

## **“Be Strong in the Lord By Putting on the Mantle of Charity”**

by Elder Bill Jones

Our theme for the month indicates what is to be gained in our relationship with Christ by making the effort to put on the MANTLE OF CHARITY—charity being the pure love of Christ.

From the beginning, when man fell into sin, the servants of God were made to recognize that mankind does not sufficiently acknowledge the love that God has for them or make the effort to reciprocate in kind. People do not love God with all their heart, mind and soul. Their lives are filled with selfishness and they have not learned to love God or others as much as they love themselves.



The Apostle Paul in Romans 13:8-10, calls to our attention how important it is to God that we learn to love one another and put into practice the principles that support that love. “For he that loveth another **hath fulfilled the law**. For this, [referring to the love we should have for each other—that fulfills the law] thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not bear false witness, thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, thou shalt **love thy neighbor as thyself**. Love worketh no ill to his neighbor; therefore, **love is the fulfilling of the law.**” If we cannot do this, we are in rebellion against God.



We should look to Christ's earthly ministry to see evidence of the love He has for us and the response He expects from us. If we do, we will see that He went about the task of serving the people and setting the example by blessing the sick and giving comfort where comfort was needed, and nourishing the spiritually weak and feeding the hungry, both spiritually and physically. We will hear Him expressing His willingness to respond to the Spirit of God as it moved upon Him. (Read Luke 4:18): "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives and the recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised."

Nephi looked into the future, and upon seeing Christ and His ministry was moved to exclaim, "He doeth not anything save it be for the benefit of the world; **for he loveth the world**, even that he layeth down his own life, that he may draw all men unto him. Wherefore, he commandeth none that they shall not partake of his salvation." (Read 2 Nephi 11:96-97)

Moroni identified the examples of Christ's ministry as charity, which is the pure love of Christ. "Wherefore, cleave unto charity which is the greatest of all, **for all things must fail**; but charity is the pure love of Christ, and it **endureth forever**, . . . pray unto the Father . . . that ye may be filled with this love . . . that ye may become the sons of God. . . ." (Read Moroni 7:52-53)



From Moroni's words, we understand that charity—the pure love of Christ—endures forever, it never fails and it has the power to change lives. It is a quality we should enthusiastically seek if we are to become Christ's disciples, follow His teachings and demonstrate with compassion, patience and understanding our love for our fellowman. Moroni saw the importance in obtaining charity and having it be a part of our lives. He wasn't just suggesting it would be nice to have; he was stressing the necessity of having it when he said, "**Pray unto the Father—that ye may be filled with this love that never fails.**" He knew God would bestow this kind of love on all those who were true followers of His Son Jesus Christ, so that they might be like Him, that they might become the sons of God and that they might see Him as He is.

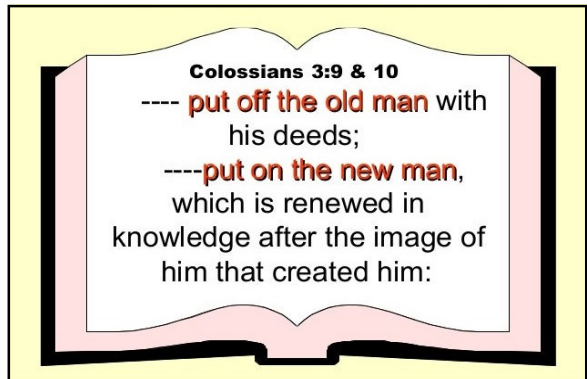
The 38th verse in the 85th section of the Doctrine and Covenants says to clothe ourselves with the bonds of charity, as with a mantle, which is the bond of perfectness and peace. In Colossians 3:14, Paul also says to put on charity and refers to it as a bond of **perfectness** or **completeness**, because it represents a relationship between individuals or groups that is based on shared feelings, interests and experiences representing the kind of love required by God. It is to be in the hearts of each one of us. It is a selfless love that creates a new nature in our hearts which moves us to obey God's commandments. If we are to be strong in the Lord we are to put on this love or this charity as a mantle; we wrap ourselves in it. It becomes a part of us.

In other words, we put off the OLD MAN with all of its sins, with its displays of anger and wrath and malice and lies and covetousness and all its evil deeds and we instead put on the NEW MAN ". . . which is **renewed in knowledge** after the image of him that created [us]." (Read Colossians 3:10)

In verse 12, it says we are to put on mercy and kindness and humbleness of mind (our thoughts), meekness and long-suffering. We put on these things because as Paul says, "It is what the **elect** of God would do." We are to be patient with one another, and forgiving,

as Christ would forgive us. "And above all these things, put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; . . ." (Read Colossians 3:14-15)

We all are to do this, to wrap ourselves in this mantle of charity, this perfect bond of unity and unselfish love. If we do this, the promise is we shall be bound together in agreement, each one seeking that which is best for the other. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom: teaching and admonishing one another . . . , And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God . . ." (Read Colossians 3:16-17)



If we pause to consider this which we are describing, it sounds like the Church; like the conditions of Zion. Nephi addresses this very thing in 2 Nephi 11:107-108 when he says, “. . . the Lord God hath given a commandment that all men should have charity, which charity is love. And except they should have charity, they were nothing; wherefore, if they should have charity, they would not suffer the laborer in Zion to perish.” This means if we truly have charity we will have uppermost in our minds the desire to assure that our brothers and sisters will not fail in laboring for Zion. We shall be bound together in agreement; each one seeking that which is best for the other. We shall be as the ELECT OF GOD.

In Apostle Oakman’s book Belief in Christ, he suggests that the Church was formed to build Christ’s type of character from which the kingdom would be formed. The process of human development was to play a large part in the growth of the church and its outreach to build the kingdom. Therefore, a major part of our effort is to express the concept of charity and the characteristics of having the pure love of Christ instilled in our lives. It is this which will build brotherhood and increase our capability for loving our neighbor as ourselves as we seek to extend this fellowship to the world. If we do this, there is no reason to delay Zion.

Our strength in the Lord will increase as we put on the mantle of charity.

