

We're Marching to Zion

A Priesthood Study Letter

Prepared by
Elder Dwight Burford

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In Memory

The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart; and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come. He shall enter into peace; they shall rest in their beds, each one walking in his righteousness. (Isaiah 57:1,2)

The passing of our brother Lindon Robinson brought both sadness and hope. He was a dear friend and brother, one who was steady in his temperament and faithful to the end of his days.

Several weeks before brother Lindon passed away, he presided over our Sunday morning worship service. He had asked me to provide the preaching ministry. As I stood to speak that day, I felt as if it would be the last time he would be taking the lead in our services. Being moved with compassion, I felt led to pray for him, to be thankful for his devotion and faithful influence among us.

His was the unassuming way. He fought the good fight of faith and finished his course. And so I prayed that Sunday, as now, in the hope that each of us would be found faithful in enduring to the end in charity as I believe that our brother Lindon endured.

Lindon always impressed me as someone who believed God, and I felt confident that his faith was counted to him for righteousness (e.g. Romans 3:3). He seemed to always look forward with great expectation and anticipation for the day when unity would be restored to the church as a whole especially in our local branch. Lindon was particularly fond of the vision of Zion and the oneness it represents.

May we meet again, Brother Lindon, in our heavenly Father's kingdom to go no more out. Thank you for your faithful example of endurance. Till we meet again at Jesus' feet, I bid you Godspeed on your new journey.

D. Burford
February 7, 1995

Awake, awake, put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city; for henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean. Shake thyself from the dust; arise, and sit down, O Jerusalem; loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion. For thus saith the Lord, Ye have sold yourselves for naught; and ye shall be redeemed without money. For thus saith the Lord God, My people went down aforetime into Egypt to sojourn there; and the Assyrian oppressed them without cause. Now therefore, what have I here, saith the Lord, that my people is taken away for naught? They that rule over them make them to howl, saith the Lord; and my name continually every day is blasphemed. Therefore, my people shall know my name; yea, in that day they shall know that I am he that doth speak; behold, it is I.

And then shall they say, How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings unto them, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings unto them of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth! Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing; for they shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion.

Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem; for the Lord hath comforted his people, he hath redeemed Jerusalem. The Lord hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.

Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing; go ye out of the midst of her; be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord. For ye shall not go out with haste, nor go by flight; for the Lord will go before you; and the God of Israel will be your rereward. (Isaiah 52:1-12)

Dearly Beloved of the Lord:

Again, with thanksgiving to our gracious Redeemer and Lord, Jesus Christ, I greet you in the hope of Zion. May the blessed city of our God soon be established and flourish so that all who will may come and dwell in the presence of our Lord to partake of His goodness and truth. Truly it will be a glorious day when the kingdoms of this earth become the kingdom of our Lord, when the government rests upon His shoulders as foretold by the prophets (Revelation 11:15 & Isaiah 9:6,7).

Behold

These past few weeks¹ the refrain from the hymn, *We're Marching To Zion*, has continued to be sung “richly” within my soul by the word of Christ (cf. Colossians 3:16 & D&C 24:3b). The abiding presence of this melody has not only comforted me but it has heightened my expectation and joy in the establishment of the longed for City of our God (D&C 94:5).

This song continues to draw my thoughts back to the events of a Wednesday night prayer service early in November of 1994. That night I found it truly rewarding to come apart from the world to rest awhile in the Lord. I was leading the service at church but I had a head cold and felt rather weary, not only from the cold, but also from the complexing circumstances in our branch, at my work, etc.

As the service progressed, our brother David Newman stood to pray. His thoughts of praise and thanksgiving were expressed in a quiet and peaceful manner. As he continued praying I thanked the Lord for the beauty in his praise and thanksgiving. As I did, a vision opened to me in the Spirit and the power of my natural eyes faded. I saw a small group of people huddled together, bowed down and facing each other. There was a heavy darkness, like an oppressive fog pressing upon them. But as they prayed, light came into their midst and they began to take heart and to praise the Lord in a humble manner like our brother David was praying. Their praise was truly a sacrifice as described in Hebrews 13:15, for they were sorely oppressed.

*Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his [Jesus Christ's] reproach. For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come. **By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name.** But to do good and to communicate forget not; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.* (Hebrews 13:13-16)

Their praise was offered up in meekness yet boldness, and they appeared to show great joy in their worship. It was not forced or contrived praise, but it came simply and honestly from their hearts. And it was especially impressive to see them rejoice even though they were pressed about on all sides by this oppressive darkness.

As I looked upon these few, to my amazement I saw a marvelous column of light shine straight down in their midst. As it fell upon them, they took courage all the more and stood up, and now, facing the darkness, lifted their hands to heaven with their heads upward and renewed their praise in the strength of the light. As they stood, the light in their presence surrounded them and continued to encourage them in their worship and witnessing of the light.

¹In late January to early February 1995

Then, perhaps one of the most marvelous displays of the beauty of God's power I should hope to ever see occurred. I saw angels, an overwhelming number of them, come flooding down out of heaven along the shaft of light into the midst of this small group of worshippers. Then the angels rushed out ahead of these people, sweeping across the land, and then they turned upward forming a wall which surrounded the people to heights I could not fathom. Oh, how I marveled! Oh, how I wanted to join in with their praise, but my mouth was dumb with awe.

As I marveled over what I was seeing, I heard a voice say, "Behold! The great deep is divided", and I looked at the ground where the angels had swept over. It shown with a beauty of whiteness and pureness that I could not have imagined of myself.² And it was impressed upon me that what I was seeing was in the likeness of the parting of the Red Sea before Moses for the children of Israel to cross over on dry ground on their way out of the bondage of Egypt.

As I looked upon the ground and marveled at how it had been purified and sanctified by the sweeping of the angels, one angel came and stood before me as if in midair. The angel was looking over his left shoulder at me as if he was about to join those in the wall. His orientation and mine relative to him seemed to position us both rather high in the air over the land. He was north of me, facing west. My geographical position seemed to put me roughly over the general area of Wichita. The people I had seen, who had been pressed down by the heavy blanket of darkness, appeared to be located northeast of me around the center place of Zion, though some I recognized as being current members of our branch.

The angel stood at a distance of perhaps 100 feet or so from myself and waited there until he had my full attention, at which time he seemed to say, "Watch and see what I do." As I watched, he gracefully, but with much strength, lifted up both his hands high toward heaven, arching his back and looking steadfastly upward. As he did he became a flame of fire, and as swiftly as he came he moved to join the circular wall of countless angels. Oh, so glorious and beautiful was that scene! And as I watched, this flaming wall of praising angels pressed effortlessly against the darkness, and I heard the voice say, "Behold the borders of Zion are expanded."

In the darkness which was being pressed outward, I could see many faces. A number of individuals seemed to be confused by the wall pressing against them. Among those being pressed outward and away from the area that had been sanctified by the sweep of the angels were church members. This appeared to be happening to them because they would not worship God as He is seeking true worshipers to worship Him, in spirit and in truth (cf. John 4:24-26, Alma 16:237,238 & D&C 90:1-6). They were they who continued to complain and murmur, to quarrel and dispute. They had remained contentious rather than seeking to come to Jesus Christ to be perfected in Him through charity (Moroni 7:50-53 & 10:29,30). And so they found themselves being pressed outward and away from the center by the wall of angels.

The wall continued to expand in effortless praise. I wanted so much to join in with them. But I felt as I feel our one year old son must feel at times when he tries to talk like big people talk, but simply cannot as yet. As I rested in that glorious scene before me, I gazed heavenward and could see that the wall and the light went farther than I could see. Bless God. I was there. And, oh, how marvelous the light and clarity of sight. There was no mist or haze whatsoever.

Then the voice said again, "Behold! The great deep is divided." I looked again toward the northeast beyond where the initial circle of angels had formed, but at a slightly lower angle northward. There I saw countless angels forming a trough in the darkness which led to the original circle. An amazing number of angels joined together in the forming of this channel with joy

²It was most comparable to burning magnesium.

and power and light. And I heard, "Behold, a highway is cast down in the great deep." And I knew that this was the highway along which the redeemed of the Lord would come to Zion (see D&C 45:14 & Isaiah 11:16, 35:8-10 & 51:9-11). That which I saw was not a highway formed in physical water as some have spoken of. Rather, it was a highway of light formed through the gross darkness that covers the earth amidst the masses of this world.

How effortlessly those angels formed columns on either side to prepare the way! When retelling this to someone later I was reminded of the scripture in which the Lord states that the angels are eagerly awaiting the command to reap down the earth (D&C 38:3c & 84:2b). After seeing this display of power and beauty, I can believe that God alone could hold them back until the appropriate time.

As our brother David concluded his prayer, the vision faded. When I attempted to tell the congregation of what I had seen, my words seemed completely inadequate. All that I wanted to do was to lift my hands in praise of our God for His marvelous works among the children of men:

O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counselor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things; to whom be glory forever. Amen. (Romans 11:33-36)

Arise, Shine, For Thy Light Is Come

This is such an awesome vision to me. And though I do not know when its time will be, I fully believe with all my heart that its time is near. This impress was reinforced several Wednesdays ago during our prayer Service.³ I felt directed to Isaiah 59 in which the prophet had written of the gross darkness and the circumstances into which Jesus Christ is foretold to come to establish His kingdom upon the earth.

The prophet wrote, "...for truth is fallen in the street" (vs. 59:14). So he prophesies that our Lord and Savior, who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, will come, having "put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation upon his head...and the garments of vengeance for clothing, and...zeal as a cloak," to establish judgment (vss. 15-18). As I continued to read into the next chapter, chapter 60, several verses stood out with respect to the vision described above beginning with verse 1:

Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people; but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising. Lift up thine eyes round about, and see; all they gather themselves together, they come to thee; thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side. Then thou shalt see, and flow together, and thine heart shall fear, and be enlarged because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee. And the sons of strangers shall build up thy walls, and their kings shall minister unto thee; for in my wrath I smote thee, but in my favor have I had mercy on thee. (Isaiah 60:1-5,10)

³In late January 1995.

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Though the enemy shall come in like a flood (Isaiah 59:19), the Lord has a flood prepared to preserve His people (i.e. those who are one in Him; D&C 38:6a):

And righteousness and truth will I cause to sweep the earth as with a flood, to gather out mine own elect from the four quarters of the earth, unto a place which I shall prepare; an holy city, that my people may gird up their loins, and be looking forth for the time of my coming; for there shall be my tabernacle, and it shall be called Zion; a New Jerusalem. (Genesis 7:70, IV)

What comfort and joy! These scriptures, along with the assurance of the Comforter, so clearly confirmed to me the vision given several months earlier. But, they also seemed to beg the question which Peter asked many years earlier: What manner of persons ought we to be as we see the day of the Lord approach (II Peter 3:11)? Our Lord answered this question as follows: we must be even as He is (III Nephi 13:5). In other words, we must be pure as He is pure (through charity) so that we might have the boldness to abide the brightness of His coming (I John 3:1-3 & 4:15-17; cf. Moroni 7:53).

In short, to abide in Zion, the city to which our Lord will come, we must be pure in heart, for Zion **is** THE PURE IN HEART (D&C 94:5). Zion is not a place but a people who have obtained a land for their inheritance upon which there is no curse--unlike the rest of the earth (cf. D&C 45:13 with Ether 6:35,36):

*And I have made the earth rich, and, behold, it is my footstool: wherefore, again I will stand upon it; and I hold forth and deign to give unto you greater riches, even a land of promise; a land flowing with milk and honey, upon which there shall be no curse when the Lord cometh; and I will give it unto you for the land of your inheritance, **if you seek it with all your hearts...** (D&C 38:4d,e)*

And because of their faithfulness in obtaining the promised inheritance, God is not be ashamed to be called their God (cf. Hebrews 6:11,12):

But now they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly; wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for he hath prepared for them a city. (Hebrews 11:16)

To receive this blessed inheritance, which shall not be moved from its place (D&C 87:8d & 94:5b), each one of us must seek it by becoming pure in heart. For this is the chief means whereby Zion is to be built up, by our becoming perfected in Christ unto the purifying of our souls (cf. Matthew 5:40-50 with Moroni 10:29,30 & Philippians 2:1-16; see also James 1:2-4 & Romans 5:1-5).

And we will go on unto perfection if God permit. (Hebrews 6:3)

It is so vitally important for those who seek the redemption of Zion to live ever in remembrance that Zion is THE PURE IN HEART, the city of our God (D&C 94:5b,c). *For we are to be that city.* As the Lord has said, "I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people" (II Corinthians 6:16). Otherwise, there is no Life within us (cf. Colossians 3:4 with John 6:27-63):

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And this I know, because the Lord has said, he dwelleth not in unholy temples, but in the hearts of the righteous doth he dwell; yea, and he has also said, that the righteous shall sit down in his kingdom, to go no more out; but their garments should be made white, through the blood of the Lamb. (Alma 16:235)

We, as the body of Christ (I Corinthians 12:12-28), are being built up into a holy habitation of our God through the Spirit of Christ, even the Spirit of Adoption (Romans 8:1-17 & Galatians 4:6):

*Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone; **in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord; in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.** (Ephesians 2: 19-22)*

What! know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's. (I Corinthians 6:19,20)

...go ye straightway unto the land of my vineyard, and redeem my vineyard, for it is mine, I have bought it with money. (D&C 98:7e)

Those who abide in Zion shall be called “trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified” (Isaiah 61:3). As His disciples, we are, therefore, called to be branches grafted (adopted) into the True Vine, Jesus Christ. And out of the lives of those who are “rooted and grounded” in Him (Colossians 2:6,7), Jesus will bring forth an abundance of fruit to the honor of our heavenly Father (Philippians 1:11 & Ephesians 2:10 with John 15:1-17). Otherwise no good fruit will be borne among us, for without Him we can do nothing (John 15:5 & Matthew 5:16-18 with Philippians 1:11 & Colossians 2:6-10).

To bring forth fruit to the honor and glory of the Father, we must press forward through faith in seeking with all our hearts the inheritance which the Lord has prepared for all those who love and serve Him:

For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold our confidence steadfast unto the end. (Hebrews 3:14)

It is only by being one in Jesus Christ that we can hope to be a part of Zion. For, it is in bringing forth good fruit meet for the kingdom, that we are able to dwell there with our God:

...for inasmuch as they bring forth fruit and works meet for my kingdom, they shall dwell thereon; they shall build, and another shall not inherit it; they

shall plant vineyards, and they shall eat the fruit thereof. Even so. Amen (D&C 98:13d)

Those who do not bring forth the desired fruit meet for the kingdom of God, Jesus said the Fa-

ther would simply take them away from Him as the True Vine to be gathered of men and burned (John 15:1,2 with Matthew 3:37 & 15:11-13 & Alma 3:87-91).

One Bread, And One Body

About a year ago now,⁴ Brother Gary Whiting and I had the opportunity to administer the sacrament to one of our sisters who was unable to attend our regular church services. As Gary offered the prayer over the bread, the difference in the wording in the prayers we have been commanded to pray over the sacrament emblems stood out very distinctly in my thoughts.

As indicated in the prayer for the bread, in partaking of the bread we are witnessing to the Father our willingness to do at least three distinct things: 1) to take upon us the name of the Son of God, 2) to always remember Him, and 3) to keep all His commandments (Moroni 4:4). In the prayer over the wine the list is reduced to a single element: to witness of our willingness to always remember the Son and the blood He shed for us (Moroni 5:3).

Why the difference? The wine represents the blood of the Atonement, the price Jesus Christ paid for our salvation. It stands alone. We cannot add to it nor take away from it. Faith in the cleansing blood of Jesus Christ is what is required to wash away all our sins. For it is after we have faith that God works miracles among the children of men (Ether 5:12,13,18,31,32):

*And behold they are righteous for ever; for **because of their faith in the Lamb of God, their garments are made white in his blood.** And the angel said unto me, Look! And I looked and beheld three generations pass away in righteousness, and their garments were white, even like unto the Lamb of God. And the angel said unto me, **These are made white in the blood of the Lamb, because of their faith in him.** (I Nephi 3:117-119)*

The bread, on the other hand, represents not only His body that was broken and given as a ransom on Calvary (Matthew 26:22, Luke 22:19), it also represents the living body of Jesus Christ, those who are grafted into Him. Simply stated, we together are that body, and members in particular (I Corinthians 12:27):

*...The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? **For we being many are one bread, and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread.** (I Corinthians 10:16,17)*

And so the prayer over the bread includes wording which addresses our relationship to each other as members in the body of Christ. In taking the name of Christ upon us we are joined together in the marriage covenant between the church, the Bride, and Jesus Christ, the Bridegroom. To always remember Him and keep His commandments (John 14:15) shows our love and devotion for Him.

But what specifically are Jesus Christ's commandments? Paul said that they can be "briefly comprehended in this saying, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Romans 13:9). In other words, His commandments center around His "new commandment", that we love one another as He loved us (John 13:34 & 15:12-17 with Romans 13:8-10).

⁴Referring back from February 1995

By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another. (John 13:35)

To do otherwise is to invoke the wrath of a just God upon ourselves (Genesis 7:40,41).

Though we are many, as Paul said, we “are one bread, and one body.” And so the prayer we offer up to the Father, in the name of His Son over the bread acts as a reminder to us of our commitment to each other as one bread, one offering to the Lord (cf. Romans 12:1).

That They May Always Have His Spirit To Be With Them

Since that humble sacrament service with Brother Gary and our sister, I have often sought wisdom of the Lord concerning the significance of the various elements of this ordinance, including the order in which the emblems are administered.

In instituting this ordinance, Jesus Christ first administered the bread and then the wine (Matthew 26:22-26, Mark 14:20-24 & III Nephi 8:28-46). This is also the order in which the prayers are given (Moroni 4,5 & D&C 17:22,23). Clearly it is appropriate to administer the bread before administering the wine in this sacred ordinance of the Lord. But up until recently I did not fully appreciate the significance of this order.

The wording in each of the sacrament prayers states why we partake of each emblem. Ultimately we partake of the bread so that we **may always have** the Spirit of Jesus Christ with us. And we partake of the wine so that we **may have** His Spirit to be with us (Moroni 4:4 & 5:3 & D&C 17:22d & 17:23b).

May always have and **may have**. Here again, I believe the Lord is making a very significant distinction between the bread and the wine with these words.

And so in thinking about this wording of *having* and *always having* the Spirit with us I wondered why we do not first partake of the wine to *have* the Spirit with us and then partake of the bread to *always have* the Spirit with us. But clearly this is not how Jesus instituted this ordinance. And so I knew I was missing something and continued to call upon the Lord from time to time about this matter according to His promise to grant wisdom and insight into His holy truths to those who call upon Him (Matthew 7:12,13 & James 1:5).

Finally, after a year, the Lord has given me an answer to my prayers on this subject. On the Saturday before last, January 18, we happened to be discussing the sacrament at our early morning men's fellowship at the church. As we talked, the Spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ brought an understanding that came flooding over me with such clarity that I was immediately moved to confess Him through prayer and praise. The understanding I received of Him was this: We are to first partake of the bread to witness and affirm our love for each other as members of one body in Christ before we attempt to show our love for Him by remembering the blood He has shed for us.

By partaking of the communion bread we show our determination to be one body in Christ. Again we read:

*...The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? **For we being many are one bread, and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread.** (I Corinthians 10:16,17)*

Through Christ, we have all been made to drink into one Spirit:

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For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many. (I Corinthians 12:12-14)

Are we willing to be made one in the Lord? We must first answer this question by manifesting a determination to be one as we have been called before proceeding further in our vows to the Lord:

I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, in one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. (Ephesians 4:1-6)

Through the Spirit of Jesus Christ, we become members one of another (Ephesians 4:25). And this we must assent to, or be conformed to, before we seek directly to show our love for our God. As John asked:

If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? (I John 4:20)

And so we must first be reconciled to the members of the body in our hearts before coming to the Lord.

*Therefore, if ye shall come unto me, or shall desire to come unto me, or if thou bring thy gift to the altar, **and there rememberest** that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave thou thy gift before the altar, and go thy way unto thy brother, and first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift. (Matthew 5:25,26)*

The Lord is simply not interested in our showing our devotion to Him if we are not willing to love each other or if we are determinedly at variance one with another, which is contrary to His will.

If we are unable to be reconciled with each other over different matters or offenses, we are still to forgive one another in all things and let the Lord judge between us (D&C 64:2 with 122:16).

My disciples, in days of old, sought occasion against one another, and forgave not one another in their hearts, and for this evil they were afflicted, and sorely chastened; wherefore I say unto you, that ye ought to forgive one another, for he that forgiveth not his brother his trespasses, standeth condemned before the Lord, for there remaineth in him the greater sin. I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men; and ye ought to say in your hearts, Let God judge between me and thee, and reward thee according to thy deeds. (D&C 64:2c-e)

The power of the Spirit of Jesus Christ is the only Way we can keep such sayings (John 14:6).

If we do not so deal with each other according to His word (Spirit, John 6:63 & D&C 83:7b), Satan can and will gain advantage over us (II Corinthians 2:10,11). Therefore, it is wisdom to deal quickly and justly in Christ in our relationships with each other.

Our relationship with God together with our relationship to each other is at the heart of God's interest in our sacraments, i.e. our sacrifice offerings of devotion before Him. If we give grudgingly and without real intent to be one, our offering will not be counted unto to us for righteousness (Moroni 7:5-7). For through the partaking of the body of Christ via the bread we are witnessing our willingness to keep all His commandments (Moroni 4:4), chief of which is the commandment He gave the night He instituted the sacrament among the apostles:

*This is my commandment, **That ye love one another, as I have loved you.** Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, **if ye do whatsoever I command you.** (John 15:12-14)*

This is the standard that disciples of Jesus Christ hold up before the world (Matthew 5:15-18 with III Nephi 8:55 & Isaiah 60:3), even their love for each other (John 13:35). But theirs is not human love. No, it is charity, the pure love of Christ (Moroni 7:52).

The Bond of Charity

Charity is the bond of perfectness whereby our hearts are knit together (Colossians 2:2,19 & 3:14). In other words, the bond which unifies and keeps the fellowship of believers together is the perfect love of our God which He “sheds abroad” into our hearts by the gift of the Holy Ghost (I Nephi 3:64):

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)

This is our calling in Jesus Christ, to love as He has loved us by receiving His love into our hearts and, thus, to become one body. It was to this end that He went to the cross, to draw all men unto Himself (John 12:32):

*And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, **that they may be one, as we are.** (John 17:11)*

And so we have been commanded to love each other and to dwell together in righteousness according to the Lord's peace (John 14:27-29 with Hebrews 12:14-16):

*See that ye love one another; cease to be covetous; learn to impart one to another as the gospel requires; cease to be idle; cease to be unclean; cease to find fault one with another; cease to sleep longer than is needful; retire to thy bed early, that ye may not be weary; arise early, that your bodies and your minds may be invigorated; and above all things, **clothe yourselves with the bonds of charity**, as with a mantle, which is the bond of perfectness and peace; pray always, that you may not faint until I come; behold, and lo, I will come quickly, and receive you unto myself. Amen. (D&C 85:38)*

We are to put on charity (Colossians 3:14). Hence, I believe that it is the white raiment spoken of by the Spirit in Revelation 3:18 that the Lord counsels us to buy of Him. It is perfect and everlasting love (Moroni 8:18). Those who clothe themselves in the mantle of charity will have boldness in the day Jesus Christ comes in His glory, for they will be like Him (I John 3:1-3):

*Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God. 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 judgement; **because as he is, so are we in this world.** (I John 4:15-17)*

To confess Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Ghost as did Peter on the road to Caesarea Philippi (Matthew 16:17), we must be filled with charity or we are nothing:

And if a man be meek and lowly in heart, and confesses by the power of the Holy Ghost, that Jesus is the Christ, he must needs have charity; for if he have not charity, he is nothing; wherefore he must needs have charity. 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. (Moroni 7:50,53)

Love The Brotherhood; For We Are Members One of Another

Many, in teaching the second great commandment, to love our neighbor as ourselves (Matthew 22:38), have focused upon what our love for ourselves should be. Some have even emphasized the need for us to learn how to love ourselves so that we might learn to love others. Such emphases somehow miss the mark for me now.

Sometime back, while in a prayer service, a different emphasis was impressed upon my mind regarding the second commandment. The impress came that this commandment actually has to do with our considering ourselves members of one body, members of each other, as Paul put it. We are not to look at each person as a separate entity. But rather we are to consider others as being members of ourselves. Therefore, as the priesthood has been admonished, we are not to let anything separate us from each other:

Yea, verily, thus saith the Lord, unto the elders of the church: continue in steadfastness and faith. Let nothing separate you from each other and the work whereunto you have been called; and I will be with you by my Spirit and presence of power unto the end. Amen. (D&C 122:17a-b)

The Lord esteems or considers all flesh in one (I Nephi 5:121). And so must we (cf. James 2:1). As He has said:

Behold, this I have given unto you a parable, and it is even as I am: I say unto you, Be one; and if ye are not one, ye are not mine. (D&C 38:6a)

The bread is placed before us to call us to union so that we might be the Lord's (cf. Hebrews 10:19-22).

For we being many are one bread, and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread.
(I Corinthians 10:17)

Will we be one? This is the question each one of us must answer in our own lives. If we partake without discerning the body of Christ, i.e. the other members of His body about us, we eat and drink damnation to our own souls (I Corinthians 11:29 with Jude 12,13).

The sacrament, or feast of charity as it was sometimes referred to in the first century church, poses a very significant question to each of us: Will we keep the two great commandments? If we partake of the bread, our affirmation is, Yes, we will love not only our Lord, Jesus Christ, but we will love each other as inseparable members of His body as well.

If, on the other hand, we choose not to partake of His body, we have no life in us (John 6:53 with I John 5:12). Simply, we forfeit the blessings our Redeemer bestows upon the members of His body. There is no in-between. We must be either hot or cold or the Lord will reject us (Revelation 3:16).

Are our hearts being knit together in the love of Christ? If not, why then do we partake of Christ? Not to pursue oneness with our whole hearts is to mock Him and His death on the cross.

Our God is not passive in this matter of loving one another. He is intent on proving us, to know whether we love Him or not by our love for one another (cf. D&C 95:3b & Deuteronomy 13:3).

And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.
(I John 4:21)

Therefore, we are admonished:

Honor all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king. (I Peter 2:17)

Loving one another according to the commandments is to honor the King.

In partaking of the bread solemnly and with due consideration of our relation with all the other members of our Lord's body, we have the opportunity to grow up in Christ in the unity of faith, to be edified in Him. But to do so, we must be one, or so seek to be one in Him and one with each other. We do this by being renewed in the mind of the Spirit:

*And now I speak unto you concerning the former conversation, by exhortation, that ye put off the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and **be renewed in the mind of the Spirit**; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor; **for we are members one of another**. Can ye be angry, and not sin? let not the sun go down upon your wrath; neither give place to the devil...Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you,*

WE'RE MARCHING TO ZION

with all malice; and be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. (Ephesians 4:22-32)

It is vital to the health of the body of Christ to view the sacrament as an essential ordinance for being renewed in the mind of the Spirit, who is laboring in our midst to make us one. For how can He perform His work among us if, in our coming to the table of our Lord, we do not love each other fervently as the apostle Peter admonished (I Peter 1:22)? And so the apostle Paul greatly encouraged the body to let the mind of Christ Jesus, which is His Spirit (I Corinthians 2:9-16), dwell in us, as we fellowship together in remembrance of the One who gave Himself for us:

*If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfill ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same love, **being of one accord, of one mind.** Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus; who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. (Philippians 2:1-8)*

Zion awaits those who will be thus minded, even as Christ who laid down His life on our behalf. Those who love the brethren as Christ loved have passed from death into Life. All others remain in the darkness of death (cf. D&C 83:7f-i):

Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you. We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer; and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him. Hereby perceive we the love of Christ, because he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. (I John 3:13-16)

Will we be one bread in Jesus Christ? When the bread is passed before us, that is the question that our heavenly Father is asking us.

And the Lord called his people, Zion, because they were of one heart and of one mind, and dwelt in righteousness; and there were no poor among them. (Genesis 7:23)

Zion awaits the pure in heart. Come and purify yourselves that your Lord and your God may purify and cleanse you. He awaits with healing in His wings. Even so, come, Lord Jesus, come. Amen.

Your Brother in Jesus Christ, our Lord,

Elder Dwight Burford