

September 30-October 13
New Testament 39
“For the Perfecting of the Saints”
Ephesians
By Lenet Hadley Read

I. Paul was successful as an apostle to the Gentiles because he had come to truly love them. He had completely lost the previous belief of his people that Gentiles were unworthy in every way. One feels his love throughout this epistle, particularly for those who have accepted Christ.

A. He has come to believe that they were foreordained to become members of Christ’s church.

B. He testifies that before the creation of the Earth, the Lord chose the valiant, both Israelite and Gentile, to establish His Church. “...he hath chosen **us ... before the foundation of the world**, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love (Ephesians 1: 4; also read vs. 2-9).

C. **Paul urged the Saints to live up to their foreordination**, receive wisdom, revelation, and understand all things relating to Christ, the *Head* of His Church. (1:17-23).

II. Paul taught the purpose of an organized Church **is to help perfect the Saints**

A. Christ revealed His will [or plans] to those of that time (Ephesians 1:8-9).

B. But He promised in a future time *all things* for the *perfecting of man* would be given.

1. “... in the **dispensation of the fullness of times** [he would] gather together in one all things..., both which are in heaven, and which are on earth;” (Ephesians 1:10).

a. **Paul is prophesying of our day, when Christ’s Church is restored and all things brought together so all people may be perfected through Christ.**

b. This promise is being fulfilled as missionary work is being done on earth and in Heaven, **and essential ordinances are performed in temples throughout the earth for the living and the dead of all generations. Truly now all can be perfected through Christ’s Church.**

c. See details in Bruce McConkie *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, p. 492).

III. Paul encouraged the Gentile saints to also be perfected.

A. “Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the Saints, **and of the household of God**” (Ephesians 2:19).

B. Paul assures that Christ established the Church on a sound foundation..

1. “And [ye as a Church] are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit” (Ephesians 2:20-21).

C. **Paul tells them he was brought to Christ through grace, and then to minister to the Gentiles so that they could comprehend the riches of God’s grace to them** (Eph. 3:7-9).

1. “That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God” (3:17-19).

IV. Oneness in the structure of Christ's Church should create Oneness among the Saints.

A. "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of us all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all" (4:4-6).

B. **The perfect structure of Christ's Church was given for the perfecting of the Saints.**

1. "And he gave ...apostles; and ...prophets; and ...evangelists; and ... pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:"

C. The final goal is for all of us to reach the "measure" of Christ, **thus becoming like Him, its head.**"

1. "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 fullness of Christ*" (4:11-13).

D. **Cleaving to the teachings of Christ's appointed ministers will avoid being deceived.**

1. "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;" (Ephesians 4:14-15).

E. Saints are exhorted not to turn back to previous life lived by most Gentiles.

1. "henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk" (Ephesians 4:17).

a. "Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness" (4:19).

2. "... put off... the conversation [of] the old man... put on the new man... created in righteousness and true holiness" (Ephesians 4:22-24).

3. "Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Ephesians 4:32).

V. Paul stresses God's laws pertaining to morality.

A. He straightforwardly shows that immorality cuts one off from God (5:1-12).

B. Paul adds his witness to other prophets that Christ is as a Bridegroom to the Church, and thus serves as an example **both for husbands and wives** (Ephesians 5:20-33).

1. "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; ... That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle" (Ephesians 5:25-27).

2. "For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.... I speak concerning Christ and the church" (Ephesians 5:30-32).

C. His counsel on "submitting" should **not** be seen as favoring men over women. He is counseling us **all** to become meek and submissive as Jesus Christ, the perfect Man was.

D. One can avoid Satan's power by putting on "the whole armor of God" (6:11-18).

VI. Paul testifies that individuals can, through Christ and faithfulness, be sealed through the Holy Spirit of Promise to receive God's Eternal blessings (Ephesians 1:13-14).

A. "... ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, **Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession...**" (Eph. 1:13-14).

1. "Earnest is something of value given to bind a bargain. Here God himself, by giving the ratifying seal of the Spirit, is guaranteeing compliance with his own covenant ... the promise of an inheritance of eternal life" (Bruce R. McConkie, DNTC, 495).

B. “The **Holy Spirit of Promise is the Holy Spirit promised the saints, or in other words the Holy Ghost. This name-title is used in connection with the sealing and ratifying power of the Holy Ghost**, that is, the power given him to ratify and approve the righteous acts of men so that those acts will be binding on earth and in heaven. ‘All covenants, contracts, bonds, obligations, oaths, vows, performances, connections, associations, or expectations,’ must be sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise, if they are to have ‘efficacy, virtue, or force in and after the resurrection from the dead; for all contracts that are not made unto this end have an end when men are dead.’ (D&C. 132:7). (Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 493-4).

C. This is the “calling and election made sure” (Joseph Smith, *Teachings*, pp. 149-151).

VII. **Salvation by Grace has long been a tenet of the LDS faith.**

A. Many critics claim the Church has changed its focus, stressing salvation by grace as opposed to salvation by works.

B. The *Book of Mormon* has long taught that salvation comes only through grace.

C. The *DNTC* by Bruce R. McConkie (1970) is one work stressing this principle.

D. Because some Christians emphasized grace exclusively, and Mormons defended the need also for works, misunderstandings occurred.

E. *The only thing that has changed is recognition* that Latter-day Saints should be more careful and not let other Christians push us into a corner as if we believed salvation comes through works.

F. *Members of the church have become more careful in presenting the true picture as contained in our scriptures: **Salvation and exaltation begin and end through the atonement of Jesus Christ. The Savior made it clear, however, that righteous works are also essential: Men will also be judged by them, and rewarded for them.***

VIII. **A True Account of how The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints does work to perfect the Saints.** (This is an individual known personally to the writer).

[Name withheld] was a Chinese student studying in Ireland where she met LDS missionaries. Because she had previously found Christ’s teachings very beautiful, she listened to them. She was baptized in Ireland. But since she had only a student visa, had to return to China. **She returned to a city of millions where she was the only member.** Furthermore, her family was not religious, and her father was anti-Christian.

So no one is lost, the **Church had already established a program to minister to persons like her.** Priesthood leaders are assigned to keep in touch with such individuals in lands where there is no Church structure. The mission president in Ireland promptly gave her name and personal information to the Church which was relayed to such a Church leader.

Furthermore, Her Institute leaders, friends in Institute, and the missionaries were very concerned about her. Motivated by pure love, we all continued to keep in touch with her by e-mail and continued to give her support in any way we could.

She greatly needed this support. She shared how difficult it was when her company’s boss would pay tribute to her at organized dinners and toast her with an alcoholic drink. She was expected, of course, to accept the tribute by drinking herself. Since no one else believed in God, it was very difficult to explain why she objected.

The Church also gave her name and personal information to teachers of English working in her Chinese city. They gave her support too. However, she was forbidden by law to attend church with them, and there were months when none were in China.

In time, the Church was able to provide her with an opportunity to join with a very small group of Chinese. What they were allowed to do was very limited, mostly just to talk about their struggles and their faith. But they did strengthen each other.

Eventually she married a non-member. But she prayed and felt it was the right thing to do, that things would work out. The couple eventually moved to Canada. While he did not believe in God, through her patient example and love, he began to exercise some faith. While it was not easy, with the help of missionaries, he eventually was baptized.

Then the Church was fully able to teach and to bless them. They still had many struggles, such as her trying to teach Primary with language barriers. But she persisted.

The culmination of the story is wonderful. They were eventually sealed in the temple. **Through the help of Christ's Church, she has grown from a young woman who knew not God, to a strong faithful Latter-day Saint, married to a priesthood holder. Their union has been sealed for time and all eternity.** They now have two children, and she rejoices that they and all other posterity will be similarly sealed to them under the covenant.

The Church has functioned just as the Savior intended it. This young sister was helped along the path toward perfection through Jesus Christ and His Church.

Since then, as with most of us, there have been additional challenges. But Church members, moved by the spirit, have watched over them, and supported them through those new challenges as well.