

Making Your Calling and Election Sure and the Second Comforter

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My wife and I are were given two single verses on which to base our talks. I suggested that she choose the one she wanted and I would talk on the other. The verse of scripture that fell to me is John chapter 14 verse 21. It reads:

21 He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.

This verse describes a simple formula that, if followed, will allow us to see the Savior. There must be more to it, so continuing on through verses 22 and 23 we read:

22 Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot (Judas Thaddaeus, otherwise known as Lebbaeus), Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?

23 Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.

This last verse led me to Doctrine and Covenants section 130 verse 3 which is some direct instruction and revelation given to the prophet Joseph Smith and which says:

John 14:23 – The appearing of the Father and the Son, in that verse, is a personal appearance; and the idea that the Father and the Son dwell in a man's heart is an old sectarian notion, and is false.

So what is all of this getting at? Is this a promise reserved for the apostles of Jesus' time or is the personal appearance of these members of the Godhead something we can each work toward? And is it something we can achieve in the flesh or is it something that happens after we leave this mortal world? These verses and also several before those quoted have been interpreted by Joseph Smith as being related to having one's Calling and Election made sure and of receiving the Second Comforter, something that seems to have been talked about in the Church more often in days past than it is today. At least, that is my perception. I don't recall the last time I heard this subject addressed in General

Conference directly, though from what I have read this week, it used to be a common topic. To almost his dying day, the prophet Joseph frequently exhorted the rank and file of the church to seek after this thing. If you have been in the dark regarding this doctrine, as I was, I hope that my talk will enlighten you and that you will be inspired to learn more and to focus your life on attaining this great blessing.

For my talk today I will be drawing heavily from the words of Elder Bruce R. McConkie's *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*. Any words which are not mine and which I do not specifically quote are his.

I begin with this quote from him:

Among those who have received the gospel, and who are seeking diligently to live its laws and gain eternal life, there is an instinctive and determined desire to make their calling and election sure. Because they have tasted the good things of God and sipped from the fountain of eternal truth, they now seek the divine presence, where they shall know all things, have all power, all might, and all dominion, and in fact be like Him who is the great Prototype of all saved beings—God our Heavenly and Eternal Father. (D&C 132:20.) This is the end objective, the chief goal of all the faithful, and there is nothing greater in all eternity, “for there is no gift greater than the gift of salvation.” (D&C 6:13.)

The key point that I pull out of this is that if we do not have within ourselves this “instinctive and determined desire to make [our] calling and election sure”, then we are not *really* “seeking diligently to live [the gospel's] laws and gain eternal life”. We're being mediocre. We're living in the world and *still* being of it. Speaking for myself, based on this simple test, I have thus far been this kind of latter-day saint. I need to do better.

What follows next are a series of questions pertaining to this doctrine, each followed by its answer. We begin with this:

[1] What is meant by calling? And who are the called of God?

To be called is to be a member of the Church and kingdom of God on earth; it is to be numbered with the saints; it is to accept the gospel and receive the everlasting covenant; it is to have part and lot in the earthly Zion; it is to be born again, to be a son or a daughter of the Lord Jesus Christ; to have membership in the household of faith; it is to be on the path leading to eternal life and to have the hope of eternal glory; it is to have a conditional promise of eternal life; it is to be an inheritor of all of the blessings of the gospel, provided there is continued obedience to the laws and ordinances thereof.

The call itself is to the gospel cause; it is not reserved for apostles and prophets or for the great and mighty in Israel; it is for all the members of the kingdom.

That's good news. We have joined the church through the waters of baptism and we have answered the call. We are on the path of righteousness that leads to eternal life.

[2] Now what is meant by making a calling sure?

All blessings promised in connection with the callings of God are conditional; they are offered to men provided they obey the laws upon which their receipt is predicated. (D&C 130:20-21.) “For all who will have a blessing at my hands,” the Lord says, “shall abide the law which was appointed for that blessing, and the conditions thereof, as were instituted from before the foundation of the world.” (D&C 132:5.) It follows, then, that when the law has been lived to the full, the promised blessing is guaranteed. “I, the Lord, am bound when ye do what I say; but when ye do not what I say, ye have no promise.” (D&C 82:10.) Accordingly, when a man lives the law that qualifies him for eternal life, the Lord is bound by his own law to confer that greatest of all gifts upon him. And if by a long course of trial and obedience, while yet in this

life, a man proves to the Lord that he has and will abide in the truth, the Lord accepts the exhibited devotion and issues his decree that the promised blessings shall be received. The calling, which up to that time was provisional, is then made sure. The receipt of the promised blessings are no longer conditional; they are guaranteed. Announcement is made that every gospel blessing shall be inherited.

This sounds awesome, but is it something that only happens to prophets and apostles; is only attainable by them? Or is this something that even the lowliest (meaning the least prominent or influential) of church members can achieve? If you're *only* a nursery leader, is this something you can expect to do? Let's continue with the next few questions...

[3] What is meant by election? Who are the elect of God? To what have they been elected? And why?

Election is akin to and synonymous with calling, and in a general sense the elect comprise the whole house of Israel.

But in the most express and proper usage of the terms, “The elect of God comprise a very select group, an inner circle of faithful members of the Church.... They are the portion of church members who are striving with all their hearts to keep the fulness of the gospel law in this life so that they can become inheritors of the fulness of the gospel rewards in the life to come.

“As far as the male sex is concerned, they are the ones, the Lord says, who have the Melchizedek Priesthood conferred upon them and who thereafter magnify their callings and are sanctified by the Spirit. In this way, ‘They become the sons of Moses and of Aaron and the seed of Abraham, and the church and kingdom, and the elect of God.’” (*Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed., 217.)

Well, depending on how you choose to look at that answer, you will either think: “Yep, I knew it! That blessing isn't for me. It's for the 'elite' members of the church, and that's not me!” -OR- you can choose to believe when God says that He is no respecter of persons and then realize that this means that God makes no exclusions on who can keep His commandments and earn His favor. Whether you are in the above-mentioned 'inner circle' is entirely up to you.

[4] What is meant by making an election sure?

It is with election as with calling: the chosen of the Lord are offered all of the blessings of the gospel on condition of obedience to the Lord's laws; and they, having been tried and tested and found worthy in all things, eventually have a seal placed on their election which guarantees the receipt of the promised blessing.

[5] What is meant by having one's calling and election made sure?

To have one's calling and election made sure is to be sealed up unto eternal life; it is to have the unconditional guarantee of exaltation in the highest heaven of the celestial world; it is to receive the assurance of godhood; it is, in effect, to have the day of judgment advanced, so that an inheritance of all the glory and honor of the Father's kingdom is assured prior to the day when the faithful actually enter into the divine presence to sit with Christ in his throne, even as he is “set down” with his “Father in his throne.” (Rev 3:21.)

So, now that we know some basics, let's look at a few particulars.

[6] What is the relationship between baptism and having one's calling and election made sure?

Baptism is the beginning of personal righteousness; it opens the door to celestial exaltation; it puts us on the path leading to eternal life.

[7] What is the relationship between celestial marriage and having one's calling and election made sure?

In the same sense that baptism opens the door and starts repentant persons travelling on the path leading to eternal life, so also does celestial marriage. This holy order of matrimony also opens a door leading to celestial exaltation. "In the celestial glory there are three heavens or degrees; And in order to obtain the highest, a man must enter into this order of the priesthood [meaning the new and everlasting covenant of marriage]; And if he does not, he cannot obtain it. He may enter into the other, but that is the end of his kingdom; he cannot have an increase." (D&C 131:1-4.)

As everyone who has been married in the temple knows, those so united—by the power and authority of the holy priesthood and by virtue of the sealing power restored by Elijah—are promised an inheritance of glory, honor, power, and dominion in the kingdom of God. But, as with baptism, all the promises are conditional; they are specifically and pointedly stated as being contingent upon the subsequent faithfulness of the participating parties. If they keep the commandments after celestial marriage, their union continues in the life to come; if they do not conform to the standards of personal righteousness involved, their marriage is not of force when they die and they revert to their separate and single status.

As with baptism, so with celestial marriage; after the glorious promise of eternal life that is part

of each of these covenants, we must press forward in righteousness until our calling and election is made sure; and this high achievement grows out of and is the crowning reward of celestial marriage.

[8] What is the relationship between holding the holy Melchizedek Priesthood and having one's calling and election made sure?

The Melchizedek Priesthood is conferred with an oath and a covenant — a covenant on man's part that he will receive the priesthood and magnify his calling therein, and an oath on God's part that man shall, as a consequence, be “made like unto the Son of God, abiding a priest continually.” (*Inspired Version* [JST], Heb 7:3; D&C 84:33-44.) See Heb 7:1-3, 18-22. In other words, those who magnify their callings shall gain eternal life.

Of note here too is that by magnifying our callings, we will be made like unto the Son of God. Whereas in the past, this commandment to magnify our callings always just seemed like another of the many commandments we have been instructed to obey, I seem to have previously missed this blessing that goes along with it. In fact, this seems like a very good commandment to put towards the top of those we focus on. Would not being made like unto the Son of God mean that we have a greater and greater disposition to obey all of God's commandments?

[9] Is having one's calling and election made sure the same as being sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise?

The Holy Ghost is the Holy Spirit; he is the Holy Spirit promised the saints at baptism, or in other words the Holy Spirit of Promise, this exalted name-title signifying that the promised receipt of the Holy Spirit, as on the day of Pentecost, is the greatest gift man can receive in mortality.

So “The Holy Spirit of Promise” is a title of the Holy Ghost.

The gift of the Holy Ghost is the right to the constant companionship of that member of the Godhead based on faithfulness; it is bestowed with a promise that we shall receive revelation and be sanctified if we are true and faithful and so live as to qualify for the companionship of that Holy Spirit who will not dwell in an unclean temple. (1 Cor 3:16-17; 6:19; Mosiah 2:37; Hela 4:24.) The receipt of the promise is conditional! If after we receive the promise, we then keep the commandment, we gain the companionship of this member of the Godhead, and not otherwise.

One of the functions assigned and delegated to the Holy Spirit is to seal, and the following expressions are identical in thought content:

To be sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise;

To be justified by the Spirit;

To be approved by the Lord; and

To be ratified by the Holy Ghost.

By way of illustration, this means that baptism, partaking of the sacrament, administering to the sick, marriage, and every covenant that man ever makes with the Lord — plus all other “contracts, bonds, obligations, oaths, vows, performances, associations, or expectations” — must be performed in righteousness by and for people who are worthy to receive whatever blessing is involved, otherwise whatever is done has no binding and sealing effect in eternity. Since “the Comforter knoweth all things” (D&C 42:17), it follows that it is not possible “to lie to the Holy Ghost” and thereby gain an unearned or undeserved blessing, ~~as Ananias and~~

~~Sapphria found out to their sorrow.~~ (Acts 5:1-11.)

When the Holy Spirit of Promise places his ratifying seal upon a baptism, or a marriage, or any covenant, except that of having one's calling and election made sure, the seal is a conditional approval or ratification; it is binding in eternity only in the event of subsequent obedience to the terms and conditions of whatever covenant is involved.

But when the ratifying seal of approval is placed upon someone whose calling and election is thereby made sure— because there are no more conditions to be met by the obedient person—this act of being sealed up unto eternal life is of such transcendent import that of itself it is called being sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise, which means that in this crowning sense, being so sealed is the same as having one's calling and election made sure. Thus, to be sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise is to be sealed up unto eternal life; and to be sealed up unto eternal life is to be sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise.

[10] Is having one's calling and election made sure the same as receiving the Second Comforter?

It is the privilege of those who have their calling and election made sure, meaning those who are sealed up unto eternal life, meaning those who are “sealed with that holy Spirit of promise” (Eph 1:13), to receive the Second Comforter.

“After a person has faith in Christ, repents of his sins, and is baptized for the remission of his sins and receives the Holy Ghost, (by the laying on of hands), which is the first Comforter, then let him continue to humble himself before God, hungering and thirsting after righteousness, and living by every word of God, and the Lord will soon say unto him, Son, thou shalt be exalted.

When the Lord has thoroughly proved him, and finds that the man is determined to serve him at all hazards, then the man will find his calling and election made sure, then it will be his privilege to receive the other Comforter, which the Lord hath promised the saints, as recorded in the testimony of St. John, in the 14th chapter, from the 12th to the 27th verses.” (*Teachings*, 149-150.)

Let's read John 14:21 & 23 again:

21 He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.

23 ~~Jesus answered and said unto him,~~ If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.

[W]hy should they not come to such persons, since all who gain eternal life shall dwell in their presence and be like them?

After quoting the ~~named~~ [12th through 27th] verses from the 14th chapter of John, the Prophet continues his own inspired analysis: “Now what is this other Comforter?” he asks. “It is no more nor less than the Lord Jesus Christ himself; and this is the sum and substance of the whole matter; that when any man obtains this last Comforter, he will have the personage of Jesus Christ to attend him, or appear unto him from time to time, and even he will manifest the Father unto him, and they will take up their abode with him, and the visions of the heavens will be opened unto him, and the Lord will teach him face to face, and he may have a perfect knowledge of the mysteries of the Kingdom of God; and this is the state and place the ancient saints arrived at when they had such glorious visions—Isaiah, Ezekiel, John upon the Isle of Patmos, St. Paul in the three heavens, and all the saints who held communion with the general

assembly and Church of the Firstborn.” (*Teachings*, 150-151.) [See D&C 84:54, 67-70.]

Speaking in November, 1831, to those whose calling and election would in due course be made sure, and whose “privilege” it would then be to receive the Second Comforter, the Lord said: “Verily I say unto you that it is your privilege, and a promise I give unto you that have been ordained unto this ministry, that inasmuch as you strip yourselves from jealousies and fears, and humble yourselves before me, for ye are not sufficiently humble, the veil shall be rent and you shall see me.” (D&C 67:10-14.)

[11] What if those whose calling and election has been made sure thereafter commit grievous sins?

Suppose they backslide and walk in the ways of wickedness? Or fight the truth and rebel against God

— what then?

That all men commit sin, before and after baptism, and for that matter, before and after their calling and election is made sure, is self-evident. There has been only one Sinless One—the Lord Jesus who was God’s own Son.

Obviously the laws of repentance still apply, and the more enlightened a person is, the more he seeks the gift of repentance, and the harder he strives to free himself from sin as often as he falls short of the divine will and becomes subject in any degree to the Master of Sin who is Lucifer. It follows that the sins of the godfearing and the righteous are continually remitted because they repent and seek the Lord anew every day and every hour.

And as a matter of fact, the added blessing of having one’s calling and election made sure is itself an encouragement to avoid sin and a hedge against its further commission. By that long course of obedience and trial which enabled them to gain so great a blessing the sanctified saints

have charted a course and developed a pattern of living which avoids sin and encourages righteousness.

But suppose such persons become disaffected and the spirit of repentance leaves them — which is a seldom and almost unheard of eventuality — still, what then? The answer is — and the revelations and teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith so recite! — they must then pay the penalty of their own sins, for the blood of Christ will not cleanse them. Or if they commit murder or adultery, they lose their promised inheritance because these sins are exempt from the sealing promises. Or if they commit the unpardonable sin, they become sons of perdition.

[12] Who has had their calling and election made sure and how can they be identified?

Isaiah, Ezekiel, John the Revelator, Paul, Moses, Joshua, Joseph Smith, and all the prophets are of course in this category. Who else? Joseph Smith identified some: William Clayton (a contemporary of his), “many others” of his day, at least some of the saints at Ephesus in the New Testament, as well as at Rome, Corinth, Galatia, Philippi, Colosse, Thessalonica, and in all the places where the Meridian Saints were congregated. If Paul and John are part of the group, so also are Peter, James, Titus, Jude, Matthew, the other apostles, and many of the preachers of righteousness of that ancient day. And how about among the Nephites, or the Jaredites? Certainly there were many, particularly during the 200 years of peace after the Savior visited the Nephites. Enoch's city of Zion must also be included in the count.

As with all the blessings of the gospel, the glorious reality of having one's calling and election made sure is within the power of the faithful saints to obtain, including both men and women.

In any time or place, those who have had their calling and election made sure can be identified by their

fruits by those with the spirit.

Last question:

[13] How many of the saints have or shall make their calling and election sure?

There is no more an answer to this question than there was to the query put to Jesus: “Lord, are there few that be saved?” to which he answered: “Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able” (Luke 13:23-24), by which he meant to teach that though the total saved will be many they are few as compared to the masses of men. And so it is among the saints with reference to being sealed up unto eternal life: though many shall so obtain, they will be few compared to the total population of the Church.

It is in this sense that Jesus used the enigmatic expression “Many are called, but few are chosen.” (Matt 22:14.) Called to what? Chosen for what? Called into the Church, called to the holy priesthood, called to receive all of the blessings of the gospel, including the crowning blessing of eternal life. Chosen to inherit the blessings offered through the gospel and the priesthood; chosen for eternal life and exaltation. Called to the Church, but chosen to be sealed up unto eternal life and to have one’s calling and election made sure. “How many will be able to abide a celestial law, and go through and receive their exaltation,” the Prophet said, “I am unable to say, as many are called, but few are chosen.” (*Teachings*, 331.)

Briefly, in closing, allow me to suggest a few steps that we can take now to orient ourselves toward this mighty goal of having our Calling and Elections made sure and of receiving the Second Comforter:

- 1) Strive to magnify your calling – that means go beyond what is required.
- 2) Go to bed earlier and don't end your day in front of the television.
- 3) Wake up early enough that you don't have to rush to get ready and run out the door which

allows you to...

- 4) Read the scriptures in the morning and pray and ponder.
- 5) Write and review a personal mission statement daily.
- 6) Review your patriarchal blessing daily along with any other blessings you may have recorded.
- 7) Ask the Lord what you can work on today.

I believe that if we do these things, we will be putting the Lord first and the other commandments that we must obey will be easier as our capacities for righteousness expand. By putting the Lord first, we will really, earnestly “seek[] diligently to live [the gospel's] laws and gain eternal life” and will develop within ourselves an “instinctive and determined desire to make [our] calling and election sure”. This is my prayer, that we so do, in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.