

President David O. McKay

(Read by his son David Lawrence McKay)

It is an honor, my brethren of the priesthood throughout the entire Church, to be associated with you. I greet all assembled here tonight in this great Tabernacle and all who are listening in over closed circuit in 700 appointed places throughout the United States and Canada. This is a glorious occasion!

Examples to the flock

Two thousand years ago the chief apostle Peter addressed the elders of the Church and said: ". . . I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed:

"Feed the flock of God which is among you. . . .

"Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. . . .

"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:

"Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world." (1 Pet. 5:1-3, 8-9.)

Note Peter's statement to be examples to the flock!

I testify to you, as I have done before, that you leaders, you priesthood bearers, may so live that you may receive impressions and direct messages through the Holy Ghost. The veil is thin between those who hold the priesthood and those on the other side of the veil. That testimony began in the home in my youth because of the example of my father, who honored the priesthood, and my mother, who sustained him and lived it in the home.

I do not know that Peter had that in mind particularly when he mentioned being an example to the flock, but I know that such a home is a part of that flock. The influence you spread in your home will go throughout the town, will go throughout the county,

the wards, and the stakes. No bishop, no counselor, no stake president, no man holding a responsible position in this Church can afford to sidestep to the slightest degree his great responsibility of living the gospel as he preaches it and of being an example to the flock. Any man holding such a position who would lead a young person to doubt the Church by his actions will bring dishonor to the Church and great sorrow to his own soul. The most precious thing in the world is a testimony of the truth. Truth never grows old, and the truth is that God is the source of your priesthood and mine. The truth is that he lives; that Jesus Christ, the Great High Priest, stands at the head of the Church; and that every man who holds the priesthood, if he lives properly, soberly, industriously, humbly, and prayerfully, is entitled to the inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit. I know that is true.

Honor priesthood calling

Men who are vessels of the Holy Priesthood, who are charged with words of eternal life to the world, should strive continually in their words and actions and daily deportment to do honor to the great dignity of their calling and office as ministers and representatives of the Most High.

Whenever the priesthood is delegated to man, it is conferred upon him, not as a personal honor—although it becomes such as he honors it—but as authority to represent Deity and an obligation to assist the Lord in bringing to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.

If priesthood meant only personal distinction or individual elevation, there would be no need of groups or quorums. The very existence of such groups, established by divine authorization, proclaims our dependence upon one another, the indispensable need of mutual help and assistance. We are social beings. Edwin Markham said:

"There is a destiny that makes us brothers;
None goes his way alone;
All that we send into the lives of others
Comes back into our own."
(*"A Creed"*)

Service and mutual help

This element of service and mutual help is emphasized by the Lord as follows:

"Wherefore, be faithful; stand in the office which I have appointed unto you; succor the weak, lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees." So says the Lord in the *Doctrine and Covenants*, Section 81, verse 5.

And again:

"And if any man among you be strong in the Spirit, let him take with him him that is weak, that he may be edified in all meekness, that he may become strong also." (*D&C 84:106.*)

One of the responsibilities of the priesthood here assembled, and the vast number in the Church of whom you are representatives, is to perform the labor of home teaching, "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." (*Eph. 4:12.*) And so it is right to have the home teacher carry the responsibility of looking after the welfare of each individual. Assignments can properly be made so that every man who holds authority, which comes by direct revelation, may recognize his ecclesiastical duties by exercising the authority that he holds.

Behavior of servicemen

Our priesthood should be honored no matter in what situation or circumstance we find ourselves. Our hearts and thoughts go out to our servicemen throughout the world, and especially to those who are in the active combat zones. Recently, I received a report from Elder Marion D. Hanks telling of the high caliber and behavior of servicemen in Vietnam, which gives assurance of the gospel in their lives and that they are honoring their priesthood. From that report I quote the following:

"Everywhere our men were highly

spoken of. Every one of the generals to whom I talked went out of his way to commend the Mormon servicemen with whom he had trooped.

"They were most affirmative and strong in their endorsements.

"One fine Marine major, in the middle of battle daily, expressed his strong testimony and asked that I carry to the missionaries the message that he is happy to be in Vietnam fighting to preserve the right of our missionaries to do their more important work."

We can only hope and pray that hostilities in that grief-stricken area, and all over the world, will soon end.

Prayer for divine knowledge

I am going to tell you boys of the Aaronic Priesthood that a voice has been heard in this dispensation giving assurance that the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is the head of this Church and guiding it, as he directed it in ancient days and has guided it since he and his Father appeared to the Prophet Joseph Smith.

I am going to tell you what happened to me as a boy upon the hillside near my home in Huntsville. I was yearning, just as you boys are yearning, to know that the vision given to the Prophet Joseph Smith was true, and that this Church was really founded by revelation, as he claimed. I thought that the only way a person could get to know the truth was by having a revelation or experiencing some miraculous event, just as came to the Prophet Joseph.

One day I was hunting cattle. While climbing a steep hill, I stopped to let my horse rest, and there, once again, an intense desire came over me to receive a manifestation of the truth of the restored gospel. I dismounted, threw my reins over my horse's head, and there, under a serviceberry bush, I prayed that God would declare to me the truth of his revelation to Joseph Smith. I am sure that I prayed fervently and sincerely and with as much faith as a young boy could muster.

At the conclusion of the prayer, I arose from my knees, threw the reins over my faithful pony's head, and got into the saddle. As I started along the

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trail again, I remember saying to myself: "No spiritual manifestation has come to me. If I am true to myself, I must say I am just the same 'old boy' that I was before I prayed." I prayed again when I crossed Spring Creek, near Huntsville, in the evening to milk our cows.

Answer given in Scotland

The Lord did not see fit to give me an answer on that occasion, but in 1899, after I had been appointed president of the Scottish Conference, the spiritual manifestation for which I had prayed as a boy in my teens came as a natural sequence to the performance of duty. For, as the apostle John declared, "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." (John 7:17.)

Following a series of meetings at the conference held in Glasgow, Scotland, was a most remarkable priesthood meeting. I remember, as if it were yesterday, the intensity of the inspiration of that occasion. Everybody felt the rich outpouring of the Spirit of the Lord. All present were truly of one heart and one mind. Never before had I experienced such an emotion. It was a manifestation for which as a doubting youth I had secretly prayed most earnestly on hillside and in meadow. It was an assurance to me that sincere prayer is answered sometime, somewhere.

During the progress of the meeting, an elder on his own initiative arose and said, "Brethren, there are angels in this room."

Strange as it may seem, the announcement was not startling; indeed, it seemed wholly proper, though it had not occurred to me there were divine beings present. I only knew that I was overflowing with gratitude for the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Prophecy of James L. McMurrin

I was profoundly impressed, however, when President James L. McMurrin, president of the European Mission, arose and confirmed that statement by pointing to one brother sitting just in front of me and saying, "Yes, brethren, there are angels in this room, and one

of them is the guardian angel of that young man sitting there," and he designated one who afterward became a patriarch in the Woodruff Stake of the Church, John Young.

Pointing to another elder, he said, "And one is the guardian angel of that young man there," and he singled out one whom I had known from childhood, David Eccles. Tears were rolling down the cheeks of both of these missionaries—not in sorrow or grief, but as an expression of the overflowing Spirit. Indeed, we were all weeping.

Such was the setting in which James L. McMurrin gave what has since proved to be a prophecy. I had learned by intimate association with him that James McMurrin was pure gold. His faith in the gospel was implicit. No truer man, no man more loyal to what he thought was right ever lived. So when he turned to me and gave what I thought then was more of a caution than a promise, his words made an indelible impression upon me. Paraphrasing the words of the Savior to Peter, Brother McMurrin said: "Let me say to you, Brother David, Satan hath desired you that he may sift you as wheat, but God is mindful of you." Then he added, "If you will keep the faith, you will yet sit in the leading councils of the Church."

At that moment there flashed in my mind temptations that had beset my path, and I realized even better than President McMurrin, or any other man, how truly he had spoken when he said, "Satan hath desired thee." With the resolve then and there to keep the faith, there was born a desire to be of service to my fellowmen; and with it came a realization, a glimpse at least, of what I owed to the elder who first carried the message of the restored gospel to my grandfather and grandmother, who had accepted the message years before in the north of Scotland and in South Wales.

I ask God to continue to bless you that you will keep true to the priesthood that you hold, for it comes directly from John the Baptist, who received it from his Lord and Savior. In your youth, do not let temptation lead you astray. Be true to the ideals of your parents.

Story of horse "Dandy"

Now, to conclude, I shall tell you boys a story about a horse I once owned and had great pleasure in training. He had a good disposition, a clean, well-rounded eye, was well-proportioned, and, all in all, a choice equine possession. Under the saddle he was as willing, responsive, and cooperative as a horse could be. He and my dog Scotty were real companions. I liked the way he would go up to something of which he was afraid. He had confidence that if he would do as I bade him, he would not be injured.

But Dandy resented restraint. He was ill-contented when tied and would nibble at the tie-rope until he was free. He would not run away—just wanted to be free. Thinking other horses felt the same, he would proceed to untie their ropes. He hated to be confined in the pasture, and if he could find a place in the fence where there was only smooth wire, he would paw the wire carefully with his feet until he could step over to freedom. More than once my neighbors were kind enough to put him back in the field. He even learned to push open the gate. Though his depredations were provoking and sometimes expensive, I admired his intelligence and ingenuity.

But his curiosity and desire to explore the neighborhood led him and me into trouble. Once on the highway he was hit by an automobile, resulting in a demolished machine, injury to the horse, and slight, though not serious, injury to the driver.

Recovering from that, and still impelled with a feeling of wanderlust, he inspected the fence throughout the entire boundary. He even found the gates wired. So for awhile we thought we had Dandy secure in the pasture.

One day, however, somebody left the gate unwired. Detecting this, Dandy unlatched it, took his companion with him, and together they visited the neighbor's field. They went to an old house used for storage. Dandy's curiosity prompted him to push open the door. Just as he had surmised, there was a sack of grain. What a find!

Yes, and what a tragedy! The grain was poison bait for rodents! In a few minutes Dandy and his companion were in spasmodic pain, and shortly both were dead.

Keep faith in God

How like Dandy are many of our youth! They are not bad; they do not even intend to do wrong; but they are impulsive, full of life, full of curiosity, and they long to do something. They too are restive under restraint, but if they are kept busy, guided carefully and rightly, they prove to be responsive and capable; if left to wander unguided, they all too frequently violate principles of right, which often leads to snares of evil, disaster, and even death.

And so I say, with Edgar A. Guest:
 "So keep your faith in God above,
 And faith in the righteous truth,
 It shall bring you back to the absent
 love,
 And the joys of a vanished youth.

You shall smile once more when your
 tears are dried,
 Meet trouble and swiftly rout it,
 For faith is the strength of the soul in-
 side,
 And lost is the man without it."

God bless you that you may realize the blessings that are yours through the revelation and restoration in this day and age of the world of the priesthood of God. This priesthood gives you authority to represent him in proclaiming the reality of the existence of the Father and his Beloved Son, Jesus Christ, and the restoration of the gospel as given through Christ, through obedience to which peace shall be established on earth and the will of God carried forth to the salvation and exaltation of his children.

With all the power the Lord has given his servants, I bless you and pray that you will go forth with the spirit of service, honoring the priesthood that you hold and his name now and forever, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.