

**Class Member Reading: Ephesians**

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**Eph 1:1-6:24 NRSV**

I felt a great appreciation for this letter as I worked through it for the podcast. I hope many of you have a similar experience.

1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God,

To the saints who are in Ephesus and are faithful in Christ Jesus:

2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, 4 just as he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be **holy and blameless before him in love**. 5 He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, 6 to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. 7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his **grace** 8 that **he lavished on us**. [Touching wording—lavished grace](#). With all wisdom and insight 9 he has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, 10 as a plan for the fullness of time, to **gather up all things in him**, things in heaven and things on earth. 11 In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance, having been destined ([“decide beforehand”](#)) according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to his counsel and will, 12 so that we, who were the first to set our hope on Christ, might live for the praise of his glory. 13 In him you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and had believed in him, were **marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit**; 14 this is the **pledge of our inheritance** toward **redemption** as God’s own people, to the praise of his glory.

15 I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, and for this reason 16 I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers. 17 I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, 18 so that, with the **eyes of your heart enlightened** ([I appreciate this wording](#)), you may know **what is the hope to which he has called you**, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, 19 and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power. 20 God put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, 21 far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come. 22 And he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

**Chapter 2**

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### Lesson 39: “For Perfecting of the Saints”

1 You were **dead through the trespasses and sins** 2 in which you once lived, following the course of this world, following the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work among those who are disobedient (If you have been paying careful attention to the letters of Paul you will notice how different this writing sounds. Quite eloquent. Also notice how literally the author seems to take this idea of cosmic forces influencing us). 3 All of us once lived among them in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of flesh and senses, and we were by nature children of wrath, like everyone else. 4 But God, who is **rich in mercy**, out of the great love with which he loved us 5 even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us **alive together with Christ —by grace you have been saved—** 6 and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus (This book holds a view called “realized eschatology”, the idea that saints already benefit from the blessings of the Age to Come, as opposed to Paul who held a view called “future eschatology”), 7 so that in the ages to come he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. 8 For **by grace you have been saved through faith**, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God— 9 not the result of works, so that no one may boast. 10 For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life. (The idea of predestination seems pretty strong in this text)

11 So then, remember that at one time you Gentiles by birth, called “the uncircumcision” by those who are called “the circumcision”—a physical circumcision made in the flesh by human hands— 12 remember that you were at that time without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. 13 But now in Christ Jesus **you who once were far off have been brought near** (something we all long for) by the blood of Christ. 14 For he is our peace; in his flesh **he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us.** (So powerful—the eradication of our barriers between each other, all those elements that divide us) 15 He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might **create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace**, 16 and might **reconcile both groups to God in one body** through the cross, thus **putting to death that hostility through it.** 17 So he came and **proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near;** 18 for **through him both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father.** 19 So then **you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God,** (What a beautiful ideal to strive for in our communities. How can we apply these ideals in our lives?) 20 built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. 21 In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; 22 **in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God.** (God dwells in us when we are unified together—lovely idea).

## Chapter 3

1 This is the reason that I Paul am a prisoner for Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles— 2 for surely you have already heard of the commission of God’s grace that was given me for you, 3 and how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I wrote above in a few words, 4 a reading of which will enable you to perceive my understanding of the mystery of Christ. 5 In former generations this mystery was not made known to humankind, as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit: 6 that is, the **Gentiles have become fellow heirs, members of the same**

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**body, and sharers in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.** *HUGE deal from the perspective of Judaism, challenging fundamental tenets of election.*

7 Of this gospel I have become a servant according to the **gift of God’s grace** that was given me by the working of his power. *(Recognizing our strengths as gifts can help us remain humble with a proper perspective)* 8 Although I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given to me to bring to the Gentiles the news of the boundless riches of Christ, 9 and to make everyone see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things; 10 so that through the church the **wisdom of God in its rich variety** *(what wonderful wording)* might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. 11 This was in accordance with the eternal purpose that he has carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord, 12 in whom we have **access to God in boldness and confidence through faith in him.** 13 I pray therefore that **you may not lose heart** over my sufferings for you; they are your glory.

14 For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, 15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name. 16 I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that **you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit,** *(“strengthened in your inner being”, worthy goal)* 17 and that **Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith,** as you are being **rooted and grounded in love** *(Ephesians is so eloquent. I have enjoyed savoring the wording of these ideas).* 18 I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, 19 and to know the **love of Christ that surpasses knowledge,** so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

20 Now to him who by the **power at work within us** is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine *(the feeling of being directed by a force greater than yourself is so empowering and thrilling)*, 21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

## Chapter 4

1 I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to **lead a life worthy** of the calling to which you have been called, 2 with all **humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love,** 3 making every effort to **maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.** 4 There is **one body and one Spirit,** just as you were called to the 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 all. *Traits worth pondering.*

7 But each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ’s gift.

8 Therefore it is said,

“When he ascended on high he **made captivity itself a captive;** *(powerful image)* he gave gifts to his people.”

9 (When it says, “He ascended,” what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower parts of the earth? 10 **He who descended is the same one who ascended far above all the heavens,** so that he might fill all things. *(I don’t think we ponder enough the implications of this,*

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the Savior’s condescension. In what ways must we too “descend” into the dark, hard aspects of life and relationships?) 11 The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists (Joseph Smith connected this term to Patriarch; see History of the Church 3:381 and Bible Dictionary. The Greek word means those who preach the gospel, or evangelize), some pastors and teachers, 12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for **building up the body of Christ**, 13 until all of us come to the **unity of the faith** and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to **maturity**, (this is that wonderful “perfection” word, *teleios*. How can we grow into our potential?) to the measure of the **full stature** of Christ. 14 We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people’s trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming. 15 But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, 16 from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body’s growth in building itself up in love.

17 Now this I affirm and insist on in the Lord: you must no longer live as the Gentiles live, in the futility of their minds. 18 They are darkened in their understanding, **alienated from the life of God** because of their ignorance and hardness of heart. 19 They have **lost all sensitivity** (the fact we humans adapt quickly is a good thing and bad thing... This is why it is important to have people who can give us perspective as well as having opportunities for us to examine our lives and make sure we remain sensitive to the promptings of the Spirit) and have abandoned themselves to licentiousness, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. (clearly a rhetorical exaggeration, but this author sure knows how to put things) 20 That is not the way you learned Christ! 21 For surely you have heard about him and were taught in him, as truth is in Jesus. 22 You were taught to **put away your former way of life**, your old self, corrupt and deluded by its lusts, 23 and to be **renewed in the spirit of your minds**, 24 and to **clothe yourselves with the new self**, created according to the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. (I find this wording deeply moving)

25 So then, putting away falsehood, **let all of us speak the truth** to our neighbors, for **we are members of one another**. 26 Be angry but do not sin (Helpful distinction between emotions and how we act on those emotions); do not let the sun go down on your anger (it is good to work to resolve our emotions, but sometimes we just need some food and a good night’s sleep), 27 and do not make room for the devil (This section touches on important life wisdom—it is more effective to fill your time and life with good things than try to avoid the negative). 28 Thieves must give up stealing; rather let them **labor and work honestly with their own hands**, so as to have something to share with the needy (I love this!! Scientifically sound too. Find how to use your strengths to overcome your challenges/weaknesses). 29 Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only what is **useful for building up**, as there is need, so that your words may give grace to those who hear. 30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with which you were marked with a seal for the day of redemption. 31 Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice, 32 and be **kind** to one another, **tenderhearted**, **forgiving** one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you. Sublime passage to ponder.

## Chapter 5

1 Therefore **be imitators of God**, as beloved children, 2 and **live in love**, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

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3 But fornication and impurity of any kind, or greed, must not even be mentioned among you, as is proper among saints. 4 Entirely out of place is obscene, silly, and vulgar talk; but instead, let there be **thanksgiving**. 5 Be sure of this, that no fornicator or impure person, or one who is greedy (that is, an idolater), has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes on those who are disobedient. 7 Therefore do not be associated with them. 8 For once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light. **Live as children of light**— 9 for the **fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true**. 10 **Try to find out what is pleasing to the Lord**. 11 Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. 12 For it is shameful even to mention what such people do secretly; 13 but everything exposed by the light becomes visible, (One of my favorite things about this book is that it provides positive suggestions along with the negative cautions)

14 for everything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says,

“Sleeper, awake!  
Rise from the dead,  
and Christ will shine on you.”

15 **Be careful then how you live**, not as unwise people but as wise, 16 **making the most of the time**, because the days are evil. (Make the most of this time. Just that is worth its own daily meditation) 17 So do not be foolish, but **understand what the will of the Lord is**. 18 Do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery; but **be filled with the Spirit**, 19 as you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, singing and making melody to the Lord in your hearts, 20 giving thanks to God the Father at all times and for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

21 Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ. (healthy and unhealthy “subjection” would be a worthwhile discussion) We now have what is called a “household code” which starts showing up in the New Testament toward the end of the first century.

22 Wives, be subject to your husbands as you are to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife just as Christ is the head of the church, the body of which he is the Savior. 24 Just as the church is subject to Christ, so also wives ought to be, in everything, to their husbands. Challenge and be challenged by. This is simply wrong. Spouses should be partners and “preside together” as the Proclamation on the Family says. Both husbands and wives have a direct link to God and should counsel and support each other.

25 Husbands, **love your wives**, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, 26 in order to make her holy by cleansing her with the washing of water by the word, 27 so as to present the church to himself in splendor, without a spot or wrinkle or anything of the kind—yes, so that she may be holy and without blemish. 28 In the same way, husbands should love their wives as they do their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 For no one ever hates his own body, but he nourishes and tenderly cares for it, just as Christ does for the church, 30 because we are members of his body. 31 “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” 32 This is a great mystery, and I am applying it to Christ and the church.

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33 Each of you, however, should **love** his wife as himself, and a wife should **respect** her husband. This is what is called a “benevolent hierarchy”, patriarchy in this case. Interestingly, it corresponds exactly to the Confucian principle of “Shu” where the superior loves (Jen) the inferior and the inferior respects the superior.

## Chapter 6

1 Children, **obey your parents in the Lord**, for this is right. 2 “Honor your father and mother”—this is the first commandment with a promise: 3 “so that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.”

4 And, fathers, **do not provoke your children to anger**, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

5 Slaves, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, in singleness of heart, as you obey Christ; 6 not only while being watched, and in order to please them, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart. 7 Render service with enthusiasm, as to the Lord and not to men and women, 8 knowing that whatever good we do, we will receive the same again from the Lord, whether we are slaves or free. The advice on slaves should give us a heads up that the author’s cultural assumptions have influenced his description of proper relationship dynamics. There is much good advice here, but we should also examine it critically.

9 And, masters, do the same to them. Stop threatening them, for you know that both of you have the same Master in heaven, and with him there is no partiality. Both helpful and ironic..

10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power. 11 **Put on the whole armor of God**, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 12 For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. 13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to withstand on that evil day, and having done everything, to **stand firm** (were are influenced intensely by context—being able to “stand firm” for our principles is a key trait to cultivate). 14 Stand therefore, and fasten the **belt of truth** around your waist, and put on the **breastplate of righteousness**. 15 As shoes for your feet put on whatever will make you **ready to proclaim the gospel of peace** (preparation/nurturing the self). 16 With all of these, take the **shield of faith**, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17 Take the **helmet of salvation**, and the **sword of the Spirit**, which is the word of God. (Probably the best known passage from Ephesians, worth discussion. What do each of these elements mean?)

18 **Pray in the Spirit at all times** in every prayer and supplication. To that end **keep alert** and always **persevere** in supplication for all the saints. 19 Pray also for me, so that when I speak, a message may be given to me to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, 20 for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it boldly, as I must speak.

21 So that you also may know how I am and what I am doing, Tychicus will tell you everything. He is a dear brother and a faithful minister in the Lord. 22 I am sending him to you for this very purpose, to let you know how we are, and to encourage your hearts.

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23 **Peace** be to the whole community, and **love** with **faith**, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 24 **Grace** be with all who have an undying love for our Lord Jesus Christ.

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**Additional Reading:** [John 17:11](#); [Mosiah 18:21–22](#); [Doctrine and Covenants 27:15–18](#); [38:25–27](#); Bible Dictionary, “[Dispensations](#),” 657–58.

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**John 17:11 NRSV**

11 And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one

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**Mosiah 18:21-22**

21 And he commanded them that there should be no contention one with another, but that they should look forward with one eye, having one faith and one baptism, having their hearts knit together in unity and in love one towards another.

22 And thus he commanded them to preach. And thus they became the children of God.

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**D&C 27:15-18**

15 Wherefore, lift up your hearts and rejoice, and gird up your loins, and take upon you my whole armor, that ye may be able to withstand the evil day, having done all, that ye may be able to stand.

16 Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, having on the breastplate of righteousness, and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, which I have sent mine angels to commit unto you;

17 Taking the shield of faith wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked;

18 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of my Spirit, which I will pour out upon you, and my word which I reveal unto you, and be agreed as touching all things whatsoever ye ask of me, and be faithful until I come, and ye shall be caught up, that where I am ye shall be also. Amen.

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**D&C 38:25-27**

25 And again I say unto you, let every man esteem his brother as himself.

26 For what man among you having twelve sons, and is no respecter of them, and they serve him obediently, and he saith unto the one: Be thou clothed in robes and sit thou here; and to the other: Be thou clothed in rags and sit thou there—and looketh upon his sons and saith I am just?

27 Behold, this I have given unto you as a parable, and it is even as I am. I say unto you, be one; and if ye are not one ye are not mine.

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#### Dispensations

A dispensation of the gospel is a period of time in which the Lord has at least one authorized servant on the earth who bears the holy priesthood and the keys, and who has a divine commission to dispense the gospel to the inhabitants of the earth. When this occurs, the gospel is revealed anew so that people of that dispensation do not have to depend basically on past dispensations for knowledge of the plan of salvation. There have been many gospel dispensations since the beginning. The Bible suggests at least one dispensation identified with Adam, another with Enoch, another with Noah, and so on with Abraham, Moses, and Jesus with His Apostles in the meridian of time. Paul writes of “the dispensation of the fulness of times” in which the Lord will “gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth” ([Eph. 1:10](#)). The fulness of times is the final dispensation and began with the revelation of the gospel to Joseph Smith. It is a dispensation of restoration and of fulfillment of the Lord’s plans and purposes since the world began. There are also things reserved for the fulness of times that have not been revealed previously ([D&C 121:26–32](#); [124:41](#)). It is a glorious time, the time in which we live today (see [Acts 3:19–21](#); [D&C 27:13](#); [110:11–16](#); [112:14–32](#); [128:18–21](#); [136:37–40](#)).

In addition there were dispensations of the gospel among the Nephites, the Jaredites, and the Lost Tribes of Israel. Melchizedek could also be included, as well as John the Baptist, since they truly held the priesthood and taught the word of the Lord to the people and were unique in their time. There are many other prophets who have had the priesthood and a knowledge of the gospel. Perhaps if more were revealed to us, we would learn that they too should be spoken of as having a dispensation. These could include, among others, Abel, Esaias, Gad, Jeremy, Elihu, Caleb, Jethro, Zenock, and Zenos. See [JST Gen. 14:25–40 \(Appendix\)](#); [1 Ne. 19:10–12](#); [Alma 13:14–19](#); [33:3–17](#); [D&C 84:6–16](#); [HC 3:386–89](#); [4:208–9](#).

The plan of salvation, which is older than the earth, has been revealed and taught in every dispensation beginning with Adam and is the same in every age of the world. However, each of the dispensations has been unique in some way. For example, Adam opened the way of the earth; Noah preserved a portion of mankind through the Flood; Jesus wrought the Atonement and Resurrection; and through Joseph Smith the foundation was laid for a culmination of the purposes of God on the earth.

Although the Bible contains historical information pertaining to the ancient prophets and patriarchs, it is latter-day revelation that makes it clear that the leaders of former dispensations had the gospel of Jesus Christ and that certifies to the divine calling, ordination, and high intelligence of those early brethren ([D&C 84:6–16](#), [26–28](#); [107:41–57](#); [Moses 6:3–6](#), [45–46](#)). [I firmly believed in dispensations until my first semester of graduate school, at which time I learned that the Mormon version of history I had been raised on did not match up with scholarship and our best understanding of the past. I think there is a productive way to understand the periods of earth’s history, but this idea of revealed truth \(specifically Mormonism\) being established then lost then established... it just doesn’t work. Now, the idea of God revealing as much truth as we will receive, and that being accepted and acted on to different degrees... I can get behind that.](#)

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**Scripture Chain:** Psalm 133:1; 1 Corinthians 1:10; Ephesians 4:11–16; 2 Nephi 1:21; Moses 7:18

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**Psalms 133:1 NRSV**

1 How very good and pleasant it is  
when kindred live together in unity

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**1 Corinthians 1:10 NRSV**

Now I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you be in agreement and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same purpose

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**Ephesians 4:11-16 NRSV**

11 The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, 12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, 13 until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ. 14 We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people’s trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming. 15 But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, 16 from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body’s growth in building itself up in love

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**2 Ne 1:21**

21 And now that my soul might have joy in you, and that my heart might leave this world with gladness because of you, that I might not be brought down with grief and sorrow to the grave, arise from the dust, my sons, and be men, and be determined in one mind and in one heart, united in all things, that ye may not come down into captivity;

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**Moses 7:18**

18 And the Lord called his people Zion, because they were of one heart and one mind, and dwelt in righteousness; and there was no poor among them.

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