

American Decency Association

PO Box 202, Fremont MI 49412 231-924-4050 www.americandecency.org
Encouraging Christians to guard their heart February 2023

Love: The Cherished Garment of Charity by Steve Huston



The Apostle Paul, in the third chapter of his letter to the Colossians, exhorts us to put on, or wear, several pieces of clothing; the most important piece being that of charity – perfect love.

“**Put on** therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. 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; and be ye thankful.” (v. 12-15)

Having been a short-term

missionary in India, I had the blessing to witness the modest and beautiful dress of the women there.

Arriving at the church I would be working with, there was a large gathering of women dressed in traditional garb who performed a traditional Indian dance complete with finger cymbals and song. It was a sight to behold.

One devotional writer from long ago accurately described both the clothing they wore and the corresponding spiritual application. “*In the dress of a Hindu woman, her graceful robe is fastened upon her person entirely by means of a single knot. The long strip of cloth is wound around her person so as to fall in graceful folds like a made garment, and the end is fastened by a little knot, and the whole thing hangs by that single fastening. If that were loosed the robe would fall. And so in the spiritual life our habits of grace are likened unto garments; and it is also true that the garment of love, which is the beautiful adorning of the child*

*of God, is entirely fastened by little **nots.***” (A.B. Simpson)

This most beautiful, priceless, outer garment of God’s love - in us and reaching out to others through us - holds all these other garments Paul mentions (mercy, kindness, humility, patiently putting up with and forgiving one another, etc.) securely in place. Such perfect love leads to God’s peace ruling in our hearts and, according to Peter, “*shall cover the multitude of sins.*” (1 Pet. 4:8)

To “cover” is to hide, to put out of sight, or to suppress in darkness and oblivion. Instead of the self-love that takes pleasure in exposing every fault or offense of a brother – either to make oneself look better or to foster pity from others – the love which stems from our Creator and Redeemer seeks to protect the offending brother, concealing such offences from the notice of others. For the sake of our Sacred Head and His one Body, the Church, one who pos-

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esses such fervent love doesn't hold a grudge, but rather, forgives "until seventy times seven." And for the sake of that offending brother, motivated by that same love, he will go to his brother in secret to exhort, rebuke, or reprove. This is love in action.

While in this world of fences must necessarily come, but they need not be broadcast. The Apostle Paul examples such forgiveness and love for us in 2 Timothy 4:16. *"At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge."* This is the same love that Stephen, exemplifying Jesus, showed to young Paul at his stoning, *"Lord, lay not this sin to their charge."* Though love and forgiveness are not always passed on by those who receive such grace from others, it must be passed on by the believer. It's good for our own soul and it's a seed that is replanted in others.

With so much at stake, let us keep this garment of love firmly fastened in place. Freely and sovereignly bestowed upon us by God, let us fulfill our responsibility in caring for the "little nots" that keep love securely held in its rightful position.

What are these "**nots**" that hold such love in place? Paul shares these with us in the thirteenth chapter of his first letter to the church at Corinth:

Such love (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."

Although there are many things that define love in positive terms, there are enough "**nots**" here to keep love in place, holding our spiritual wardrobe together as God would have it.

A.B. Simpson, in speaking of these "**nots**," reminded us that "Here are reasons enough to explain the failure of so many, and the reason why they

walk naked, or with rent garments, and others see their shame." Finally exhorting us to "look after the **nots**."

In all that we do it must be the love of Christ that constrains us. As Oswald Chambers so aptly put it, *"Love is the beginning and the middle and the end – the first sign, stamp, and seal – of the saint. Stronger than death, deeper than hell, higher than heaven, is the mighty personal devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ. No one can ever destroy the individual whose heart is in personal, passionate devotion to Jesus."*

So then, by His grace, let us love and walk as Jesus loved and walked, giving our lives for others because He first gave His life for us. May we keep the garment of love firmly bound in place that our brothers, our world, and our God might see our love for Him.

"And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity."
1 Corinthians 13:13



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