

Devn Cornish, Wynn R. Dewsnup, Matthew J. Eyring, G. Guillermo Garcia, Robert C. Gay, Alfredo L. Gessati, James B. Gibson, Julio C. González, Paulo H. Itinose, Douglas W. Jessop, Faustino López, Declan O. Madu, Per G. Malm, Fernando Maluenda, James B. Martino, Sergiy N. Mikulin, Abelardo Morales, W. T. David Murray, Satoshi Nishihara, Norbert K. Ounleu, Michael D. Pickerd, Anatoly K. Reshetnikov, William F. Reynolds, Michael A. Roberts, Fernando A. R. Da Rocha, A. Ricardo Sant'Ana, Robert B. Smith, Ysrael A. Tolentino, Ruben D. Torres, J. Romeo Villarreal, Louis Weidmann, Chi Hong (Sam) Wong. All in favor, please signify. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain Elaine S. Dalton as the new general president of the Young Women, with Mary N. Cook as

first counselor and Ann M. Dibb as second counselor. Those in favor may manifest it. Any opposed may so signify.

It is proposed that we sustain the other General Authorities, Area Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies as presently constituted. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed may manifest it.

President Monson, insofar as I have been able to observe, the voting in the Conference Center has been unanimous in favor of the proposals made. Thank you, brothers and sisters, for your sustaining vote, your faith, devotion, and prayers.

We invite the newly called members of the Seventy and the Young Women general presidency to come forward and take their places on the stand.

Elder Russell M. Nelson

Gratefully we welcome Elder D. Todd Christofferson to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Wholeheartedly we sustain this wonderful First Presidency and all who have been called.

Brethren and sisters, when we received the news that President Gordon B. Hinckley had passed away, each of us immediately felt a deep sense of loss. Knowing that his destiny was in the hands of the Lord, however, we have felt our mood shift from grief to gratitude. We are very grateful for what we have learned from this great prophet of God.

Foundation of apostles and prophets

Today, at this solemn assembly, we have complied with the will of the Lord, who said that “it shall not be given to any one to go forth to preach my gospel, or to build up my church, except he be ordained by . . . one who has authority, and *it is known to the church* that he has authority and has been regularly ordained by the heads of the church.”¹ This law of

common consent² has been invoked, and the Church will move forward on its prescribed course.

Members throughout the world sustain President Thomas S. Monson and his able counselors. We are “no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God;

“And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.”³

The Lord revealed why “he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets.” It is “for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

“Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God.”⁴

Thus the ministry of the Apostles—the First Presidency and the Twelve—is to bring about that unity of the faith and to proclaim our knowledge of the Master. Our ministry is to bless the lives of all who will learn and follow the “more excellent way” of the Lord.⁵ And we are to help

people prepare for their potential salvation and exaltation.

Meaning of salvation and exaltation

The third article of faith declares that “through the Atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel.”

To be saved—or to gain salvation—means to be saved from physical and spiritual death. Because of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, all people will be resurrected and saved from physical death. People may also be saved from individual spiritual death through the Atonement of Jesus Christ, by their faith in Him, by living in obedience to the laws and ordinances of His gospel, and by serving Him.

To be exalted—or to gain exaltation—refers to the highest state of happiness and glory in the celestial realm. These blessings can come to us after we leave this frail and mortal existence. The time to prepare for our eventual salvation and exaltation is now.⁶

As part of that preparation, one must first hear and understand the gospel. For this reason the gospel of Jesus Christ is being taken to “every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people.”⁷

Individual responsibility

Some years ago I met with a tribal king in Africa. When he realized that he was being taught by an Apostle of the Lord, he was deeply moved. He said that throngs of his people would be baptized if he were to give them such a mandate. I thanked him for his kindness but explained that the Lord does not work in that way.

The development of faith in the Lord is an individual matter. Repentance is also an individual matter. Only as an individual can one be baptized and receive the Holy Ghost. Each of us is born individually; likewise, each of us is “born again”⁸

individually. Salvation is an individual matter.

Family responsibilities

Individual progression is fostered in the family, which is “central to the Creator’s plan for the eternal destiny of His children.”⁹ The home is to be God’s laboratory of love and service. There a husband is to love his wife, a wife is to love her husband, and parents and children are to love one another.

Throughout the world, the family is increasingly under attack. If families fail, many of our political, economic, and social systems will also fail. And if families fail, their glorious eternal potential cannot be realized.

Our Heavenly Father wants husbands and wives to be faithful to each other and to esteem and treat their children as an heritage from the Lord.¹⁰ In such a family we study the scriptures and pray together. And we fix our focus on the temple. There we receive the highest blessings that God has in store for His faithful children.

Thanks to God’s great plan of happiness,¹¹ families can be together forever—as exalted beings. Our Heavenly Father declared, “This is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.”¹² Both of His objectives were enabled by the Atonement of His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ. His Atonement made resurrection a reality and eternal life a possibility for all who would ever live.

Resurrection, or immortality, comes to every man and every woman as an unconditional gift.

Eternal life, or celestial glory or exaltation, is a conditional gift. Conditions of this gift have been established by the Lord, who said, “If you keep my commandments and endure to the end you shall have eternal life, which gift is the greatest of all the gifts of God.”¹³ Those qualifying conditions include faith in the Lord, repentance, baptism, receiving the Holy Ghost, and

remaining faithful to the ordinances and covenants of the temple.

No man in this Church can obtain the highest degree of celestial glory without a worthy woman who is sealed to him.¹⁴ This temple ordinance enables eventual exaltation for both of them.

Teaching our children

In Church callings we are subject to release. But we cannot be released as parents. From the first days of human history, the Lord has commanded parents to teach the gospel to their children.¹⁵ Moses wrote, “Thou shalt teach . . . diligently . . . thy children, and shalt talk of [God’s words] when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.”¹⁶

In our day the Lord has added, “Bring up your children in light and truth.”¹⁷ The Church is to assist and not to replace parents in their responsibilities to teach their children.

In this day of rampant immorality and addictive pornography, parents have a sacred responsibility to teach their children the importance of God in their lives.¹⁸ Those evils, so highly destructive of divine potential, are to be strictly shunned by children of God.

We are also to teach our children to honor their parents. The fifth commandment states, “Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.”¹⁹

How can we best teach our children? The Lord has given us specific instruction:

“No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned;

“By kindness, and pure knowledge, which shall greatly enlarge the soul without hypocrisy, and without guile—

“Reproving betimes with sharpness, when moved upon by the Holy Ghost; and then showing forth afterwards an increase of love toward him whom thou hast reprov’d, lest he esteem thee to be his enemy.”²⁰

When a child needs correction, you might ask yourself, “What can I say or do that would persuade him or her to choose a better way?” When giving necessary correction, do it quietly, privately, lovingly, and not publicly. If a rebuke is required, show an increase of love promptly so that seeds of resentment may not remain. To be persuasive, your love must be sincere and your teachings based on divine doctrine and correct principles.

Do not try to control your children. Instead, listen to them, help them to learn the gospel, inspire them, and lead them toward eternal life. You are God’s agents in the care of children He has entrusted to you. Let His divine influence remain in your hearts as you teach and persuade.

Ancestors

Any discussion of family responsibilities to prepare for exaltation would be incomplete if we included only mother, father, and children. What about grandparents and other ancestors? The Lord revealed that we cannot become perfect without them; neither can they without us be made perfect.²¹ Sealing ordinances are essential to exaltation. A wife needs to be sealed to her husband; children need to be sealed to their parents; and we all need to be connected with our ancestors.²²

What about those who are not able to marry in this life or those who cannot be sealed to their parents in this life? We know that the Lord will judge each of us according to the desires of our hearts, as well as our works,²³ and that the blessings of exaltation will be given to all who are worthy.²⁴

Children of the covenant

We as children of the covenant are highly favored. In our hearts have been planted the promises made to Fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The Lord has said:

“Ye are lawful heirs, according to the flesh, and have been hid from the world with Christ in God. . . .

“Therefore, blessed are ye if ye continue in my goodness, a light unto the Gentiles, and through this priesthood, a savior unto my people Israel.”²⁵

This life is the time to prepare for salvation and exaltation.²⁶ In God’s eternal plan, salvation is an individual matter; exaltation is a family matter.

As children of the covenant, we have met in this morning’s solemn assembly. Attention has been focused upon the sacred titles of prophets and apostles. But the final responsibility to prepare for salvation and exaltation rests upon each person, accountable for individual agency, acting in one’s own family, bearing another sacred title of mother, father, daughter, son, grandmother, or grandfather.

In those responsible roles, may we go forward in faith, led by Jesus Christ, whose Church this is, and by His prophet, through whom He speaks, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 42:11; italics added.
2. See Doctrine and Covenants 26:2; 28:13.
3. Ephesians 2:19–20.
4. Ephesians 4:11–13.
5. 1 Corinthians 12:31; Ether 12:11.
6. See Alma 34:32–33.
7. Revelation 14:6.
8. John 3:3, 7; Mosiah 27:25; Alma 5:49; 7:14; Moses 6:59.
9. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
10. See Psalm 127:3.
11. See Alma 42:8.
12. Moses 1:39.

13. Doctrine and Covenants 14:7; see also 3 Nephi 15:9. The Book of Mormon further explains the conditional nature of this great gift. It states that “ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men. Wherefore, *if* ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life” (2 Nephi 31:20; italics added).
14. See Doctrine and Covenants 131:1–3.
15. See Moses 6:57–58. Also note the teaching of King Benjamin: “Ye will not suffer your children that they go hungry, or naked; neither will ye suffer that they transgress the laws of God, and fight and quarrel one with another, and serve the devil, who is the master of sin. . . . But ye will teach them to walk in the ways of truth and soberness; ye will teach them to love one another, and to serve one another” (Mosiah 4:14–15).
16. Deuteronomy 6:7.
17. Doctrine and Covenants 93:40. The Lord also said, “Teach [your] children to pray, and to walk uprightly before the Lord” (D&C 68:28).
18. So taught Paul to Timothy: “Continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them. . . . From a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 3:14–15).
19. Exodus 20:12. Remember that parental proverb: “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it” (Proverbs 22:6).
20. Doctrine and Covenants 121:41–43.
21. See Doctrine and Covenants 128:15.
22. See Doctrine and Covenants 128:18.
23. See Doctrine and Covenants 137:9.
24. See Doctrine and Covenants 130:20–21; see also Rudger Clawson, in Conference Report, Oct. 1917, 29; Joseph F. Smith, *Deseret News*, May 1, 1878, 2; Richard G. Scott, in Conference Report, Oct. 1996, 102; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 75.

25. Doctrine and Covenants 86:9, 11.
 26. See Alma 12:24.

The choir sang “Praise to the Man.”

President Monson

Our hearts have been touched by that beautiful rendition. “Praise to the man who communed with Jehovah!”

We shall now be pleased to hear from Elder Ronald A. Rasband of the Presidency of the Seventy, followed by Sister Cheryl C. Lant, Primary general president. The choir and congregation will then sing “We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet.” Elder Kenneth Johnson of the Seventy will then address us, and he will be followed by Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

Elder Ronald A. Rasband

I would like to add my testimony and witness on this special day that President Thomas S. Monson is the Lord’s prophet on the earth. I am grateful to have this privilege to speak in general conference.

Experiences that build faith and testimony

I am grateful, as you are, for the experience we have in this historic conference as we sustain, in an orderly and patterned way, our new prophet, First Presidency, and other leaders of the Church.

This kind of experience fortifies our testimonies and increases our faith in the knowledge that this is indeed the Lord’s true and living Church.

Our personal journey through life provides us with many special experiences that become building blocks of faith and testimony. These experiences come to us in vastly different ways and at unpredictable times. They can be powerful spiritual events or small enlightening moments. Some experiences will come as serious challenges and heavy trials that test our ability to cope with them. No matter what the experience may be, each gives us a chance for personal growth, greater wisdom, and, in many cases, service to others with more empathy and love. As the Lord stated to the Prophet Joseph Smith in a reassuring way during one of his most significant trials at Lib-

erty Jail, “All these things shall give thee experience, and shall be for thy good” (D&C 122:7).

As experiences accumulate in our lives, they add strength and support to each other. Just as the building blocks of our homes support the rest of the structure, so too do our personal life experiences become building blocks for our testimonies and add to our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

This very conference session illustrates the value of a life full of experiences. As we follow the wise counsel of our leaders and marvel at their teachings and spirit, is it any wonder that the Lord chooses His senior Apostle, after years of preparation, to become His chosen prophet?

My patriarchal blessing indicates that I would be given special experiences that would strengthen my own testimony. Brothers and sisters, think of the special experiences you have been blessed with in your life that have given you conviction and joy in your heart. Remember when you first knew that Joseph Smith was God’s prophet of the Restoration? Remember when you accepted Moroni’s challenge and knew that the Book of Mormon was indeed another testament of Jesus Christ? Remember when you received an answer to fervent prayer and realized that your Heavenly Father knows