

Doctrine and Covenants Paper: Atonement and Grace: How are they similar?
How do they affect me?

Intro

One of the most difficult concepts for members and nonmembers of the LDS Church to comprehend is the Atonement. And with that comes the concept of Grace. The Bible Dictionary says on Atonement, "the word describes the setting 'at one' of those who have been estranged, and denotes the reconciliation of man to God. Sin is the cause of the estrangement, and therefore the purpose of Atonement is to correct or overcome the consequences of sin" (pg 617). And on page 697 the Bible Dictionary states on Grace, "The main idea of the word is divine means of help or strength, given through the bounteous mercy and love of Jesus Christ.... 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." So, as can be seen from these two definitions, the Atonement and Grace go hand-in-hand.

Atonement

The Atonement is a wonderful gift given to us by our elder brother Jesus Christ. In D&C 53:2 it states: "Behold, I, the Lord, who was crucified for the sins of the world, give unto you a commandment that you shall forsake the world." In other words, He did not suffer so we could do whatever we wanted in this life but to help us if we would follow him and not the world. We have now been given something we can use to help us through this difficult mortal life. The problem arises when we have no idea as to how to access it and use it for our benefit. So many of us have a very vague understanding. "For, behold, the Lord your Redeemer suffered death in the flesh; wherefore he suffered the pain of all men that all men might repent and come unto Him" (D&C 18:11). Or how about this one; "For behold, I, God, have suffered these things for all, that

they might not suffer if they would repent; ... Which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, 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” (D&C 19:16, 18-19). Christ had his agency during this ordeal. He did not have to do it. His love for us is so strong He finished it despite His fear and suffering. One interesting point I want to make is that in the Garden of Gethsemane Christ had an Angel strengthen Him so He could finish. On the cross He was completely alone but not before that. If Christ asked for an Angel for Strength, then why can't we? The third Article of Faith says, “We believe that through the Atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel.” It doesn't say if we obey some of them or most of them but **ALL** of the laws and ordinances to the best of our ability. And this is where Grace comes in.

Grace

Grace is the means of asking for help and strength after all we can do. It seems so ironic to me that we have this power and yet we are all so darn independent and prideful to ask for anything unless we are on our deathbeds. To qualify for grace, so to speak, we must first have faith and our works must be unto obedience so we cannot boast of our own accomplishments. Because they are not really ours in the first place. (“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. [Ephesians 2:8-9]). Hebrews 12:28 “Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear:” Heb 4:16 “Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.” Grace is the help meet to the Atonement. Without one we cannot have the

other. We are saved by Grace **after** all we can do. This means obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel, Which are "First, Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ second, Repentance third, baptism by immersion for the remission of sins and fourth, the laying on of Hands for the Gift of the Holy Ghost." (Articles of Faith, 4). Another part of Grace is this: "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" (Bible Dictionary, 697). What a great promise!

Conclusion

Repentance and humility are necessities to understand the Atonement and Grace. "There is one who gave His life for you; He'll take your pain. If you have faith and trust in Him, He'll make you whole again. With great mercy He will gather you, and great shall be your peace. Trust in Him to heal your soul. If you'll reach, He'll raise you up and make you whole (New Testament Soundtrack Song #5). So many people inside and outside the Church are afraid of the Atonement and at the same time they are afraid of Grace as well. To come to even a inkling of understanding it takes a lot of effort on our part. That is usually more than we are willing to do. But was it Christ who said I never said it would be easy. I only said it would be worth it. I believe we can come to that understanding, not perfectly yet, but enough for our understanding at this time, if we will only follow the laws and ordinances and really strive and prayer for an understanding. D&C 46:8-9 states, "...seek ye earnestly the best gifts, always remembering for what they are given; For verily I say unto you, they are given for the benefit of these who love me and keep all my commandments, and him that seeketh so to do; that all may be benefited that seek or that ask of me..." One of the gifts mentioned is that of knowledge. I had always thought

that that gift was for the temporal things of life. For help in school and at work. But that is not true! If we truly want to understand, all we need to do is ask as did Joseph Smith in the grove, “in faith, nothing wavering” (James 1:6). I know I want to gain the best understanding can in this life. It is definitely not easy because Satan is in there every step of the way trying to discourage me. I guess that is why, for most of us, we do not try to understand until we have sinned grievously. But why wait until then to reap the benefits of grace and atonement? It is because so many lose hope. We need to help other realize, once we have, that we can have hope through Christ. Moroni said, “And what is it that ye shall hope for? Behold I say unto you that ye shall have hope through the atonement of Christ and the power of his resurrection, to be raised unto life eternal, and this because of your faith in him according to the promise” (Moroni 7:41). The Atonement is not just for our sins, but it is also for all of our pains and afflictions too. Grace can give us the strength to continue on while relying on Christ to help us make it back.

Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ love us so very much. We are Heavenly Father’s sons and daughters and someday we will be able to have a perfect knowledge of things. “But it is the mark of an apt pupil to recognize what he [she] does not know and from whom he [she] can learn more” (This comes from Neal A. Maxwell’s book *All These Things Shall Give Thee Experience*, 23). I once took that leap of faith and became that “apt pupil” 5 an a half years ago. I will never be what I was. I have a much better understanding of Christ Atonement and His Grace. To feel the Atonement helping me in my everyday life is what I hope everyone will be able to feel too one day. And with that comes an understanding of and a desire for His Grace to help us through those rough times. I know His Atonement is real. I know He carries us when we can do no more. His love is so incredible and pure and that is why He could die for everyone who has ever lived and will yet live.