

## ELDER JOSEPH FIELDING SMITH

*Of the Council of the Twelve Apostles*

"Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance." (Psalms 33:12) So said the Psalmist. This saying it would be well for the people of America to remember.

## OUR COUNTRY UNDER DIVINE GUIDANCE

No nation has been more greatly blessed than has the United States. We live in a land which has been called choice above all other lands by divine pronouncement. The Lord has watched over it with a jealous care and has commanded its people to serve Him lest His wrath be kindled against them and His blessings be withdrawn. Our government came into existence through divine guidance. The inspiration of the Lord rested upon the patriots who established it, and inspired them through the dark days of their struggle for independence and through the critical period which followed that struggle when they framed our glorious Constitution which guarantees to all the self-evident truth proclaimed in the Declaration of Independence, "that all men are created equal: that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights: that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." That is to say, it is the right of every soul to have equal and unrestricted justice before the law, equal rights to worship according to the dictates of conscience and to labor according to the individual inclinations, independently of coercion or compulsion. That this might be, the Lord has said, "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. 101:80)

The founders of this nation were men of humble faith. Many of them saw in vision a glorious destiny for our government, provided we would faithfully continue in the path of justice and right with contrite spirits and humble hearts, accepting the divine truths which are found in the Holy Scriptures. The appeal of these men has echoed down the passing years with prophetic warning to the succeeding generations, pleading with them to be true to all these standards which lay at the foundation of our government. This country was founded as a Christian nation, with the acceptance of Jesus Christ as the Redeemer of the world. It was predicted by a prophet of old that this land would be a land of liberty and it would be fortified against all other nations as long as its inhabitants would serve Jesus Christ; but should they stray from the Son of God, it would cease to be a land of liberty and His anger be kindled against them.

## DANGER IN FORSAKING RIGHTEOUSNESS

It is a sad reflection, but one that cannot be successfully refuted, that we have forgotten the admonition which has come down to us, just as Israel forgot the commandments which would have blessed that nation

in the land of Canaan forever had they been observed. In forsaking these laws we stand in danger of punishment as the people of Israel stood in danger of punishment because they forsook the Lord and failed to repent and accept the warnings of their prophets.

Since the days of our fathers there has been a gradual straying from the sacred teachings which we have received. In later years we have, in fact, fulfilled the prophecy of Paul:

This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.  
 For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,  
 Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good,  
 Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;  
 Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof. (II Timothy 3:1-5)

This is a very severe indictment made by Paul; but can we honestly deny the charge? The Ten Commandments are just as much the word of the Lord today as they were when written by the finger of God on Sinai. They have not been abrogated; they have not been modified and are binding upon the people with all the force which accompanied them when first uttered. As sure as we live, we are to be judged by them and all other divine commandments, for God will not permit us to mock Him and hold His laws in contempt with impunity.

Have not the people of this land ignored the first commandment?

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.  
 This is the first and great commandment.  
 And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.  
 On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. (Matt. 22:37-40)

In other words, all that has been revealed for the salvation of man from the beginning to our own time is circumscribed, included in, and a part of these two great laws. If we love the Lord with all the heart, with all the soul, and with all the mind, and our neighbors as ourselves, then there is nothing more to be desired. Then we will be in harmony with the total of sacred law. If we were willing to live in harmony with these two great commandments—and we must do so eventually if we are worthy to live in the presence of God—then wickedness, jealousy, ambition, covetousness, bloodshed, and all sin of every nature would be banished from the earth. Then would come a day of eternal peace and happiness. What a glorious day that would be! We have been endowed with sufficient reason to know that such a state is most desirable and would establish among men the Fatherhood of God and the perfect brotherhood of man.

But as a people have we not forsaken these commandments? Can we say that we love the Lord with all the soul? Can we say we are as solicitous for the welfare of our neighbor as we are for our own? As we look about us, we cannot fail to see the selfishness, the unbelief,

blasphemy, and love of evil which are found everywhere among the people, all revealing to us our weakness and unwillingness to obey these laws. We are not ignorant of the things of God, for they have been made known to us from the days of Adam until now and are recorded in the Holy Scriptures. Messengers from the presence of God have been sent to the earth from the beginning to establish in the hearts of men and to reveal to them all that is essential for man's salvation. If any among us is ignorant of these things, it is due to wilful rebellion. The Son of God came to earth Himself to show us by example the way to eternal life, and was Himself free from all sin. We cannot excuse ourselves for the violation of the laws of God on the ground of ignorance. With all of these commandments before us, we are moral agents responsible to the Most High and under obligation to be obedient. Nevertheless, because of the love of the things of the world and the enticing influence of the powers of darkness, we have departed from the strait path which leads to life and which our Lord has said few men find because they love darkness rather than light, their deeds being evil. We have permitted the philosophies of men, which deny the divinity of Jesus Christ and mock at the sacred ordinances of the gospel, to enter into our schools, our businesses, and our homes, thus weakening our faith and our reverence for our Creator. We have forgotten that man was created in the image of God, that the scriptures declare that we are His offspring, and that we are commanded to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.

#### LAWS OF GOD TO BE OBEYED

Are we keeping our bodies clean and free from all contaminating influences? We are informed that no unclean thing can inherit the kingdom of God, that "he that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still." (Rev. 22:11) So it will be in the judgment. Every man shall receive a reward according to his works. Unfortunately there are many selfish, greedy agencies at work playing upon the credulity and ignorance of the people, enticing them to indulge in many evil habits which weaken and impair their vitality and drive them from the spiritual guidance promised them through their humility and faith.

Have we observed the Sabbath day and kept it holy? Is it not a fact that we have looked upon this law as being obsolete; something suited, perhaps to the needs of a primitive people, who, like little children, need special care, but not necessary for us to observe in this modern world of superior wisdom? Is it not the fact that through the length and breadth of our land, this sacred commandment has been treated, and is being treated, with absolute contempt? Have we not made of it a day of pleasure, of indulgence, and have we not lost all love for its sacredness? How can we expect the Lord to bless us when we ignore so universally this holy law?

Have we not forgotten to pray and to thank the Lord for His mercies

and for His guidance in all that we do? If at times we have been requested to seek the help of the Lord in this great struggle which has deluged the world, have we prayed in the true spirit of prayer? What good does it do for us to petition the Lord, if we have no intention of keeping His commandments? Such praying is hollow mockery and an insult before the throne of grace. How dare we presume to expect a favorable answer if such is the case? "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." So said Isaiah (Isaiah 55 :6-7). But is not the Lord always near when we petition Him? Verily no! He has said, "They were slow to hearken unto the voice of the Lord their God; therefore, the Lord their God is slow to hearken unto their prayers, to answer them in the day of their trouble. In the day of their peace they esteemed lightly my counsel; but, in the day of their trouble, of necessity they feel after me" (D. & C. 101 :7-8). If we draw near unto Him, He will draw near unto us, and we will not be forsaken; but if we do not draw near to Him, we have no promise that He will answer us in our rebellion.

Are we free from all covetousness? Do we refrain from desiring to possess unjustly the property of others? Have we permitted the lusts of the flesh and the desire to possess that which is not our honest due, to canker our souls?

Have we not come to look upon the sacred and holy bonds of matrimony as merely a civil contract which may be broken at will on the slightest whim by either covenanting party? Has not divorce become a blot upon the nation? How can we reconcile our practices and the statutes of many states with the commandments given us by Jesus Christ in relation to the marriage covenant? The home is the foundation of civilization and vital to the safety of our country. When the home is destroyed, the foundation of the country is in danger of destruction. Such has been the history of the past among nations. Marriage is a sacred ordinance instituted before death came into the world when the Lord said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him" (Gen. 2:18).

#### SUFFERING COMES THROUGH LOSS OF BLESSINGS

Throughout our land we see the tragedy of broken homes, fathers and mothers separated, children denied the natural affections. Children have a right to the blessings coming from this sacred union. They are entitled to the love and care of faithful parents and the happiness and devotion which true worship brings. When these blessings are lost, the whole community suffers and the integrity of government is weakened. It is a shame and a disgrace that so much evil is coming out of broken homes, and this comes largely because we have forgotten God and our obligations to serve and honor Him. Truly we have much room for repentance and a return to the simple worship of true Christianity.

## THE NEED FOR RELIGION

President Calvin Coolidge once said :

Our government rests upon religion. It is from that source that we derive our reverence for truth and justice, for equality and liberality and for the rights of mankind. Unless the people believe in these principles they cannot believe in our government. There are only two main theories of government in the world. One rests on righteousness and the other on force. One appeals to reason, the other appeals to the sword. One is exemplified in a republic, the other is represented by a despotism.

The government of a country never gets ahead of the religion of a country. There is no way by which we can substitute the authority of law for the virtue of men. Of course we can help to restrain the vicious and furnish a fair degree of security and protection by legislation and police control, but the real reform which society in these days is seeking will come as a result of religious convictions, or they will not come at all. Peace, justice, charity—these cannot be legislated into being. They are the result of Divine Grace.

It is true that a country cannot get ahead of its religion. The higher our ideals, the nearer we observe divine law, and the stronger are our spiritual forces. No Christian country can forsake the divinity of Jesus Christ and not suffer. In those lands in Europe where paganism has superseded the Christian ideals, there is bound to come decay and eventually, if there is no repentance, their former greatness will be forgotten. Jesus said: "And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46)

Here is another inspiring thought. It was copied from a panel on the wall in the chapel at Stanford University.

There is no narrowing so deadly as the narrowing of man's horizon of spiritual things. No worse evil could befall him in his course on earth than to lose sight of heaven; and it is not civilization that can prevent this; it is not civilization that can compensate for it. No widening of science, no possession of abstract truth, can indemnify for an enfeebled hold on the highest and eternal truth of humanity.

What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

But some one will say: "Are we not living in the most enlightened age the world has ever seen? Is it not true that great progress is being made to lessen the burdens and increase the happiness of man?" Yes, this is true in regard to many material things. Great progress has been made in mechanics, chemistry, physics, surgery, and other things. Men have built great telescopes that have brought the hidden galaxies to view. They have, by the aid of the microscope, discovered vast worlds of micro-organisms, some of which are as deadly as are men towards their fellow men. They have discovered means to control disease; they have, by the aid of anesthesia, made men insensible to pain, thus permitting major and delicate operations which could not otherwise be performed. They have invented machines more sensitive than the human touch, more far-seeing than the human eye. They have controlled elements and made machinery that can move mountains, and many other things have they done too numerous to mention. Yes, this is a wonderful age. However, all of these discoveries and inventions have not drawn men nearer to God!

Nor created in their hearts humility and the spirit of repentance, but to the contrary, to their condemnation. Nearly everything, it seems, which has been given that should be a blessing to men, has been turned to evil. Many of these discoveries and inventions are now being used to bring destruction to the human race. They are being used in the most cruel, most inhuman, godless war this world has ever seen. They are employed by criminals to aid them in their crimes, by the ambitious in their efforts to destroy the agency of man, and by despots who are endeavoring to subjugate the world to an unholy, wicked rule.

Faith has not increased in the world, nor has righteousness, nor obedience to God. What the world needs today is to draw nearer to the Lord. We need more humble, abiding faith in our Redeemer, more love in our hearts for our Eternal Father and for our fellow men. Yes, this is a good time, a vital time—if we are to survive the forces of evil—for every man to forsake the paths of sin and turn unto the Lord who will abundantly pardon. If we will do this, we may in confidence call upon the Lord and He will be near. He will help us fight our battles to cleanse the world of despotism and make it a fit abode for all who love the principles of truth and righteousness.

“Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord.” (Psalms 33:12)  
Let us make our nation all that it was destined to be, and this will come if we will humble ourselves and learn to be obedient to divine law.

May the peace and blessings of the Lord be ours, I humbly pray, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

After the address, the Choir sang “Rise Up, O Men of God” (Noble).

(*End of Broadcast*)

The Choir and congregation sang, “America.”

### PRESIDENT DAVID O. McKAY

*Second Counselor in the First Presidency*

Inasmuch as ye shall keep my commandments, ye shall prosper, and shall be led to a land of promise. (1 Nephi 2:20)

That inspired promise made over two thousand years ago, referred to America, in loyalty to which every true American can say in his heart:

Breathes there a man, with soul so dead,  
Who never to himself hath said,  
This is my own, my native land!  
Whose heart hath ne'er within him burned,  
As home his footsteps he hath turned,  
From wandering on a foreign strand!

#### A GOD-BLESSED LAND

In the giant forest of the Sequoia National Park there is standing