the Atonement

By Lauren Soffer

When people speak of the Atonement, they often speak of sin and the redemptive powers of the Atonement. This aspect of the atonement is crucial to our eternal Salvation and to our ability to return to live with our Father in Heaven again. Through the Atonement, we can be clean of our sins once more and able to live in God's presence.

When people speak of the Atonement, they sometimes also speak of immortality. Through the Atonement, Jesus Christ broke the bonds of death, so that we too may be resurrected in perfect bodies.

But I want to speak about a third aspect of the Atonement which is sometimes referred to as the enabling power of the Atonement.

For years, I had been searching for a diagnosis for a slew of strange and debilitating symptoms. My doctors thought I had some sort of autoimmune disease, but they weren't sure which one. Then, about a year and a half ago, I was hospitalized with a serious skin infection on my neck. The infection caused the unknown disease plaguing my body to suddenly get much worse. I woke one morning to discover that I was too weak to lift my left leg off the hospital bed. My right leg shortly followed.

As the severe weakness spread up my body, I knew I was in trouble when I started to lose my voice. Before long the muscles in my chest were so weak and tired that I couldn't keep breathing on my own. My doctors rushed me to intensive care where they placed me on a machine that breathed for me for the next 7 days. I was

subsequently diagnosed with a disease called Myasthenia Gravis in which the immune system attacks the connections between the nerves and muscles causing severe weakness.

So why am I telling you this story? This experience makes me think of the Atonement in several ways. It reminds me of this scripture from 2 Nephi 25:23:

“We know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do” ([2 Nephi 25:23](#)).

After I had done all that I could to and taken every last breath I could on my own, something outside myself breathed for me. And by doing so, saved me. Using the Atonement is much like this. When we are too worn out by life to take even more breath, Christ’s Atonement enables us to breath some more. This is the enabling power of the Atonement.

Elder Bendar writes:

“[Grace is] a word that occurs frequently in the New Testament, especially in the writings of Paul. The main idea of the word is divine means of help or strength, given through the bounteous mercy and love of Jesus Christ.

“It is through the grace of the Lord Jesus, made possible by his atoning sacrifice, that mankind will be raised in immortality, every person receiving his body from the grave in a condition of everlasting life. It is likewise through the grace of the Lord that individuals, through faith in the atonement of Jesus Christ and repentance of their sins, receive strength and assistance to do good works that they otherwise would not be able to

maintain if left to their own means. This grace is an enabling power that allows men and women to lay hold on eternal life and exaltation after they have expended their own best efforts.” ([The Atonement and the Journey of Mortality](#))

How does Christ’s Atonement have this enabling power? It is because through the Atonement that Christ received divine understanding of each of us. Through the Atonement, Christ suffered for far more than our sins alone. Bender writes:

“The Savior has suffered not just for our iniquities but also for the inequality, the unfairness, the pain, the anguish, and the emotional distresses that so frequently beset us. There is no physical pain, no anguish of soul, no suffering of spirit, no infirmity or weakness that you or I ever experience during our mortal journey that the Savior did not experience first. You and I in a moment of weakness may cry out, “No one understands. No one knows.” No human being, perhaps, knows. But the Son of God perfectly knows and understands, for He felt and bore our burdens before we ever did. And because He paid the ultimate price and bore that burden, He has perfect empathy and can extend to us His arm of mercy in so many phases of our life. He can reach out, touch, succor—literally run to us—and strengthen us to be more than we could ever be and help us to do that which we could never do through relying upon only our own power.

“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

“Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

“For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Matthew 11:28–30).” ([The Atonement and the Journey of Mortality](#))

Words cannot express how much comfort this knowledge brings me. Often times with the illness I suffer, I’m tempted to feel so alone. Like no one could possibly understand what I endure. But in truth, my Savior knows exactly what I am going through. He has already suffered all of it. He knows what the sheer terror of being too weak to breathe feels like. Of how helpless that felt. And, because he understands so precisely, he was able to give me exactly the kind of comfort and strength I needed to get through that experience.

He knew to fortify me with warm feelings of comfort and courage that I would be okay. He knew to prompt friends and family to visit me. He knew just how to love me through the ordeal. As it says in Alma 7:11-14:

“11 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.

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.

13 Now the Spirit knoweth all things; nevertheless the Son of God suffereth according to the flesh that he might take upon him the sins of his people, that he might blot out their transgressions according to the power of his deliverance; and now behold, this is the testimony which is in me.” ([Book of Mormon, Alma 7:11-14](#))

Because Christ suffered and even died for me, he could succor me according to my infirmities. What a great blessing that is. That we don't have to feel alone in our infirmities, but instead have a Savior that can nurture us through our darkest hours because he has already endured them and so much more.

So how do we utilize the enabling power of the Atonement in our lives? There are five steps that I've come up with: repent, submit, pray for help, have faith, and act.

First we have to repent. D&C 19:16-19 reads:

“For 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, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit—and would that I might not drink the bitter cup, and shrink—

“Nevertheless, glory be to the Father, and I partook and finished my preparations unto the children of men” ([Doctrine & Covenants 19:16–19](#)).

To use the Atonement, it is required that we repent for our sins and take the upon ourselves the name of Jesus Christ. The sacrifice required of us is nothing more or less than a broken heart and a contrite spirit.

Next, we have to submit to the will of the Lord. As it says in Mosiah 3:19:

“19 For the natural man is an enemy to God, and has been from the fall of Adam, and will be, forever and ever, unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and putteth off the natural man and becometh a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord, and becometh as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father.” ([Book of Mormon, Mosiah 3:19](#))

It isn't always easy to submit. It is often frightening to let go of the perceived control we have in our lives and turn our will over to our Heavenly Father. It helps me to remember that Heavenly Father can see the whole picture and has a plan for me. From my limited point of view, my life might look like abstract paint daubs where, from His eternal perspective, my life is a painting of a beautiful garden. With that knowledge, it's far easier to submit to his will and trust that he will ultimately know what is best for me.

Once you submit, the next step is to pray for help. Now there are lots of ways to pray for help. Sometimes, I am tempted to pray for God to just fix everything. “God,” I might say, “just make this all better. I don't care how or what has to happen. Just fix it.” But I find I get much better results when I pray for the ability to solve the problem myself. Elder Bednar touched on this when he said:

“I come to understand and employ the enabling power of the Atonement in our personal lives, we will pray and seek for strength to change our circumstances rather than praying for our circumstances to be changed.

We will become agents who act rather than objects that are acted upon (see 2 Nephi 2:14).” ([The Atonement and the Journey of Mortality](#))

Next, we have to have faith that this enabling power will come. Moses 1:39 reads:

“behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” ([The Pearl of Great Price, Moses 1:39](#)).”

If we have faith that this is true, we can have faith that the Atonement is here to bless us and help us overcome obstacles we couldn't surmount otherwise.

Finally, we must show our faith by acting. This is so vitally important. We can't just sit back and passively wait for the Atonement to bless our lives. We need to actively seek it out. Seek to understand it and apply it. Act in our lives with the faith that the Atonement will get us that extra mile if we allow it to work in our lives.

If we allow the Atonement to work in our lives, it will make the seemingly impossible, possible. Elder Cecil O. Samuelson Jr of the Seventy says:

“His perfect mortal life devoid of sin, the shedding of His blood, His suffering in the garden and upon the cross, His voluntary death, and the Resurrection of His body from the tomb made possible a full Atonement for people of every generation and time.

The Atonement makes the Resurrection a reality for everyone. However, with respect to our individual transgressions and sins, conditional aspects of the Atonement require our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, our repentance, and our compliance with the laws and ordinances of the gospel.” [What Does The Atonement Mean To You?](#)

Brothers and sisters, on this Easter Sunday, I sit before you with a testimony that Jesus is the Christ. That he died for our sins and was resurrected that we might return to live with our Father in Heaven again.

I have a testimony that it is that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do. That through the enabling power of the Atonement we are able to still receive life giving oxygen when we can no longer breathe on our own.

I have a testimony that if we repent, submit, pray for help, have faith, and act, the enabling power of the Atonement will work go to work in our lives.

Yesterday I went through the Temple for the first time and received my Endowment. I am so grateful especially for Temples on Earth again today and for the special Spirit I was able to feel there.

I know that the Book of Mormon is true. That it is another testament of Jesus Christ. That the Gospel has been restored. That Thomas S. Monson is a prophet of God on earth today.

I want to leave you with one of my favorite scriptures from 2 Nephi 22:2:

"Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid; for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; he also has become my salvation."

[\(The Book of Mormon, 2 Nephi 22:2\)](#)

And I say this in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.