

The Atonement – Sweetening the Bitter

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The Atonement is not just for sinners

Tasting the bitter is a deliberate part of life

- Moses 6:55 (Lord to Adam)
 "and they taste the bitter, that they may know to prize the good"
- What does that mean?
 - Just because you're good doesn't mean things won't happen to you!

Sources of bitterness in our lives

(From: "Beauty for Ashes: The Atonement of Jesus Christ," Ensign, Apr. 1990, pg 7.):

- Sin
 - One end of the spectrum
 - Our fault
 - We have talked about this
- Adversity
 - Other end of the spectrum
 - no fault of our own
 - Natural causes (earthquake, weather)
 - Actions of someone else
 - The man whose brakes on his truck failed
- Unwise choices, hasty judgments, mistakes, disappointments
 - In between ends of the spectrum
 - some degree of fault, sometimes no fault

The Power to heal – "Beauty for ashes"

- Isaiah 61:1-3

"he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound;... to comfort all that mourn... to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness "
- Scripture portrays the Atonement as not just for Sinners
 - Bruce Hafen (1st Quorum of 70):

"The Savior's atonement is thus portrayed as the healing power not only for sin, but also for carelessness, inadequacy, and all mortal bitterness. The Atonement is not just for sinners." (Beauty for Ashes: The Atonement of Jesus Christ," Ensign, Apr. 1990, pg 7.)
- Robert Millet:

"To put it simply, the Atonement does more than fix the mistakes. It does more than balance the scales. It even does more than forgive our sins. It rehabilitates regenerates, renews, and transforms human nature." (Grace Works. pg 95)

- Boyd K Packer:
 "So many are like the immigrant woman who skimped and saved and deprived herself until, by selling all of her possessions, she bought a steerage-class ticket to America.
 She rationed out the meager provisions she was able to bring with her. Even so, they were gone early in the voyage. When others went for their meals, she stayed below deck—determined to suffer through it. Finally, on the last day, she must, she thought, afford one meal to give her strength for the journey yet ahead. When she asked what the meal would cost, she was told that all of the meals had been included in the price of her ticket." (Grace Works. pg 95)

- Don't be like the immigrant woman with the Atonement!
- Testimony: "Beauty for ashes"

How the Atonement "sweetens the bitter"

- Sometimes we understand what but now how
- How:
 - Christ understands and knows *how* to succor us
 - It is through grace (divine gift), something we can receive now
 - Bitterness removed in the same way as for sin
 - Cry out
 - While we remember the experience, the pain is taken away
 - Must forgive others
 - Take upon us his yoke
 - Learn of him & walk in the meekness of his Spirit

"That he may know how to succor his people"

- Alma 7:11-12 (Alma the Younger)
"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."
 - succor: go to the aid of; relieve
 - Atonement allows us to give away the pain – receive succor
 - He understands
 - We can not say – "you don't understand"
 - When we have someone who understands us it lightens our minds
 - He has been there
 - We can not say – "you don't know what it is like"
 - We have a companion in our trials and burdens

You are not alone

- Isaiah 53:4
" he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows"

Grace - "After all we can do"

- 2 Nephi 25:23

"for we know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do"

- Bruce Hafen:

"The Atonement can heal the effects of tasting all of this bitterness. This healing power ... can also compensate, "after all we can do," not only for the consequences of our sins, but also for the harmful effects of our ignorance and neglect." (Beauty for Ashes: The Atonement of Jesus Christ," Ensign, Apr. 1990, pg 7.)

- "after" not a preposition of time but rather of separation (logical)

- We can receive grace now – it is not:

- Stephen Robinson:

"a cherry on top added at the last moment as a mere finishing touch to what we have already accomplished on our own without any help from God" (Believing Christ: The Parable of the Bicycle and Other Good News, 91)

- But we must do "all we can do"

- Stephen Robinson:

"Thus, the correct sense of "2 Nephi 25:23 would be that we are ultimately saved by grace apart from whatever we manage to do. Grace is not merely a decorative touch or a finishing bit of trim to top off our own efforts—it is God's participation in the process of our salvation from its beginning to its end." (Believing Christ: The Parable of the Bicycle and Other Good News, 91)

"I could remember my pains no more"

- Learn from how the Atonement takes away the pain of sin

- Same source (Atonement) for the removal of pain & bitterness

"Racked" and "harrowed up"

- Alma 36:12-13

"I was *racked* with eternal torment, for my soul was *harrowed up* to the greatest degree and *racked* with all my sins"

- Racked – like stretched on a rack (torture device)
- Harrowed – what a harrow does to a field

"Cried within my heart"

- Alma 36:18

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

- We need *explicitly* to "cry out"
- Within our hearts
- Verbalize out loud

"I could remember my pains no more"

- Alma 36:19

"I could *remember my pains* no more; yea, I was *harrowed up* by the memory of my sins *no more*"

- Did *not* say he couldn't remember his sins
 - No longer harrowed up when he thought of his pains
 - Memory of the pain, not the sins taken away

- D&C 58:42

"I, the Lord, remember them no more"

- The Lord remembers no more, doesn't say we won't remember
- Sometimes we think we should not be able to remember our sins

Filled with joy and light

- Alma 36:20-21

"what *joy, and what marvelous light* I did behold; yea, my soul was filled with joy as exceeding as was my pain!

Yea, I say unto you, my son, that there could be nothing so *exquisite and so bitter* as were my pains. Yea, and again I say unto you, my son, that on the other hand, there can be nothing so *exquisite and sweet* as was my joy"

- Atonement replaces
 - Pain with joy
 - bitter with sweet

We must forgive others and give up bitterness

- D&C 64:8-10

"ye ought to forgive one another; for he that forgiveth not his brother his trespasses standeth condemned before the Lord; for there remaineth in him the greater sin.

I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men"

- Ephesians 4:31-32

"Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:

And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you"

- To get rid of the pain we must forgive and give it up

- Boyd K Packer:

"Some frustrations we must endure without really solving the problem. Some things that ought to be put in order are not put in order because we cannot control them. Things we cannot solve, we must survive. If you resent someone for something he has done—or failed to do—forget it. Too often the things we carry are petty, even stupid. If you are still upset after all these years because Aunt Clara didn't come to your wedding reception, why don't you grow up and forget it? If you brood constantly over a loss or a past mistake, look ahead—settle it. We call that forgiveness. Forgiveness is powerful spiritual medicine. To extend forgiveness, that soothing balm, to those who have offended you is to heal. And, more difficult yet, when the need is there, forgive yourself! I repeat, "John, leave it alone. Mary, leave it alone." Purge and

cleanse and soothe your soul and your heart and your mind and that of others. A cloud will then be lifted, a beam cast from your eye. There will come that peace which surpasseth understanding." ("Balm of Gilead," Ensign, Nov. 1987, 16)

- Alma 41:10-15 (Alma the Younger)
 - If we are in the gall of bitterness we must give it up to receive the comforts of the Atonement for that which we "send out will return again unto you"

"Come unto me ... and I will give you rest"

- Matt 11:28
"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

Lift burden

When we are "heavy laden" with sin or with other, when we "come unto [him]" and give up the burden:

- No more weighed down – we find "rest unto [our] souls"

"Swallowed up in Joy"

- Alma 31:38 (Alma, Sons of Mosiah, Zeezrom, Amulek, Alma's sons)
"And the Lord provided for them that they should hunger not, neither should they thirst; yea, and he also gave them strength, that they should suffer no manner of afflictions, *save it were swallowed up in the joy of Christ.*"
 - Childbirth (example)
 - pain swallowed up in the joy of birth of a child
 - The refining heat may come but our pain may be "swallowed up in the joy of Christ" making the burden light that we may endure it well

"Take my yoke upon you...ye shall find rest unto your souls"

- Matt 11:29

"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."

"He doth immediately bless you"

- Mosiah 2:24

"he doth require that ye should do as he hath commanded you;"

- To take upon us the yoke of Christ we must submit to his will and keep the commandments

"for which if ye do, he doth immediately bless you;"

- The Lord in turn "doth immediately bless [us]" - making that yoke light indeed

"Learn of me... walk in the meekness of my Spirit"

- D&C 19:23

"Learn of me, and listen to my words; walk in the meekness of my Spirit, and you shall have peace in me."

- Study Christ
- Do as he did
 - Service, Service Service
- We *must* be humble (meekness)
- Turning to Christ better than any self help book

Summary

- The Atonement is not just for sinners
 - Tasting the bitter is a deliberate part of life
 - Sources of bitterness range from sin on our part to acts which we have no responsibility for or control of
 - The Atonement has power to heal and provide beauty for ashes
- How the Atonement "sweetens the bitter"
 - Christ understands and knows *how* to succor us
 - It is through grace (divine gift), something we can receive now
 - Bitterness removed in the same way as is for sin
 - Turn to Christ (Cry out)
 - While we remember the experience, the pain is taken away
 - Must forgive others
 - Must let go of the bitterness
 - Take upon us his yoke
 - Learn of Him & walk in the meekness of his Spirit

References

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