

# *Grounded, Rooted, Established, and Settled*

## *(Ephesians 3:17, 1 Peter 5:10)*

NEAL A. MAXWELL

President and Sister Holland, brothers and sisters all, even more fervently than you, I wish President Kimball were here today to be appropriately honored as was planned. However, what was postponed, as President Holland indicated, can now be anticipated, and I join with you in prayerful anticipation.

### **Growth of the Church**

Since President Kimball is not here today and since we are out of the immediate range of his modesty, it is perhaps appropriate to share several statistical indicators about the Church growth in this vibrant era. Thus far in President Kimball's not-quite-eight years as president, the Church has grown from a membership of about 3.3 million to a membership of nearly 5 million.

As a better indicator of true growth, the total number of stakes has grown from 630 to 1,293—663 additional stakes as of today, more than doubling in less than eight years. The 109 missions have grown by 85 to a total of 194. Nineteen more countries outside the United States have been added to the 47 where the Church is established, opening the work for a total of 66 countries wherein units of the Church operate. The language areas in which the Church now functions have grown by 27,

from 31 to 58, so that, as the scriptures foreshadow, people can hear the gospel in their own languages (see D&C 90:11). A symbolic statistic is this one: There are now more stakes and members of the Church in Chile than in Canada, with 28 stakes and approximately 100,000 members in Chile!

The indicators just recited do not have even a close parallel in Church history. Beyond the dramatic demographics, however, there is something much more significant. We are blessed, all of us, by the personal impact of President Kimball on our lives. As such a beloved leader, his personal influence is impossible to measure, but it is even more pervasive and remarkable than the numbers recited.

### **Grounded, Rooted, Established, Settled**

Indeed it is in the context of such pleasing but challenging growth that the theme for today will be addressed—from the words of Paul and Peter, “grounded, rooted, established,

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*Neal A. Maxwell was a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints when this devotional address was given at Brigham Young University on 15 September 1981.*

and settled.” This is a vital objective for all members of the Church, but especially for your generation because of the special circumstances which will confront you. In fact, you may be the first generation in Church history, because of lamentably changing conditions in the world, who will be asked to believe and to behave “because of the word” and not circumstances. In varying degrees, you will not have the same affirmative influence of societal institutions which once strongly supported the family and principles such as chastity and fidelity. Those supporting influences, in many respects, will, unfortunately fall away like so much scaffolding. Then we will see who stands, both on holy ground and on holy principles!

Jesus described some of these realities and the casualties of conversion and retention thusly:

*Some [seeds] fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth:*

*And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away.* [Matthew 13:5–6]

Happily, Alma elaborated concerning how that gospel seed can grow, nourished by “faith with great diligence, and with patience” (Alma 32:41). Properly nourished, it will develop a good root system, and even when the heat of the sun comes and scorches, it will not wither (see Alma 32:28–38). By using a word as graphic as *scorched* to describe the heat which believers will feel, the Lord, who is not given to hyperbole, tells us something about the heat that will come, not alone in the rigors of individual life, but also in the special summer of circumstances which Jesus said would come when the leaves of the fig tree sprouted (see Matthew 24:32). That summer is upon us, and only those who are grounded, rooted, established, and settled will survive spiritually.

I do not, therefore, worry about your generation’s lack of adventure. Before you are through, you are likely to appreciate, in those lines from *Fiddler on the Roof*, what Tevye said when he wished aloud that the Lord would choose someone else for a change. You will become very conscious of who you are. However, today I will not stress the extraordinariness of your times but the immense possibilities which lie within the seeming ordinariness of your lives.

Since you are part of the Lord’s unfolding purposes, remember how deep the divine determination is.

*There is nothing that the Lord thy God shall take in his heart to do but what he will do it.* [Abraham 3:17]

You are a part of that unfolding process. But he will not revise the structure of this second estate just because you and I have had a bad day.

### **Attributes and Skills Never Obsolete**

It is especially helpful to remember also that the temptations and challenges we face are common to man (see 1 Corinthians 10:13), yet we must respond uncommonly. It is also useful to ponder the fact that, along with even the Savior himself, we are to experience certain things “according to the flesh” (Alma 7:12) and to learn “in process of time” (Moses 7:21). Built, therefore, into the seemingly ordinary experiences of life are opportunities for us to acquire such eternal attributes as love, mercy, meekness, patience, and submissiveness and to develop and sharpen such skills as how to communicate, motivate, delegate, and manage our time and talents and our thoughts in accordance with eternal priorities. These attributes and skills are portable; they are never obsolete and will be much needed in the next world.

How often have you and I really pondered just what it is, therefore, that will rise with us

in the resurrection? Our intelligence will rise with us, meaning not simply our I.Q., but our capacity to receive and to apply truth. Our talents, attributes, and skills will rise with us, certainly also our capacity to learn, our degree of self-discipline, and our capacity to work. Note that I said “our capacity to work” because the precise form of our work here may have no counterpart there, but the capacity to work will never be obsolete. To be sure, we cannot, while here, entirely avoid contact with the obsolescent and the irrelevant. It is all around us. But one can be around irrelevancy without becoming attached to it, and certainly we should not become preoccupied with obsolete things.

By these remarks I do not intend to create discontent with the paraphernalia of this probationary estate, but it is a grave error to mistake the scenery and the props for the real drama which is underway. Nor do I wish to bear down too much on the fact that certain mortal vocations will be irrelevant in the next world. A mortician does useful work here, especially if it is done with excellence, compassion, and reverence for life. Whatever our vocation, we should be sweetened, not hardened. Keeping our sense of proportion *whatever* we do, keeping our precious perspective *wherever* we are, and keeping the commandments *however* we are tested reflect being settled, rooted, and grounded in our discipleship.

### **A Precious Perspective**

Remaining settled and established is not easy, for we are crowded by the cares of the world. We are diverted by the praise of the world; we are buffeted by the trials of the world, drawn by the appetites and temptations of the world, and bruised by the hardness of the world. But when we are grounded, rooted, established, and settled, we can have a precious perspective which puts other things in their proper place. This is no small blessing, for it lifts us above our immediate circumstances

and concerns, giving us a larger view of things, as this secular episode illustrates:

*In 1918, Ernest Rutherford, a physicist, missed a meeting of experts advising the British government on anti-submarine warfare. When criticized for missing the meeting, he replied, “I had been engaged in experiments which suggest that the atom can be artificially disintegrated. If it is true, it is of far greater importance than a war.” [George F. Will, *The Pursuit of Happiness, and Other Sobering Thoughts* (New York: Harper and Row, 1978), p. 228]*

The precious perspective of the gospel also helps to keep before us the reality of what lies ahead. Malcolm Muggeridge put it so very well:

*Now, the prospect of death overshadows all others for me. I am like a man on a sea voyage nearing his destination. When I embarked, I worried about having a cabin with a porthole, whether I should be asked to sit at the captain’s table, who were the more attractive and important passengers. All such considerations become pointless, however, when I shall soon be disembarking. [Ian Hunter, ed., *Things Past* (New York: Morrow, 1979), p. 166]*

### **Guidance of the Holy Spirit**

So it is, brothers and sisters, that neither a sense of impending cataclysm nor of our eventual death should keep us from proceeding with our mortal chores. It is very desirable, for instance, that you go forward with your education even in the midst of the gathering storm. I cherish these lines from C. S. Lewis given over 40 years ago to students and scholars at Oxford in the midst of another gathering storm. He said:

*If men had postponed the search for knowledge and beauty until they were secure, the search would never have begun. . . . Life has never been normal. . . . Humanity . . . wanted knowledge and beauty*

*now, and would not wait for the suitable moment that never comes. . . . The insects have chosen a different line: they have sought first the material welfare and security of the hive, and presumably they have their reward. Men are different. They propound mathematical theorems in beleaguered cities, conduct metaphysical arguments in condemned cells, make jokes on scaffolds, discuss the last new poem while advancing to the walls of Quebec, and comb their hair at Thermophylae. This is not a panache; it is our nature. ["Learning in War-Time," *The Weight of Glory and Other Addresses* (New York: Macmillan, 1980), pp. 21–22]*

Be true, therefore, to the buoyancy in your nature which responds to your innate cravings for truth and beauty in spite of circumstance. Besides, in a very real sense, given the purpose of the mortal experience, your university education is an education within an education. You will wonder sometimes about life—if mortality consists only of large classes. In fact, life is designed to be quite tutorial in nature so far as how the lessons are usually taught and learned. Each of us will surely need to take the Holy Spirit as our Teacher, Guide, and Comforter throughout this stretching experience (see D&C 45:57). He can reassure us that the president of the Church is a prophet of God. There will be times when you will need that reinforcement. After all, prophets are not just for following in the Sinai or on a westward journey. President Brigham Young told of one man who, instead of going west, wanted to wait in the East for the impending redemption of Zion and who was told by George A. Smith that the nearest way to Missouri was through Salt Lake City (*JD* 8:198). There will be some equivalent counsel given to you in your lifetime.

Moses, an inspired leader, desired an inspired people. On one occasion reports reached him that certain members of the camp were prophesying, and when Joshua wanted it forbidden, Moses said unto him:

*Enviest thou for my sake? would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his spirit upon them!* [Numbers 11:27–29]

It is not merely a matter of lessening the burden of the few, but of enlarging the perspectives of the many.

With the Holy Spirit as our guide, our conscience stays vibrant and alive. Things which we had never supposed come into view. Seeming routine turns out to be resplendent. Ordinary people seem quite the opposite. What we once thought to be the mere humdrum of life gives way to symphonic strains. Circumstances or a mere conversation which look quite pedestrian nevertheless cause a quiet moment of personal resolve, and a decision affecting all eternity is made. Sometimes you and I even sense it as it happens, but there are no bands playing, and there are no headlines. Therefore, a very significant part of getting settled in one's discipleship consists of coming to terms with the realities around us that seem so routine. Routine, like trials, can bring us closer to God or move us away from him. What seems commonplace seldom is.

#### **Danger in Lack of Love**

Occasionally I see individuals who are meeting life's challenges reasonably well but who unfortunately fail to appreciate the general adequacy of their response. They let the seeming ordinariness of life dampen their spirits. Though actually coping and growing, some lack the quiet inner-soul satisfaction which can steady them. Instead they seem to experience a lingering sense that there is something more important they should be doing or that their chores are somehow not quite what was expected, as if what is quietly achieved in righteous individual living or in parenthood is not sufficiently spectacular.

Feeling unrequited as to role and feeling underwhelmed do not occur, however, because of a structural failure in this divinely designed second estate. Rather they occur because of a lack of love, for love helps us to see and to respond to those opportunities which have been allotted to us and which lie unused all about us. Before we complain about the curriculum in mortality, or more particularly our current class schedules, we would do well to remember who designed the curriculum and to allow for however many other places it has been successfully used.

True, there are more things to be done than we do, more opportunities for service than are used. True we make mistakes. Even some of our achievements are flawed by a lack of finesse. True there are seeming flat periods in life when we may feel underwhelmed. In such situations, however, we had best get back to the basics of why we are here. In the terse communiqué from the Gods about our being placed on this planet, the basic objective of life on this planet was stated:

*And we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them. [Abraham 3:25]*

This is a pithy but sweeping declaration of divine intent. The second estate has been carefully structured so as to carry out that intent. To misunderstand this straightforward and tutorial purpose of life as a proving process is to make a fundamental error which ensure that thousands of additional errors will naturally follow. If our focus on the fundamental purpose of life is blurred, we will not see “things as they really are” (Jacob 4:13).

### **Some Lessons the Hard Way**

Hence there should be no surprise about the second estate when it features lessons to be learned the hard way “according to the flesh.” There should be no resentment or mystery

regarding the patient personal development which must occur “in process of time.” God’s purposes are plain!

Since we are here to thus be proved, how can that occur except we are tested? If we are here to learn to choose wisely, how can that occur except there be alternatives? If our soul is to be stretched, how can that happen without growing pains? How can personal development really occur amid routine unless we have authentic challenges on which to practice? Therefore, those who wait for some other insight about the purpose of this life heretofore inscrutably withheld from us will wait in vain. A sense of surprise, if there is one, is far more likely to occur, therefore, when some plain truth which we have known all along intellectually is suddenly or dramatically confirmed experientially. They err who, instead of concentrating on commandment keeping and personal spiritual progress, desire sweeping significance and high visibility in the second estate.

Is it really numbers of people touched at the moment which measure the impact of an individual? Did tens of thousands hear the Sermon on the Mount? Did it make the six-o’clock news? Is Abraham to be measured by the volume of his trade with nomadic caravans in the desert or by living quietly and righteously so as one day to see fulfilled the promise that his posterity would be as numberless as the stars in the heavens? Was Ruth’s eloquent and touching entreaty to Naomi to be assessed by the size of her audience? Demographics are not a complete measure.

Or is it the terrain one traverses which is the true test of his life? If so, should those of us who travel in the jet age view with condescension the mileage logged by Jesus during his mortal ministry? In those days, “from Dan to Beersheba” seemed so sweeping, yet it involved only a little over a hundred miles. One day our travels about his planet will seem quite provincial too when we are wafted from

planet to planet. Distance, therefore, is not much of a determinant either.

Actually if it is sweeping insight we desire, and surprise, let us save room for surprise as the moment arrives when the eternal family's eventual itinerary is fully unveiled. But family life seems so ordinary now. Even so, some may still say, "Should I not be doing something else?" Ah, but that is not the real question! The real question is: "Why should I desire more than to perform the work to which I have been called?" (Alma 29:6). That is the question.

### **Patience and Enduring Well**

One's task is to do more and to perform well within his callings, but it is not something else or another work he should seek. God will not judge us according to the calling of another. Therefore, how we utilize the seemingly ordinary experiences of our life and how well we keep the commandments are true tests of our performance in this second estate. One can, while in the employ of a railroad company, learn something of patience while struggling to keep the train schedule meticulously up to date. But the patience will long outlast the printed train schedule. A discovering scientist may augment his awe and meekness before his Creator because of the breathtaking order in the universe even if his new discoveries erelong are swallowed up in even more immense discoveries.

But it is also true that routine may cause a gravedigger to become indifferent to the sorrows of the bereaved gathered about those fresh mounds of earth. The gravedigger may even become cynical about the resurrection which one day will empty all those graves. A marriage counselor can become encrusted with a protective layer of clinical indifference brought on by the routine and incessant nature of his chores. If so, his techniques will never compensate for his lack of caring. A civil servant who has forgotten how to be civil may have some sway now in the procurement

division of a vast governmental direction, but he is headed in just the opposite developmental direction needed for sway in the next world.

On the other hand, one who listens more and more effectively to others with a genuine desire to understand and to help, if not always to agree, will have no regrets later on. Such an individual may occasionally run out of time here, but he is fitting himself for eternity. Love and patience are never wasted; they only appear to be. The devoted wife and mother who is a quiet but effective neighbor but whose obituary is noticed by a comparative few may well have laid up precious little here in the current coin-of-the-realm, recognition, yet rising with her in the resurrection will be relevant attributes and skills honed and refined in family and neighborhood life. Contrariwise, the civic leader whose thirst for recognition causes him to do things to be seen of men has his reward. He too will receive the gift of immortality during which expanse he can work on meekness and humility.

### **Look beyond Appearances**

Thus when life is viewed superficially, it seems routine and even pedestrian. However, what appears on the surface can be a thin cover for developments of great spiritual significance. Those who passed by the football stadium at the University of Chicago several decades ago did not know what was underway below those empty seats. The atom was being split, after which the world was never again to be the same. Such a quiet stadium too. It is left to us, therefore, in our varied circumstances but with common challenges to make the interplay of our time and talent bring about the development of the key eternal attributes and the everlasting skills. A botched performance here means less chance to serve there. Any resulting advantage we have in the world to come clearly will result from taking advantage of the opportunities this life affords us. Hence those who are grounded, rooted, established,

and settled will be serious about the eternal objectives on which this life should focus.

Brothers and sisters, when anciently we shouted for joy in anticipation of this mortal experience, we did not then think it would be ordinary and pedestrian at all. We sensed the impending high adventure. Let us be true to that first and more realistic reaction.

### **Perspective Much Needed**

May I note in closing how much needed the perspective is which goes with being established and settled as we contemplate our varied circumstances. Some in the Church are divorced; some are unmarried but yearn to be and are worthy to be married. Some are widowers, and some are widows; others are blessed to be in traditional intact families. Some are healthy; others are ill, some seriously and terminally ill. Some members are struggling economically, but a few are quite comfortable economically. Some are lonely, and others have almost more friends than they can manage. Our immediate circumstances surely differ, but these circumstances will pass away soon enough, though at times it may seem otherwise.

Notice in contrast how our basic circumstances and eternal opportunities are strikingly similar. Each of us is a child of God. Each of us agreed to pass through this mortal experience with its common temptations and seeming ordinariness. Eventually each of us can have the privilege of receiving all the gospel ordinances. Each of us is accountable for our thoughts and actions. Each of us is loved perfectly by a Heavenly Father who knows us and our needs perfectly. Each of us has the same commandments to keep and must walk the same straight and narrow path in order to have happiness here and there. Each of us has the same eternal attributes to develop. So our fundamental circumstances are the same.

A hundred years from now, today's seeming deprivations and tribulations will not matter

then unless we let them matter too much now. A hundred years from now, today's serious physical ailment will be but a fleeting memory. A thousand years from now, those who now worry and are anguished because they are unmarried will, if they are faithful, have smiles of satisfaction on their faces in the midst of a vast convocation of their posterity. The seeming deprivation which occurs in the life of a single woman who feels she has no prospects of marriage and motherhood properly endured is but a delayed blessing, the readying of a reservoir into which a generous God will pour all that he hath. Indeed, it will be the Malachi measure: "there shall not be room enough to receive it" (Malachi 3:10).

In eternity, the insensitivities and injustices of today's grumpy boss will not matter when we then live in the presence of a God who is perfect in his justice and his mercy. A thousand years from now, today's soul pain inflicted by a betraying or deserting spouse will be gone. A thousand years from now, if one has been misrepresented or misunderstood, the resentment will be gone. So much depends, therefore, upon our maintaining gospel perspective in the midst of ordinariness and the pressures of temptation, tribulation, and deprivation. As we come to love the Lord more and more, we can understand, rather than resent, his purposes. He who should know has said that there is no other way. Besides, when the Savior urged even his closest disciples to "settle this in your hearts, that ye will do the things which I shall teach, and command you" (JST Luke 14:28), he spoke of the high cost of discipleship, "signifying there should not any man follow him, unless he was able to continue" (JST Luke 14:31). Clearly Jesus was underscoring the importance of having his followers become thoroughly grounded in the gospel, rooted in resolve, established in their expectations about life, and settled in their devotion to the Savior. May we so become I pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

