

A Mighty Change of Heart (<http://mightychangeofheart.com>)

"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 8 – Clean

CHAPTER 8

CLEAN

“And NO UNCLEAN THING can enter into his kingdom; therefore nothing entereth into his rest save it be those who have washed their garments in my blood, because of their faith, and the repentance of ALL THEIR SINS, and their faithfulness unto the end. (III Nephi 27:19)

In the church we have placed a great deal of emphasis on the law of chastity. Virtue has been cried both long and loud. The necessity of this emphasis is very easy to justify. However, in the minds of the youth and some adults it appears that Satan has come forth with a very clever deception. What is that deception? Being “unclean” has been equated only to the violation of the law of chastity. Is the violation of the law of chastity the only transgression that makes a person unclean? Of course not. Every sin or transgression that we commit makes us unclean. Yes, I mean every sin –lying, cheating, stealing, priestcraft, witchcraft, backbiting and the hundreds of other sins that we commit, all make us unclean. Some of the lesser sins may not carry the stigma that the violation of the law of chastity does, but lesser sins lead to greater sins.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE CLEAN?

First of all, let’s discuss what it doesn’t mean. It doesn’t mean to live the law of chastity alone. You mean that a person can be morally clean and still be unclean? That is exactly what I mean. You see, it takes more than moral cleanliness to qualify for entrance into the Celestial Kingdom. Listen to the Master:

*I Am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now **ye are CLEAN through the WORD WHICH I HAVE SPOKEN UNTO YOU.** (John 15:1-3)*

What was the word that was spoken to the apostles that made them clean? In these verses John doesn’t tell us what the “word ... spoken” is, but there are many other accounts to which we can refer, that we may know of a surety.

And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee’s house, and sat down to meat. And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee’s house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, And stood at his feet behind him

WEEPING, and began to wash his feet with TEARS, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment. Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spake WITHIN HIMSELF, SAYING, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him; FOR SHE IS A SINNER. (Luke 7:36-39)

Do you see what was happening? A woman heavily burdened by her past, weeping — in the spirit of true repentance, was bathing the Master’s feet with her tears seeking relief from her agonizing guilt and self-condemnation. The Master’s attention was focused on the woman. He felt a divine compassion for her. He knew that He was shortly to be lifted up on the cross to die for her sins. He sensed the presence of the evil one. Satan had whispered to Simon, “If he were a prophet – he’d know what manner of woman this is – she’s a sinner.”

And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have something to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on. There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence and the other fifty.

*And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him. Thou has rightly judged. And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss; but this woman, since the time I came, hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, WHICH ARE MANY, ARE FORGIVEN; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. **And he said unto her, THY SINS ARE FORGIVEN.** And they that sat at meat with him began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins also? And he said to the woman, **THY FAITH HATH SAVED THEE;** go in peace. (Luke 7:40-50)*

What are the sacred words that make a person clean? THY SINS ARE FORGIVEN. They are the words that every Latter-Day Saint should long to hear. They were the words with which the Lord consoled the repentant woman. They were the words that Simon probably didn’t even know were available. Was it because of a seared conscience or a self-righteous attitude that Simon was not forgiven? Perhaps it was a combination of both. What does it mean to be clean? This doctrine is so important that the Lord has defined it himself so we may have no cause for error. The Lord revealed the definition of “clean”. To discover it let us go to the Kirtland Temple. The year is 1836. It is April the third. The prophet Joseph has just assisted in the distribution of the Lord’s Supper. The meeting ends. The prophet Joseph and Oliver Cowdery approach the pulpit, kneel, and pour out their hearts to the Lord in solemn and silent prayer. As we watch we begin to sense a feeling of anticipation. Are those prayers going to be answered? Yes, right now. They cease their prayers, but they don’t move. They are looking toward the pulpit. Their eyes are fixed on a heavenly being. Listen to Joseph’s description:

The veil was taken from our minds, and the EYES OF OUR UNDERSTANDING WERE OPENED. We saw the LORD standing upon the breastwork of the pulpit, before us; and under his feet was a paved work of pure gold, in color like amber. His eyes were as a flame of fire; the hair of his head was white like the pure snow; his countenance shone above the brightness of the sun; and his voice was as the sound of the rushing of great waters . . . (D&C 110:1-3)

As we ponder the scene with Joseph and Oliver we are filled with joy. Faith and hope course through our whole bodies as we gaze upon the Master. Look, we can even see the nail marks in His hands and feet. We wonder if we should be there. Our sins pass before our eyes like tired soldiers. The Savior senses our

concern. Look — He's smiling. He's speaking,

even the voice of Jehovah, saying: I am the first and the last: I am he who liveth, I am he who was slain; I am your advocate with the Father. Behold, your sins are forgiven you; you are CLEAN BEFORE ME; therefore, lift up your heads and rejoice. (D&C 110:4-5)

How does a person become clean?

Now ye are CLEAN through the WORD WHICH I HAVE SPOKEN UNTO YOU. (John 15:3)

And what are the words?

Behold, YOUR SINS ARE FORGIVEN YOU: you are CLEAN BEFORE ME; therefore, lift up your heads and rejoice. (D&C 110:5)

Listen as Enos describes this experience in his life.

Behold, it came to pass that I, Enos, knowing my father that he was a just man — for he taught me in his language, and also in the nurture and admonition of the Lord — and blessed be the name of my God for it — And I will tell you of the WRESTLE which I had before I RECEIVED A REMISSION OF MY SINS. Behold, I went to hunt beasts in the forests; (Enos 1-3)

Now, isn't that interesting. Enos decided to go hunting, but the Lord had this day set apart for something besides hunting. The Lord changed Enos' interest from hunting back to the teachings of his father.

*And the words which I had often heard my father speak concerning eternal life, and the joy of the saints, sunk deep into my heart. And my soul hungered; and I kneeled down before my maker, and I cried unto him in mighty prayer and supplication for mine own soul; AND ALL THE DAY LONG DID I CRY UNTO HIM: yea, and when the night came I DID STILL RAISE MY VOICE HIGH THAT IT REACHED THE HEAVENS. And there came a voice unto me, saying: Enos, **THY SINS ARE FORGIVEN THEE**, and thou shalt be blessed. And I, Enos, knew that God could not lie; wherefore, MY GUILT WAS SWEEPED AWAY. And I said, Lord, how is it done? And he said unto me: Because of thy FAITH IN CHRIST, whom thou hast never before heard nor seen. And many years pass away before he shall manifest himself in the flesh; wherefore, go to, **THY FAITH HATH MADE THEE WHOLE. (Enos 3-8)***

The example of Enos is one of the great examples in holy writ. The nature of Enos' transgressions are not known, but what is clearly evident is the determination that Enos had. How many of us have prayed all day and then into the night? That is what Enos did. He was determined to see it through to its conclusion. He believed that the Lord had the power to forgive and that he could obtain that forgiveness. Another thing might be said of Enos. He admits that he had a guilt complex, for he says that his guilt was swept away. It has been suggested that a guilt complex is some kind of unnatural aberration of the mind; that it is something that is unhealthy. Nothing could be farther from the truth. A guilt complex is the result of an awakened conscience. It is the gentle nudging of the Spirit toward the process of repentance. If we don't have a guilt complex it is either because we are still too young or have been forgiven or because our conscience has been seared with a hot iron. Pray that it may not be the latter. If we have not experienced what Enos did, perhaps a guilt complex would be something worthwhile to add to our prayer requests.

FORGIVENESS FOR THE SUBJECTS OF KING BENJAMIN

One of the great accounts of forgiveness happened in the days of King Benjamin. It was just three years prior to his death. He had been a good king. He had labored with his own hands for his support. His subjects had been diligent in keeping the commandments of the Lord. (Mosiah 1:11) King Benjamin ordered that a tower be built near the temple in the land of Zarahemla that the people might gather to hear his words. King Benjamin prepared himself well for this last sermon.~ He wanted it to be his best. So great in fact was his preparation that the Lord sent an angel to him and gave him the sermon that he should deliver to his people. The deep humility of this great man was going to be felt by this whole congregation. The message that King Benjamin gave to those people centered around the atonement of Christ and remission of sins. (Mosiah 3:13) How did it affect the congregation? Listen.

And now, it came to pass that when king Benjamin had made an end of speaking the words which had been delivered unto him by the angel of the Lord, that he cast his eyes round about on the multitude, and behold they had fallen to the earth, for the fear of the Lord had come upon them. And they had viewed themselves in their own carnal state, even less than the dust of the earth. And they all cried aloud WITH ONE VOICE, SAYING: O have mercy, and apply the atoning blood of Christ THAT WE MAY RECEIVE FORGIVENESS OF OUR SINS, and our hearts may be purified; for we BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST, the Son of God, who created heaven and earth, and all things; who shall come down among the children of men. And it came to pass that after they had spoken these words the SPIRIT OF THE LORD CAME UPON THEM, and they were filled with joy, HAVING RECEIVED A REMISSION OF THEIR SINS, and having peace of conscience, BECAUSE OF THE EXCEEDING FAITH WHICH THEY HAD IN JESUS CHRIST who should come, according to the words which king Benjamin had spoken unto them. (Mosiah 4:1-3)

In three of the above accounts did you notice the factor that was always present? That factor was faith in Christ. To the sinner in Simon's home the Lord said, "thy faith hath saved thee." To Enos, "Thy faith hath made thee whole." And to the subjects of King Benjamin it was "because of the exceeding faith which they had in Jesus Christ who should come." Do we really believe in the atonement of Christ? Do we believe that He will forgive us? Unless we do we will never attempt the process of repentance. **Faith and repentance are the foundation of forgiveness.**

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