

SERMON
LONG BRANCH BAPTIST CHURCH
AUTRYVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA
OCTOBER 12, 1975
BY SENATOR ROBERT MORGAN

My friends, since I've been in the Senate, it has been impressed upon me how much this is a world governed by standards. Much of the legislation we consider is aimed at setting standards by which all sorts of things are to be judged.

Thousands of laws have been passed by the Congress to provide uniform rules to determine quality, weight, extent, or value. The mint has a standard for the fineness and weight of metal used in coins. The Bureau of Standards maintains under lock and key the official bars which determine the length of the inch, the foot, or the yard.

Legislators are always being called upon to set some new standard -- and it is hard to set them right. What standards would be right for determining the minimum necessities essential to maintaining a citizen of this nation? What should be the standards of air quality or water quality? What, in short, are going to be the standards or norms which shall be the measure of the legal life of the nation?

That word "norm" is interesting. It comes from the Latin word "norma" -- which is not a woman's name, but the word for "carpenter's square." That's right -- a norm is a device for testing our work or our lives to see if what we've done is square and true, whether in our society, our business, or our personal life.

What chaos our society would be in without specific norms - literally yardsticks for judging! Suppose each man set his own standards or norms...the merchant would want a one foot yard. The buyer would want a five foot yard. With the price of gasoline I would want the gallon to be the size of a No. 3 washtub...the filling station operator would want it to be the size of a thimble. If I were an industrialist I would want to dump all waste in streams...if I were a fisherman I would want no...absolutely no dumping of waste.

Aren't we all like the little boy who said, "Mama, I am as tall as Goliath, I am nine feet tall." "What makes you say that?" asked the mother in surprise. "Well, I made a little ruler of my own and measured myself with it, and I'm nine feet high!"

said the boy. We all want rules to suit our desires.

You see, our society, our way of life cannot survive without standards. There must be those in our nation who, with an overview of all sides of the picture, can establish standards for the benefit and well being of all.

What then does all of this have to do with the topic of this address...."that righteousness exalteth a nation"?

It has everything to do with it!

Righteousness is the norm established by God for the proper conduct of men. If every man selected his own ground rules for life and living anarchy would result. Men would be dominated and controlled by the fastest gun or the strongest fist. Men would cower before other men as frightened children before the onslaught of a fierce autumn hurricane. We would

be a frightened people. With the setting of the evening sun we would flee to our homes, shutter windows, bar doors and little sleep hopefully awaiting the light of day.

God has set a standard of conduct for men and the faithful proclamation of this claim of God upon men has made us better than we were yet not as good as we should be.

Righteousness does exalt a nation. This standard of God for human behaviour, when acknowledged in national existence, restores the ethical sinew and moral fiber of a people which holds them erect in the eyes of men and God.

Righteousness is moral integrity. It is the opposite of sin. Adherence to this standard gave power and prosperity to Israel in the mind of the Old Testament writer. They

believed that Israel would lose its national vigor and power without righteousness. Integrity and success were inseparably intertwined in Israelite thinking concerning the nation. Dare we be so bold as to reaffirm this position for our own national life!

As we stand on the threshold of our bi-centennial as a nation can we not with tremendous profit hear the words of President George Washington in his Farewell Address:

"Religion and morality are the indispensable supports of political prosperity. Let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion. Reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in

exclusion of religious principle. Morality is a necessary spring of popular government. Who, that is a sincere friend to it, can look with indifference upon attempts to shake the foundations of the fabric?"

My friends, there are not a few today who believe that we can have national strength, worldwide prestige, and honor among our citizens without the righteousness of God...His standard for human conduct as our guide for living. I say to you...

We might as well expect to have a stream without a source...

a tree without roots...

a house without a foundation.

Mere natural kindness is not enough! Simple or complex

political systems are not enough! Man made laws are not enough! These may be good but they will never...never suffice within themselves to uphold a society or bind together a nation with true destiny in the eyes of God. Only a belief in God, as He who determines the ultimate standards for a Christian nation's existence, will suffice.

On the top of the rocky summit overlooking the bay where the good ship, Mayflower, first cast here anchor is a magnificent statue. On the four corners of the huge pedestal are seated four figures representing Law, Morality, Freedom and Education, symbolic of the four pillars which support our entire national life. Rising high above these figures is a granite shaft on which stands a heroic-sized figure of Faith.

In one hand she holds an open Bible and with the other hand points to the heaven above.

The entire statue proclaims boldly to all who would behold one central message...this nation was founded upon religious principles.

Now let us say it!

Now let us admit it!

If those foundations weaken...decay...erode...then the entire structure will crumble. If even one pillar is permitted to fall into dis-repair...to crumble...then the entire structure is in danger of falling. Public...private...national morality as originally conceived by our founding fathers was based on the righteousness of God. It is the continuance of that principle

in our national life, and that alone, which will exalt this nation in the years to come. To be righteous means to be straight. God's righteousness is God's plumb line to determine if man is in accord with or deviating from His standards. Have you ever seen a brick mason plumb a wall? From high up he lets the plumb bob descend beside a wall. Slowly, ever so slowly, it weaves and spins finally coming to a stop. One look...one glance tells the story.

God, from on high, slowly...ever so slowly...lets the standard of righteousness descend upon nations and men. One look...one glance tells the story. Nations and men either meet the standard or fail. Those nations which meet the standard are exalted by God...those that fail disappear into the darkness.