

CHRIST HAS FELT MY PAIN

A gentle reminder about an aspect of the Atonement I had forgotten led to a change in attitude and perspective.

By James G. Stokes

I sighed heavily but quietly in the darkness of my hospital room. I felt frustrated, but I didn't want to disturb my mother, asleep on a couch not far from my bed. I was recovering from my fourth unexpected surgery in three weeks, with another operation planned in two months during the summer. That later operation, we had been told, would last about five hours, with four to six weeks afterward for recovery in the hospital.

I was born in 1986. Soon after birth, I was diagnosed with cerebral palsy secondary to congenital hydrocephalus. Hydrocephalus, called "water on the brain," is a condition in which an individual has either too much or too little cerebrospinal fluid. In my now 28 years of life I have had

more than 50 surgical procedures for these conditions.

Nevertheless, the Lord has richly blessed me. One of my first doctors

counseled my parents, "Take him home and simply love him. He will never be anything more than a limp noodle on the sofa." Thankfully, my



parents didn't listen. Throughout my life, they have encouraged me to do and accomplish many things. They never treated me any differently than they did my siblings. Thanks to them, in spite of my disability, I lead the fullest life that I can.

I Heard My Name

Nevertheless, on what felt like the darkest and most dismal night I had ever faced, I forgot the many blessings I had received from the Lord. I thought only of the sorry state of my life. My negativity engulfed me, and I began to doubt all I had been taught about my Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. A loving God, I rationalized, would not have left me alone to face this nightmarish reality. Worst of all, no one knew what I was going through. My family felt a portion, but they did not fully understand how painful my experiences had been. No one did.

I was about to voice these thoughts in prayer when I heard my name. Through my anguish I recognized the voice of the Spirit, carrying a message to my soul from my Savior reminding me I was not alone. Jesus Christ knew what I was going through. He had felt my pain.

As the message resonated in me, doubt was replaced by shame. In my self-pity, I had forgotten about Jesus Christ. I had been taught much about how the Savior suffered for our sins. I had forgotten that in the Garden of Gethsemane and on the cross, the Lord had also borne my grief and carried my pain (see Isaiah 53:4; Alma 7:11). This reminder forever changed the way I look at the Atonement of Jesus Christ. Inwardly, I resolved that I would never again forget. This reminder would govern my thoughts, words, and deeds in this life and in the life to come.

This change in perspective also brought a change in attitude. Remembering that I am not alone, I have been more positive about my situation. I believe that this allowed me to recover more quickly from the surgeries. It also helped me to come through the extensive surgery in the summer within three hours and cut my hospital stay (originally projected to be four to six weeks) to only three weeks.

Taking Courage

My disabilities and the trials that accompany them have not been easy to bear. But because I know that my Savior completely understands what

I am going through, even if no one else does, I know He will always be there for me. All I have to do is “drop my burden[s] at his feet and bear a song away” (“How Gentle God’s Commands,” *Hymns*, no. 125).

I will be forever grateful to a Savior who not only carried my sins, sorrows, and afflictions but also took the time to remind me that He has done so. I hope that my experiences can help others to take courage, bear up under their burdens, remember that they are not alone, and be blessed to endure to the end. ■

The author (pictured left) lives in Utah, USA.



WE ARE NOT ALONE

“There is no physical pain, no spiritual wound, no anguish of soul or heartache, no infirmity or weak-

ness you or I ever confront in mortality that the Savior did not experience first. In a moment of weakness we may cry out, ‘No one knows what it is like. No one understands.’ But the Son of God perfectly knows and understands, for He has felt and borne our individual burdens.”

Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Bear Up Their Burdens with Ease,” *Ensign*, May 2014, 90.