

## Moroni 7

Moroni 7 is the great cornerstone of the Book of Mormon's teaching on charity, and one of the most beautiful sermons in all of scripture. Moroni preserves it from his father Mormon — *a few of the words of my father Mormon, which he spake concerning faith, hope, and charity* (v. 1), preached in the synagogue to the peaceable followers of Christ. The sermon is the Book of Mormon's companion to Paul's hymn to love in 1 Corinthians 13, and in some ways its deepening: where Paul defines charity, Mormon names its source — *charity is the pure love of Christ* (v. 47). The chapter unfolds as a connected argument that builds from how to discern good from evil, through faith and hope, to the summit of charity. Mormon teaches that *every thing which inviteth and enticeth to do good... is inspired of God* (v. 13); that faith lays hold on every good thing; that faith requires hope, and hope requires meekness, and the meek must needs have charity; for if he have not charity he is nothing (v. 44). And he ends with the command to pray with all the energy of heart to be filled with the pure love of Christ. It is the chapter that gathers the whole gospel into three words and crowns them with the greatest — charity, the pure love of Christ, which never faileth.

### Hebrew Word Studies

**ahavah / chesed / 'or-mashiach** (אָהַבָּה / חֶסֶד / —) — **love (the deep, covenantal and personal love) / lovingkindness, steadfast covenant love / the light of Christ (the inborn light to know good from evil) vv. 45–48, vv. 45–47, vv. 16–19.** Two Hebrew love-words stand behind *charity*. The Greek of Paul (which Mormon's sermon parallels) is *agape* — self-giving love — but the Hebrew roots reach deeper. *Ahavah* is the great covenant-love word: God's *ahavah* for Israel (Deut. 7:8), the love commanded toward God with all thine heart (Deut. 6:5) and toward neighbor (Lev. 19:18). Mormon's charity — patient, kind, seeking not her own, enduring all things (v. 45) — is *ahavah* perfected, and named at last as *the pure love of Christ* (v. 47): not merely human affection but the very *ahavah* Christ bears, bestowed on his followers. *Chesed* — steadfast, loyal, covenant love and mercy — is the other root, the love that *endureth forever* (v. 47). *Chesed* is the love that does not quit, that *beareth all things... endureth all things* (v. 45); the psalmist's refrain *his chesed endureth for ever* (Ps. 136) is exactly Mormon's *charity... endureth forever*. Charity is the human possession of God's own *chesed* — the loyal, enduring, never-failing love of Christ. Underlying the chapter's first movement is the *light of Christ* (vv. 16–19), the inborn *Spirit of Christ... given to every man, that he may know good from evil*. This is the universal endowment — every soul given enough light to discern good from evil as plain... as the daylight is from the dark night (v. 15). The chapter's three ideas form the ascent: by the light of Christ a soul discerns and lays hold on good, by faith and hope it rises, and at the summit it is filled with *ahavah/chesed* — the pure, enduring love of Christ that never fails and makes us like him.

### From the Chapter's Architecture

``cross-references Lev. 19:18 (thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself — the *ahavah* behind *charity*, v. 45); Deut. 6:5 (love the Lord thy God with all thine heart — the love of v. 48); Ps. 136 (his mercy / *chesed* endureth for ever — *charity* that *endureth forever*, v. 47); Prov. 10:12 (love covereth all sins — *charity* that *bears all things*, v. 45); Isa. 11:2 (the Spirit of the Lord, of wisdom and knowledge — the gifts that lay hold on good, vv. 16, 24); Matt. 7:16–20 (by their fruits ye shall know them — by their works ye shall know them, v. 5); Matt. 7:1–2 (with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged — v. 18); Matt. 22:37–40 (the two great commandments of love — the *charity* of vv. 45–48); Lk. 6:43–45 (the good tree and the corrupt tree, the good and evil treasure of the heart — the fountain of vv. 11–12); Jn. 1:9 (the true Light that lighteth every man — the light of Christ, v. 16); Jn. 13:34–35 (love one another; as I have loved you — the pure love of Christ, v. 47); Jn. 15:12–13 (greater love hath no man — v. 47); Rom. 8:24–25 (hope that is not seen, awaited with patience — the hope of vv. 40–42); 1 Cor. 13:1–13 (the hymn to *charity*, the greatest of these is *charity* — the master parallel to vv. 45–46); Gal. 5:22 (the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace... — the good of v. 13); Eph. 2:8–10 (saved by grace through faith unto good works — faith laying hold on good, vv. 21–26); Heb. 11:1, 6 (faith, the substance of things hoped for; without faith it is impossible to please God — vv. 21, 38); 1 Jn. 3:2–3 (when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is... every man that hath this hope... purifieth himself — verbatim behind v. 48); 1 Jn. 4:7–8, 18 (God is love... perfect love casteth out fear — the pure love of Christ, v. 47); 2 Ne. 26:30 (*charity... the Lord God hath given a commandment that all men should have charity, which charity is love* — v. 47); Ether 12:6, 28, 34 (faith as things hoped for and not seen; faith, hope, *charity* bring to Christ; *charity* as the love that inherits the mansions — the companion to vv. 1–48); Alma 32:21, 27 (faith as hope for the unseen; the seed and meekness — vv. 41–43); Moro. 8:25–26 (the chain from faith to baptism to the Holy Ghost to hope and perfect love — vv. 40–48); Moro. 10:20–23, 32 (faith, hope, *charity* necessary to salvation; perfected in Christ — vv. 42–48); D&C 4:5–6 (faith, hope, *charity*, and love qualify for the work — vv. 44–48); D&C 121:45 (let thy bowels... be full of *charity* towards all men... then shall thy confidence wax strong — v. 48). ``