

Stand Strong in Holy Places

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Standing obedient and strong on the doctrine of our God, we stand in holy places, for His doctrine is sacred and will not change.

Brethren, it is an honor to be with the holders of the royal priesthood of God. We are living in the last days, in “perilous times.”¹ As bearers of the priesthood, we have the responsibility to stand strong with a shield of faith against the fiery darts of the adversary. We are role models to the world, protecting God-given, inalienable rights and freedoms. We stand in defense of our homes and our families.

When I was in the ninth grade, I returned from my first out-of-town game with the varsity baseball team. My father discerned that on the long bus ride home I had witnessed language and behavior that was not in harmony with the standards of the gospel. Being a professional artist, he sat down and drew a picture of a knight—a warrior capable of defending castles and kingdoms.

As he drew and read from the scriptures, I learned how to be a faithful priesthood holder—to protect and defend the kingdom of God. The words of the Apostle Paul were my guide:

“Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to *stand*.

“*Stand* therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;

“And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;

“Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.

“And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”²

Brethren, if we are faithful in the priesthood, this armor will be given to us as a gift from God. We need this armor!

Young men, your fathers and grandfathers never faced the temptations that you face on a regular basis. You are living in the last days. If your father wanted to get in trouble, he had to go searching for it. Not anymore! Today temptation finds you! Please remember that! Satan desires to have you, and “sin lieth at the door.”³ How will you resist his aggressive tactics? Put on the whole armor of God.

Let me teach you from another experience of my life:

In January of 1982, I spoke in a devotional on the BYU campus in Provo, Utah. I invited the students to imagine

that the Church was on one side of the podium, right here, and the world was just a foot or two away on the other side. This represented the “very short distance between where the world was and where the Church standards were” when I was in college. Then, standing before the students 30 years later, I held up my hands in the same manner and explained, “The world has gone far afield; [it has traveled; it is nowhere to be seen;] it has proceeded way, way out, all the way out of this [building and around the world]. ... What we and our children and our grandchildren have to remember is that the Church will remain constant, [it’s still right here; yet] the world will keep moving—that gap is [becoming] wider and wider. ... Therefore, be very careful. If you judge your actions and the standards of the Church on the basis of where the world is and where it’s going, you will find that you are not where you should be.”⁴

Back then I could not have imagined how far and how fast the world would move away from God; it was impossible to understand that, given doctrine, principles, and commandments. And yet the standards of Christ and His Church have not moved. As He said, “The truth *abideth* forever and ever.”⁵ When we understand and accept this, we are prepared to face the social pressure, ridicule, and even discrimination that will come from the world and some who call themselves friends.

Most of us know someone who would say, “If you want to be my friend, you’ll have to accept my values.” A true friend doesn’t ask us to choose between the gospel and his or her friendship. To borrow the words of Paul, “From such turn away.”⁶ A true friend strengthens us to stay on the strait and narrow path.

Staying on the gospel path of covenants, commandments, and ordinances protects us and prepares us to do God’s work in this world. When we obey the Word of Wisdom, our agency is protected from addictions to substances like alcohol, drugs, and tobacco. As we pay our tithing, study the scriptures, receive baptism and confirmation, live for the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost, partake of the sacrament worthily, obey the law of chastity, prepare for and receive the Melchizedek Priesthood, and make sacred covenants in the temple, then we are prepared to serve.

In the temple we are prepared to and promise to live the law of consecration. Able young men begin to live this law by seeking a mission call—giving a tithing of the first years of their lives in the full-time service of the Lord. That sacrifice strengthens them to go forward to the highest covenant in life—for many, it will be to be sealed in the temple and begin an eternal family.

As we press forward along the strait and narrow path, we build progressive spiritual strength—strength in using our agency to act for ourselves. For both young men and young women, this growth is aided as they learn doctrine and share their testimonies through the new online curriculum, *Come, Follow Me*.

In addition, use your agency to develop yourself personally. As you discover your gifts and talents, remember that parents and mentors may assist you, but you must let the Spirit guide you. Choose and act for yourself. Be motivated from within. Make a plan for your life, including education or vocational training. Explore interests and skills. Work and become self-reliant. Set goals, overcome mistakes, gain experience, and finish what you begin.

Along the way, be sure to participate in family, quorum, class, and combined Mutual activities. Enjoy wholesome fun together. Through these experiences you will come to respect and appreciate one another’s spiritual gifts and the eternal, complementary natures of the sons and daughters of God.

Above all, have faith in the Savior! Fear not! As we diligently live the gospel, we become strong in the Lord. With His strength we are able to reject the anti-Christ who says, “Eat, drink, and be merry,” for God “will justify [you] in committing a little sin; ... there is no harm in this ... , for tomorrow we die.”⁷ In the strength of the Lord we are able to stand against any philosophy or creed that denies the Savior and contradicts the great, eternal plan of happiness for all of God’s children.

We are not authorized to negotiate the conditions of that eternal plan. Remember Nehemiah, who was charged with building a wall to protect Jerusalem. Some wanted him to come down and compromise his position, but Nehemiah refused. He was not intolerant of others; he simply explained, “I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease ... ?”⁸

Sometimes we become the lightning rod, and we must “take the heat” for holding fast to God’s standards and doing His work. I testify that we need not be afraid if we are grounded in His doctrine. We may experience misunderstanding, criticism, and even false accusation, but we are never alone. Our Savior was “despised and rejected of men.”⁹ It is our sacred privilege to stand with Him!

Ironically, standing strong sometimes means avoiding and even fleeing from the world. The Savior declared, “Get thee behind me, Satan.”¹⁰ Joseph of Egypt ran from the temptations of Potiphar’s wife,¹¹ and Lehi left behind Jerusalem and took his family into the wilderness.¹²

Be assured that all of the prophets before us stood strong in their day:

Nephi performed the curious work of the Lord despite the buffetings of Satan and the persecutions of Laman and Lemuel, his brothers.¹³

Abinadi testified of Christ in the face of suspicion, scorn, and certain death.¹⁴

The 2,000 stripling warriors defended their families against those who despised gospel values.¹⁵

Moroni raised the title of liberty to preserve his people’s families and religious freedom.¹⁶

Samuel stood on a wall and prophesied of Christ’s coming while rocks and arrows were assailing him.¹⁷

The Prophet Joseph Smith restored the Savior’s gospel, sealing his testimony with his blood.¹⁸

And Mormon pioneers stood strong in the face of withering opposition and hardship, following a prophet in their great trek and settlement of the West.

These great servants and Saints of God were able to stand strong because they stood with the Savior. Consider how the Savior stood strong:

As a young man, Jesus faithfully went about His Father’s business, preaching the gospel to the learned men in the temple.¹⁹ Throughout His ministry, He accomplished the work of the priesthood—teaching, healing, serving, and blessing and lifting others. When appropriate, He boldly stood against evil, even cleansing the temple.²⁰ He also stood for truth—whether with words or with dignified silence. When the chief priests accused Him before Caiaphas, Jesus wisely and courageously refused to respond to untruth and held His peace.²¹

In the Garden of Gethsemane, our Savior and Redeemer did not shrink from drinking the bitter cup of the

Atonement.²² And on the cross He suffered again to do His Father's will, until at last He could say, "It is finished."²³ He had endured to the end. In response to the Savior's perfect obedience in standing strong, our Heavenly Father declared, "Behold my Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, in whom I have glorified my name."²⁴

My beloved priesthood brethren young and old, let us glorify God's name by standing strong with our Savior, Jesus Christ. I bear my special witness that He lives and that we "are called with a holy calling"²⁵ to participate in His work. "Wherefore, stand ye in holy places, and be not moved."²⁶ Standing obedient and strong on the doctrine of our God, we stand in holy places, for His doctrine is sacred and will not change in the social and political winds of our day. I declare, as did the Apostle Paul, "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, [behave] like men, [and] be strong."²⁷ This is my fervent prayer for you in the holy name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. 2 Timothy 3:1.

2. Ephesians 6:13–17; emphasis added.

3. Moses 5:23.

4. Robert D. Hales, "This Is the Way; and There Is None Other Way," in *Brigham Young University 1981–82 Speeches* (1982), 3–4; available at speeches.byu.edu.

5. Doctrine and Covenants 1:39; emphasis added.

6. 2 Timothy 3:5.

7. 2 Nephi 28:8.

8. Nehemiah 6:3.

9. Isaiah 53:3; Mosiah 14:3.

10. Luke 4:8.

11. See Genesis 39:7–12.

12. See 1 Nephi 2.

13. See, for example, 1 Nephi 18.

14. See Mosiah 11–17.

15. See Alma 53, 56–58.

16. See Alma 46:11–13.

17. See Helaman 13–16.

18. See Doctrine and Covenants 135.

19. See Luke 2:46–49.

20. See Matthew 21:12–13.

21. See Matthew 26:57, 59–63.

22. See Doctrine and Covenants 19:16–19.

23. John 19:30.

24. 3 Nephi 11:7.

25. Alma 13:3; see also 2 Timothy 1:9.

26. Doctrine and Covenants 87:8.

27. 1 Corinthians 16:13.