

Remain active

Third: "I am always going to be active in God's Church!"

That will provide an anchor for you like nothing else on earth, for it will give you the opportunity to discover for yourself the real meaning of happiness. It will assure you that, no matter where you go, you belong—for you have brothers and sisters who love you and sustain you. You will know something of the brotherhood of the gospel of Jesus Christ: you will become acquainted with him as your Savior; and you will keep your testimony burning brightly.

Consider what such goals will do for you. When temptations come, as they surely will, you are going to be prepared. You will have made the choice in advance: "I am going on a mission!" "I am going to be married in the temple!" "I am always going to be active in God's Church!" "Therefore, I will not partake!" When you make those basic decisions in advance, think how many other decisions are already made: living the Word of Wisdom, keeping morally clean, attending your meetings, paying tithing, studying the gospel, and so forth. You will not compromise on any important principle. You will be in control of your life, and you will enjoy the peace and serenity that come with keeping the commandments of God.

Unique, important roles

How I pray that our Father in Heaven will bless you choice young men to understand that you are sons

of God with unique, important roles to play in life and heavy responsibilities to your fellowmen; that he will bless you with wisdom, courage, patience, understanding, love for your brothers and sisters, and deep faith in the Lord and his gospel; and that he will keep you clean and wholesome and strong in the face of temptations and evil.

And may you realize that this is your world, a beautiful world with unlimited opportunities to grow, to learn, and to serve. Will you make it a better world through the preparations you make now and the noble service you render throughout your life as a token of the love you have for your Father in Heaven and his Son, bearing witness of the truth of the gospel through your powerful example and the precepts you teach your fellowmen. "Hope of Israel, rise in might," and be that army that God can use to further his great purpose, I pray, in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, our Savior, amen.

President Marion G. Romney

Elder Robert L. Backman, a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy, has just spoken to us.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "Praise to the Man."

The hymn "Praise to the Man" was sung by the choir and congregation.

President Romney speaks without announcement.

President Marion G. Romney

My beloved brethren, the schedule of this conference calls for me to make some remarks at this time. I

have in mind saying a few words about "the oath and covenant which belongeth to the priesthood" (D&C

84:39), since we're all priesthood bearers here in this great assemblage. As we have been celebrating this, the sesquicentennial anniversary of the organization of the Church, I have recalled that ten months prior to that organization the Prophet Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery had received from Peter, James, and John the Melchizedek Priesthood.

Covenants

Traditionally, God's people have always been known as a covenant people. The gospel itself is the new and everlasting covenant. The posterity of Abraham through Isaac and Jacob constitute what is known as the covenant race. We come into the Church by covenant, which we enter into when we go into the waters of baptism. The new and everlasting covenant of celestial marriage is the gate to exaltation in the celestial kingdom. Men receive the Melchizedek Priesthood by an oath and covenant.

A covenant is an agreement between two or more parties. An oath is a sworn attestation to the inviolability of the promises in the agreement. In the covenant of the priesthood the parties are the Father—that's the Lord—and the receiver of the priesthood. Each party to the covenant undertakes certain obligations. The receiver undertakes to magnify his calling in the priesthood. The Father, by oath and covenant, promises the receiver that if he does so magnify his priesthood he will be sanctified by the Spirit unto the renewing of his body; that he will become a member of "the church and kingdom, and the elect of God," and receive the "Father's kingdom; therefore," said the Savior, "all that my Father hath shall be given unto him" (D&C 84:33-34, 38).

It is of such—that is, those who receive the priesthood and magnify it—that the following was written:

"They are they into whose hands the Father has given all things—

"They are they who are priests and kings, who have received of his fulness, and of his glory;

"And are priests of the Most High, after the order of . . . the Only Begotten Son.

"Wherefore, as it is written, they are gods, even the sons of God." (D&C 76:55-58.)

These transcendent blessings the Father promises the receiver of the Melchizedek Priesthood by an oath and covenant which he says "he cannot break, neither can it be moved" (D&C 84:40). But these blessings, as has already been indicated, do not come by ordination alone. Ordination to the priesthood is a prerequisite to receiving them, but it does not guarantee them. For a man to actually obtain them he must faithfully discharge the obligation which is placed upon him when he received the priesthood. That is, he must magnify his calling.

Magnify calling

Now let us consider for a moment just what magnifying one's calling in the priesthood means. Speaking to the assembled bearers of the priesthood at the time the oath and covenant was revealed, the Lord said, "*I have given the heavenly hosts and mine angels charge concerning you*" (D&C 84:42; italics added). This has always been an extremely impressive and sacred statement to me—to think that the Lord has given his angels and his heavenly hosts charge concerning those who receive the priesthood.

Then, addressing the elders, he continued:

"And I now give unto you [you bearers of the priesthood] a commandment to beware concerning yourselves, to give diligent heed to the words of eternal life.

"For you shall live by every word that proceedeth forth from the mouth of God." (D&C 84:43-44.) It is compliance with this charge which entitles the bearer of the priesthood to the blessings and rewards offered by the Father in "the oath and covenant which belongeth to the priesthood."

Status of one who breaks covenant

The status of one who receives the priesthood and then breaks the covenant is explained by the Lord in this language:

"Whoso breaketh this covenant after he hath received it, and altogether turneth therefrom, shall not have forgiveness of sins in this world nor in the world to come" (D&C 84:41). With such a penalty prescribed for breaking it, one might be prompted to question the advisability of accepting the obligations of the covenant; that is, he might question it until he reads the verse which follows the statement of the penalty. There he learns that those who do not receive the oath and covenant are not *much*, if any, better off than those who receive it and break it. For in that verse the Lord says: "And wo unto all those who come not unto this priesthood which ye have received" (D&C 84:42).

Such is the sober import of "the oath and covenant which belongeth to the priesthood" (italics added). You can read it in full just as the Lord gave it in section 84 of the Doctrine and Covenants beginning with verse 33.

It is apparent from this revelation that the only way a man can make the maximum progress towards eternal life, for which mortality is designed, is to obtain and magnify the Melchizedek Priesthood. With "eternal life, . . . the greatest of all the gifts of God" (D&C 14:7) depending upon it, it is of utmost importance that we keep clearly in mind

what the magnifying of our callings in the priesthood requires of us. I am persuaded that it requires at least the following three things:

1. That we obtain a knowledge of the gospel.
2. That we comply in our personal living with the standards of the gospel.
3. That we give dedicated service.

Obtain gospel knowledge

As to the importance of a knowledge of the gospel, the Prophet Joseph Smith said that "it is impossible for a man to be saved in ignorance" (D&C 131:6). That he had in mind ignorance of gospel truths is evident from the fact that on another occasion he said:

"A man is saved no faster than he gets knowledge, for if he does not get knowledge, he will be brought into captivity by some evil power in the other world, as evil spirits will have more knowledge, and consequently more power than many men who are on the earth. Hence it needs revelation to assist us, and give us knowledge of the things of God." (*History of the Church*, 4:588.)

There is no knowledge other than knowledge of the things of God that will save us. "Ye must grow in grace and in the knowledge of the truth," said the Lord to the brethren in the infant days of the Church (D&C 50:40).

In the revelation given to President Brigham Young at Winter Quarters in January 1847, the Lord said:

"Let him that is ignorant learn wisdom by humbling himself and calling upon the Lord his God, that his eyes may be opened that he may see, and his ears opened that he may hear;

"For my Spirit is sent forth into the world to enlighten the humble and contrite, and to the con-

demnation of the ungodly" (D&C 136:32-33).

Fourteen years earlier the Lord had thus counseled the brethren:

"I give unto you a commandment that ye shall continue in prayer and fasting from this time forth.

"And I give unto you a commandment that you shall teach one another the doctrine of the kingdom.

"Teach ye diligently and my grace shall attend you, that you may be instructed more perfectly in theory, in principle, in doctrine, in the law of the gospel, in all things that pertain unto the kingdom of God, that are expedient for you to understand." (D&C 88:76-78.)

One of the best ways to learn the gospel is to search the scriptures. Our purpose in urging all bearers of the Melchizedek Priesthood to read the Book of Mormon is that they may learn more about the gospel. One cannot sincerely study the Book of Mormon without learning gospel truths, because it contains "the fullness of the gospel of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles and to the Jews also" (D&C 20:9). So impressed was the Prophet Joseph with it that he "told the brethren that the Book of Mormon was the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion, and a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book" (*History of the Church*, 4:461).

Live the standards

Learning the gospel from books, however, is not enough. It must be lived by one who would magnify his calling in the priesthood. As a matter of fact, getting a knowledge of the gospel and living it are interdependent. They go hand in hand. One cannot fully learn the gospel without living it. A knowledge of the gospel comes by degrees. One learns a little, obeys what he learns, learns a little more, obeys that, and repeats

this cycle in an endless round. Such is the pattern by which one can move on to a full knowledge of the gospel.

John the Beloved says that this was the way Jesus himself attained a fullness. He wrote:

"I, John, saw that he received not of the fullness at the first, but received grace for grace;

"And he . . . continued from grace to grace, until he received a fullness" (D&C 93:12-13). Jesus prescribed the process for us in these words:

"If you keep my commandments you shall receive of his fullness, and be glorified in me as I am in the Father; therefore, I say unto you, you shall receive grace for grace" (D&C 93:20). And in another scripture:

"And no man receiveth a fullness unless he keepeth his commandments.

"He that keepeth his commandments receiveth truth and light, until he is glorified in truth and knoweth all things" (D&C 93:27-28). I can't understand how one can read these words without joy filling his heart.

Jesus further points out that the commandments we are required to keep are given in the scriptures, and adds: "If thou lovest me thou shalt serve me and keep all my commandments" (D&C 42:29). And "unto him that keepeth my commandments I will give the mysteries of my kingdom, and the same shall be in him a well of living water, springing up unto everlasting life" (D&C 63:23).

Many of the commandments concerning our personal conduct are to be found in section 42 of the Doctrine and Covenants, which the Prophet Joseph specifies "as embracing the law of the Church" (D&C 42, headnote). Every priesthood bearer should be familiar with this revelation and with the instructions given in section 59 and section 88, particularly verses 117 to 126. Indeed, a priesthood bearer with

serious intentions of so magnifying his calling as to merit the blessing of the "covenant which belongeth to the priesthood" should be conversant with all the instructions given to guide us in our personal conduct—both those recorded in the scriptures and those being received currently by the living prophets. One can scarcely hope to be fortified "against the wiles of the devil" by putting "on the whole armour of God" (see Eph. 6:11) unless he knows what that armor is.

Render dedicated service

But the commandments do not pertain alone to one's personal conduct. They put on every bearer of the priesthood the stimulating responsibility to render service—service in carrying the restored gospel, with all the blessings of the priesthood, to the peoples of the earth; and service in comforting, strengthening, and perfecting the lives of one another and all the Saints of God.

The nature of this service is spelled out in detail in the revelations and by the living prophets. The burden of it the Lord has laid upon his priesthood. It can be done properly only by men who are magnifying their priesthood—who know the gospel, conform their lives to its stan-

dards, and enthusiastically give dedicated service in the spirit of the divine proclamation that "men should be anxiously engaged in a good cause, and do many things of their own free will, and bring to pass much righteousness; for the power is in them" (D&C 58:27-28).

Such men are magnifying their callings, and they shall obtain the rewards promised by the Lord in the "oath and covenant which belongeth to the priesthood." That each of us may be found in this choice group, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Marion G. Romney

President Spencer W. Kimball, our beloved leader, will be our concluding speaker.

Before President Kimball speaks, we note that the nationwide CBS Radio Tabernacle Choir broadcast will be from 9:30 to 10:00 Sunday morning. Those desiring to attend must be in their seats before 9:15 A.M.

Following President Kimball's address, the choir will close this meeting with "Beautiful Saviour," following which Elder G. Homer Durham, a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy, will offer the benediction.

President Spencer W. Kimball

My dear brethren, it is always a great joy for me to have the privilege of meeting with you in general priesthood meeting. We are gathered here in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City and in more than 2,000 other places around the world. Just think of the mighty and sacred power that is represented by this assemblage of men and boys. I rejoice with you, my brethren, in the manifold blessings which are ours in holding the priesthood of God!

Members urged to vote

Brethren, there is one matter I should like to mention at the very beginning of my remarks. To those of you who are citizens of the United States: I wish to urge you and your family members of voting age to go to the polls in large numbers next month on Tuesday, November 4, and vote for the strongest, finest people who are certain to do the most to safeguard the rights and freedoms of