

## *A Three-Fold Witness – Part 2*

Prepared by

Dwight Burford

<http://www.hisworkmanship.net>

11/16/04

A couple of weeks ago, during our family devotions on election night, we discussed what we should look for in an individual when choosing who to support for the various leadership positions. I talked with our family about three key witnesses I have been led to look for when choosing potential leaders to support. Last week I shared some thoughts about the first of these witnesses, prayer. Here are some thoughts about the second.

**Charity, The Pure Love of Christ:** Another of the three witnesses is love, specifically the love referred to as *charity* in the following passage of scripture:

*Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity never faileth. (I Corinthians 13:4-7)*

How might this incredible love be manifest in the life of a good leader or potential leader? To answer this question we must first recognize that *charity* is not innate in any of us. Rather, it is the gift of God which He imparts through the gift and power of the Holy Ghost to those who love Him (I John 4:13-19 & I Corinthians 2:9-16; cf. I Thessalonians 4:9 with Philipppians 2:13).

*And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. (Romans 5:5; cf. Romans 10:11-13)*

The apostle John wrote, “God is love” (I John 4:8,16). Therefore, by imparting His love to us through His Spirit, God bestows upon us the very quality of His own character and nature (I John 3:1-3 with John 15:1-17). His love, however, is not ours to exploit nor to manipulate and use as we please. Rather, it is given to us to manifest the wondrous nature of the true and living God who dwells in our hearts by faith (cf. Ephesians 3:17 & I Peter 1:2-4 with Alma 16:235).

God imparts to us His love both as an expression of His love for us as well as a means of empowering us to love as He loves, and thus to be like Him in this world (cf. Matthew 5:16-18 & 25:34-41 with Genesis 1:27,29 & I John 3:1-3, 4:9-17).

*And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as he is, so are we in this world. (I John 4:16,17)*

How then do we know if this precious love is resident in the heart of a leader or potential leader? The way is often not readily obvious because this wondrous love does not, as the apostle Paul wrote, *vaunt* itself, i.e. boast, nor is it *puffed up*, i.e. proud (I Corinthians 13:4-7). The life into which this precious gift has been invested does not draw attention to itself or the deeds it performs. Rather, it labors to bring glory to God in ways this world does not notice and often

does not appreciate. Because their life is endowed with such grace, these individuals bring blessings they are unaware of or are unaware of the significance thereof in terms of need and circumstance (Matthew 25:35-41; cf. III John 3-6).

Another reason why it may not be obvious when charity is present in a person's life is that it may be *growingly* present. Charity begins with faith and it *matures* in us as we grow together in Christ (Ephesians 4:11-16 with I Timothy 1:5). The apostle Peter explains the process of maturing in the following manner.

*... add to your faith virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. (II Peter 1:5-8)*

*But grow in grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever. Amen. (II Peter 3:18)*

While charity may have matured in one life, it may be just beginning to grow in another. Like the apostle Paul, then, we must take care *to judge nothing before the time* of our Lord's coming in glory (cf. I Corinthians 4:5).

Still, there are ways of discerning whether or not charity is present and growing in someone being considered for leadership. I have found that an essential witness of a life invested with the love of God is the love of little children, of whom Jesus said, "*of such is the kingdom of God*" (Mark 10:12 & Luke 18:16). Mormon testified that he had been granted this love in a letter to his son, Moroni.

*... and I am filled with charity, which is everlasting love; wherefore all children are alike unto me; wherefore I love little children with a perfect love ... (Moroni 8:18)*

Likewise, all little children are alike and precious to those into whom the love of God has been invested. Instead of being viewed as an unwanted nuisance, or worse, an unwelcome trouble, little children are welcomed and nurtured as blessed gifts from God (James 1:17). This does not mean there will not be trying times when, for example, a parent must deal with the complexities and intricacies of raising children. Rather, the trying times, or trials, are meant to mature and grow the love of God in our lives (Romans 5:1-5 & I John 4:16-18 with James 1:2-4 & I Peter 4:12,13).

Briefly stated, how a leader or potential leader deals with issues that relate to little children, born or unborn, speaks volumes regarding whether or not they have received the precious gift of charity. Those who work to protect and defend little children are much more apt to have charity, and thus have a heart endowed with God's love.

*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. (Moroni 7:53)*

In Christ,

Dwight B.