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## The Glorious Standard

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**Abstract:** This article recalls Book of Mormon prophecies that foretold the discovery and establishment of the promised land of America. There are blessings for those who keep God's commandments and cursings for those who do not. The author claims that the constitution was divinely inspired.

an all-time high, with church membership over 100 million, but delinquency, (I remind you) immorality, and social confusion also are at peaks."

As I made note of those articles I thought to myself, it is time for us to make a critical self-analysis of ourselves to see how much of this applies to us as a Church and to us as individuals.

President Wilford Woodruff said something: "The trouble with the Latter-day Saints, we spend too much time confessing the other fellow's sins."

Nephi the prophet warned something about this as he predicted about our day. "Wo unto them that turn aside the just for a thing of naught and revile against that which is good, and say that is of no worth! . . ." (2 Nephi 28:16.) Obviously this was intended for those in Zion or for the pure in heart of the Church.

"For behold, at that day," Nephi said, "shall he (Lucifer) rage in the hearts of the children of men, and stir them up to anger against that which is good.

"And others will he pacify, and lull them away into carnal security, that they will say: All is well in Zion; yea, Zion prospereth, all is well—and thus the devil cheateth their souls, and leadeth them away carefully down to hell." (*Ibid.*, 28:20-21.)

And then he warns, "Therefore, wo be unto him that is at ease in Zion!" (*Ibid.*, 28:24.)

"Cursed is he," Nephi again said, "that putteth his trust in man, or maketh flesh his arm, or shall hearken unto the precepts of men, save their precepts shall be given by the power of the Holy Ghost." (*Ibid.*, 28:31.)

Moroni finished the record of his father Mormon and then added some inspired observations of his own concerning ". . . things . . . which must shortly come (to pass), . . . when these things (presumably meaning the coming forth of the Book of Mormon) shall come forth among you." Now that means our day. This is what he said (and note the definition of a prophecy): He said, "Behold, I speak unto you as if ye were present, and yet ye are not. But behold, Jesus Christ hath shown you unto me, and I know your doing." (Mormon 8:34-35.)

You remember what the Master said, the devil shall rage in the hearts of men even so much that if it were possible the very elect according to the covenant would be deceived. This is what Moroni said: "And I know that ye do walk in the pride of your hearts; and there are none save a few only who do not lift themselves up in the pride of their hearts, unto the wearing of very fine apparel, unto envying, and strifes, and malice, and persecutions,

and all manner of iniquities; and your churches, yea, even every one, have become polluted because of the pride of your hearts.

"For behold, ye do love money, and your substance, and your fine apparel, and the adorning of your churches, more than ye love the poor and the needy, the sick and the afflicted." (*Ibid.*, 8:36-37.)

As I read that, I thanked the Lord that for a quarter of a century in our lifetime the Church has, through the welfare program, sought to place the proper emphasis where the Lord has placed it, by putting foremost the love of the poor and the needy.

One of the first revelations the Lord said in our day: "And even so I have sent mine everlasting covenant into the world, to be a light to the world, and to be a standard for my people, and for the Gentiles to seek to it, and to be a messenger before my face to prepare the way before me." (D&C 45:9.)

"But" the Lord said, "there is a possibility that man may fall from grace and depart from the living God."

Mark that, you who come in as converts to the Church! "Therefore let the church take heed and pray always, lest they fall into temptation;

"Yea, and even let those who are sanctified take heed also." (*Ibid.*, 20:32-34.)

The more complicated our lives and world conditions become, the more important it is for us to keep clear the purposes and principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is not the function of religion to answer all the questions about God's moral government of the universe, but to give one courage, through faith, to go on in the face of questions he never finds the answer to in his present status.

It was the wise counsel of a thinker who said: "If the time comes when you can no longer hold to your faith, then hold to it anyway. You cannot go into tomorrow's uncertainty and dangers without faith."

Let parents and leaders and church members generally, and hopefully our nonmember friends and relatives take heed of the counsels repeatedly given from our leaders. Allow time to meditate and ponder the things pertaining to our ministry. Live that we might be responsive to divine direction. Let me again, as I close, repeat what I have quoted before from a revelation of the Lord. "Search diligently, pray always, and be believing, and all things shall work together for your good, if ye walk uprightly before the Lord and keep the covenant wherewith ye have covenanted one with another." (*Ibid.*, 90:24.) This I pray humbly we may all do in the name of the Lord Jesus. Amen.

Sunday Afternoon Session, October 6, 1963

## THE GLORIOUS STANDARD

Delbert L. Stapley

Of the Council of the Twelve

My brothers and sisters and friends:

Because of disturbing trends and alarming conditions in this country of ours which are of great concern to every loyal, patriotic citizen, I desire to draw related analogies between the nation of ancient Israel and our own nation in the light of the revelations of Almighty God concerning both nations.

To each nation, God gave promises of blessings or cursings, depending upon the faithfulness of the people. In all the recorded history of man upon the earth, the God of heaven has established only two nations with basic divine purposes. One is the nation of Israel which the Lord by his mighty power led out of Egypt under the guidance of his prophet Moses.

The other nation is the United States of America. Prophets in early times foretold the events leading to the establishment of this mighty gentile nation and its promised destiny among the nations of the earth—if its people are faithful in keeping the commandments of God.

Moses counseled the newborn nation of Israel to serve the Lord and to keep his laws and statutes. He informed them of God's plans and purposes concerning his chosen people and also outlined his promises for faithful obedience to his laws and commandments and the cursings which would befall them if they became disobedient and sinful.

From Deuteronomy, I quote the following teachings and admonitions of Moses to the children of Israel:

"Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse;

"A blessing, if ye obey the commandments of the Lord your God, . . .

"And a curse, if ye will not obey the commandments of the Lord your God, but turn aside out of the way . . . to go after other gods, which ye have not known." (Deut. 11:26-28.)

"And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I



command thee this day, that the Lord thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth:

"And the Lord shall make thee the head, and not the tail; and thou shalt be above only, and thou shalt not be beneath; . . ." (*Ibid.*, 28:1, 13.)

Regardless of the many prophets, Israel was periodically blessed with following the death of the great law-giver, Moses, the continued disobedience and the contentions among its tribes not only divided them as a people but also destroyed them as a nation; and true to his warning, God scattered Israel among all the nations of the earth.

With these few pronouncements of God to Israel in mind, I turn to the second nation of destiny, the United States of America—a nation established by God in these latter days in fulfillment of prophecy, with wonderful promises for obedience to the commandments of the Lord and cursings if it fails to keep his commandments.

There were two groups of people before the time of Christ who were led away from eastern lands by the Lord to the Americas, and they became, in time, quite numerous. Eventually, however, because of disobedience and wickedness, they were destroyed, except a remnant of the second group who are the progenitors of the American Indian. These two migrations of people to the Americas received knowledge by revelation through their prophets concerning a powerful gentile nation which was to be established in the latter days upon this land by the hand of God.

Now let us briefly examine the revelations and prophecies as recorded in the Book of Mormon, foretelling America's discovery, its peopling from the European gentile nations, the events leading to the break with Great Britain, the Revolutionary War which secured independence for the colonies from the tyranny of oppression of an unjust king and nation. An angel showed to Nephi, an American prophet who lived about six hundred years before Christ, the many waters which separated the gentile nations from the seed of his brethren. He recorded this vision as follows:

"And it came to pass that the angel said unto me: Behold the wrath of God is upon the seed of thy brethren.

"And I looked and beheld a man among the Gentiles, who was separated from the seed of my brethren by the many waters; and . . . the Spirit of God . . . came down and wrought upon the man; and he went forth upon the many waters, even unto the seed of my brethren, who were in the promised land.

"And . . . I beheld the Spirit of God, that it wrought upon other Gentiles; and they went forth out of captivity, upon the many waters.

"And . . . I beheld many multitudes of the Gentiles upon the land of promise; . . .

"And I beheld the Spirit of the Lord, that it was upon the Gentiles, and they did prosper and obtain the land for their inheritance; . . .

"And . . . the Gentiles who had gone forth out of captivity did humble themselves before the Lord; and the power of the Lord was with them.

"And I beheld that their mother Gentiles were gathered together upon the waters, and upon the land also, to battle against them.

"And I beheld that the power of God was with them, and also that the wrath of God was upon all those that were gathered together against them to battle.

"And I, Nephi, beheld that the Gentiles that had gone out of captivity were delivered by the power of God out of the hands of all other nations.

"And it came to pass that I, Nephi, beheld that they did prosper in the land; . . ." (1 Nephi 13:11-20.)

From your knowledge of early American history, you will recognize Columbus as the man who went forth upon the many waters and discovered the Americas. The other facts of this prophecy and its fulfillment are also known to you from America's recorded history. This same prophet, speaking of the house of Israel being scattered and confounded, predicted:

". . . that the Lord God will raise up a mighty nation among the Gentiles, yea, even upon the face of this land; . . ." (*Ibid.*, 22:7.)

Lehi, the father of Nephi, and himself a prophet, speaking to his descendants and followers, declared that the land of America is a land of promise, choice above all other lands.

"Wherefore, I, Lehi, prophesy according to the workings of the Spirit which is in me, *that there shall none come into this land save they shall be brought by the hand of the Lord.*

"Wherefore, this land is consecrated unto him whom he shall bring. And if it so be that they shall serve him according to the commandments which he hath given, it shall be a land of liberty unto them; wherefore, they shall never be brought down into captivity; if so, it shall be because of iniquity; for if iniquity shall abound cursed shall be the land for their sakes, but unto the righteous it shall be blessed forever." (2 Nephi 1:6-7. Italics added.)

Jacob, the brother of Nephi, in an inspirational discourse to his people, reaffirmed the Lord's promises to the gentiles upon this land. He declared:

". . . the promises of the Lord are great unto the Gentiles, . . .

". . . and the Gentiles shall be blessed upon the land.

"And this land shall be a land of liberty unto the Gentiles, and there shall be no kings upon the land, who shall raise up unto the Gentiles.

"And I will fortify this land against all other nations." (*Ibid.*, 10:9-12.)

During the Savior's visit to the Nephites in the Americas after his resurrection and ascension to glory, he, speaking of the gentiles upon this land, promised that he would pour out the Holy Ghost upon the gentiles, "*which blessing upon the Gentiles shall make them mighty above all. . . .*" (3 Nephi 20:27. Italics added.)

When God confounded the language of the people at the tower of Babel, he separated a group known as the Jaredites, and under the direction of a prophet, led them to the land of the Americas. He revealed to this ancient prophet:

"Behold, this is a choice land, and whatsoever nation shall possess it shall be free from bondage, and from captivity, and from all other nations under heaven, *if they will but serve the God of the land, who is Jesus Christ, who hath been manifested by the things which we have written.*" (Ether 2:12. Italics added.)

The Lord also emphasized to this early prophet that whatsoever nation shall possess this land of promise shall serve God or they shall be swept off when the fulness of his wrath shall come upon them. And the fulness of his wrath cometh upon them when they are ripened in iniquity. "This," said the prophet, "is an everlasting decree of God." (*Ibid.*, 2:8-10.)

Thus, from ancient American prophets, we learn that this United States of America was established by God for a divine purpose, and that great blessings, which all must admit, as we review the history of this nation, have so far been literally fulfilled; yet the fulfillment of future promise of blessings is conditional upon the continued righteousness of its people. A great challenge is presented to the citizens of this land if God is to be on our side and give us power as a nation to overcome our enemies and not be brought down into captivity.

This nation did not come into being by chance. God declared that the gentiles who came here were to be brought out of captivity by his hand. The prophecies previously quoted concerning the establishment of this nation have been fulfilled to the letter. The people coming here in the beginning did so to find religious freedom. Nevertheless, they were subjected to tyrannical rule, unjust demands, and no representation. They had lost the opportunities, the privileges, the religious freedom and liberty which impelled them to settle in this new land. The colonists became



an aroused group because of oppression; therefore, the time had arrived in the economy of God for the people to break off the yoke of domination which subjected them to these unjust and intolerable conditions. The Lord, knowing beforehand the events which would set the pattern for independence, raised up strong and valiant men to meet this hour of crisis and challenge. The Declaration of Independence came from a determined people. The successful Revolutionary War which followed united the colonies; and the gentile nation of destiny and of divine purpose, as foretold by the prophets, was born. A Constitution was needed to set forth the purposes, obligations, and the guide lines for the new nation. God was prepared and ready and did not neglect this newborn nation which he had ordained to be established thousands of years previously.

I now turn to latter-day scripture to substantiate this statement, which revelations are not only important for Latter-day Saints to know and understand, but also for the entire citizenry of this favored country. The Lord, through the Prophet Joseph Smith in December of 1833, counseled in the midst of their afflictions that "the Saints should continue to importune for redress, and redemption, by the hands of those who are placed as rulers and are in authority over you—

"According to the laws and constitution of the people, which I have suffered to be established, and should be maintained for the rights and protection of all flesh, according to just and holy principles;

"That every man may act in doctrine and principle pertaining to futurity, according to the moral agency which I have given unto him, that every man may be accountable for his own sins in the day of judgment.

"Therefore, it is not right that any man should be in bondage one to another.

"And for this purpose have I established the Constitution of this land, by the hands of wise men whom I raised up unto this very purpose, and redeemed the land by the shedding of blood." (D&C 101:77-80.)

God gave the men chosen to formulate the Constitution the inspiration of heaven to guide them. It becomes, therefore, an enduring document for this nation. It is not the prerogative of man to change its basic and fundamental principles and concepts.

The dynamic statesman, Daniel Webster, in his last public address before the New York Historical Society in 1852, said:

"Unborn ages and visions of glory crowd upon my soul, the realization of all which, however, is in the hands

and good pleasure of Almighty God; but, under His divine blessing, it will be dependent on the character and the virtues of ourselves, and of our posterity.

"And let me say, gentlemen, that if we and our posterity shall be true to the Christian religion—if we and they shall live always in the fear of God, and shall respect His commandments—if we and they shall maintain just, moral sentiments, and such conscientious convictions of duty as shall control the heart and life—we may have the highest hopes of the future fortunes of our country, and if we maintain those institutions of government and that political union, exceeding all praise as much as it exceeds all former examples of political associations, we may be sure of one thing—that, while our country furnishes materials for a thousand masters of historic art, it will afford no topic for a Gibbon. It will have no decline and fall. It will go on prospering and to prosper.

"But if we and our posterity reject religious instruction and authority, violate the rules of eternal justice, trifle with the injunctions of morality, and recklessly destroy the political constitution which holds us together, no man can tell how sudden the catastrophe may overwhelm us, that shall bury all our glory in profound obscurity."

How applicable today are these splendid sentiments and warnings by this valiant statesman and patriot!

When God established the nation of Israel, he gave them the Ten Commandments, written on tablets of stone by his own finger. Man, through the centuries, has not altered or changed the Ten Commandments. The Constitution of this nation was not written on tablets of stone like unto Israel, but wise men were raised up and inspired for the important task of writing a constitution of government which guaranteed the God-given rights of free men.

In the revelation to Joseph Smith previously quoted, he was told that the Constitution should be maintained for the rights and protection of all flesh, according to just and holy principles, that it is not right for man to be in bondage one to another. It guarantees what God has always bestowed upon his children—the rights, privileges, and honor of a free people. So important is this latter-day gentile nation established by God that he required the land to be redeemed by the shedding of blood. The blood of the Revolutionary patriots was freely spilled upon the field of battle to insure independence and to redeem the land and make it sacred to those who possessed it. When the North and South became divided over state rights which included slavery, it was most important in the plan for this nation that it remain united and strong.

Only by so doing could the nation fulfil its destiny and God's purposes and work. The Civil War resulted in the death and misery of many souls, and thus for the second time the land was redeemed by the shedding of blood.

Truly, God rules in the affairs of men and nations. This nation has always been a beacon light to the world, exemplifying the principles of democracy, freedom, opportunity, achievement, and happiness. It now wields tremendous influence and power in the affairs of men and will continue to do so according to the promise of God as long as the people of the land serve the God of the land who is Jesus Christ.

The Constitution made provision for an expanded nation, but the founding fathers and God had no thought of changing or altering its basic principles, rules, and concepts.

President Woodrow Wilson defined the Constitution of the United States as "Not being a mere lawyer's document. It is," said he, "a vehicle of life, and its spirit is always the spirit of the age. The explicitly granted powers of the Constitution are what they always were; but the powers drawn from it by implication have grown and multiplied beyond all expectation."

To interpret this valued document understandingly, we need to remember the conditions and circumstances which confronted the founding fathers, who, under the inspiration of the Lord, brought this wonderful instrument of government into being. So important was God's will respecting this nation as revealed to Joseph Smith the Prophet, that in his prayer offered at the dedication of the Kirtland Temple, he included this appeal to Almighty God:

"Have mercy, O Lord, upon all the nations of the earth; have mercy upon the rulers of our land; may those principles, which were so honorably and nobly defended, namely, the Constitution of our land, by our fathers, be established forever." (D&C 109:54.)

With the knowledge of God's declaration that the Constitution of this land is inspired of him, it behooves every citizen to analyze the meaning, importance, and significance of this profound document and give loyal support to its spirit and purpose. We cannot afford to become complacent, forsake vigilance, and thus lose the benefits of the Lord's promise of blessings upon the people of this goodly land. Also, we must see to it that the principles, the standards, the ideals, the rights, the privileges, and the protection guaranteed by the Constitution are upheld by those who represent us in the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government.

A wise and understanding God had all this in mind when he gave the



following revelation to the Prophet Joseph Smith in August 1833:

"And that law of the land which is constitutional, supporting that principle of freedom in maintaining rights and privileges, belongs to all mankind, and is justifiable before me.

"Therefore, I, the Lord, justify you, and your brethren of my church, in befriending that law which is the constitutional law of the land;

"And as pertaining to law of man, whatsoever is more or less than this, cometh of evil.

"I, the Lord God, make you free, therefore ye are free indeed; and the law also maketh you free.

"Nevertheless, when the wicked rule the people mourn.

"Wherefore, honest men and wise men should be sought for diligently, and good men and wise men ye should observe to uphold; otherwise whatsoever is less than these cometh of evil." (*Ibid.*, 98:5-10.)

If wickedness prevails and wicked men rule, then we will be as other nations. We will stand alone without the guiding influence and power of God to sustain us in time of trouble and in meeting the challenge and threat of internal and external Satanic ideologies, also the evil designs and intrigues of men and nations.

I quote from a talk given by National Commander James E. Powers of the American Legion which appeared in the *American Legion* magazine of September 1963:

"America's deepest roots are spiritual. This is the most important historical fact of American life. To ignore it is to miss the essence of the heritage, the character, and the destiny of the American people. Today, with international and domestic tension tightening, I believe it is well that we see clearly the spiritual core of that creed. . . . The American colonies and nation were established in turn by men and women who acknowledged openly their reliance upon almighty God."

Continued righteousness and dependence upon God therefor are the only guarantees we have for the constant enjoyment of his blessings upon us, for he has warned: ". . . my law shall be kept on this land." (D&C 58:19.)

The Constitution of the United States is to this gentile nation what the Ten Commandments were and still are to the nation of Israel.

What a strength and comfort it would be to the people of this land for God to fight for this nation if the need arises as he fought for Israel during their struggle to build and maintain a nation. However, Israel's persistence in disobedience and wickedness destroyed them as a nation. This fact stands as a warning to us. What happened to the

nation of Israel can happen to this nation also if we as a people in this chosen land fail to obey the laws and the counsels of God. It will be profitable to all of us in the light of the promises and warnings to this nation to read again the biblical history of the nation of Israel. It will help us avoid the pitfalls which befell them.

I earnestly pray that we shall always stand firm and steadfast and immovable in upholding and sustaining the Constitution of this favored land. May we also selectively and wisely choose those who are equally valiant and patriotic to represent us in the top echelons of government—men who are upright, honest, and willing to keep the commandments of God in their personal lives.

These truths and considerations I bear humble witness and testimony to in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

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## THE NEED FOR MORAL COURAGE

*ElRay L. Christiansen*

Assistant to the Council of the Twelve

My beloved brethren and sisters, I have not forgotten the statement made in one of the recent general conferences by Elder Richard L. Evans, who reminded us that to know is not enough. As we draw near to the close of this great and uplifting conference, it seems to me that the thing that remains is for us to go to our homes and conform our lives to the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ as they have been expounded here, lacking not in determination and in moral courage to do it, for "to know is not enough."

One of the greatest demonstrations of moral courage ever shown in this day was when in the dead of winter, 1846, the first of the Saints, living in the city of Nauvoo, rolled their loaded wagons onto flatboats to be ferried across the broad, icy Mississippi River. That marked the beginning of the exodus of modern Israel. Later in the month, according to the historians, long caravans crossed the river on a solid floor of ice.

These people had been living in substantial and comfortable homes. They had farmed their fertile lands; they had completed the construction of the sacred Nauvoo Temple and had developed an

attractive city, which they proudly referred to as "Nauvoo the Beautiful." All these they left behind to move their families, with what household goods and provisions that they could take with them, to make an almost superhuman trek thirteen hundred miles into an almost unknown western land.

With a background of culture and refinement, they were not accustomed to the hardships of improvised shelters erected against the wintry blasts of February winds; yet, because of their faith and their courage, they resolutely met the challenge, and turning their backs upon their beautiful homes and their faces toward the west, they met whatever was to come. These exiled people, with implicit trust in their leaders, chose to ". . . seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; . . ." (Matt. 6:33.) Their physical courage was equaled only by their moral courage.

In our day there is a crying need for this same quality in each of us, especially the moral courage to resist the ever-increasing pressures and insidious influences that are constantly at work, distorting the truth, tearing down the good and the decent, and attempting to substitute therefor the vain and shallow philosophies and practices of a carnal world. There is need for the moral courage to uphold correct principles in our personal lives and to defend right and truth and decency and honor, and above all, to have faith in and honor God our Father.

It seems to me that moral courage is made of a firm desire, coupled with determination to accept and to do what is right and to shun the wrong. It is the outgrowth of moral conviction. Moral courage may not be dramatically displayed. Seldom does it receive public acclaim, nevertheless, it is an indispensable attribute of noble character. It must be exercised if worthwhile principles and institutions are to be preserved and perpetuated.

He who stands steadfastly for that which is right must take the risk of becoming at times disapproved and unpopular, or even shunned by others—sometimes by his closest friends. Indeed, some have become martyrs. Knowing what is right and true and honorable, they have had the courage to do, not what is *easy* but what is right; not what is *expedient* but what is best.

I think of a young boy with whom I am acquainted, who, rather than join his companions one night in an escape that was not in harmony with the training he had received in his home and in the Church, chose to walk more than six miles to his home while his companions in the car proceeded to carry out their plans. I imagine that boy, for more reasons than one, slept well when he finally arrived at home.