

October 2–8. Ephesians: “For the Perfecting of the Saints”

Justification

Paul reminds the Ephesians what life was like before they had the gospel of Christ

Ephs 2:2,12

2 Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:

12 That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world:

What does Paul say about those who “walk according to the course of this world”?

(strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope)

John Taylor

“How often has it been told us [to live]... like them, serve the devil, commit iniquity, go down to darkness and the shades of death, and live and die without God and without hope in the world, as they would have us to do, and die and be damned. God forbid, we will not do it. Our desire is to serve God; we know the ways of life, for God has taught them to us. We know in whom we have believed, for God has revealed it to us. We know the Gospel is true, because the Gospel has made manifest itself to us, and we feel satisfied with regard to the course we are taking, and God being our helper, we will pursue it to the end.” (JD, 11:157)

He reminds us that justification is a gift from God

Ephs 2:8-10

8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:

9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.

10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

Why do you think Paul emphasizes that our works alone won’t save us?

(it is the gift of God)

Dale G. Renlund

“Good deeds are not sufficient. Salvation is not earned. Not even the vast sacrifices Micah knew were impossible can redeem the smallest sin. Left to

our own devices, the prospect of returning to live in God’s presence is hopeless.

“Without the blessings that come from Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ, we can never do enough or be enough by ourselves. The good news, though, is that because of and through Jesus Christ we can become enough.... If we turn our hearts to God, salvation from spiritual death is available to all ‘through the Atonement of [Jesus] Christ ... by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel’ (Articles of Faith 1:3). We can be redeemed from sin to stand clean and pure before God.” (CR, Oct. 2020)

What do you think Paul meant by, “created... unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them”?

John C. Pingree Jr

“God has important work for each of us.... President Spencer W. Kimball taught: ‘Before we came [to earth, we] were given certain assignments.... While we do not now remember the particulars, this does not alter the glorious reality of what we once agreed to’ (CR, Oct. 1979). What an ennobling truth! Our Heavenly Father has specific and significant things for you and me to accomplish.” (CR, Oct. 2017)

Alma 13

1... the Lord God ordained priests, after his holy order, which was after the order of his Son, to teach these things unto the people.
3... they were ordained—being called and prepared from the foundation of the world according to the foreknowledge of God, on account of their exceeding faith and good works;

Thru justification we can be rooted and grounded in God’s love

Ephs 3:14,17-19

14 For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,

17 That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love,

18 May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height;

19 And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.

What do you think Paul means by, “being rooted and grounded in love”?

(know the love of Christ... that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God)

Neil L. Andersen

“We realize that as evil increases in the world, our spiritual survival, and the spiritual survival of those we love, will require that we more fully nurture, fortify, and strengthen the roots of our faith in Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul counseled us to be rooted, grounded, and settled in our love for the Savior and our determination to follow Him. Today and the days ahead require more focused and concentrated effort, guarding against diversions and carelessness.” (CR, Oct. 2022)

Christ allows us to put off the old man and put on the new man

Ephs 4:22-24

22 That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts;

23 And be renewed in the spirit of your mind;

24 And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

What does it mean to, “put off ... the old man” and “put on the new man”?

(be renewed in the spirit of your mind)

Ezra Taft Benson

“The Apostle Paul used some vivid expressions to illustrate that a member of the Church must be different from the world. He commended us to ‘put on Christ’ (Gal 3:27), ‘put off ... the old man,’ and ‘put on the new man’ (Eph 4:22, 24).

“[This] means that we must become like Jesus Christ. We must emulate His way of life in our lives. Of necessity, we must be ‘born again’ and put aside worldly lusts and former behavior unsuited to the Christlike character. We must seek the Holy Ghost to temper our actions.” (CR, Oct. 1983)

But it takes real effort to put off the old man and resist Satan so Paul admonishes us to put on the whole Armour of Christ

Ephs 6:10-17

10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.

11 Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

13 Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

14 Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;

15 And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;

16 Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.

17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:

According to Paul, what is it that we are fighting against?

(against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places)

How does the Armour of God protect us in this fight?

(that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil)

Harold B. Lee

“[Paul] taught a remarkable lesson. He pictured each of us as a man of armor, clothed on various strategic points of his body with armor that would protect him against the onslaughts of evil....

“Thus armored, we are now prepared with the weapons common to the warfare of Paul's day, comparable to those things which we would have in similar way upon us today, to attack and to fight successfully and to win this battle in which the forces of evil and the forces of righteousness are contending today.” (CR, Oct. 1949)

What are the different parts of the armor and how do they help us in this battle?

(having your loins girt about with truth
having on the breastplate of righteousness;
your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace
taking the shield of faith
take the helmet of salvation
the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God)

What can we do to fortify this armor so it will help us in this battle?

N. Eldon Tanner

“Are we studying the scriptures so that we can increase our knowledge and faith and testimony regarding the gospel? Do we keep the commandments? Are we honest and truthful in our dealings? Do we keep the Sabbath day holy? Do we observe the Word of Wisdom? Do we pay an honest tithing? Do we attend our meetings and respond to the calls made of us by our authorities? Are we virtuous and clean and pure in heart and mind and deed? ... Do we truly love our neighbors as ourselves?

“If we can answer yes to these questions, then we will have on the whole armor of God, which will protect us from harm and preserve us from our

enemies. If we must answer no to these questions, then our armor is weak, there is an unshielded place which can be found, a vulnerable area for attack, and we will be subject to injury or destruction by Satan, who will search until he finds our weaknesses, if we have them.

“Examine your armor. Is there an unguarded or unprotected place? Determine now to add whatever part is missing. No matter how antiquated or lacking in parts your armor may be, always remember that it is within your power to make the necessary adjustments to complete your armor.

“Through the great principle of repentance you can turn your life about and begin now clothing yourself with the armor of God through study, prayer, and a determination to serve God and keep his commandments.” (CR, April 1979)

Unity of Faith

Regardless of our background, when we join the Church of Christ we become fellow-citizens with the saints

Ephs 2:19-22

19 Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God;

20 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;

21 In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord:

22 In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

Why is it important to recognize that all members of the Church are “fellowcitizens with the saints”?

Gérald Caussé

“Though the membership of the Church is increasing in its diversity, our sacred heritage transcends our differences. As members of the Church, we are admitted into the house of Israel. We become brothers and sisters, equal heirs to the same spiritual lineage. God promised Abraham that ‘as many as receive this Gospel shall be called after [his] name, and shall be accounted [his] seed, and shall rise up and bless [him], as their father’ (Abr 2:10).

“A promise has been made to everyone who becomes a member of the Church: ‘Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God’ (Ephs 2:19).” (CR, Oct. 2013)

Why are prophets and apostles considered to be the foundation of the church?

(In whom all the building fitly framed together)

Jeffrey R. Holland

“The apostolic and prophetic foundation of the Church was to bless in all times, but especially in times of adversity or danger, times when we might feel like children, confused or disoriented, perhaps a little fearful, times in which the devious hand of men or the maliciousness of the devil would attempt to unsettle or mislead.... In New Testament times, in Book of Mormon times, and in modern times these officers form the foundation stones of the true Church, positioned around and gaining their strength from the chief cornerstone, ‘the rock of our Redeemer, who is [Jesus] Christ, the Son of God’ (Helaman 5:12)... Such a foundation in Christ was and is always to be a protection in days ‘when the devil shall send forth his mighty winds, yea, his shafts in the whirlwind, yea, when all his hail and his mighty storm shall beat upon you’ (Helaman 5:12).” (CR, Oct. 2004)

Paul continues the building metaphor to emphasize that we should be a temple for the Holy Ghost

Ronald A. Rasband

“Your testimony of Jesus Christ is your personal fortress, the security for your soul.... One by one we gain a witness from the Holy Spirit as He speaks to our own spirit, teaching ‘truth in the inward parts’ (Psalm 51). When we live the gospel of Jesus Christ, when we draw upon the Savior’s Atonement and press forward with faith, not fear, we are fortified against the wiles of the adversary. Our testimonies connect us to the heavens, and we... are safely encircled in the arms of the Savior’s love.” (CR, April 2019)

We are unified when we all harken to the Spirit

Ephs 4:1-6

- 1 I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,
- 2 With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;
- 3 Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.
- 4 There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;
- 5 One Lord, one faith, one baptism,
- 6 One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

In what ways should we be unified and what allows us to accomplish this unity?

(One Lord, one faith, one baptism)
(the unity of the Spirit)

Charles W. Penrose

“All those who received this spirit received the same spirit. They were no

longer Sectaries, Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, Herodians, or of any other sect; they were ‘all baptized by one Spirit into one body, whether Jew or Gentile, bond or free’ (1 Cor 12:13), and they had ‘One Lord, one faith, one baptism’ and ‘one hope of their calling.’ Hence you see one of its effects was to make all see eye to eye. They were no longer divided in their opinions in regard to these matters, but were united, seeing alike and understanding alike....

“If we are all influenced by the same spirit, why should we not see eye to eye? There is a day to come when... all shall see and comprehend alike, being baptized by one spirit and having the glorious boon of the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, which reveals the things of God, and makes them plain to the human mind.” (JD, 22:82)

The structure of of the Church also keeps us unified

Ephs 4:11-14

11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

14 That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

How does the organization of the Church help us all to become unified?

(no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine)

Ronald A. Rasband

“We have a prophet of God on the earth today! Never discount what that means for you....

“We are distinguished as a Church to be led by prophets, seers, and revelators called of God for this time. I promise that as you listen and follow their counsel, you will never be led astray. Never!

“We live in a time when we are ‘tossed to and fro,’ when spirituality, decency, integrity, and respect are under attack. We have to make choices. We have the voice of the Lord through His prophet to calm our fears and lift our sights, for when President Nelson speaks, he speaks for the Lord.” (CR, Oct. 2021)

We are admonished keep love and unity in our homes

Ephs 6:1-4

- 1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right.
- 2 Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;)
- 3 That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.
- 4 And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

What do we learn from Paul about our roles as both children and parents?

(obey your parents in the Lord
bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord)

Gordon B. Hinckley

“I hope that each one of us will be a better husband or wife, kinder to one another, more thoughtful, more restrained in criticism, and more generous with compliments. I hope that as fathers and mothers we will strive more fully to rear our children ‘in the nurture and admonition of the Lord’ treating them with respect and love, giving encouragement at every opportunity and subduing our critical remarks. I hope that as sons and daughters we will be more respectful than we have been, that we will look to our parents with the knowledge that they love us, and that we will try to be more obedient in following their counsel.” (CR, April 2000)

Pre-Existence

In Ephs 2:10 we read:

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

Paul gives us more insight into our pre-existence

Ephs 1:3-5

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:

4 According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:

5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,

He tells the Ephesian that they are “predestined... unto the adoption.”

What do you think it means to be, “chosen... before the foundation of the world [to] be holy”?

George Q. Cannon

“The reason that the sound of the Gospel had such an effect upon us was, because we were chosen from before the foundation of the world, for the

express purpose of coming forth in this day to receive it and well may it be said that your lives have been hid with Christ. You have come forth in these last days to be instruments in His hands of bringing souls to a knowledge of the truth as it is in Christ Jesus. In the Temples that shall be built, you will have the opportunity of standing therein, as saviors, upon Mount Zion.” (JD, 22:120)

What do we learn about the pre-existence from these verses?

(chosen us in him before the foundation of the world
predestinated us unto the adoption)

Russell M. Nelson

“Before the foundation of the world, each of us existed as spirit children with our Father in Heaven. Among us were noble and great men foreordained to bear the priesthood.....

“Children of the covenant were designated in the premortal realm. Paul taught that the Lord ‘hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world.’ Then conditions were established that allowed us to receive blessings from God—upon obedience to laws upon which those blessings were predicated.” (CR, April 2002)

Dispensation of the Fulness of Time

Paul told them that all things in Christ will be gather together in one in the dispensation of the fulness of time.

Ephs 1:9-13

9 Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself:

10 That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him:

11 In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:

12 That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.

13 In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise.

What does Paul mean by, “dispensation of the fulness of time”?

(he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth)

D&C 128

18)... The earth will be smitten with a curse unless there is a welding link of

some kind or other between the fathers and the children... It is necessary in the ushering in of the dispensation of the fulness of times, which dispensation is now beginning to usher in, that a whole and complete and perfect union, and welding together of dispensations, and keys, and powers, and glories should take place, and be revealed from the days of Adam even to the present time....

He also told them that “after [they] believed, [they] were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise.”

What does it mean to be sealed with the holy Spirit of promise?

When Paul wrote that the Saints had been “sealed with that holy Spirit of promise” (Ephs 1:13), he meant that they had been promised eternal life even though they were still living in mortality. When people are sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise, the Holy Ghost ratifies them as celestial inheritors even though they are mortal. This doctrine is sometimes referred to as having one’s calling and election made sure or receiving the Second. (New Testament Student Manual, Religion 211-212, pg. 425)