

Be Perfected in Him

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Our perfection is only possible through God's grace.

Our Heavenly Father and our Savior, Jesus Christ, have the power to save us and transform us. They can help us become as They are.

A few years ago, one of our young grandsons, Aaron, began having health problems. He became fatigued, had quite a bit of bruising, and did not look healthy. After medical testing, he was diagnosed with severe aplastic anemia, a disease where his bone marrow stopped producing red blood cells, white blood cells, and platelets. Without treatment and an eventual cure, his blood could not clot properly or fight off infections, so even minor falls, injuries, or illnesses could quickly become life-threatening.

For a period of time, Aaron received regular platelet and blood transfusions to keep him out of danger. The doctors explained that the only cure for the disease would be a bone marrow transplant, and the best chance for success would be to have a sibling as the donor. If one of his siblings were an ideal match, the outcome of the transplant could be lifesaving. His four younger brothers were tested, and one, Maxwell, was deemed a perfect match.

Even with a perfect donor match, a bone marrow transplant still poses a serious risk of complications. The process required that Aaron's own cells in his diseased bone marrow be destroyed by a combination of chemotherapy and radiation before receiving the stem cells from his brother Maxwell's bone marrow. Then because of Aaron's compromised immune system, he needed to be isolated in the hospital for several weeks and then at home for several months with special protocols, restrictions, and medications.

The hoped-for outcome from the transplant was that Aaron's body would not reject the donor cells and that Maxwell's cells would gradually produce the needed red and white blood cells and platelets in Aaron's body. A successful donor transplant causes a very real physiological change. Amazingly, a doctor explained that if Aaron committed a crime and left blood at the crime scene, the police could

arrest his brother Maxwell. This is because Aaron's blood would come from Maxwell's transplanted cells and have Maxwell's DNA, and this would be the case for the rest of his life.

Aaron being saved by his brother's blood has spurred many thoughts about the atoning blood of Jesus Christ and the effect of His Atonement on us. I would like to focus today on the permanent, life-giving change that occurs as we allow the Lord to work miracles in us.¹

Aaron did not have the power in himself to overcome the disease. His body could not make the blood cells needed to sustain his life. No matter what he personally did, he could not heal his bone marrow. Just as Aaron could not cure himself, we cannot save ourselves. No matter how capable, educated, brilliant, or strong we are, we cannot cleanse ourselves from our sins, change our bodies to an immortal state, or exalt ourselves. It is only possible through the Savior Jesus Christ and His infinite Atonement. "There is none other way nor name given under heaven whereby man can be saved in the kingdom of God."² It is His atoning blood that cleanses us and sanctifies us.³

Although Aaron could not heal himself, in order for the transplant to work he needed to be willing to do what the doctors asked—even very difficult, challenging things. Although we can't save ourselves, when we submit to the Lord's will and keep our covenants, the way is open for our redemption.⁴ Like the remarkable process of the very DNA of Aaron's blood cells changing, we can have our hearts changed,⁵ have His image in our countenances,⁶ and become new creatures in Christ.⁷

Alma reminded the people of Zarahemla of the previous generation that had been converted. Speaking of his father, Alma explained that "according to his faith there was a mighty change wrought in his heart."⁸ He then asked, "Have ye experienced this mighty change in your hearts?"⁹ It wasn't the people who changed their own hearts. The Lord performed the actual change. Alma was very clear about this. He said, "Behold, he changed their hearts."¹⁰ They "humbled themselves and put their trust in the true and living God ... [and] were faithful until the end ... [and] were saved."¹¹ The people were willing to open their hearts and exercise faith, and then the Lord changed their hearts. And what a mighty change it was! Think of the difference in the lives of these two men named Alma before and after their hearts were changed.¹²

We are children of God with a majestic destiny. We can be changed to become like Him and have "a fulness of joy."¹³ Satan, on the other hand, would have us be miserable like he is.¹⁴ We have the ability to choose whom we follow.¹⁵ When we follow Satan, we give him power.¹⁶ When we follow God, He gives us power.

The Savior taught that we “should be perfect.”¹⁷ This can seem so daunting. I can clearly see my personal inadequacies and am painfully aware of the distance between me and perfection. We may have a tendency to think we have to perfect ourselves, but that is not possible. Following every suggestion in every self-help book in the world will not bring it about. There is only one way and one name whereby perfection comes. We are “made perfect through Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, who wrought out this perfect atonement through the shedding of his own blood.”¹⁸ Our perfection is only possible through God’s grace.

Can you imagine how overwhelming it would have been for our young grandson Aaron to assume he had to understand and perform all the medical procedures associated with his transplant himself? We should not assume we need to do what only the Savior can do in the miraculous process of our perfection.

As Moroni concluded his record, he taught, “Yea, come unto Christ, and be perfected in him, ... and if ye shall deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and love God with all your might, mind and strength, then is his grace sufficient for you, that by his grace ye may be perfect in Christ.”¹⁹ What a comforting and powerful truth! His grace is sufficient for me. His grace is sufficient for you. His grace is sufficient for all who “labour and are heavy laden.”²⁰

With medical treatments like Aaron’s, there is always some uncertainty of the outcome. In fact, Aaron needed a second transplant when the first one had complications. Thankfully, with a spiritual change of heart, we don’t have to wonder if it will happen. When we live according to His will, “relying wholly upon the merits of him who is mighty to save,”²¹ there is a 100 percent guarantee of being cleansed by the Savior’s blood and eventually being perfected in Him. He is “a God of truth, and [cannot] lie.”²²

There is no question that this process of change takes time and will not be completed until after this life, but the promise is sure. When the fulfillment of God’s promises seems far off, we still embrace those promises, knowing they will be fulfilled.²³

The miraculous change in Aaron’s health has brought great joy to our family. Imagine the great joy in heaven as mighty changes happen in our souls.

Our Heavenly Father and our Savior, Jesus Christ, love us and have graciously offered to change us and perfect us. They want to do this. It is central to Their work and glory.²⁴ I testify They have power to do this as we come to Them in faith. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. See Alma 23:6.
2. 2 Nephi 31:21.
3. See 1 Peter 1:18–19; Revelation 1:5; Moses 6:59–60.
4. See 3 Nephi 18:1–12; 27:20; Doctrine and Covenants 132:19.
5. See Alma 5:7.
6. See Alma 5:14.
7. See Mosiah 27:25–27.
8. Alma 5:12.
9. Alma 5:14.
10. Alma 5:7.
11. Alma 5:13.
12. See Mosiah 18:1–3; 27:8–10; Alma 4:15–20.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 93:33.
14. See 2 Nephi 2:18.
15. See 2 Nephi 2:27.
16. See 2 Nephi 26:22; 28:22; Mosiah 16:5; Alma 34:39; 3 Nephi 7:5; Doctrine and Covenants 29:40.
17. 3 Nephi 12:48.
18. Doctrine and Covenants 76:69.
19. Moroni 10:32.
20. Matthew 11:28.
21. 2 Nephi 31:19.
22. Ether 3:12.
23. See Hebrews 11:13.
24. See Moses 1:39.