

Elder John Longden

Assistant to the Council of the Twelve

We have been fed and uplifted spiritually in music, song, prayer, and speech during all the sessions of this conference. The spirit of encouragement has been richly manifest. Where do we go from here? What are we going to do about it?

I remember the words of President McKay some months ago when he made this statement: "Make Jesus Christ the center of our lives." I feel these are the doctrines that have been taught in all the sessions of this conference.

In an age of the world when rebellion is to be found in many areas, obedience is, by mistaken ideas of freedom, considered a mark of humiliation. In reality, true obedience to the Lord's commands is an indication of moral courage, strength, and power.

Samuel, the Old Testament prophet, declared:

"Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.

"For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king." (1 Sam. 15:22-23.)

Here obedience is referred to in simple, understandable terms. This is an eternal truth that is characterized by the ancient seers and saints, who, like the Messiah, were ready to say by word and deed, "I came not to do mine own will but the will of my Father who sent me." (John 5:30.)

The Savior taught this great lesson 2,000 years ago.

". . . My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me.

"If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." (John 7:16-17.)

The Father of our spirits requires obedience. The best embodiment of this principle, the most humble in yielding to the divine will, was the

best and purest being who ever dwelt in mortality, even the Lord Jesus Christ—he, in whose mouth there was found no guile, who was perfect and without blemish in all the walks of life. While he was obedient to his Father's will and humble to the extreme, he was independent of the influence and persuasions of wicked men, including Satan, who tempted him severely.

Then, said Jesus to those Jews who believed on him:

"If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed;

"And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (John 8:31-32.)

Advantages and fruits of obedience

Truth or principle does not change; today, if we desire the blessing of God, we must be obedient—obedient to conscience, to conviction of right, to divine authority, and to God, in whom we trust.

Obedience applies to all—to youth in school, those who work in the shop and factories, the farmer, the rancher, the office worker, the teacher, all the professions, mothers and fathers and children, in their homes and out of their homes.

Obedience to the gospel, making application of the gospel principles in our daily lives, guarantees every adherent the companionship of the Holy Spirit, and this Spirit secures to every faithful individual a living testimony concerning the truth or falsity of every proposition presented for our consideration.

The Apostle Paul said that "by one spirit have we access unto the Father." (See Eph. 2:18.)

All who embrace the gospel are entitled to an individual testimony of the truth; the same Spirit guides into all truth, reveals the things of the Father, and imparts the inspiration essential to preserve mankind from a blind obedience to erroneous principles and false guides.

Again, may I repeat the statement

of the Savior, recorded in John 7:17:

"If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself."

This secures to all men protection against imposition and abuse of power and the false decisions of man-made councils.

The Lord has promised to guide and direct his Church upon the earth, for he "will do nothing but he revealeth his secrets unto his servants the prophets." (Amos 3:7.)

This does not imply the infallibility of man, but it does imply the promise that no man or council of men who stand at the head of the Church shall have power to lead the Saints astray.

With this assurance, then, the people of God in every dispensation have been justified in rendering absolute, yet intelligent, obedience in the direction of the holy prophets.

The evidence is sure that whatever has come, either by written document or verbally, from the presidency of the Church has been attended with good results.

Applying this principle of obedience to organizations of a civil and business character, confusion and weakness result from men refusing their support to the decision of the presiding authority or of the majority where the action is left to popular vote. Carlyle, the great writer, said:

"All great minds are respectfully obedient to all that is over them; only small souls are otherwise."

The twelfth article of our faith states:

"We believe in being subject to kings, presidents, rulers, and magistrates, in obeying, honoring, and sustaining the law."

Family home evening

Each family in the Church is encouraged to hold a family home evening. A home evening manual has been presented to every family encouraging them to study the lessons that it contains for the first eight months of 1967, the subject matter being "Obedience to Law."

The obedience rendered to God is based upon a conviction that he is

perfect in all his ways, possessing the attributes of justice, judgment, knowledge, power, mercy, and truth in all their fullness. Obedience to his appointed authority upon the earth is obedience to him and is so taught by the Savior.

"He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me." (Matt. 10:40.)

And further on, we are told and strengthened thereby: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me; and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me." (John 13:20.)

It is not the person who calls for this respect and consideration; it is the principle involved. God has placed authority upon the humble men. Through their administrations can be secured the benefits and blessings that follow obedience to the ordinances of the gospel. Implicit obedience must be rendered. The mandates of the Lord Jesus are imperative. No substitute will do.

The path has been marked and led by the Savior. This is the only sure pattern for living.

Obedience is essential to salvation, essential to success in every avenue of human enterprise, whether rendered to the laws of God direct in their moral and spiritual phases or to his authority vested in man. Obedience must be implicit.

Our leaders ask us to do right, to live pure lives, to do good to all men and evil to no one, and to respect the order of God's kingdom, that salvation and exaltation may come to all.

The epistle of Paul, the apostle, to the Hebrews:

"Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered." (Heb. 5:8.)

Jesus set the example in the Garden of Gethsemane as he prayed to his Father just previous to his crucifixion:

"O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, *thy will be done.*" (Matt. 26:42. Italics added.)

I humbly pray that we may exercise this power and strength in obeying and keeping the covenants we have made with the Lord Jesus Christ. I feel that more than any other thing, the human

family today needs to keep close to Jesus through obedience to his spiritual and moral laws. As we make Jesus Christ the center of our lives, this will be our lot, and I pray for this, bearing my witness that these things are true. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior. Amen.

President N. Eldon Tanner

He to whom you have just listened is Elder John Longden, Assistant to the Twelve.

Elder Boyd K. Packer will now speak to us.

Elder Boyd K. Packer

Assistant to the Council of the Twelve

I feel subdued in spirit, brethren and sisters, as we come near the closing moments of this great conference. There is the promise that "when a man carries it into the hearts of the children of men." (2 Ne. 33:1.) Because there are some here visiting with us as guests about whom I care deeply, I pray for an interest in your faith and prayers as I direct my remarks to them.

It has been our privilege over the past two years in the mission field to become acquainted with clergymen from a number of Christian churches. We find them to be good men—sincere, honest in their dedication to the ministry that they have chosen. It is to you "men of the cloth," as you term yourselves, that I speak.

Churches wanting

Would you be offended if I called you "our brethren"? This term, commonly used in the Church, is a title of dignity and honor, and I address you thusly in respect for your ministerial assignment.

Please understand the spirit in which I speak. It is with humility and without arrogance that I call to your attention a matter of significant spiritual importance; in the spirit of what might be termed "a call to the Christian clergy."

In conversation several of you have opened your heart and given expression to your solemn feelings concerning the Christian Church at large, the feeling that something is out of order that wants to be put in order. Not so much as you have said, that the clergy is not desirous of moving people to good works, but rather that there is something missing.

Your youth have become unresponsive, and although you have introduced innovations into the worship services—jazz combos, poetry reading, interpretive dancing, all thought to be appealing to youth—nevertheless, they are drawn away and grow up without faith.

"Famine in the land"

One reads with serious reflection the words of the Prophet Amos:

"Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord:

"And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it.

"In that day shall the fair virgins and young men faint for thirst." (Amos 8:11-13.)

I testify that such a spiritual famine is upon the world. And as moral fiber is weakened, forces of darkness grow in courage. Evil has unclothed herself and walks the street in brazen impudence, defiant, frightening, persuasive.

In recognition of this, you point with nervous realization that the churches are not fulfilling their obligation to mankind; and you find yourselves reaching out to one another, hoping to draw close together, to stand shoulder to shoulder, sensing that in unity there may be strength.

You have told me of your councils—local, regional, national, and worldwide—in which you devote yourselves to the spirit of ecumenism. These are ecumenical councils in which you