

President N. Eldon Tanner

First Counselor in the First Presidency

I have always been impressed with the song, "Do What Is Right," which was sung by the men's chorus of the Tabernacle Choir. Particularly do I find special meaning in the words:

"Angels above us are silent notes taking
Of ev'ry action; do what is right!"

—*Hymns*, no. 27

Oath and covenant of priesthood

It is always a privilege and blessing for me to stand before and address the priesthood. The priesthood is the power of God delegated to us to act in his name, in the office which we hold. And when he gives us that priesthood, we make a covenant with him, and he makes a covenant with us that I should like to read this evening:

"For whoso is faithful unto the obtaining these two priesthoods ["whoso is faithful unto the obtaining" means that a deacon must begin to do those things which will make it possible for him to hold these two priesthoods] . . . and the magnifying their calling, are sanctified by the Spirit unto the renewing of their bodies.

"They become the sons of Moses and of Aaron and the seed of Abraham, and the church and kingdom, and the elect of God.

"And also all they who receive this priesthood receive me, saith the Lord;

"For he that receiveth my servants receiveth me;

"And he that receiveth me receiveth my Father;

"And he that receiveth my Father receiveth my Father's kingdom; therefore all that my Father hath shall be given unto him.

"And this is according to the oath and covenant which belongeth to the priesthood.

"Therefore, all those who receive the priesthood, receive this oath and

covenant of my Father, which he cannot break, neither can it be moved.

"But whoso breaketh this covenant after he hath received it, and altogether turneth therefrom, shall not have forgiveness of sins. . . ." (D&C 84:33-41.)

It is up to us whether that covenant is kept. We make that covenant. The Lord cannot break it, and we have the responsibility of keeping it.

Order of the priesthood

This evening I should like to say a few words about the order of the priesthood, or some of the things that are placed under the priesthood. I thought this might be of interest to the Aaronic Priesthood as well as others. First, I wish to explain how, following the death of the President of the Church, a new president is chosen, ordained, and set apart and the presidency is reorganized, following which they are sustained in a solemn assembly by the quorums of the priesthood and by those members of the Church present at general conference, as they were yesterday, and then by members throughout the Church in their stake conferences. Also, I shall refer to some of the authority, duties, and responsibilities of the President.

First Presidency disorganized

As you all know, three months ago our beloved President Joseph Fielding Smith was called home to his great reward and to other duties. He was certainly a true servant of the Lord and a prophet of God, who from his childhood lived to the best of his ability the teachings of the gospel and kept his covenants. He was a man without guile, and his passing was as near a translation as possible.

The Thursday before his death he

gave a powerful address to the seminar of the Regional Representatives and Mission Representatives assembled in Salt Lake City. Sunday, July 2, the day of his death, he attended his Sunday meetings in his ward and participated as usual. He returned home, and after his evening meal he sat in his favorite chair talking to his daughter and quietly passed from mortal life.

On the death of the President of the Church the First Presidency is disorganized, and the counselors take their places in the Quorum of the Twelve, which, according to revelation, assumes the responsibility of the presidency of the Church, because they hold the Holy Melchizedek Priesthood and are the next quorum in authority according to the Doctrine and Covenants. (See D&C 107:23-24.) The Church, therefore, is never left without a presidency. The President of the Quorum naturally is the chief or executive officer, and the Twelve continue as the presidency of the Church until such time as the First Presidency is reorganized.

Authority vested in Twelve

While Joseph the Prophet was President of the Church, the Lord through him bestowed all of the keys of the priesthood upon the Quorum of the Twelve with equal authority with the First Presidency. Therefore, with that authority, following the death of Joseph the Prophet, the Twelve, with Brigham Young as President of the Quorum, presided over the Church for a number of years. Finally they were moved upon by the Holy Spirit to reorganize the First Presidency of the Church with Brigham Young as President and with Heber C. Kimball and Willard Richards as his counselors. In reality this organization might have been effected within twenty-four hours after the death of the Prophet Joseph Smith.

Upon the death of President Young, President John Taylor followed in similar measure the example of his

predecessor, and it was some time before the presidency of the Church was reorganized with John Taylor as President, George Q. Cannon and Joseph F. Smith as counselors.

After the death of President Taylor, Wilford Woodruff, President of the Twelve, hesitated and allowed a little time to pass before the presidency was reorganized. When at last he became convinced it was his duty and was necessary in order to carry out the purposes of the Lord, he, with the Twelve, reorganized the presidency of the Church.

Reorganization of First Presidency

At that time he gave a solemn injunction to his fellow servants in relation to this. He desired it understood that in all future times if the President of the Church should die and thereby the First Presidency become disorganized, it would be the duty of the proper authorities of the Church to proceed at once, without any unnecessary delay, to reorganize the First Presidency, which procedure has since been followed.

Therefore, on July 7, 1972, shortly after the passing of President Joseph Fielding Smith, President Lee as President of the Twelve called a meeting of all the Twelve to reorganize the First Presidency of the Church. At this meeting we called upon the Lord in solemn prayer. Then each member of the Twelve, starting with the junior member, was called by the President of the Quorum to express his feelings regarding the matter at hand.

When it became President Kimball's turn to speak, he, at the conclusion of his remarks, nominated President Harold B. Lee as President of the Church, which motion was duly seconded and put to the Twelve, and carried unanimously. President Lee responded to the nomination and the action of the Twelve, accepting the high and holy calling. He then

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nominated, for the consideration of the Twelve, N. Eldon Tanner as first counselor and Marion G. Romney as second counselor. This was unanimously approved.

President Spencer W. Kimball, as senior member of the Twelve, was nominated and approved as President of the Quorum of the Twelve. Following this, President Kimball joined with other members of the Twelve as they placed their hands upon the head of President Lee and ordained him and set him apart as President of the Church and as Prophet, Seer, and Revelator, and Trustee-in-Trust for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Lee then set apart President Tanner and President Romney as his counselors and President Kimball as President of the Twelve.

Appreciation for association

This being an election year in the United States, these activities point up quite clearly the contrast of choosing the president of the United States and other officials in government, and the way the Lord has directed his church leaders to be chosen and placed in office. I am most thankful unto the Lord for the signal privilege I have had of associating so closely with and laboring under and sustaining three of the prophets of God and to see how the Lord works through them. I humbly pray continually that I may serve in an acceptable manner unto the Lord and to them.

Here I wish to express my deep appreciation and love for President Marion G. Romney. I have learned to love him and President Lee as I have never loved men before. And while I am speaking of love, I should like to express my love for the members of the Council of the Twelve and the other General Authorities, and for all members of the Church. In fact, I have a feeling of love for mankind, and I just hope and pray

always that the Lord will make it possible for me to show that love.

Preparation of President Lee

President Lee, I am sure, was chosen and foreordained to be a prophet of God and President of the Church. The Lord has certainly prepared him for this high and holy calling by giving him responsibilities in stakes, as director of the welfare program, and for more than thirty years as a member of the Council of the Twelve. President Lee has proven his faithfulness, dedication, and ability, as referred to by Brother Hinckley here tonight and by many of the speakers during our conference thus far. He has been chosen to preside over the Church in one of the most critical periods of time in the history of the world. He is a prophet of God and speaks the will of the Lord. President Joseph Fielding Smith made this astute observation at the solemn assembly where he was sustained as President of the Church:

"I desire to say that no man of himself can lead this church. It is the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ; he is at the head. The Church bears his name, has his priesthood, administers his gospel, preaches his doctrine, and does his work.

"He chooses men and calls them to be instruments in his hands to accomplish his purposes, and he guides and directs them in their labors. But men are only instruments in the Lord's hands, and the honor and glory for all that his servants accomplish is and should be ascribed unto him forever.

"If this were the work of man, it would fail, but it is the work of the Lord, and he does not fail. And we have the assurance that if we keep the commandments and are valiant in the testimony of Jesus and are true to every trust, the Lord will guide and direct us and his church in the paths of righteousness, for the accomplish-

ment of all his purposes." (*Improvement Era*, June 1970, p. 26.)

He then said of his first counselor, who is now the President of the Church: "President Harold B. Lee is a pillar of truth and righteousness, a true seer who has great spiritual strength and insight and wisdom, and whose knowledge and understanding of the Church and its needs is not surpassed." (*Ibid.*, p. 27.)

Advice to Frederick G. Williams

As the Lord said to Frederick G. Williams, second counselor to the Prophet Joseph Smith: ". . . Listen to the voice of him who speaketh, to the word of the Lord your God, . . .

"Unto whom I have given the keys of the kingdom, which belong always unto the Presidency of the High Priesthood:

"Therefore, verily I acknowledge him and will bless him, and also thee, inasmuch as thou art faithful in counsel, in the office which I have appointed unto you, in prayer always, vocally and in thy heart, in public and in private, also in thy ministry in proclaiming the gospel in the land of the living, and among thy brethren." (D&C 81:1-3.)

This applies to every holder of the priesthood.

Giving heed to prophet's words

The words of the Lord to the Prophet Joseph in his call to preside over the Church apply equally to our beloved President Harold B. Lee: ". . . thou shalt be called a seer, a translator, a prophet, an apostle of Jesus Christ. . .

"Wherefore, meaning the church, thou shalt give heed unto all his words and commandments which he shall give unto you as he receiveth them, walking in all holiness before me;

"For his word ye shall receive, as if from mine own mouth, in all patience and faith.

"For by doing these things the

gates of hell shall not prevail against you; yea, and the Lord God will disperse the powers of darkness from before you, and cause the heavens to shake for your good, and his name's glory.

"For thus saith the Lord God: Him have I inspired to move the cause of Zion in mighty power for good, and his diligence I know, and his prayers I have heard.

". . . behold, I will bless all those who labor in my vineyard with a mighty blessing, and they shall believe on his words, which are given him through me by the Comforter, which manifesteth that Jesus was crucified by sinful men for the sins of the world, yea, for the remission of sins unto the contrite heart." (D&C 21:1, 4-7, 9.)

You deacons, you teachers, you priests, you elders and seventies and high priests, what a tremendous privilege it is to hold the priesthood of God and have a prophet of God directing us today!

As Joseph F. Smith clearly stated regarding the President of the Church: "Every officer in the Church is under his direction, and he is directed of God." (*Gospel Doctrine*, p. 174.)

Duties of the President

Let us always remember this. The President of the Church holds the keys of the Melchizedek Priesthood, and there is no business or office in the Church that the President of the Church may not fill. In fact, every office in the Church belongs to the President.

The Lord, in speaking to the Prophet Joseph Smith, said: "And again, the duty of the President of the office of the High Priesthood is to preside over the whole church, and to be like unto Moses—

"Behold, here is wisdom; yea, to be a seer, a revelator, a translator, and a prophet, having all the gifts of God which he bestows upon the head of the church." (D&C 107:91-92.)

It is most important that we, as members of the Church, accept without reservation President Lee as a prophet of God and as our leader. I am glad I can say that from the bottom of my heart with every bit of feeling I have. Let us listen to the prophet's voice and follow him, not blindly but by faith. As we do this, we will never go astray. No holder of the priesthood can take it lightly. It is important that every member magnify his priesthood and realize that it is a great privilege and blessing to be able to hold the priesthood of God.

Living worthily

We must be true to the faith and dependable in every way. We must be an example to the world. I want to say to you young men, remember that the priesthood which you hold is the power of God delegated to you to act in his name in the office which you hold. The Lord expects each and every one of us to live worthy of this priesthood and be an example to the world. As President Lee said when he was first interviewed after being appointed President of this Church, and which has been referred to today, his message to the world, and surely to every one of us, is "Keep the commandments." As we do this, we will be blessed.

We never know what position or blessing the Lord has in store for us. It is our responsibility to prepare for any call that may come to us. Joseph who was sold into Egypt had no idea that he was the one chosen to save his people. Through his faithfulness and by overcoming temptation he was blessed and strengthened by the Lord and recognized for his faithfulness.

Moses in his youth did not know he was to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt, and Mormon did not know in advance of the great and important work he and his son Moroni would perform in preparing and preserving

the sacred records concerning the gospel of Jesus Christ.

In each case it was because they proved their faithfulness from boyhood, and in every position they held they proved themselves worthy and were accepted by the Lord.

Faith of youth of Zion

I was thrilled as that group sang this afternoon: "Shall the youth of Zion falter," and then clearly sang, "No!" There is a difference in singing "No" and meaning "no," and in living it, and I should like to urge every young man under the sound of my voice this night to prove to the Lord that the youth of Zion have not and will not falter, but they will be an example to the world, an influence for good. And remember, if you want to be great men, you have to be great boys and youth. Prepare yourselves as our President did while he was in his youth.

Joseph Smith at age 14 had no idea that he would be President of the Church and a prophet of God. All he wanted was to know which church was true. He was foreordained, as each and every one of us is for some purpose, and because he proved faithful and lived worthy he was called to this high position. Let us live so as to be worthy and accomplish those things for which we have been foreordained.

Acting in all diligence

President Lee as a young man had no idea that he would ever be President of the Church, but his faithful performance in every office he held proved him worthy. It is just as important that the president of the deacons quorum or teachers quorum perform his duties and walk uprightly before the Lord as it is for the president of the elders, seventies, or high priests if he wants to be an instrument in the hands of the Lord. The Lord expects every man to do his duty and to be true to the cove-

nants he makes. As is recorded in the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord said: "Wherefore, now let every man learn his duty, and to act in the office in which he is appointed, in all diligence.

"He that is slothful shall not be counted worthy to stand, and he that learns not his duty and shows himself not approved shall not be counted worthy to stand. Even so. Amen." (D&C 107:99-100.)

"Why should we think to earn a great reward, if we now shun the fight?" It is important that every holder of the priesthood, old and young, discipline himself, overcome evil, keep himself morally clean, keep the Word of Wisdom, keep the Sabbath day holy, be honest in his dealings, true to the trust of others, and live so as to be loved and respected by all who know him, that others seeing his good works may be led to glorify our Father in heaven.

We must see that the work of the Lord goes forward and help his church and kingdom here upon the earth to grow and expand until it fills the whole earth. This is our responsibility as holders of the priesthood.

Blessings to the faithful

Man is that he might have joy. Have a good time. Enjoy life by doing those things which are right. There is no joy

or satisfaction in sin, but there are great blessings promised to the faithful. No young man under the sound of my voice knows for what he was foreordained or what is in store for him, but the Lord has promised that "all saints who remember to keep and do these sayings, walking in obedience to the commandments [he was not referring to the Word of Wisdom only, but walking in obedience to *all* the commandments] shall receive health in their navel and marrow to their bones;

"And shall find wisdom and great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures;

"And shall run and not be weary, and shall walk and not faint.

"And I, the Lord, give unto them a promise, that the destroying angel shall pass by them, as the children of Israel, and not slay them." (D&C 89:18-21.)

May we all express our appreciation every night and every morning to the Lord for the privilege we have of being members of his church and of holding his priesthood, and pray for courage and strength to live as we should and thereby prepare ourselves and help others to prepare themselves for eternal life, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President Harold B. Lee

I have some thoughts—notes that I thought I might be prompted to use tonight. So, if the Lord is willing, I should like to talk to you now for a few minutes in this great conference.

Call from First Presidency

I had a lesson years ago as to the greatness of priesthood. It had to do with the call of the First Presidency for

me to come to their office on a day that I shall never forget—April 20, 1935. I was city commissioner in Salt Lake City. I was a stake president.

We had been wrestling with this question of welfare. There were few government work programs; the finances of the Church were low; we were told that there wasn't much that could be done so far as the finances of the Church were concerned. And here