



*A Message from the Quorum of Twelve Apostles*

## **CREATE IN ME A CLEAN HEART,**

**O GOD; AND RENEW A RIGHT SPIRIT WITHIN ME. Psalms 51:10**

This was the cry of David, king of Israel, as he sought forgiveness of the Lord after he wrestled with his sin(s) and realized his spirit wasn't right. He carried guilt and pain and needed the Lord. Now, David's sin(s) were well documented in 2 Samuel, chapters 11-12, for all of us to read, and we would no doubt be mortified if our sin were written and recorded in the most well-read book in the history of the world. (It's estimated that as many as 7 billion copies of the Bible have been made!) But when David was through trying to hide his sin, ignoring what he did or burying it in his subconscious, he finally confessed it freely in Psalm 51 and pleads for forgiveness. His request to "Create in me a clean heart..." was another way of asking for forgiveness and for a spiritual cleansing. And though David suffered consequences for his sin, he was forgiven and restored to spiritual fellowship. We read in Romans 4:6-8 that David was forgiven, not because of his 'works' to earn forgiveness, but simply because he asked in faith and sincerely repented. We recognize that our works or actions are an important outward demonstration of our heart, but the sacrifice Jesus Christ paid was the atonement for our sin. In spite of the sin(s) that we commit, as often as we approach the Lord in sincerity, we can ask Him for forgiveness, and He can create in us a clean heart.

Even John tells us, *"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."* (1 John 1:8-9). And we recognize that we *"...all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;"* but we are, *"... justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:"* (Romans 3:23-24), while obviously trying to learn from our mistakes and not continue in sin.

There are many other examples throughout the Bible and Book of Mormon, ranging from kings to apostles, from Jew to Gentile, from rich to poor, from military leaders to common laborers, all illustrating the weakness and sinful, fallen state of God's creation and need for Christ.

### The Plan of Salvation prepared the Way...

As Jesus said, “... *to them all, if any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.” Luke 9:23*

Looking at this passage more closely, we see that Jesus:

- is speaking to all (everyone who would seek Him, everyone who would listen to Him, everyone who would consider His ways),
- is looking to those who would come after me (those who would be willing to follow Him, to exercise faith in Him, to repent of their sins, and be baptized),
- is asking us to deny [ourselves] (abstain from actions, words, and even thoughts that would be pleasing to the natural person, but displeasing to God - sin),
- is asking us to take up [our] cross daily (to recognize that EVERY DAY we have the weight of sin to bear),
- Is looking for us to follow [Him] (to lay down the weight of sin at the feet of Jesus every day).

Although David lived approximately 1000 years before Jesus, like many others throughout the Bible and Book of Mormon, he understood that Christ would come and that repentance would bring about a ‘clean heart’ and a ‘right spirit’.

Jacob who lived approximately 500 years before Jesus said this about the importance of having a pure heart, “*But behold, I, Jacob, would speak unto you that are pure in heart. Look unto God with firmness of mind, and pray unto him with exceeding faith, and he will console you in your afflictions... O all ye that are pure in heart, lift up your heads and receive the pleasing word of God, and feast upon his love; for ye may, if your minds are firm, forever.*” Jacob 3:1-2

Even in our day, the Lord continues to remind us of the importance and need of having a pure heart! In April 2022, the Priesthood of The Church of Jesus Christ accepted an experience as a revelation from God. An excerpt from this experience says: “... See now what is before you [conditions in the world] and know that **your heart must be sure and your heart must be right** and you must be anchored, anchored, anchored, to the

*principles of My Son, Jesus Christ, the Rock of Salvation that was given through Him and the sacrifice! Are you there? Is your vision clear? Are your eyes focused? Is there love in your heart or is there malice? Cleanse it now! Cleanse it now, that you may see and you may be part, thus saith the Lord."*

This message is very clear and pointed. It applies to The Church of Jesus Christ, individually and collectively. We as individuals need to be found faithful, serving Jesus Christ, covered by His blood and His righteousness. We need to keep our hearts pure through individual surrender to His commandments and will, maintaining a perpetual spiritual readiness, no matter what chaos or hardship occurs in our lives or in the world. We must possess the pure love of God and be cleansed of sin in order to reach a level of righteousness and sufficient faith (Ether 4:6) that in so doing, our individual lives and the Church will be blessed with greater power through the truth of the Bible, Book of Mormon and the restoration.

The Quorum of Twelve Apostles, hand in hand with the entire priesthood (Evangelists, Elders and Teachers), are actively working to encourage our members to stay within the Ark of Safety - The Church, and to purify our hearts by staying within the teachings and boundaries established by Christ (not the world).

### **But how can our hearts be made clean and anchored to Christ?**

The process of creating a clean heart is all about 'yielding our hearts' to God. Yielding means to 'give way, permit, or allow' ...Jesus to come first. Helaman 3:35 states, *"Nevertheless they did fast and pray oft, and did wax stronger and stronger in their humility, and firmer and firmer in the faith of Christ, unto the filling their souls with joy and consolation, yea, **even to the purifying and the sanctification of their hearts, which sanctification cometh because of their yielding their hearts unto God.**"* We all need to learn how to 'yield' more of our daily lives. Here are a few ways each of us can 'yield our hearts':

**Be Repentant** - We all sin (by our very nature) and even with our very best efforts and intentions, it would still not be enough to remain pure. Since we would never be able to repay the debt of sin, God offered his son as the perfect sacrifice for our sins. But we must accept this sacrifice daily by repenting and seeking forgiveness (and learning from our mistakes by not continuing in them). And when we seek the Lord, in sincerity, God forgives us! A repentant heart is a purified and sanctified heart!

**Spend time in the Word of God** - The Bible and Book of Mormon offer us His timeless word. Spending time on a regular basis, reading and studying, helps provide clarity, strength, understanding, wisdom, peace, and direction for our lives. It helps us focus our hearts on what is important. It allows us to see where our thoughts and feelings align or fail to line up with God's intention. If you struggle with this as many do, try an audio version of the Bible and Book of Mormon, look for a daily scripture devotional, download the church app so you can read the word anywhere, set up a scheduled time to read every day, subscribe to the gospel blog, read the Gospel News, view church videos and listen to church podcasts, because every effort we make, will bring us closer to a purified heart!

**Spend time in Prayer (and Fasting)** - Prayer goes hand in hand with spending time in the word of God. When we take time with the Lord, we open our hearts to allow Him to cleanse us. It's a time to draw closer to Him as we share our personal thoughts (of thanks and supplication). And when we're able to combine fasting with prayer we purify and sanctify our hearts (Helaman 3:35). If you struggle with prayer and especially fasting, don't overthink it - start small because the marathon runner didn't start training on the first day by running 26 miles! Every effort we make, no matter the size, will bring us closer to a purified and sanctified heart!

**Watch our Thoughts, Words, and Actions** - Thoughts, words, and actions are often a reflection of our heart. So, if our desire is to 'purify our hearts' we must be mindful of each of these. In other words, the things that fill our thoughts, are often the things that will come out through our words and actions. Being self-aware of thoughts, choosing to intentionally control where our mind goes by placing greater focus on our spiritual walk will help strengthen what we say and how we say it. It will influence our actions despite the cloudy distractions our society and culture offer us about the love of God. Being conscious of our thoughts, words, and actions will help us align ourselves with Christ and become more like Christ. Not doing this, will yield the opposite effect!

**Look out for Distractions** - Along any path, we often find things that distract us, or draw our attention away from what's really important. This happens to everyone in varying degrees. In fact, it's so easy to be distracted, that we often don't even realize it's happening. When we do see it, we often rationalize it because, 'it's not sinful' or we justify it by thinking, 'it won't be this way forever'. Our focus must be on Christ as we seek a 'clean heart', it means we can't turn to the weak and beggarly elements of life. We must be mindful to guard against every weight (distraction) that so easily besets us.

**Seek out Advice** - Everyone has struggles and challenges that we think no one else would ever understand or have experienced. The truth is, God gave us fellowship with

others who share the gospel of Jesus Christ - the Church, the Ark of Safety, as a place where we can find spiritual advice with Godly wisdom. The Lord has called and ordained men and women to help provide spiritual advice and guidance. He's given us our brothers and sisters, many of whom are friends and mentors. It's important to surround ourselves with like-minded people by attending church and seeking out those who can offer spiritual wisdom as a priceless gift on our journey to a pure heart.

**Abstain from Sin** - While it may go without saying, each of us must abstain from sin and even the very appearance of it, because the Lord wants to bless us, use us, prepare us and save us! He wants us to cleanse our heart of malice (ill feelings toward others or hatred), abstain from fornication (sex outside of marriage), from lust (desiring or wanting something that isn't good for us), from pride (being arrogant or excessive self-esteem), from greed (desire or love of wealth or money), from envy (jealousy), from addictions (being dependent on a substance that is detrimental), etc., etc. Jesus asks that we abstain from EVERY sin that would draw us away from His perfect will.

## In Summary

Life can be hard, and the challenges we face in our future may be even more difficult than those of today, BUT with Christ, our burdens are lightened because He has overcome it all! This is where we must focus our hearts - by placing our trust and faith in Him!. We need Jesus in our daily lives, not just on Sunday or when we're 'in need'! Let us each give attention to sincere repentance, studying the scriptures, fasting and praying, singing songs of praise, spiritual fellowship, church attendance, and reviewing our personal life priorities, to ensure our hearts are pure so that the Lord might 'create in each of us, a clean heart and renew a right spirit within us'.

In the love of God,

## The Quorum of Twelve Apostles

James Crudup, Joel Gehly, Pete Giannetti, John Griffith, Scott Griffith, Paul Liberto, Thomas M. Liberto, Leonard A. Lovalvo, Frank Natoli, Paul A. Palmieri, Peter Scolaro, Jerry Valenti

To learn more about *The Church of Jesus Christ*, with Headquarters in Monongahela, PA, please visit our website. The World Operations Center for world-wide missionary efforts is in Greensburg, PA.

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