

A Standard for My People

HORTENSE H. CHILD

It's a great privilege for me to be here this morning. I am always more thrilled when I am in the presence of the young people of the Church because there is such promise among them, and I am very blessed and feel honored to be on this campus.

Summer students, it seems to me, must be rather special. Although tradition is changing, it is rather usual to go to school during fall, winter, and spring. So those who go in hot June, July, and August indicate to me that they are really anxious about an education and are making a serious endeavor. I'm also aware that the great genealogy seminary is being held, and those of you engaged in this betterment of self are among choice people. So I have a great respect for you this morning because I look upon you to be among those who are truly the leaders and anxious to make a contribution to life.

What an exciting, wondrous time to live and to learn and to love. Such a day! There is such an outpouring of the Spirit of the Lord, and it is such a wonderful time to be worthy to enjoy and receive the blessings from him.

When I mentioned to some of the young people of my family (former BYU students) that I was to have this opportunity, they counseled: "Talk about courtship and marriage—that always turns them on." I suppose that's a

true statement. It seems to me that courtship and marriage turn on the whole world.

I'm not going to talk about courtship and marriage, but what I say could have an effect on your courtship and marriage. And I pray the Lord will help me influence your thoughts and feelings in the way he would have it.

A Spirit of Remembrance

There is a special spirit of reminiscence in this land today. Call it the bicentennial commemoration of the birth of the nation or whatever. But people young and old are concerning themselves with the past and the heritage and the foundation of this nation. History is being reviewed and dramatized and relearned.

The arts of the past are being revived. Lately, old things have become priceless: ten-gallon milk cans, old butter churns, quilts, blacksmith forges. The founding fathers—Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, John Adams—are enjoying a popularity. Take for

Hortense H. Child was first counselor in the general presidency of the Young Women of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints when this devotional address was given at Brigham Young University on 29 July 1975.

example some of Franklin's sayings that I've heard recently:

He that lieth down with dogs shall rise up with fleas.

God heals and the doctor takes the fee.

An empty bag cannot stand upright!

We are being brought to a new appreciation of the Lord's purposes for this nation in that the Constitution of this land was established by wise men raised up for this purpose and this land was redeemed by the shedding of blood.

The Challenge of Establishing Zion

This movement of relating the past to the present and learning again the reasons for the founding of this nation is timely and has purpose. There is more to it than a commemoration. For in this day a living prophet of the Lord has lifted his voice, which has been miraculously preserved, and there is an urgent call from him to each of us as he strives to extend our vision regarding our assignment as a church to prepare this nation and the world for the coming of the Savior—to further establish Zion in preparation for his coming.

The very air is vibrating with the challenge, and while it is exhilarating, it is also sobering. And you who are of his chosen ones, because you have chosen him, are on the threshold and the firing line, and you have so much to do. There is a call for everyone from the Lord. Listen to it. President Spencer W. Kimball in the just-passed historic June Conference said:

Truly, we have become a global Church. . . .

And now we seem to hear the voice of our Savior calling, "Now you are established and have become successful. . . . Gird up your loins and go forth and teach the gospel to the whole world, leaving no soul without an opportunity."

The Church has grown and now it is ready to put on its beautiful garments and go preach the

gospel and we call upon all members of the Church, old and young, to accept the challenge and to assist in this great, prolonged, and relentless effort.

"Zion must increase in beauty, and in holiness; her borders must be enlarged; her stakes must be strengthened."

When we are asked by the Lord to enlarge the borders of the Church, that means not only more stakes, more missions, greater missionary work, but greater effectiveness and security within by having more and more of our members, young and old, more fully converted and in control of their lives and less tossed about by the trends of time. When the Lord asks us . . . "to strengthen our stakes," he means just that. For the stakes of the Church are where the Zions of today are found.

He further said in the recent mission president's seminar:

The spirit of this work is urgency and we must imbue in our missionaries and our saints the spirit of NOW—"N-O-W." We are not just waiting for the natural slow process of bringing people into the Church. We must move rather hastily.

We are to move toward the establishment of Zion. Zion when perfected will be as the prophet Moses said:

And the Lord called his people ZION, because they were of one heart and one mind, and dwelt in righteousness; and there was no poor among them. [Moses 7:18]

What would it be like to read a newspaper story like this:

And there were no contentions in the land, there were no envyings, no strife, nor tumult, nor whoredoms, nor lyings, nor murders? [See 4 Nephi 15–16]

Could we believe it?

. . . and surely there could not be a happier people among all the people who had been created by the hand of God. . . . They were in one, the children of Christ, and heirs to the kingdom of God. [4 Nephi 17]

This is the scriptural description of the condition of the ancient people in this land for two hundred years following the Savior's appearance to them. They waxed strong, became an exceedingly fair and delightsome people, and they were married and given in marriage and were blessed according to the promises that the Lord had made unto them. This wonderful life existed for the same length of time as the period since the independence of our country—two hundred years.

Because of their righteousness and blessings they had become exceedingly rich, and there began to be those who were "lifted up in pride" such as the wearing of costly apparel and all manner of fine things of the world. They began to be divided into classes and build up churches unto themselves to get gain and began to deny the true church of Christ.

The account says it took just ten years after they began to be divided into contentions for persecutions and the denying of Christ to take place. They cast the disciples into prison, and the people hardened their hearts and were led by false priests and prophets. They didn't just dwindle in unbelief, but they did willfully rebel against the gospel of Christ and their children were taught to hate. Does that sound like our day—false priests and prophets, denying Christ, rejection of religion, hate and violence?

The Spread of New Social Values

Along with the exciting move to appreciate and renew our heritage in this country there are powerful and, it seems, almost all-pervading forces at work to see that a people are not fit to receive the Savior. A recent valid research study, entitled *The New Morality—A Profile of American Youth in the 1970s*, reflects the vast

changes in the complexion and outlook of an entire generation. It shows that the so-called set of new values which were incubated on the nation's campuses in the upheaval of the 1960s have now spread to the entire youth generation. I choose to believe "majority" rather than "entire" youth generation.

These new values were identified as—

1. Acceptance of more liberal sexual mores.
2. Lessening of automatic obedience to and respect for authority.
3. A rejection of church as a source of guidance for moral behavior.
4. A great preoccupation with self at the expense of sacrificing one's self for family, employer, and community.

The study serves to focus, define, and emphasize what is apparent all around us through practically every medium: literature, television, movies, newspapers, advertising, and observation of lifestyles among the people. The extreme and offensive values born on the volatile campuses in the 1960s have in these few short years, months really, been accepted and espoused by masses of the population. A significant observation of this study is that

Our prediction that the process of diffusion of the old and the new might take decades and even a generation to accomplish has been proven incorrect, and we are amazed with the rapidity with which it is taking place and by the challenges it poses to society.

Nearly everywhere I go I find young people who are seeking and searching, a little determined to do their own thing, confused by conflicting values, and greatly swayed by the statement that "everybody's doing it."

Not long ago I listened to a handsome Indian young man say that the Indians are trying to discover who they are and what they are by going back home. Perhaps this could be said of many more than only Indian people.

Doesn't the prophet say the call is urgent and the need is *now* for every member to be fully converted, in control of his life, and less tossed by the trends of time?

Standards for a Covenant People

For our guidance the Savior revealed the following to the Prophet Joseph Smith:

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]

An everlasting covenant, or the gospel, is given as a standard for his people. In the work of the Aaronic Priesthood and the Young Women we are vitally concerned with standards. Nearly always when we ask a group to respond to the word *standard*, they relate it to standards of dress and grooming, and the discussion centers around defining a standard in terms of inches. Many of the letters we receive request, almost demand, a firm statement about just how long dresses or hair should be. Is this really what the Lord was referring to when he said "an everlasting covenant as a standard for my people"?

For the Savior further said of this everlasting covenant:

Come ye unto it, and with him that cometh I will reason . . . and I will show unto you my strong reasoning.

Wherefore, hearken ye together and let me show unto you even my wisdom. . . .

. . . and I will speak unto you and prophesy. [D&C 45:10–11, 15]

As we go forth to withstand the whirlwind of radical moral and social changes which oppose the everlasting covenant, here are some of the standards for his people:

1. We believe in God the Eternal Father, and in his Son Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost. That is basic.

2. We are the spirit children of God with the promise of inheriting his kingdom and through righteousness have the opportunity to become his literal sons and daughters, taking upon us his name. We are affiliated with organized religion and look to the Church as a guide for moral conduct.

3. We are obedient to and respectful of proper authority. The priesthood is the power and authority of God delegated to his worthy sons for the blessing and governing of both men and women and we honor it. We also believe in being subject to kings, presidents, rulers, and magistrates in obeying, sustaining and honoring the law.

4. The home and family are the basis of a righteous life. Men and women were created by God different from but complementary to one another, in order to make it possible for children to come into the world and be nurtured and loved by a father and mother, each with their singular, and yet one, responsibility in parenthood. The father bears the priesthood and is responsible to guide, bless, protect, provide for, and be the head of the family. "For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife" (Matthew 19:5). The mother is to bear and have primary responsibility for nurturing and influence the children. "And thy desire shall be to thy husband" (see Genesis 3:16).

Is there anything more acceptable, more beautiful, and more reassuring than a marriage relationship based on priesthood principles in righteousness as it grows majestically and matures? Look at the marriage of the prophet. And to think there are those who advocate sexual freedom and no marriage! "The rights of the priesthood are inseparably connected with the powers of heaven, and . . . the power of heaven cannot be controlled nor handled only upon the principles of righteousness"

(D&C 121:36). In other words, priesthood operates on a standard of righteousness. When one undertakes to cover sins, gratify pride or vain ambition, or exercise control or dominion or compulsion upon another soul in any degree of unrighteousness, the Spirit withdraws and the priesthood cannot operate (see D&C 121:37).

Priesthood holders, then, have an awesome responsibility. If they are unrighteous and therefore unable to exercise their priesthood, families, other priesthood bearers, women, and children will be deprived of the necessary and vital blessings and ordinances. A priesthood bearer cannot ordain himself, cannot administer to himself, cannot call or set himself apart to a position. He can help perform these vital ordinances and functions for someone else, but he is dependent on others for them.

For women also, there is no way decreed by our Father in heaven for them to receive the precious and essential blessings of the priesthood to which they have a right except through righteous priesthood holders. Therefore, one of the greatest works and missions of women is first to live by a standard of righteousness themselves and be able to influence priesthood bearers—fathers, brothers, husbands and sons, friends—to live righteously. Then the rights of the priesthood which are connected to the powers of heaven can be controlled in her behalf. If only every young woman could know this as she enters the marriage covenant! When the scriptures say, “Thy desire shall be to thy husband,” that desire would be for the priesthood which her husband bears to be so magnified in righteousness that she and her children could be the recipients of the most profound and perfect blessings of heaven. If only every young woman could understand how important it is and what a powerful role is hers!

A sad but revealing story is that told in the words of Elder George A. Smith, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve, in conference, April 6, 1856:

The wife of Thomas B. Marsh, who was then President of the Twelve Apostles, and sister Harris concluded they would exchange milk, in order to make a little larger cheese than they otherwise could. To be sure to have justice done, it was agreed that they should not save the strippings, but that the milk and strippings should all go together. Small matters to talk about here, to be sure, two women’s exchanging milk to make cheese.

Mrs. Harris, it appeared, was faithful to the agreement . . . but Mrs. Marsh, wishing to make some extra good cheese, saved a pint of strippings from each cow and sent Mrs. Harris the milk without the strippings.

Finally, it leaked out that Mrs. Marsh had saved the strippings, and it became a matter to be settled by the Teachers. They began to examine the matter, and it was proved that Mrs. Marsh . . . had wronged Mrs. Harris. . . .

An appeal was taken from the Teacher to the Bishop, and a regular Church trial was held, and it was decided that Mrs. Marsh had violated her covenant. President Marsh did not consider that the Bishop had done him and his lady justice . . . and . . . immediately took an appeal to the High Council, who investigated the question with much patience, and I assure you they were a grave body. Marsh being extremely anxious to maintain the character of his wife, as he was President of the Twelve Apostles, and a great man in Israel, made a desperate defense, but the High Council finally confirmed the Bishop’s decision.

Marsh, not being satisfied, took an appeal to the First Presidency of the Church, and Joseph and his Counselors had to sit upon the case, and they approved the decision of the High Council.

This little affair, you will observe, kicked up a considerable breeze, and Thomas B. Marsh then declared that he would sustain the character of his wife, even if he had to go to hell for it.

The then President of the Twelve Apostles, the man who should have been first to do justice and cause reparation to be made for wrong, committed by any member of his family, took that position, and what next? He went before the magistrate and

swore that the “Mormons” were hostile toward the State of Missouri.

That affidavit brought from the government of Missouri an exterminating order, which drove some 15,000 Saints from their homes and habitations, and some thousands perished through suffering the exposure consequent on this state of affairs.
[*Journal of Discourses* 3:283–84]

Thomas Marsh said later:

Many have said to me, “How is it that a man like you, who understood so much of the revelations of God as recorded in the Book of Doctrine and Covenants, should fall away?” I told them not to feel too secure, but to take heed lest they also should fall, for I had no scruples in my mind as to the possibility of men falling away. (Sec. 20:32–34.) I can say, in reference to the Quorum of the Twelve, to which I belonged, that I did not consider myself a whit behind any of them, and I suppose that others had the same opinion; but, let no one feel too secure; for, before you think of it, your steps will slide. You will not then think nor feel for a moment as you did before you lost the Spirit of Christ; for when men apostatize, they are left to grovel in the dark. . . . Had I known as much of the Church of Jesus Christ and its doctrines before I apostatized as I now know, I think I could not have backslidden.

I look back to my experience as the very young wife of a very young bishop, and from this point in my life I say, “How I wish I had more fully understood the important in our lives was the magnification of my husband’s priesthood. While he lived, he was twice a great bishop, but I’m sure I could have done more for him as a bishop and as the head of our family had I only known how better.” Young women and young men, learn and try to understand and experience this priesthood relationship and try to enhance it. A basic standard is a strong home and family.

Other Church Standards

In addition to the four standards listed above:

5. We do not accept nor espouse the acceptance of the so-called sexual freedom. In fact, we tenaciously advocate moral chastity for both men and women, with sexual relations limited entirely to the marriage union.

6. We advocate living in such a way as to reflect our knowledge of God and our esteem in ourselves because we are his children: dressing and conducting ourselves modestly and moderately, with confidence because of our understanding of the principles, and being obedient to the instruction and guidance of the prophets.

7. Inasmuch as we are accountable to an all-knowing God we cannot be less than completely honest with ourselves and our God. Thus we must be honest with others.

8. We have a standard for the Word of Wisdom, not given for constraint, but for strengthening and blessing even the weakest of us.

9. Overall we believe in being true, chaste, benevolent, and in doing good to all men. If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after these things.

The lines of confrontation are drawn, and the greatest challenges and pressures may continue to be on the college campus, for that is where most often social upheaval and change are initiated by extremist groups. Therefore, you, whether you like it or not, are on the front battleline. We have been told that in the latter days the stakes will be a defense and refuge from the storm (see D&C 115:6). How prophetic that stakes should be organized on this campus, and each of you belongs to one of them. Each should want his or hers to be as strong as possible.

Surely not from this campus has come any contribution to the survey that reflects the establishment of patterns and values so completely opposite to the standards of a covenant

people. We have a standard based on profound truth and spiritual as well as temporal values. It is a standard for chosen people who have a mission and purpose to establish Zion, who have received a renewed call, and who are charged with being converted, being in control of their lives and becoming less tossed by the trends of time.

The Lord has asked you to learn to live by love and compassion and understanding and to be knowledgeable of his purposes and his ways and his principles. You'll have to walk by faith much of the time. You must be disciplined. You must have hope. Most important, you need to know that God lives and you can kneel and pray to him and he will give you personal revelation for your decisions and needs. As you do this, something will happen—you will learn, your vision will expand, the Spirit of the Lord will be more recognizable to you, and you will grow and increase in understanding and truth. It doesn't come all at once. It comes precept by precept—a challenge here, a defeat here, a repenting here, a victory

here; but every decision that is made to uphold the standard of righteousness gives that much more power from within.

Oh, what a challenged but what a blessed generation you are! The structure of your families now and in the future is being eroded and chopped at, but the Lord has given you a refuge and a defense in your stakes, if you will but strengthen them and stay close and accept the call of the living prophet.

I testify to you, my young friends, that President Spencer W. Kimball is indeed the prophet of the Lord. I have heard him prophesy. He is leading this people in the ways of the Lord. He sees the vision of what we must do and he is counting on us—not just on the General Authorities or the Regional Representatives of the Twelve. He is counting on you and me to be able to carry the standard, to be the covenant people, and to lift the standard high where it can be an ensign and a light forever. I bear you this testimony with deep humility in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.