

From the October 4, 2010 Issue

Life's a Pain and then You Die

Life's a pain and then you die! I'm sure you have seen some version of that wording on a t-shirt or coffee cup, and of course I am using some tact! Ha-Ha! For this issue I was given the assignment of writing on some aspect of the Atonement of Jesus Christ, and I couldn't help but relate a recent family experience I had with one of my daughters to help you understand its important influence on our present human lives, and especially as it relates to why "Life is a pain and then you die."

My youngest daughter Autumn texted me a few hours into school one day asking to come home because she had a migraine headache. I went to get her, and on the way home engaged her in conversation about the reason for the headache. She was pretty sure that the migraine came from the fact that she had been borrowing her older sister's non-prescription glasses and wearing them a little too often. I agreed with her (in part because I had already urged her to stop wearing those glasses that she really didn't need), and then we had a discussion as to how glasses are great when you need them, but not the greatest when you don't.

Realizing the pain she was in (and having already given her the Tylenol she needed as soon as I saw her), I asked her why babies don't come out of the womb with a literal pair of glasses on. She got the point, started laughing, and then answered "Because they're not meant to and glasses aren't natural!" "Right!" I said, as I laughed with her and then began to explain why I hated having to wear glasses and what a pain it was to do the smallest thing without having them on. A real pain, not to mention death for me and others if I went on for too long without wearing them! As we finished our discussion I could see two things happening. One: Autumn was now determined not to experience a migraine like that again and especially from wearing those unnecessary glasses. Two: Knowing Autumn, I could foresee the pain coming in her endeavor to develop the new habit of using only her natural eyesight while trying to put away the urge of wearing those unnecessary and painful lenses that she loved!

What does all of this have to do with the Atonement of Jesus Christ? Believe it or not, EVERYTHING!

This is the exact dynamic going on in the Atonement of Jesus Christ and what flows directly from it! Someone (you and I and the entire human race) was created with a good pair of eyes, with no need for literal, physical glasses. Unfortunately, somewhere along the line we put on the wrong pair of theological glasses (thoughts about our Relational God), creating nothing short of a disaster in all areas of our life. That resulted in our need for miracles of new physical eyesight, and in our modern day, even the wearing of glasses from a local optometrist! But it also resulted in our need for a new pair of theological glasses which were part of the main culprit in the first place! This is a serious eye problem (Matthew 6:22-23) and very painful indeed, literally resulting in our crying out for relief from the pain!

So what was the Trinity, being good, to do when He saw that His good creation was being corrupted with bad eyesight and the with inability to relate with Him and each other as each really

were? How was he going to put things right again? In a Word—Jesus! In another word—Atonement! In other words, in Jesus the Son of God as Man, God did something similar to what I did to my daughter. He literally came to get us and undo the pain in a personal way that included dialogue and real medicine. But in Jesus' case for us, He Himself was going to be the Word and the Medicine that brought us into "At-One-ment" and get rid of humanity's migraine and pain once and for all!

And Jesus coming to undo our pain was going to create another pain, even as Autumn's new habit of not wearing those "old" but fashionable glasses was going to be an additional pain to the migraine pain she had already experienced. This first pain is necessary to alert us that something is wrong in the first place and so that we might seek a solution for getting it corrected. In all seriousness, this physical pain is an ACTUAL encounter with the Father, Son and Spirit Who not only created us as good, but Who continue to sustain us only in their ongoing goodness! The reality of Autumn's good eyes were NOT going to adapt to the unreality of the new vision, and therefore any twisting of that reality was going to be painful.

The second pain Autumn will experience (resulting from a determination to live with her eyes as they really are) is also necessary as the true reality of her eyes not only remains but also goes to war against the wrong and twisted vision—to undo the unreality! This is similar to the pain that comes after a broken limb or relationship. There is the first pain of the initial break, and then there is the second pain of the fix as the wounds heal, literally putting to death the initial break!

Again, this is what is going on in the Atonement, and what is going on in our experiences of everything because of the Atonement. You see, the Atonement is Jesus Himself, the One Who is not only Fully God but also Fully Man! Tying this into the examples in this article: Because Jesus is fully God and fully Man, his becoming Man as God means war. It means the struggle of all struggles, and it means both kinds of pain we have been talking about. How is it that we, who are sustained in the permanent goodness of God, will not ultimately feel pain when the Reality of His goodness in us is twisted and perverted?! We most definitely will feel the pain! And how is it that we, who are sustained in the permanent goodness of God will not ultimately feel the pain of being healed, when the Reality of His goodness in us undoes our twisted vision and quite literally puts it to death?! We most definitely will feel that pain, too!

Atonement through the Son of God becoming the Son of Man (while remaining God) explains why life is a pain and then we die! Life is a pain because of our relationship with God the Trinity in Jesus, Who so sustains us in His goodness that He is never going to let us go (even as Autumn's original eyesight was not going to change or let her go). Because God is not changing or letting us go, that can only mean the death of our pain, and it can only mean a new kind of pain, or a second pain, as our spiritual eyes are adjusted to Reality again, and Reality puts the unreality to death!

Be encouraged, for it is Jesus Christ and your AT-ONE-MENT in Him that is the ultimate source of why you are experiencing pain of every type. The first reason for your pain is that you are included and adopted into the life of the Trinity in Jesus and are good with His goodness! He never has been, nor ever will be, truly separated from you! He's always dreamed of dancing forever with you! Your "migraine" in life is the natural consequence flowing out of your sinful nature which

is determined to wear the wrong pair of glasses and is clashing against the reality of His goodness in you!! That first pain is His determination that you be safe in His embrace and alerted to the wrong vision that is occurring!

The second reason for your life pain and migraine is that you have been fixed, reconciled, and brought back into having proper eyesight and insight about Who God is, and who you are in Him through Jesus Christ! This second pain is the death of the first pain and it must exist temporarily, until all of the darkness and foggy vision be undone in you! The second pain means a real physical pain and deterioration and death, AND AT THE SAME TIME it means the ongoing Reality of a renewed and whole life that you are in Jesus, and that will never die!

In conclusion, as Robert Walker succinctly states in *Incarnation: The Person and Life of Jesus Christ*:

If Jesus is not God, then it is not God That has saved us, but equally, if Jesus is not Man then Man has not been saved. (page xxxii)

Fortunately for you and me and the entire human race, Jesus is both of those natures in One Person and we all are saved because it is God Who has saved us!

~ *Timothy Brassell*