

Council of the Twelve who has just spoken to us.

We shall now hear Elder ElRay L. Christiansen, Assistant to the Twelve.

ELDER ELRAY L. CHRISTIANSEN

Assistant to the Council of the Twelve Apostles

I AM SO GRATEFUL, my brothers and sisters, for the blessings that have come to me from this conference. I have thought of it in this way: "If thy brother ask thee to go with him one mile, go with him twain." (See Matt. 5:41.) As someone put it: "The first is an obligation; the second, a consecration."

I have made up my mind that henceforth, because of the marvelous things that have been said here, I will be more determined to dedicate that which I have in the way of energy and substance to the work of the Lord here upon the earth—more determined than I have ever been before.

It seems to me that the life of a Latter-day Saint is intended to be a life of dedication and of consecration to the things of God. The gospel of Jesus Christ is a program for the perfecting of the individual member by his adherence to the principles of that gospel. It is designed to teach us to forget ourselves, to be unselfish. I have come to think that selfishness on the part of those of us who are inclined that way is one of the great deterrents to our progress and to the realization of a divine destiny. Let us be determined to overcome selfishness and personal aggrandizement by sharing with others that which we have, by dedicating ourselves to the work at hand which we have to do, through dedication of our talents, our time, our substance, our tithes, and our offerings, our love, our goodness and kindness one to another, always seeing the good that always may be found in others.

When we partake of the sacrament, brothers and sisters, we presumably take upon us the name of Christ. We agree to do as he would do, to act as he would act:

. . . by love serve one another.

For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. (Gal. 5:13-14.)

The reward of unselfish service has been told us by the Lord when he has said that ". . . whosoever will save his life shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for my sake [I take it, in his service and the service of his fellow men] shall find it." (Matt. 16:25.) The sweetness and the joy of life is found when we are willing to deny ourselves for the good and the benefit of others. Service to others, service in the Church, giving of our substance, is part of the life of a Latter-day Saint. We are taught that sacrifice brings forth the blessings of heaven. In no other way, as I see it, can the Lord raise up a people who will be fit for the kingdom, who will have it ready for his coming. By offering himself as a sacrifice for the sins of the world and the redemption of mankind from death, Jesus set an incomparable example to us in the way of sacrifice and of love for others.

Again, when Abraham and Sarah were commanded of the Lord,—requested at least—to give as a sacrifice their son Isaac, we can imagine what must have gone through their minds. Nevertheless, they met the test. The Lord did it to see how much they loved him. Abraham was sustained, I am sure, by an unwavering trust in God. I am sure that Abraham knew that to accomplish his purposes, God could, if he desired, raise up Isaac from the dead, even after he had died. But what a lesson that is in service, of dedication, of consecration of that which he dearly loved! No wonder that Abraham was called a "friend of God."

An opportunity to demonstrate his love of the Lord was given to another man. He had great possessions, and he had a chance to test his unselfishness when he asked of the Lord, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" (Luke 10:25.) Now this man had done many good things. He had kept most of the commandments, I understand, but he had become selfish because of his great possessions. Evidently he thought more

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of them than he did of eternal life, because when told by the Savior that in order to gain eternal life he should sell whatsoever he had and give to the poor and take up the cross and follow him, he was sad, and according to the record, ". . . went away grieved: for he had great possessions." (Mark 10:22.) He had not learned the meaning of dedication and of consecration.

Contrast this man with a certain poor widow who cast into the treasury her two mites, which made a farthing—all that she had. Her contribution amounted to very little in monetary value, about one half of a penny of our money, but it was not the smallness of her offering that made it especially acceptable unto the Lord as he witnessed her placing her money in the treasury, but it was the spirit of sacrifice that she had shown. As he observed others throwing their money into the treasury, the record states:

. . . he called unto his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury:

For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living. (*Ibid.*, 12:43-44.)

Dedication, it seems to me, in some form, is the real essence of all religion. Dedication to the will of the Lord and to his work is the religion of the Latter-day Saints. In this dispensation of the gospel, thousands have met the test when called upon to sacrifice their personal positions, their time, and even their lives, in order to establish and defend the kingdom of God upon the earth.

The Prophet Joseph Smith permitted himself to be taken by the mob and be put to death, and along with him, Hyrum, whose life was lost by an assassin's bullet, and in the same room at the same time, Dr. Willard Richards and John Taylor, who refused to leave him, and Dan Jones, and others who were loyal and devoted and would have given their lives gladly in preference to the Prophet's life. They set an example for us in this dispensation! There is scarcely an end to the list of those who have done likewise or who stand

now willing to do all that is required of them. A spirit of dedication, willingness to serve in any capacity and to sacrifice, if necessary, characterizes the true Latter-day Saint.

It was not long ago that I was in one of the stakes in southern Idaho. I was asked to interview five young men between twenty-five and thirty-five years of age, most of them married and having one or two children, to see if they were ready to receive an office in the Melchizedek Priesthood for which they had been recommended. I received the thrill of my life. Somehow, I decided—I don't know whether I made a mistake or not—but I decided to see what the depth of their willingness to sacrifice was. As each one came into the room, I sat down with him, introduced myself, and became better acquainted with him. Then I stated that the Church had acquired a great tract of land in Brush Creek and wished to prepare it for settlement for the Saints. The water had to be brought on to it, the brush had to be cleared and the land leveled, homes built, schools erected, and all things must be done from scratch. It would be no easy thing. I said: "If you were asked to go, would take your wife and family and leave what you have and go to Brush Creek and settle it?" Every one of those young men said yes.

I said: "What would your wife think about it?" In every case they said, in effect, "I am sure she would feel as I do, that if the Church required it, we would go." Then I explained that I had concocted the story.

I felt like putting my arms around each of those young men. I commended them, and then I got down on my knees, and I thanked the Lord for such young men of this day who were ready to dedicate, to consecrate, to leave all that they had and go, no matter where they may be called to go and build up Zion. That is the test that we all should be ready to meet.

There is a veritable army of men and women such as these in the quorums, in the missions, and in the wards and stakes, and in all places, where they serve without a thought of compensation. There is no end to the list—the ward teachers, who do good jobs, all of those who serve, all of you. It is com-

mendable, and it must be pleasing in the sight of the Lord. Among them, not to be overlooked, are those much unnoticed, unsung men and women, who day after day, month after month, year after year, labor in the temples of the Lord, giving vicarious service on behalf of the dead. Along with them are those who do research work, hiding behind desks and files, where nobody knows about them, spending hours and money and time and energy that the work might be perfected. It is one thing, you know, to do something for those who can return the goodness and who can thank you, but these people—this great army of those who do vicarious service, who do not expect a return in thanks, at this time at least—I think win our most sincere commendation and our admiration for that type of dedication.

Paul has said that “. . . He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.

“. . . let him give, not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.” (II Cor. 9:6-7.)

With the Apostle Paul, brothers and sisters, let us say, as we go from this conference,

For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor

powers, nor things present, nor things to come,

Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:38-39.)

May it be so with us. I testify that this is the work of God; that his power is within this Church—the power to bring redemption to the dead and salvation to the living, and I am honored to be affiliated with the membership of this Church and to do my little bit in furthering the work. God bless you and keep you and comfort you when you need comfort, I pray humbly, in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

President David O. McKay:

The congregation will please rise and sing one verse of “Praise to the Man Who Communed with Jehovah.”

The Combined Chorus and the congregation joined in singing the hymn, “Praise to the Man Who Communed with Jehovah.”

President David O. McKay:

Elder Marion G. Romney of the Council of the Twelve will now address us.

ELDER MARION G. ROMNEY

Of the Council of the Twelve Apostles

MY BELOVED brothers and sisters: President McKay began this great conference on a note of gratitude. My soul immediately responded to the theme. The spirit of it has inspired the proceedings of every session of the conference. In harmony with it, let me say that I am grateful for the peace that has come into my heart during the conference, and for the peace of this moment as I stand before you to express my feelings.

Among the many things for which I am thankful is the sanctifying process of repentance. I am grateful to the Lord Jesus Christ who, through the

atonement he wrought, gave us the gift of repentance. I am grateful that he was willing voluntarily to give his life for us: That is literally what he did. He did not have to give it; he did not have to die. Because he was the Son of God, he was not subject to the fall, as were men. Within him was power to live forever. “. . . I lay down my life for the sheep”—he said. “No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.” (John 10:15, 18.) He inherited power over death from his divine Father.

It took a person with power over death to pay the debt to justice to bring men