

"And now behold, I ask of you, my brethren of the church, have ye spiritually been born of God? Have ye received his image in your countenances? Have ye experienced this mighty change in your hearts?" Alma 5:14

Chapter 22 – The Divine Laws Of Love – Our Prime Directives

PART III

A summary of important principles concerning this vital change.

CHAPTER 22

THE DIVINE LAWS OF LOVE – OUR PRIME DIRECTIVES

In our view love is the common component in every aspect of the Gospel, including reestablishing a Zion society. The best known of the many scriptures that give us the divine laws of love involve, of all people, a lawyer (scribe). We have two versions of the incident. Matthew gives us the short version, thusly:

Matt. 22:34-39 But when the Pharisees had heard that he had put the Sadducees to silence, they were gathered together.

35 Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying,

36 Master, which is the great commandment in the law?

37 Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

38 This is the first and great commandment.

39 And the second is like unto it, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.

40 On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

Mark gives us the more detailed version which, among other things, tells us that the lawyer already knew the answer to his question and that, therefore, these divine laws of love were already known to and understood by at least the thoughtful Israelites. We also learn that once upon a time there was at least one lawyer who was close to getting it right.

Mark 12:28-34. And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and having perceived that he had answered them well, asked him, Which is the first commandment of all?

29 And Jesus answered him, the first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord:

30 And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment

31 And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.

32 And the scribe said unto him, Well, Master, thou hast said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but he:

33 And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbor as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.

34 And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God. And no man after that durst ask him any questions.

We begin our comments, oddly enough, in the premortal spirit realm. After we were each organized by our heavenly parents from what the scriptures call “intelligence” we dwelt with our parents in Heaven. There we were instructed by them and by others in all things that were necessary for us to know in order to accomplish all that was possible there towards becoming perfect like them. Certainly the emphasis there was also on love.

Because of our perfect intellectual knowledge of these truths in the premortal existence and because nothing imperfect can be in Father’s presence, it was not possible for us to know there whether at our core we had fully learned, understood and could properly apply these great principles of love. Thus, Father proposed and we agreed to this great experience here where we would have an opportunity to choose good over evil and to experience the consequences of those choices in order to be PROVED and learn for ourselves. For that reason we come into this world where we basically start over with just our eternal character. A veil is purposefully drawn over our minds so that we forget our past experiences. There is much truth to the saying that circumstances do not make character, but only reveal it. In an eternal sense, Shakespeare was speaking a great truth when he said “All the world is a stage”, for truly this world is only a temporary stage on which to conduct this great learning process.

Although this world with its problems and challenges is terribly real at the moment, that which has lasting, eternal import is the choices we make and the attitudes and attributes of character that we develop, or uncover, because that is all we take with us when we leave here. One of the strongest lessons taught in this world is the power and worth of love, for each of us to a greater or lesser extent learns by experience that love in personal relationships or the lack thereof is the source of our greatest happiness and greatest sorrow.

Hence, the great theme unifying Father’s plan of progression towards perfection is love of both our Father and each other. In fact, these divine laws of love are so essential that to me they basically define two other concepts important to our growth and progression towards perfection, those two concepts being “sin” and “repentance”. As I have struggled to understand exactly what “sin” is, I have come to the view that sin is any act which is inconsistent with or in violation of the two great commandments to love God and to love each

other. And repentance, which basically means to change our mind, thoughts, or spirit, I see as the name given to the process of changing our thoughts and actions from those that are inconsistent with these two laws of love to acts that are consistent with those laws.

To me not only do these laws define the concepts of sin and repentance but they essentially define at least the most important aspect of perfection itself as that term is applied to us in most places in the scriptures. Specifically, I believe that an individual whose thoughts and actions are in full harmony with those principles is fundamentally perfect since that attribute underlays all the other attributes such as patience, kindness, etc. mentioned in the scriptures as divine attributes.

The first reason I see why these laws of love are our “prime directives” is because every person on this planet is His son or daughter. I too am a father and one of the things that upsets me the most is squabbling, fighting, anger, etc. among my children. In addition to doing everything I know how to do to get my children to understand the need to not only get along with one another but to really love one another I also want them to learn to share and be fair with one another. And I strive to do this because I know that as a family our own joy and happiness is greatest when there is a maximum of love and harmony among each of the family members.

The day I saw the parallel between my purpose as a father and what Heavenly Father asks of us just happened to be after refereeing a squabble among my children that particularly upset me. As I pondered over why I was so upset I suddenly saw the parallel; it was one large “AH HA!” for me. It astonishes me that it took me more than thirty years to really understand through my experience something that had been right in front of my nose all that time. I had intellectually understood for some time that Heavenly Father’s entire plan exists only to enable or empower us to return along with our loved ones to live with our divine parents and their eldest son, Jesus Christ, in the Celestial Kingdom, a realm of love and beauty, as a family of perfected men and women enjoying a perfect love and carrying on the unending work of organizing and perfecting others. Nonetheless, at that moment I came to a much deeper understanding of why Father’s kingdom is one of pure, perfect love and beauty, and the most important of the divine and eternal laws which we must come to accept, understand and apply is to love our Father in Heaven and each other and then act accordingly in all things.

One other thought on another “why.” Clearly neither knowledge nor capabilities either alone or combined are what perfection is all about, for Lucifer, who had a full knowledge and presumably virtually full capabilities as one of Father’s right hand assistants in the pre-mortal existence, blew it all when he rebelled against Father and with his knowledge and great capabilities succeeding in attracting to his cause a full one third of all of Father’s children, who themselves apparently had great knowledge and capabilities far beyond those we now possess in this world. Concerning the tests of this world we are told that all will be fully tested even as Abraham was tested – and clearly Abraham’s test of whether he would do all that Father asked and sacrifice what to his knowledge was the only son and child he would ever have was a truly awesome test. Abraham’s test was for me a test of the strength, or dependability of his love for Father. By becoming perfect or godlike and acquiring all the Father hath, we acquire among other things all of the capacities and capabilities of God with which immense harm and damage could be done, along the lines of what Lucifer has done, if we ever, for any reason did not act selflessly in all things in total harmony with these laws of love.

As I came to see these reasons for our divinely given prime directives I saw more clearly why these laws underlay or were the reasons for everything else that Heavenly Father has asked us to do. And, I understood better why Moroni’s great statements on faith, hope and charity are the sum and substance of the Gospel. Let’s read again the final portion of these oh so choice verses:

Moroni 7:44 ... for none is acceptable before God, save the meek and lowly in heart; and if a man be meek and lowly in heart, and confesses by the power of the Holy Ghost that Jesus is the Christ, he must needs have charity; for if he have not charity he is nothing; wherefore he must needs have charity.

45 And charity suffereth long, and is kind, and envieth not, and is not puffed up, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, and rejoiceth not in iniquity but rejoiceth in the truth, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

46 Wherefore, my beloved brethren, if ye have not charity, ye are nothing, for charity never faileth. Wherefore, cleave unto charity, which is the greatest of all, for all things must fail –

47 But charity is the pure love of Christ, and it endureth forever; and whoso is found possessed of it at the last day, it shall be well with him.

48 Wherefore, my beloved brethren, pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with this love, which he hath BESTOWED upon all who are true followers of his Son, Jesus Christ; that ye may become the sons of God; that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is; that we may have this hope; that we may be purified even as he is pure. Amen

I understood why the entire purpose of the earth is foiled without the sealing ordinances of the gospel:

D&C 138:46-48 And Malachi, the prophet who testified of the coming of Elijah – of whom also Moroni spake to the Prophet Joseph Smith, declaring that he should come before the ushering in of the great and dreadful day of the Lord – were also there.

47 The Prophet Elijah was to plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to their fathers.

48 Foreshadowing the great work to be done in the temples of the Lord in the dispensation of the fulness of times, for the redemption of the dead, and the sealing of the children to their parents, lest the whole earth be smitten with a curse and utterly wasted at his coming.

I more easily understood why on the economic aspects of life Heavenly Father has given the following to us as His will.

D&C 104:11-18 *It is wisdom in me; therefore, a commandment I give unto you, that ye shall organize yourselves and appoint every man his stewardship;*

12 That every man may give an account unto me of the stewardship which is appointed unto him.

13 For it is expedient that I, the Lord, should make every man accountable, as a steward over earthly blessings, which I have made and prepared for my creatures.

14 I, the Lord, stretched out the heavens, and built the earth, my very handiwork; and all things therein are mine.

15 And it is my purpose to provide for my saints, for all things are mine.

16 But it must needs be done in mine own way; and behold this is the way that I, the Lord, have decreed to provide for my saints, that the poor shall be exalted, in that the rich are made low.

17 For the earth is full, and there is enough and to spare; yea, I have prepared all things, and have given unto the children of men to be agents unto themselves.

18 Therefore, if any man shall take of the abundance which I have made, and impart not his portion, according to the law of my gospel, unto the poor and the needy, he shall, with the wicked, lift up his eyes in hell, being in torment.

D&C 49:20 But it is not given that one man should possess that which is above another, wherefore the world lieth in sin.

D&C 78:3-6 For verily I say unto you, the time has come, and is now at hand; and behold, and lo, it must needs be that there be an organization of my people, in regulating and establishing the affairs of the storehouse for the poor of my people, both in this place and in the land of Zion –

4 For a permanent and everlasting establishment and order unto my church, to advance the cause, which you have espoused, to the salvation of man, and to the glory of your Father who is in heaven;

5 That you may be equal in the bonds of heavenly things, yea, and earthly things also, for the obtaining of heavenly things.

6 For if ye are not equal in earthly things ye cannot be equal in obtaining heavenly things;

7 For if you will that I give unto you a place in the celestial world, you must prepare yourselves by doing the things which I have commanded you and required of you.

D&C 70:14

Nevertheless, in your temporal things you shall be equal, and this not grudgingly, otherwise the abundance of the manifestations of the Spirit shall be withheld.

I also understood how unity, which is a major requirement of the Lord for many blessings, naturally flows from following these principles. Consider the following revelation.

D&C 38:24-27 And let every man esteem his brother as himself, and practice virtue and holiness before me.

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.

Listen now as the Lord explains the blessings that naturally follow those who obey with full purpose of heart the preceding principles. It sounds exactly like the desires I have and the blessings I would wish for each one of my own children.

D&C 82:16-24 Behold, here is wisdom also in me for your good.

17 And you are to be equal, or in other words, you are to have equal claim on the properties, for the benefit of managing the concerns of your stewardships, every man according to his wants and his needs, inasmuch as his wants are just –

18 And all this for the benefit of the church of the living God, that every man may gain other talents, yea, eve an hundred fold, to be cast into the Lord's storehouse, to become the common property of the whole church –

19 Every man seeking the interest of his neighbor, and doing all things with an eye single to the glory of God.

20 This order I have appointed to be an everlasting order unto you, and unto your successors, inasmuch as you sin not.

21 And the soul that sins against this covenant, and hardeneth his heart against it, shall be dealt with according to the laws of my church, and shall be delivered over to the buffetings of Satan until the day of redemption.

22 And now, verily I say unto you, and this is wisdom, make unto yourselves friends with the mammon of unrighteousness, and they will not destroy you.

23 Leave judgment alone with me, for it is mine and I will repay. Peace be with you; my blessings continue with you.

24 For even yet the kingdom is yours, and shall be forever, if you fall not from your steadfastness. Even so, Amen.

Now, having thoughtfully considered the preceding words of Lord to the us, and being mindful that none of those principles were fully or even substantially followed, perhaps you can more fully appreciate just why the Lord is so clearly unhappy and says what He does in these next verses from D&C 101. Because the preamble is helpful to a fuller understanding we include it as well.

Revelation given to Joseph Smith the Prophet, at Kirtland, Ohio, December 16, 1833. HC 1:458-464. At this time the saints who had gathered in Missouri were suffering great persecution. Mobs had driven them from their homes in Jackson County, and some of them had tried to establish themselves in Van Buren County, but persecution followed them. The main body of the saints was at that time in Clay County, Missouri. Threats of death against individuals of the Church were many. The people had lost household furniture, clothing, livestock, and other personal property, and many of their crops had been destroyed.

Verily, I say unto you, concerning your brethren who have been afflicted, and persecuted, and cast out from the land of their inheritance –

2 I, the Lord, have suffered the affliction to come upon them, wherewith they have been afflicted, in consequence of their own transgressions.

3 Yet I will own them, and they shall be mine in that day when I shall come to make up my jewels.

4 Therefore, they must needs be chastened and tried, even as Abraham who was commanded to offer up his only son.

*5 For **all those who will not endure chastening, but deny me, cannot be sanctified.***

*6 Behold, I say unto you, there were jarrings, and contentions, and envyings, and strifes, and lustful and covetous desires among them; therefore **by these things they polluted their inheritances.***

7 They were slow to hearken unto the voice of the Lord their God; therefore, the Lord their God is slow to hearken unto their prayers, to answer them in the day of their trouble.

8 In the day of their peace they esteemed lightly my counsel; but in the day of their trouble, of necessity they feel after me.

Now read carefully the following portions of D&C 105 which to me are an excellent summary of the entire subject of the Lord's will for economic matters among the Saints and what is required for it to occur.

D&C 105:2-6, 9-14, 31-33. Behold, I say unto you, were it not for the transgressions of my people, speaking concerning the church and not individuals, they might have been redeemed even now.

*3 But behold, they have not learned to be obedient to the things which I required at their hands, but are full of all manner of evil, and **do not impart of their substance, as becometh saints, to the poor and afflicted among them;***

*4 **And are not united according to the union required by the law of the celestial kingdom;***

*5 **And Zion cannot be built up unless it is by the principles of the law of the celestial kingdom;** otherwise I cannot receive her unto myself.*

6 And my people must needs be chastened until they learn obedience, if it must needs be, by the things which they suffer.

...

9 Therefore, in consequence of the transgressions of my people, it is expedient in me that mine elders should wait for a little season for the redemption of Zion –

10 That they themselves may be prepared, and that my people may be taught more perfectly, and have experience, and know more perfectly concerning their duty, and the things which I require at their hands.

*11 **And this cannot be brought to pass until mine elders are endowed with power from on high.***

*12 For behold, **I have prepared a great endowment and blessing to be poured out upon them,** inasmuch as they are faithful and continue in humility before me.*

13 Therefore it is expedient in me that mine elders should wait for a little season, for the redemption of Zion.

14 For behold, I do not require at their hands to fight the battles of Zion; for, as I said in a former commandment, even so will I fulfill – I will fight their battles.

...

*31 But first let my army become very great, **and let it be SANCTIFIED before me,** that it may become fair as the sun, and clear as the moon, and that her banners may be terrible unto all nations;*

32 That the kingdoms of this world may be constrained to acknowledge that the kingdom of Zion is in very deed the kingdom of our God and his Christ; therefore, let us become subject unto her laws.

33 Verily I say unto you, it is expedient in me that the first elders should receive their endowment from on high in my house, which I have commanded to be built unto my name in the land of Kirtland.

Hopefully you are aware of the unprecedented spiritual outpouring that occurred during the dedication of the Kirtland Temple. During those events it appears from this revelation and from the records of the events that during those unforgettable days many became sanctified through the baptism of fire.

And, finally, I understood much more clearly that when our hearts are changed and filled with the pure love of Christ so that we care more for the welfare of others than we do ourselves, then, and only then, these principles will be willingly followed by all out of love. Only when this happens can a true Zion society occur and endure. Note the essential aspects of the true Zion Society as summarized in the following well known scripture.

Moses 7:18. 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.

To date, there is no ground for disputing that the Lord's economic standard is one that as a people we simply have not met; nor is that failure due to a lack of understanding. As both Hugh Nibley in his landmark work "Approaching Zion" and President Benson have pointedly explained the Saints remain immersed in Babylon because of such divisive attitudes as pride, selfishness and greed, which attitudes can only exist in those who do not have the pure love of Christ.

The big problem with the laws of love is that as plain old "natural man" folks we simply are unable to live them. Since the Gospel was restored and the church formally organized on April 6, 1830, as a people we have experienced more than one hundred sixty years of revelations, sermons, exhortations and admonitions from Prophets and Apostles, endless reminders of our "duties", and countless lists of "shoulds" and "oughts" in innumerable hours of instruction and sermons. Yes, it has helped. We are certainly better for it. We have progressed individually and as a people. But, based on all the evidence, and as the Lord has expressly acknowledged in the above verses from Section 105, mere "head learning" or intellectual understanding is a necessary beginning but is not alone nearly enough to bring about sufficient changes in our behavior

So we now find ourselves in the situation where with our lips we can teach and mentally comprehend correct principles, but our hearts are not sufficiently changed, so our behavior is not sufficiently changed and Zion is not yet reestablished, although the foundation has been laid since 1830.

But, we should not be too discouraged either. After all it took Enoch more than twice this number of years before his Zion was ready to be taken up. In fact, he needed some three hundred sixty five years laboring with the same people (because of their much longer life spans) and their descendants before Zion was taken up.

Based on the results from the beginning of the restoration to now, it seems fair to conclude that as a people or society we have developed about as far as we can on sermons and "shoulds" and "oughts." WE NEED SOMETHING MORE!!

Is it not plainly apparent that, in the terms of King Benjamin and his people, the something more needed is to come unto Christ, have his atoning blood applied to us that we might receive a remission sins and experience the mighty change of heart including the gift or endowment of the pure love of Christ spoken of so eloquently by Moroni?

AFTER ALL, IT WAS NEVER INTENDED THAT WE BE ABLE TO DO IT BY OURSELVES; IF WE COULD THERE WOULD BE NO NEED FOR THE SAVIOR OR HIS ATONEMENT!

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