

It appears, President Hinckley, that the voting has been unanimous in the affirmative. Thank you, brothers and sisters, for your loving and prayerful support.

President Faust

Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will be our first speaker at this session.

Elder Neal A. Maxwell

Need for increased consecration

Whenever Church members speak of consecration, it should be done reverently while acknowledging that each of us “come[s] short of the glory of God,” some of us far short (Romans 3:23). Even the conscientious have not arrived, but they sense the shortfall and are genuinely striving. Consolingly, God’s grace flows not only to those “who love [Him] and keep all [His] commandments,” but likewise to those “that [seek] so to do” (D&C 46:9).

A second group of members are “honorable” but not “valiant.” They are not really aware of the gap nor of the importance of closing it (see D&C 76:75, 79). These “honorable” individuals are certainly not miserable nor wicked, nor are they unrighteous and unhappy. It is not what they have done but what they have left undone that is amiss. For example, if valiant, they could touch others deeply instead of merely being remembered pleasantly.

In a third group are those who are grossly entangled with the “ungodliness” of the world, reminding us all, as Peter wrote, that if “[we are] overcome” by something worldly, “[we are] brought in bondage” (2 Peter 2:19).

Serve the true Master

If one “mind[s] the things of the flesh” (Romans 8:5), he cannot “have the mind of Christ” (1 Corinthians 2:16) because his thought patterns are “far from” Jesus, as are the desires or the “intents of his heart” (Mosiah 5:13). Ironically, if the Master is a stranger to us, then we

will merely end up serving other masters. The sovereignty of these other masters is real, even if it sometimes is subtle, for they do call their cadence. Actually, “we are all enlisted” (*Hymns*, no. 250), if only in the ranks of the indifferent.

To the extent that we are not willing to be led by the Lord, we will be driven by our appetites, or we will be greatly preoccupied with the lesser things of the day. The remedy is implicit in the marvelous lamentation of King Benjamin: “For how knoweth a man the master whom he has not served, and who is a stranger unto him, and is far from the thoughts and intents of his heart?” (Mosiah 5:13). For many moderns, sad to say, the query “What think ye of Christ?” (Matthew 22:42) would be answered, “I really don’t think of Him at all!”

Examples of keeping back a portion

Consider three examples of how honorable people in the Church keep back a portion and thus prevent greater consecration (see Acts 5:1–4).

A sister gives commendable, visible civic service. Yet even with her good image in the community, she remains a comparative stranger to Jesus’ holy temples and His holy scriptures, two vital dimensions of discipleship. But she could have Christ’s image in her countenance (see Alma 5:14).

An honorable father, dutifully involved in the cares of his family, is less than kind and gentle with individual family members. Though a comparative stranger to Jesus’ gentleness and kindness, which we are instructed to emulate,

a little more effort by this father would make such a large difference.

Consider the returned missionary, skills polished while serving an honorable mission, striving earnestly for success in his career. Busy, he ends up in a posture of some accommodation with the world. Thus he forgoes building up the kingdom first and instead builds up himself. A small course correction now would make a large, even destinational, difference for him later on.

Greater consecration corrects omissions

These deficiencies just illustrated are those of omission. Once the telestial sins are left behind and henceforth avoided, the focus falls ever more on the sins of omission. These omissions signify a lack of qualifying fully for the celestial kingdom. Only greater consecration can correct these omissions, which have consequences just as real as do the sins of commission. Many of us thus have sufficient faith to avoid the major sins of commission, but not enough faith to sacrifice our distracting obsessions or to focus on our omissions.

Most omissions occur because we fail to get outside ourselves. We are so busy checking on our own temperatures, we do not notice the burning fevers of others even when we can offer them some of the needed remedies, such as encouragement, kindness, and commendation. The hands which hang down and most need to be lifted up belong to those too discouraged even to reach out anymore.

Letting God educate our desires

Actually, everything depends—initially and finally—on our desires. These shape our thought patterns. Our desires thus precede our deeds and lie at the very cores of our souls, tilting us toward or away from God (see D&C 4:3). God can educate our desires (see Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. [Salt Lake

City: Deseret Book Co., 1939], p. 297). Others seek to manipulate our desires. But it is we who form the desires, the “thoughts and intents of [our] hearts” (Mosiah 5:13).

The end rule is “according to [our] desires . . . shall it be done unto [us]” (D&C 11:17), “for I, the Lord, will judge all men according to their works, according to the desire of their hearts” (D&C 137:9; see also Alma 41:5; D&C 6:20, 27). One’s individual will thus remains uniquely his. God will not override it nor overwhelm it. Hence we’d better want the consequences of what we want!

Another cosmic fact: only by aligning our wills with God’s is full happiness to be found. Anything less results in a lesser portion (see Alma 12:10–11). The Lord will work with us even if, at first, we “can no more than desire” but are willing to “give place for a portion of [His] words” (Alma 32:27). A small foothold is all He needs! But we must desire and provide it.

The need to lose ourselves

So many of us are kept from eventual consecration because we mistakenly think that, somehow, by letting our will be swallowed up in the will of God, we lose our individuality (see Mosiah 15:7). What we are really worried about, of course, is not giving up self, but selfish things—like our roles, our time, our pre-eminence, and our possessions. No wonder we are instructed by the Savior to lose ourselves (see Luke 9:24). He is only asking us to lose the old self in order to find the new self. It is not a question of one’s losing identity but of finding his true identity! Ironically, so many people already lose themselves anyway in their consuming hobbies and preoccupations but with far, far lesser things.

Ever observant, in both the first and second estates, consecrated Jesus always knew in which direction He faced: He consistently emulated His Father: “The Son can do nothing of himself, but what

he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise" (John 5:19), for "I have suffered the will of the Father in all things from the beginning" (3 Nephi 11:11).

Submission brings revelation and joy

As one's will is increasingly submissive to the will of God, he can receive inspiration and revelation so much needed to help meet the trials of life. In the trying and very defining Isaac episode, faithful Abraham "staggered not . . . through unbelief" (Romans 4:20). Of that episode John Taylor observed that "nothing but the spirit of revelation could have given him this confidence, and . . . sustained him under these peculiar circumstances" (in *Journal of Discourses*, 14:361). Will we too trust the Lord amid a perplexing trial for which we have no easy explanation? Do we understand—really comprehend—that Jesus knows and understands when we are stressed and perplexed? The complete consecration which effected the Atonement ensured Jesus' perfect empathy; He felt our very pains and afflictions before we did and knows how to succor us (see Alma 7:11–12; 2 Nephi 9:21). Since the Most Innocent suffered the most, our own cries of "Why?" cannot match His. But we can utter the same submissive word "nevertheless . . ." (Matthew 26:39).

Progression toward submission confers another blessing: an enhanced capacity for joy. Counseled President Brigham Young, "If you want to enjoy exquisitely, become a Latter-day Saint, and then live the doctrine of Jesus Christ" (in *Journal of Discourses*, 18:247).

Thus, brothers and sisters, consecration is not resignation or a mindless caving in. Rather, it is a deliberate expanding outward, making us more honest when we sing, "More used would I be" ("More Holiness Give Me," *Hymns*, no. 131). Consecration, likewise, is not

shoulder-shrugging acceptance, but, instead, shoulder-squaring to better bear the yoke.

Do not shrink from full consecration

Consecration involves pressing forward "with a steadfastness in Christ" with a "brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men . . . [while] feasting upon the word of Christ" (2 Nephi 31:20). Jesus pressed forward sublimely. He did not shrink, such as by going only 60 percent of the distance toward the full atonement. Instead, He "finished [His] preparations" for all mankind, bringing a universal resurrection—not one in which 40 percent of us would have been left out (see D&C 19:18–19).

Each of us might well ask, "In what ways am I shrinking or holding back?" Meek introspection may yield some bold insights! For example, we can tell much by what we have already willingly discarded along the pathway of discipleship. It is the only pathway where littering is permissible, even encouraged. In the early stages, the debris left behind includes the grosser sins of commission. Later debris differs; things begin to be discarded which have caused the misuse or underuse of our time and talent.

Hard times can hasten consecration

Along this pathway leading to consecration, stern and unsought challenges sometimes hasten this jettisoning, which is needed to achieve increased consecration (see Helaman 12:3). If we have grown soft, hard times may be necessary. If we are too contented, a dose of divine discontent may come. A relevant insight may be contained in reproof. A new calling beckons us away from comfortable routines wherein the needed competencies have already been developed. One may be stripped of accustomed luxury so that the malignant mole of materialism may be removed. One may be scorched

by humiliation so pride can be melted away. Whatever we lack will get attention, one way or another.

John Taylor indicated that the Lord may even choose to wrench our very heartstrings (see *Journal of Discourses*, 14:360). If our hearts are set too much upon the things of this world, they may need to be wrenched, or broken, or undergo a mighty change (see Alma 5:12).

Submit to God and trust Him

Consecration is thus both a principle and a process, and it is not tied to a single moment. Instead, it is freely given, drop by drop, until the cup of consecration brims and finally runs over.

Long before that, however, as Jesus declared, we must “settle this in [our] hearts”: that we will do what He asks of us (Joseph Smith Translation, Luke 14:28). President Young further counseled us “to submit to the hand of the Lord, . . . and acknowledge his hand in all things, . . . then you will be exactly right; and until you come to that point, you cannot be entirely right. That is what we have to come to” (in *Journal of Discourses*, 5:352).

Thus, acknowledging God’s hand includes, in the words of the Prophet Joseph, trusting that God has made “ample provision” beforehand to achieve all His purposes, including His purposes in our lives (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938], p. 220). Sometimes He clearly directs; other times it seems He merely permits some things to happen. Therefore, we will not always understand the role of God’s hand, but we know enough of His heart and mind to be submissive. Thus when we are perplexed and stressed, explanatory help is not always immediately forthcoming, but compensatory help will be. Thus our process of cognition gives way to our personal submission as we experience those moments when we learn to

“be still, and know that I am God” (Psalm 46:10).

Then the more one’s will is thus “swallowed up,” the more his afflictions, rather than necessarily being removed, will be “swallowed up in the joy of Christ” (Alma 31:38).

Seventy years ago, Lord Moulton coined a perceptive phrase, “obedience to the unenforceable,” describing “the obedience of a man to that which he cannot be forced to obey” (“Law and Manners,” *Atlantic Monthly*, July 1924, p. 1). God’s blessings, including those associated with consecration, come by unforced obedience to the laws upon which they are predicated (see D&C 130:20–21). Thus our deepest desires determine our degree of “obedience to the unenforceable.” God seeks to have us become more consecrated by giving everything. Then, when we come home to Him, He will generously give us “all that [He] hath” (D&C 84:38).

The only possession that is ours to give

In conclusion, the submission of one’s will is really the only uniquely personal thing we have to place on God’s altar. The many other things we “give,” brothers and sisters, are actually the things He has already given or loaned to us. However, when you and I finally submit ourselves, by letting our individual wills be swallowed up in God’s will, then we are really giving something to Him! It is the only possession which is truly ours to give!

Consecration thus constitutes the only unconditional surrender which is also a total victory!

May we deeply desire that victory, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Faust

We have just listened to Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Council of the Twelve Apostles.