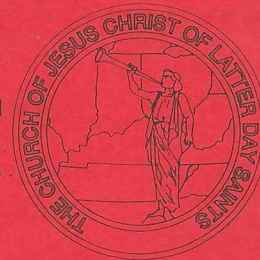


The IRON ROD



OUR CHARGE AS MISSIONARIES IS TO TEACH AND TESTIFY OF CHRIST AND THE RESTORATION AND INVITE ALL TO COME AND BE BAPTIZED UNTO REPENTANCE THAT THEY ALSO MAY BE PARTAKERS OF THE FRUIT OF THE TREE OF LIFE.

President's Message

July, 1992

To Stand Fast in that Liberty Wherewith God Has Made us Free

God raised up wise men who established the Constitution of the United States based on "just and holy principles". These principles are accountability, agency, and freedom (see D&C 101:77,78,80). *D&C 98:5*

Accountability is based upon the concept that if we know good from evil we will be held responsible for our actions in the day of judgement. The principle of agency, or the power to choose, is a gift from God and can't be taken by force, but we can voluntarily compromise our agency by yielding to Satan's enticements. In this way we can develop habits and addictions which allow him to enslave us.

The principle of freedom or liberty (I will use these terms interchangeably) is widely discussed but usually not fully understood. Like mankind, freedom has two dimensions, the physical and the spiritual. Physical freedom is the opportunity to carry out our choices. Our physical freedom is limited by wicked men and repressive governments. Spiritual freedom includes physical freedom and much more. It is our ability and disposition to make correct choices when given the opportunity. Our spiritual freedom is limited by a loss of physical freedom if that prevents us from being taught the gospel, and also by our willingness to make and keep gospel covenants. Spiritual freedom comes by being "born again".

The natural man, who is carnal, sensual, and devilish, when given physical freedom, often chooses evil. However, when we repent and have faith in the Lord, a mighty change is wrought in our hearts, and we have no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually (Mosiah 5:2). If we are faithful to our baptismal covenant to keep His commandments, we become the children of Christ. He becomes the Father of our salvation, and we "are born of him and have become his sons and his daughters" (v. 7). In a complete sense, only by taking the name of Christ are we made free (v.8).

The Prophets and the righteous people of the Book of Mormon understood the full concept of freedom. In an epistle Helaman wrote to Captain Moroni about his 2000 Striplings, he concluded by saying that these young men continued to "stand fast in the liberty wherewith God had made them free; and they are strict to remember the Lord their God from day to day; yea, they do observe to keep His statutes, and His judgements and His commandments continually; and their faith is strong in the prophecies concerning that which is to come." (Alma 58:40).

The same phrase was used by Pahoran in his epistle to Moroni. Pahoran testified, "My soul standeth fast in that liberty in which God hath made us free." (Alma 61:9, see also v. 21). He was, in effect, telling Moroni that he was in the line of his duty and was still faithful to his covenants.

In other words, to stand fast in the liberty wherewith God has made us free is the equivalent of keeping our baptismal covenants. In this way we become "Christians...true believers of Christ who belong to the Church of God" (Alma 46:13,14). It should be noted that Moroni considered the true Church of God to be the foundation of liberty. (Alma 46:10). It is the same today. *Prophets from J. Smith to E.T. Benson have taught Church + priesthood will have important role in preserving freedom.*

Moroni was a man of "perfect understanding" (Alma 48:11). He understood that true freedom is both the opportunity to carry out our choices together with the disposition to make correct choices. To protect the physical freedom of his people, Moroni fortified their cities, but more importantly he preserved the spiritual dimensions of their liberty as he prepared the minds of the people to be faithful to the Lord their God by keeping their covenants. (see Alma 48:7-10).

The service performed by the sons of Mosiah, and also Alma and his sons who as missionaries, "preached the word of God and they did baptize unto repentance," was as effective and important as what Moroni did to preserve the liberty of the people. These missionaries were able to preserve the freedom of the Nephites and ready them for the first coming of the Lord by preparing their hearts and minds to be faithful to their covenants. *Alma 48:13-20*

The same principle applies in our day as we maintain our Constitutional freedoms and prepare for the Second Coming. President Benson has written, "Before the final triumphal return of the Lord, the question as to whether we may save our Constitutional Republic is simply based on two factors--the number of patriots and the extent of their obedience."

We as missionaries, like the army of Helaman and the other great heroes of the Book of Mormon, are true patriots as we stand fast in the liberty wherewith God has made us free and invite others to do the same. We are using the most powerful weapon there is in defending the freedom of our country, which is to serve the Author of liberty who is "the God of the land, who is Jesus Christ" (Ether 2:12).

With Love,

President Lunt

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