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First Counselor in the First Presidency

This is an awe-inspiring view, this great body of priesthood again. As we sing in unison I can picture in my mind the scene before Jericho, when the priesthood of Aaron marched around the walls and blew the trumpets and the walls fell. God was with Israel and his priesthood.

CRUSADE OF PETER THE HERMIT

That incident reminds me that during the great crusade into the Holy Land, known as the Crusade of Peter the Hermit, when the crusaders finally reached the walls of Jerusalem, they tried to repeat the miracle of Jericho but failed. The crusaders had gone to the Holy Land with a plenary indulgence from the Pope of Rome, which promised every man who went into this crusade forgiveness, as it was popularly understood, for all the crimes he ever had committed and all that he ever might commit. Their criminal excesses astounded even the infidels.

The next day or two after the trial for the miracle, the walls of Jerusalem were stormed and the crusaders entered. The accounts say that as they went up those narrow streets toward Mount Zion, the blood running down from the men, women, and children who had been massacred, was up to the horses knees. As the crusaders pushed into the city they took children by the heels and dashed out their brains against the walls. Some who were particularly dexterous, took children by the heels and tried to throw them over the walls.

Godfrey, the head of the crusaders, went into the temple and got down on his knees and thanked God for this day of achievement, and the representative of the Pope, the papal legate, was heard in the streets thanking God for what had happened. But God refused to give the priesthoodless Crusaders the approval he gave to Joshua and his priesthood in the ancient day at Jericho.

PRIESTHOOD AN EVERLASTING ENDOWMENT

This body of priesthood here to-night holds the priesthood of the Son of God; it is a holy priesthood.

We have had much said about the priesthood today and I endorse all of it. Brother Benson talked about it at length this afternoon. Bishop Richards referred to it tonight; President McKay also spoke of it. And I hope they will excuse me if I carry the matter just a little farther.

The priesthood is an everlasting endowment. Some, at least, who have come to the earth had it before they came here. The Prophet Joseph said: "Every man who has a calling to minister to the inhabitants of the world was ordained to that very purpose

in the Grand Council of Heaven before the world was. I suppose," says he, "I was ordained to this very office in that Grand Council." The priesthood of God is from everlasting to everlasting, and the thought that I would like to leave with you will be suggested by a number of semi-questions I shall ask.

PERTINENT QUESTIONS

Do you know of any way in which you can lay your priesthood aside? Do you suppose that after you get through with this conference you can go home and lay it off like a suit and go forward with your avocations without the priesthood? Do you suppose that you can lay your priesthood aside if you should wish to do a dishonest thing, and then pick it up again afterwards and put it on and go on as if nothing had happened? Can you lay your priesthood aside while you go into a saloon and take a drink, or when you take a smoke? Can you lay your priesthood aside if you begin an immoral act? Can you lay your priesthood aside if you undertake any crime or any transgression?

And to the young men who are here I would like particularly to ask them, do you think you can lay your priesthood aside if you shall undertake to make immoral advances to some girl that you had taken out, or could you lay it aside while you committed, completed the immoral act? The priesthood you hold is with you every second of your lives until it is taken from you.

But how about honoring it and how about so living that when you have occasion to use its powers they are at your command.

If a man had given you a commission to do something which required that you walk down the straight and narrow path, do you think you would be honoring that commission if you were to go off on detours, do things that you ought not to do outside of and contrary to your commission?

OBLIGATION TO HONOR PRIESTHOOD

Those of us who have been in the temple of course know of the obligations we take there. But there are obligations which are taken by every man who bears the priesthood, from the office of deacon up. Do not dishonor your priesthood, brethren, and do not any of you let your life so shape itself that you will lose the powers which the priesthood gives.

I return again to the theme that I have always mentioned in these priesthood meetings since I came into the Council, to the question of unity. Brethren, if we could act as united and in unison as we can sing and have sung in unison, there is no power that could withstand anything that we sought to do in righteousness.

May God give us the strength and the power and the will and the desire to honor our priesthood, to remember that we cannot

lay it aside as a cloak; it is always with us to be dishonored and disgraced if we shall so act. May he give to us the will and the determination always so to honor our priesthood, that we may be indeed the agents of our Heavenly Father, to perform his will,—to the end that ultimately righteousness may rule the earth, as it will ultimately through the priesthood, I humbly pray, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

PRESIDENT GEORGE ALBERT SMITH

I wonder sometimes if as fathers we take pains to explain to our boys the seriousness of the obligation assumed when a boy becomes a deacon. I wonder if when the boy is ordained a deacon the father lets him feel that he has something now that is eternally important.

CONTRASTING WARD SITUATIONS

I remember hearing upon one occasion of two wards, side by side, with about an equal population. One of the bishops made it a point to visit the homes of the members of his flock when a child was born, and when the time came for it to be blessed in the fast meeting he was on hand to encourage the parents that their child might receive a blessing. As the children grew a little older he taught both the girls and the boys that there would be a blessing come to them if they would go to Primary and to Sunday School.

He made them want to be baptized when they were eight years of age, both the boys and the girls. When the boys were nearly old enough to be ordained deacons he had talked with them and made them feel that they could be ordained deacons. He was another father. He followed all those families through life and it was said of the ward that every boy and every girl were married in the temple and many of them went on missions.

The ward that adjoined this one had another kind of bishop. He was busy. He did not have time to follow up. He let his counselors do that. It was proper that his counselors should do part of it but the difference was noted by the stake presidency, that in the one ward all of the young people, almost without exception, were faithful, took advantage of their opportunities, were prepared and taught beforehand the importance of what they were to receive, while in the other ward if the parents did not teach the children they were not taught except in a mediocre way, and the result was that the majority of those young people grew up, not particularly interested in the church.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF A BISHOP

Now, I mention this because a father of a ward, a bishop, has a great responsibility. I do not mean that the father of the child