



Consecrate Thy Performance



In pondering and pursuing consecration, understandably we tremble inwardly at what may be required. Yet the Lord has said consolingly, “My grace is sufficient for you.”

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These remarks are addressed to the imperfect but still striving in the household of faith. As always, my immediate audience is myself.

We tend to think of consecration only as yielding up, when divinely directed, our material possessions. But ultimate consecration is the yielding up of oneself to God. *Heart, soul, and mind* were the encompassing words of Christ in describing the first commandment, which is constantly, not periodically, operative (see Matthew 22:37). If kept, then our performances will, in turn, be fully consecrated for the lasting welfare of our souls (see 2 Nephi 32:9).

Such totality involves the submissive converging of feelings, thoughts, words, and deeds, the very opposite of estrangement: “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).

Many ignore consecration because it seems too abstract or too daunting. The conscientious among us, however, experience divine discontent because of progression mixed with procrastination. Hence, loving counsel is given with the confirmation of this direction, encouragement to continue the journey, and consolation as we experience individually the inherent degrees of difficulty.

Be Fully Submissive

Spiritual submissiveness is not accomplished in an instant, but by the incremental improvements and by the successive use of stepping-stones. Stepping-stones are meant to be taken one at a time anyway. Eventually our wills can be “swallowed up in the will of the Father” as we are “willing to submit



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... even as a child doth submit to his father” (Mosiah 15:7; 3:19). Otherwise, though striving, we will continue to feel the world’s prop wash and be partially diverted.

Illustrations involving economic consecration are relevant. When Ananias and Sapphira sold their possessions, they “kept back part of the price” (see Acts 5:1–11). So many of us cling tenaciously to a particular “part,” even treating our obsessions like possessions. Thus, whatever else we may have already given, the last portion is the hardest to yield.

Granted, partial surrender is still commendable, but it resembles, more than faintly, the excuse, “I gave at the office” (see James 1:7–8).

We may, for instance, have a specific set of skills which we mistakenly come to think we somehow own. If we continue to cling to those more than to God, we are flinching in the face of the consecrating first commandment. Since God lends us “breath . . . from one moment to another,” hyperventilating over these distractions is not recommended! (Mosiah 2:21).

A stumbling block appears when we serve God generously with time and checkbooks but still withhold portions of our inner selves, signifying that we are not yet fully His!

Some have difficulty when particular tasks enter their sunset phase. John the Baptist is a model, however, saying of Jesus’s growing flock, “He must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:30). Mistakenly regarding our present assignments as the only indicator of how much God loves us only adds to our reluctance to let go. Brothers and sisters, our individual worth is already divinely established as “great”; it does not fluctuate like the stock market.

Other stepping-stones remain unused because, like the rich, righteous young man, we are not yet willing to confront what we yet lack (see Mark 10:21). A residue of selfishness is thereby exposed.

Shrinking occurs in so many ways. The terrestrial kingdom, for example, will include the “honorable,” clearly not bearers of false witness. Yet they were still “not valiant in the testimony of Jesus” (D&C 76:75, 79). The best way to valiantly testify of Jesus is to become steadily more like Him, and it is that consecration that carves out the emulative character (see 3 Nephi 27:27).



Do Not Put Other Gods before God

In meeting these recited challenges, spiritual submissiveness is fortunately and helpfully adroit—sometimes helping us to “let go” of things, even mortal life, other times to “hold fast,” and still other times to use the next stepping-stone (see 1 Nephi 8:30).

But if we lack proportion, the next few yards can seem so formidable. Though aware of how God blessed ancient Israel to escape from mighty Pharaoh and his hosts, myopic Laman and Lemuel still lacked faith in God to help them with a mere local Laban.

We can also be deflected if we are too anxious to please those who are ascendant in our professional and avocational niches. Pleasing “other gods” instead of the real God still violates the first commandment (Exodus 20:3).

We sometimes even defend our idiosyncrasies, as if these protrusions somehow constituted our individuality. In a way, discipleship is a “contact sport,” as the Prophet Joseph testified:

“I am like a huge, rough stone . . . and the only polishing I get is when some corner gets rubbed off by coming in contact with something else, striking with accelerated force. . . . Thus I will become a smooth and polished shaft in the quiver of the Almighty.”¹

Since knees often bend long before minds, holding back this “part” deprives God’s work of some of mankind’s very best intellects. Far better to be meek like Moses, who learned things he “never had supposed” (Moses 1:10). Yet, sadly, brothers and sisters, in the subtle interplay of agency and identity, there is so much hesitation. The surrender of the mind is actually a victory, because it then introduces us to God’s stretching and “higher” ways! (Isaiah 55:9).

Ironically, inordinate attention, even to good things, can diminish our devotion to God. For instance, one can be too caught up in sports and the forms of body worship we see among us. One can reverence nature and yet neglect nature’s God. One can have an exclusionary regard for good music and similarly with a worthy profession. In such circumstances, the “weightier matters” are often omitted (Matthew 23:23; see also 1 Corinthians 2:16). Only the Highest One can fully guide us as to the highest good which you and I can do.

On the two great commandments, Jesus declared emphatically, everything else hangs, not vice versa (see Matthew 22:40). The first commandment is not suspended just because of our vigorous pursuit of a lesser good, for we do not worship a lesser god.

Acknowledge God’s Hand

Before enjoying the harvests of righteous efforts, let us therefore first acknowledge God’s hand. Otherwise, the rationalizations appear, and they include, “My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth” (Deuteronomy 8:17). Or, we “vaunt” ourselves, as ancient Israel would have done (except for Gideon’s deliberately small army), by boasting that “mine own hand hath saved me” (Judges 7:2). Touting our own “hand” makes it doubly hard to confess God’s hand in all things (see Alma 14:11; D&C 59:21).

At a place called Meribah, one of the greatest ever, Moses, was fatigued by people clamoring for water. Momentarily, Moses “spake unadvisedly,” saying, “Must we fetch you water?” (Psalm 106:33; Numbers 20:10; see also Deuteronomy 4:21). The Lord mentored remarkable Moses through the pronoun problem and further magnified him. We would do well to be as meek as Moses (see Numbers 12:3).

Jesus never, never, never lost His focus! Though He went about doing so very much good, He always knew that the Atonement awaited, pleading with perspective, “Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour” (John 12:27; see also 5:30; 6:38).

As you and I develop additional love, patience, and meekness, the more we have to give God and humanity. Moreover, no one else is placed exactly as we are in our opportune human orbits.

Granted, the stepping-stones take us into new territory which we may be very reluctant to explore. Hence, the successful users of the stepping-stones are powerful motivators for the rest of us. We usually pay more attention to those we quietly admire. The hungry prodigal son remembered the menus in his home, but he was also drawn by other memories, declaring, “I will arise and go to my father” (Luke 15:18).

Consecration Returns to God What Is His

In striving for ultimate submission, our wills constitute all we really have to give God anyway. The usual gifts and their derivatives we give to Him could be stamped justifiably “Return to Sender,” with a capital S. Even when God receives this one gift in return, the fully faithful will receive “all that [He] hath” (D&C 84:38). What an exchange rate!

Meanwhile, certain realities remain: God has given us our lives, our agency, our talents, and our opportunities; He has given us our possessions; He has given us our appointed mortal spans complete with the needed breaths (see D&C 64:32). Guided by such perspective, we will avoid serious errors of proportion. Some of these are far less amusing than would be hearing a double quartet and mistaking it for the Tabernacle Choir!

No wonder President [Gordon B.] Hinckley . . . stressed our being a covenant people, emphasizing the covenants of the sacrament, tithing, and the temple, citing sacrifice as the “very essence of the Atonement.”²

Jesus’s Example of Submissiveness

Breathtaking submissiveness was achieved by the Savior as He faced the anguish and agonies of the Atonement and “would that [He] might not drink the bitter cup, and shrink” (D&C 19:18). On our small, imperfect scale, we face tests and wish that these would somehow be taken away.

Consider this: What of Jesus’s ministry if He had performed additional miracles but without the transcending miracle of Gethsemane and Calvary? His other miracles brought blessed extensions of life and lessened suffering—for some. But how could these miracles possibly compare with the greatest miracle of the universal Resurrection? (see 1 Corinthians 15:22). The multiplying of

the loaves and fishes fed a hungry multitude. Even so, recipients were soon hungry again, while those who partake of the Bread of Life will never hunger again (see John 6:51, 58).

In pondering and pursuing consecration, understandably we tremble inwardly at what may be required. Yet the Lord has said consolingly, “My grace is sufficient for you” (D&C 17:8). Do we really believe Him? He has also promised to make weak things strong (see Ether 12:27). Are we really willing to submit to that process? Yet if we desire fulness, we cannot hold back part!

Having our wills increasingly swallowed up by the will of the Father actually means an enhanced individuality, stretched and more capable of receiving “all that [God] hath” (D&C 84:38). Besides, how could we be entrusted with His “all” until our wills are much more like His? Nor could His “all” be fully appreciated by the partially committed.

Frankly, it is our prospective selves we betray by holding back whatever the “part.” No need therefore to ask, “Lord, is it I?” (Matthew 26:22). Rather, let us inquire about our individual stumbling blocks,

“Lord, is it this?” We may have known the answer for a long time and may need resolve more than His response.

The greatest happiness in God’s generous plan is finally reserved for those who are willing to stretch and to

pay the costs of journeying to His regal realm. Brothers and sisters, “come, let us anew [this] journey pursue.”³

In the name of the Lord of the outstretched arm (see D&C 103:17; 136:22), even Jesus Christ, amen. ■

Subheads added; spelling, style, and source citations standardized.

NOTES

1. In James R. Clark, comp., *Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 6 vols. (1965–75), 1:185.
2. *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* (1997), 147.
3. “Come, Let Us Anew,” *Hymns*, no. 217.

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