

Gospel Doctrine Lesson 46 "Zion—The Pure in Heart"

(D&C 57:1–3; 64:33–43; 82:14–15; 97:8–28; 105:1–12; Moses 7:12–19, 61–63, 68–69)

LESSON GOAL: To help us understand what the scriptures teach about Zion and to inspire us in our efforts to establish Zion and learn how to be pure in heart.

Today the Lord commands us: "Behold, I say unto you, keep my commandments, and seek to bring forth and establish the cause of Zion" (D&C 11:6). We do this by:

1. Becoming a Zion individual, a true Saint 2. Creating a Zion home and family 3. Establishing a Zion community

1. The word *Zion* has several meanings.

a. **The pure in heart--D&C 97:21:** Therefore, verily, thus saith the Lord, let Zion rejoice, for this is Zion—THE PURE IN HEART; therefore, let Zion rejoice, while all the wicked shall mourn.

b. **The Church and its stakes--D&C 82:14:** For Zion must increase in beauty, and in holiness; her borders must be enlarged; her stakes must be strengthened; yea, verily I say unto you, Zion must arise and put on her beautiful garments.

c. **The city of Enoch--Moses 7:19:** And Enoch continued his preaching in righteousness unto the people of God. And it came to pass in his days, that he built a city that was called the City of Holiness, even Zion.

d. **The ancient city of Jerusalem--1 Kings 8:1:** Then Solomon assembled the elders of Israel, and all the heads of the tribes, the chief of the fathers of the children of Israel, unto king Solomon in Jerusalem, that they might bring up the ark of the covenant of the Lord out of the city of David, which is Zion.

e. **The New Jerusalem,** which will be built in Missouri--**D&C 57:1–2:** HEARKEN, O ye elders of my church, saith the Lord your God, who have assembled yourselves together, according to my commandments, in this land, which is the land of Missouri, which is the land which I have appointed and consecrated for the gathering of the saints.

2 Wherefore, this is the land of promise, and the place for the city of Zion.

f. **The dwelling place of those who are exalted--Hebrews 12:22–23:** But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels,

In the scriptures, Zion can mean the Lord's people (the pure in heart), a specific place, or both. When we speak of building Zion in our day, we are referring to purifying our hearts so that the places we live can be called Zion.

2. Zion has existed in previous dispensations.

A. **The City of Enoch--**This account of the City of Enoch shows what we must do to establish Zion.

Moses 7:18-19: 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. And Enoch continued his preaching in righteousness unto the people of God. And it came to pass in his days, that he built a city that was called the City of Holiness, even Zion.

B. **The Ancient American Zion** (The word Zion is not used in 4th Nephi 1:2-18, but many principles are.)

3. The Saints of our dispensation have been commanded to establish Zion.

Although the building of the city of Zion was postponed, latter-day prophets have exhorted us to continue our efforts to establish Zion in our hearts, stakes, and homes.

PRINCIPLES FOR ESTABLISHING ZION:

Strive to be pure in heart: Have a devoted and singularity of heart that enables us to disregard distractions which call us away from our main mission to supremely love God.

Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L. Millet: "When we live in such a way that our desires are appropriate and are but reflected by our righteous actions, then we are said to be pure in heart. To be pure in heart is to be single, focused, riveted, aligned with the ways and will of the Almighty. It is to have no desires but desires for righteousness. When a Latter-day Saint is pure in heart, he seeks to build up and establish the cause of Zion; Zion is the pure in heart." (*Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, 4:67)

Becoming pure in heart does not just happen because we will it, but comes over time as we seek the Lord, seek to truly understand his word, repent and seek to overcome temptation and give of ourselves in selfless service.

Allow the Holy Ghost to burn out these impurities: disobedience, persecution of the poor, casual attitude toward the temple, casual attitude toward missionary work, casual attitude toward the priesthood, casual attitude toward gospel scholarship and duty, disunity, contention and disputations.

Be willing to give up the things of the world

President Stephen L. Richards: "Perhaps **the greatest threat** to both our unity and our progress in Zion is that of **indifference and neglect**. These deficiencies are not new. They have existed in some degree throughout our history. I believe that they have increased as a deterrent force in recent years. I believe also that this regrettable indifference to duty and opportunity is in large measure ascribable to aping the ways of the world'." (CR, Oct 1951)

Be united as a people

Elder Orson F. Whitney: ". . . **Power invariably dwells in the midst of a people who are united, who are of one heart and mind**. This was the state of the people of Enoch; and this is one of the reasons why they were worthy of the name Zion—"because they were of one heart and one mind.' They all believed alike; they were not torn asunder by various opinions, by conflicting views and notions, by divers interpretations of the things of God; but they had ascended in the scale of intelligence, of spirituality, to that glorious plane where they saw eye to eye, each man with his neighbor, and all saw God alike, so far as they were capable of comprehending Him and His purposes. (Collected Discourses, vol 1)

Live the laws and commandments of the gospel

Elder Alexander B. Morrison: "In its complete sense, then, Zion remains for us the golden, flawless ideal, the dream of what we may become if we are worthy, the goal toward which we must labor, the paradise which though now lost may yet be regained. The dream of establishing Zion thus is a dream of perfection that deals with **the conquest of the heart** rather than with constructing buildings or paving streets with gold. It calls us to subdue and purify our passions, to overcome the carnality of the natural man; and to become 'as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon [us], even as a child doth submit to his father'." (Visions of Zion, 16-17)

4. The scriptures include glorious promises about the future of Zion.

- a. Zion will spread and become glorious and great (D&C 97:18).
- b. Zion will be honored by the nations of the earth (D&C 97:19).
- c. The Lord will be Zion's salvation (D&C 97:20).
- d. Zion will rejoice (D&C 97:21).
- e. Zion will escape the Lord's vengeance (D&C 97:22–25).
- f. What we must do to enjoy these blessings (D&C 97:25.)

Elder Dallin H. Oaks: "The Final Judgment is not just an evaluation of a sum total of good and evil acts ***what we have done***. It is an acknowledgement of the final effect of our acts and thoughts--***what we have become***. It is not enough for anyone just to go through the motions. The commandments, ordinances, and covenants of the gospel are not a list of deposits required to be made in some heavenly account. The gospel of Jesus Christ is a plan that shows us how to become what our Heavenly Father ***desires us to become***. In other words, we cannot just pretend to have unified feelings, Zion-like feelings. **We must have a change of heart that is drawn out towards our fellow saints**" (Dallin H. Oaks, "The Challenge to Become," *Ensign*, November 2000).

President Spencer W. Kimball: "As important as it is to have this vision in mind, defining and describing Zion will not bring it about. That can only be done through consistent and concerted daily effort by every single member of the Church. No matter what the cost in toil or sacrifice, we must "do it." That is one of my favorite phrases: "Do It." May I suggest ***three fundamental things*** we must do if we are to "bring again Zion," three things for which we who labor for Zion must commit ourselves.

First, eliminate the individual tendency to ***selfishness*** that snares the soul, shrinks the heart, and darkens the mind. **Second, cooperate** completely and work in harmony one with the other. There must be unanimity in our decisions and unity in our actions. . . . If the Spirit of the Lord ***is to magnify our labors***, then this spirit of oneness and cooperation must be the prevailing spirit in all that we do.

Third, sacrifice whatever is required by the Lord. We begin by offering a "broken heart and a contrite spirit." We follow this by giving our best effort in our assigned fields of labor and in our callings. We learn our duty and execute it fully. Finally we consecrate our time, talents, and means as called upon by our file leaders and as prompted by the whisperings of the Spirit" (*General Conference*, April 1978)

Heber C. Kimball: "Ah, reader, the redemption of Zion is more than the purchase or recovery of lands, the building of cities, or even the founding of nations. ***It is the conquest of the heart, the subjugation of the soul, the sanctifying of the flesh, the purifying and ennobling of the passions***. Greater is he who subdues himself, who captures and maintains the citadel of his own soul, than he who, misnamed conqueror, fills the world with the roar of drums, the thunder of cannon, the lightning of swords and bayonets, overturns and sets up kingdoms, lives and reigns a king, yet wears the fetters of unbridled lust, and dies the slave of sin." (*The Life of Heber C. Kimball*, 65,66)

Example #1: Unseen Self: Heart Turned Pure

Brother Douglas seemed unable to shed his particular burden of self-concern because of an unreconciled conflict with a man in his ward. Preparing to relocate to another state, Brother Douglas knew he had to make reconciliation, but try as he might he could not discover where he had been at fault. How could he rectify a wrong he could not identify?

I will give you what happened then in his own words:

I had intended to go over to this man's house between church meetings but was detained. Suddenly I saw this brother walk out of the church and cross the parking lot to his car. I cut short the conversation I was in and almost ran after him. When I caught up with him I put my hand on his shoulder from behind, turned him around, entwined our forearms, then pulled him close to me. When you pounce on someone like that it usually means that you have something important to say. But what was I supposed to say? I still wasn't sure what my offense was. It was not until the very moment I looked directly and deeply into this man's eyes for the first time in years that I could see my sin. At that moment I no longer saw him, I saw myself reflected! Where there had been no words to say, I found myself asking this good man for his forgiveness. "Why?" he asked. I heard myself reply, "Because I have loved you less. That is my sin: I have loved you less." Tears filled our eyes as I told him then that I loved him. He knew that I loved him. Whatever else I said after that really didn't matter much. I left him to return to the church. I glanced back once to see this good brother still standing where I had left him, his head down, and his shoulders gently rolling with his sobs.

Example #2: Unseen Self: Heart Turned Pure

I received a while ago a letter from a woman whose father had been emotionally neglectful and whose husband turned out to be much the same way. When she tried to talk about why he was distant, he said it was because she was always angry. This angered her more, and she told him she was only angry because of his lack of love, which made him more inclined to withdraw. They had got themselves encircled in the bands of death and the chains of hell. She went to the mountains alone, intent upon reading one of the contemporary self-help books. She wrote later:

As the writer began describing the intense need we each have for love, I began to feel more and more deprived until I felt such a huge longing that I could barely breathe. I decided to write all of this down for my husband to read, and enumerate the many times I had felt emotionally deprived. I began to write furiously, to pour it all out onto the paper. The longer I wrote, the more I began to have a feeling come over me that what I was writing was false. The feeling continued growing until I could no longer squelch it, and I knew intuitively that the feeling was coming from God, that He was telling me that what I was writing was false. "How could it be false?" I asked angrily. "I lived it. I know it was there because I saw and felt it. How could it be false?" But the feeling became so powerful and overwhelming that I could no longer deny it or fight against it. So I tore up the pages I had written, threw myself down on my knees, and began to pray, saying, "If it is false, show me how it could be false." And then a voice spoke to my mind and said, "If you had come unto Me, it all would have been different."

I was astounded. I went to church. I read the scriptures often, I prayed pretty regularly, I tried to obey the commandments. "What do you mean, 'Come unto You?'" I wondered. And then into my mind flashed pictures of me wanting to do things my own way, of holding grudges, of not forgiving, of not loving as God had loved us. I had wanted my husband to "pay" for my emotional suffering. I had not let go of the past and had not loved God with all my heart. I loved my own willful self more.

I was aghast. I suddenly realized that I was responsible for my own suffering, for if I had really come unto Him, as I outwardly thought I had done, it all would have been different. As that horrible truth settled over me, I realized why the pages I had written of my suffering had been false. I had allowed it to happen by not truly coming unto God. That day I repented of not loving God, of not loving my husband, of blaming, of finding fault, of thinking that others were responsible for my misery.

I returned home but did not mention to my husband anything of what had transpired. But I gave up blaming, knowing that I was in large part responsible for the state of our relationship. And I tried to come unto God with full purpose of heart. I prayed more earnestly and listened to His Spirit. I read my scriptures and tried to come to know Him better. Two months passed, and one morning my husband awoke and turned to me in bed and said, "You know, we find fault too much with each other. I am never going to find fault with my wife again." I was flabbergasted, for he had never admitted he had done anything wrong in our relationship. He did stop finding fault, and he began to compliment me and show sweet kindness. It was as if an icy glass wall between us had melted away. Almost overnight our relationship became warm and sweet. Three years have passed, and still it continues warmer and happier. We care deeply about one another and share ideas and thoughts and feelings, something we had not done for the first 16 years of marriage.

from **The Measure of Our Hearts** by Marvin J. Ashton—General Conference October 1988

The Lord has a different standard by which he measures a person. "Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; ... for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, **but the Lord looketh on the heart.**" (1 Sam. 16:7.) **Why the heart? Because the heart is a synonym for one's entire makeup.** The measure of our hearts is the measure of our total performance. . . to better self, or others, or the conditions he confronts.

Ultimately you and I will be judged not only for our actions, but also for the desires of our hearts. . . "For I, the Lord, will judge all men according to their works, according to the desire of their hearts" (D&C 137:7, 9).

May I suggest four questions about the heart that may help you determine HOW YOU ARE MEASURING UP.

First Question: How honest in heart am I?

What does it mean to be honest in heart? It describes an individual who is open to truth, who will evaluate information or people without prejudice. Honest-hearted persons are individuals without pretense, without hypocrisy. They are reliable in word and action. They have no "hidden agendas" to deceive others or to misrepresent facts. An honest heart will lead to a change of heart. Spiritually speaking, a change of heart is not only desirable, but essential for eternal life.

Second Question: Do I have a willing heart?

"Behold, the Lord requireth the heart and a willing mind; and the willing and obedient shall eat the good of the land of Zion in these last days." (D&C 64:34.) A willing heart describes one who desires to please the Lord and to serve His cause first. He serves the Lord on the Lord's terms, not his own. There are no restrictions to where or how he will serve. What does the Lord require for service? A willing heart and intense desire.

Third Question: Do I have an understanding, loving heart?

An understanding, loving heart is the pinnacle of all human emotions. As the Apostle Paul said, charity "beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." (1 Cor. 13:7.) We come closest to becoming Christlike when we are charitable and understanding of others. We will never approach godliness until we learn to love and lift. Indifference to others and their plight denies us life's sweetest moments of joy and service.

Last Question: "If ye have experienced a change of heart, and if ye have felt to sing the song of redeeming love, ... can ye feel so now?" (Alma 5:26).

Having a "change of heart" at one time in our lives is insufficient to give us an understanding heart today. Helping and understanding a person years ago do not fill us with the love of God today. Christlike love must be continuous and contemporary. May God give each of us courage and desire to strive for a pure heart, a willing heart, an understanding and loving heart.

from **The Desires of Our Hearts** by Dallin H. Oaks, *devotional address at BYU, 8 October 1985*

The laws of God are concerned with spiritual things. Spiritual consequences are affected by actions, but they are also affected by desires or thoughts, independent of actions. **God's law can assign consequences solely on the basis of our innermost thoughts and desires.** There is no uncertainty in the administration of this law. As Ammon taught King Lamoni, God "looketh down upon all the children of men; and he knows all the thoughts and intents of the heart..." (Alma 18:32). Similarly, Paul warned that God "is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12-13).

In other words, **God judges us not only for our acts, but also for the desires of our hearts.** He has said so again and again. We exercise **our free agency** not only by what we *do*, but also by **what we decide, or will, or desire.** **Restrictions on freedom can deprive us of the power to do, but no one can deprive us of the power to will or desire.** Accountability must therefore reach and **attach consequences to the desires of our hearts.**

Our divinely granted willpower gives us control over our desires, but it may take many years for us to be sure that we have willed and educated them to the point that all are entirely righteous. **How do we educate our desires? We begin, I suppose, with our feelings.** The desires of our hearts are deep-seated and fundamental. But our feelings are closer to the surface and easier for us to identify and influence.

Have you ever found yourself doing something you thought was right, but doing it because you "had" to? Did you ever keep a commandment of God with an attitude of resentment or self-righteousness? I suppose most of us have had this experience. Do you remember your feelings on such occasions? Do you think such feelings will be ignored by a Father in Heaven who gave us free agency? Don't such feelings tell us something about the desires of our hearts?

To have righteous desires, **we have to control our thoughts and achieve appropriate feelings.** My widowed mother understood that principle. **"Pray about your feelings," she would say.** She taught us that we should pray to have the right kind of feelings about our experiences—positive or negative—and about the people we knew. If our feelings were right, we would be more likely to take right actions and to act for the right reasons. In other words, we must not only act, we must act for the right reasons. **There are no blessings for actions taken without real intent.**

If we refrain from evil acts, we have clean hands. If we refrain from forbidden thoughts, we have pure hearts. Those who would ascend and stand in the ultimate holy place must have both.

O, THE WEAKNESSES OF THE HUMAN HEART

The troubles of my **heart** are enlarged: O bring thou me out of my distresses. Ps. 25:17

My **heart** panteth, my strength faileth me: as for the light of mine eyes, it also is gone from me. Ps. 38:10

From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my **heart** is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock that is higher than I. Ps. 61:2

For I am poor and needy, and my **heart** is wounded within me. Ps. 109:22

If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own **heart**, this man's religion is vain. James 1:26

Nevertheless, notwithstanding the great goodness of the Lord, in showing me his great and marvelous works, my **heart** exclaimeth: O wretched man that I am! Yea, my **heart** sorroweth because of my flesh; my soul grieveth because of mine iniquities. 2 Ne. 4:17

And when I desire to rejoice, my **heart** groaneth because of my sins; nevertheless, I know in whom I have trusted. 2 Ne. 4:19

O Lord, my **heart** is exceedingly sorrowful; wilt thou comfort my soul in Christ. O Lord, wilt thou grant unto me that I may have strength, that I may suffer with patience these afflictions which shall come upon me, because of the iniquity of this people. Alma 31:31

And likewise also is it counted evil unto a man, if he shall pray and not with real intent of **heart**; yea, and it profiteth him nothing, for God receiveth none such. Moro. 7:9

But he that doeth not anything until he is commanded, and receiveth a commandment with doubtful **heart**, and keepeth it with slothfulness, the same is damned. D&C 58:29

But blessed are the poor who are pure in **heart**, whose hearts are broken, and whose spirits are contrite, for they shall see the kingdom of God coming in power and great glory unto their deliverance; for the fatness of the earth shall be theirs. D&C 56:18

Yea, O Lord, how long shall they suffer these wrongs and unlawful oppressions, before thine **heart** shall be softened toward them, and thy bowels be moved with compassion toward them? D&C 121:3

ANTIDOTES FOR A WEAK HEART

Therefore, prepare thy **heart** to receive and obey the instructions which I am about to give unto you. D&C 132:3

My son, give me thine **heart**, and let thine eyes observe my ways. Prov. 23:26

My son, forget not my law; but let thine **heart** keep my commandments: Prov. 3:1

Apply thine **heart** unto instruction, and thine ears to the words of knowledge. Prov. 23:12

Only fear the LORD, and serve him in truth with all your **heart**: for consider how great things he hath done for you. 1 Sam. 12:24

Harden not your **heart**, as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness. Ps. 95:8

He healeth the broken in **heart**, and bindeth up their wounds. Ps. 147:3

Say to them that are of a fearful **heart**, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence; he will come and save you. Isa. 33:18

Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine **heart** may be forgiven thee. Acts 8:22

And now, my brethren, I wish from the inmost part of my **heart**, yea, with great anxiety even unto pain, that ye would hearken unto my words, and cast off your sins, and not procrastinate the day of your repentance. Alma 13:27

THE NOISE OF A JOYFUL HEART

I will praise thee, O Lord my God, with all my **heart**: and I will glorify thy name for evermore. Ps. 86:12

My words shall be of the uprightness of my **heart**: and my lips shall utter knowledge clearly. Job 33:3

Trust in the LORD with all thine **heart**; and lean not unto thine own understanding. Prov. 3:5

I will praise thee, O LORD, with my whole **heart**; I will shew forth all thy marvellous works. Ps. 9:1

But I have trusted in thy mercy; my **heart** shall rejoice in thy salvation. Ps. 13:5

Behold, my soul delighteth in the things of the Lord; and my **heart** pondereth continually upon the things which I have seen and heard. 2 Ne. 4:16

Examine me, O LORD, and prove me; try my reins and my **heart**. Ps. 26:2

Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your **heart**, all ye that hope in the LORD. Ps. 31:24

Wherefore, lift up thy **heart** and rejoice, and cleave unto the covenants which thou hast made. D&C 25:13

I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my **heart**. Ps. 40:8

My mouth shall speak of wisdom; and the meditation of my **heart** shall be of understanding. Ps. 49:3

YOU HAVE THE SPIRIT WHEN YOUR HEART IS PURE

You feel happy and calm.

You feel full of light; your mind is clear.

You feel love for the Lord and others.

You are forgiving and kind.

You feel generous.

Nobody can offend you.

You wouldn't mind everybody seeing what you are doing.

You feel outgoing, anxious to be with people.

You are glad when others succeed.

You want to make others happy even those who offend you.

You gladly and willingly perform church ordinances. You'd like to be in the temple for a while every day.

You feel you can magnify your church calling.

You feel confidence in everything you do.

You feel like praying and reading the scriptures.

You feel a deep desire to help others—usually in a way no one would know about..

You wish you could keep all of the Lord's commandments.

You feel you have control of your appetites and emotions: food and sleep in moderation, sexual restraint, wholesome and moderate diversions, calm and controlled speech, no anger.

You're generally just glad to be alive.

YOU DO NOT HAVE THE SPIRIT UNLESS YOUR HEART IS PURE

You feel unhappy, depressed, confused and frustrated most of the time.

You feel heavy, full of darkness. Your mind is muddled

You feel empty, hollow, and cold inside.

You feel selfish, possessive, self-centered.

You are easily offended

Everything anyone does bothers you. You are always on the defensive.

You become easily discouraged.

You become secretive, sneaky, evasive.

You want to be alone. You avoid other people, especially your family.

You are envious of what others do and have.

You want to get even and show others up.

You are critical of others, especially of family members and of authority.

You feel hesitant, unworthy, and unwilling to perform church ordinances.

You wish you had another church job or no job at all.

You easily become discouraged.

You don't want to pray or read the scriptures.

When you help others, your main desire may be to have your actions noticed..

You find the commandments bothersome, restricting, or senseless.

You become a slave to your appetites, and your emotions become passionate:
over-indulgence in food, sleep, sex, stimulating entertainment, strong anger, outspokenness.

You wonder if life is really worth it.