

Brethren, I testify to you that the priesthood is divine. We have been given it to bless the lives of others, as well as our own. May we remember the importance of preparing hearts as we teach sacred truths. May we renew the purification process in each of us so that we might be a strength and not a hindrance to those we love most, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

### President Hinckley

Bishop H. Burke Peterson, First Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric and First Counselor in the Presidency of the Aaronic Priesthood of the

Church, has just spoken to us.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "Come, Come, Ye Saints," following which I have been asked to speak to you.

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The choir and congregation sang "Come, Come, Ye Saints."

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### President Hinckley

President Romney was to have spoken when I concluded, and he has asked that he be excused from doing so and that I take all the time. They really are turning it over to the kids!

## President Gordon B. Hinckley

### Priesthood of Aaron

"Upon you my fellow servants, in the name of Messiah I confer the Priesthood of Aaron, which holds the keys of the ministering of angels, and of the gospel of repentance, and of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; and this shall never be taken again from the earth, until the sons of Levi do offer again an offering unto the Lord in righteousness" (D&C 13).

All of you recognize these words as section 13 of the Doctrine and Covenants. They are the words of John the Baptist to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery as he laid his hands upon their heads and conferred upon them the Aaronic Priesthood on 15 May 1829.

When I was a little boy, twelve years of age, and was about to be ordained a deacon, my father challenged me to memorize those words. I did so, and they have remained with me throughout my life.

We have many boys with us tonight, and I should like all of the boys who hold the Aaronic Priest-

hood who are in the Tabernacle, and in every other hall where this meeting is heard, to stand and repeat with me these words.

"Upon you my fellow servants, in the name of Messiah I confer the Priesthood of Aaron, which holds the keys of the ministering of angels, and of the gospel of repentance, and of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; and this shall never be taken again from the earth, until the sons of Levi do offer again an offering unto the Lord in righteousness."

I want to commend those who knew and repeated these words. Some of you did not repeat them, and I urge you to open the Doctrine and Covenants when you go home and to read these words and memorize them. They are the charter of the priesthood you hold. They are evidence that this priesthood is valid and genuine in every respect.

### Powers in the priesthood

Now I would like to talk with you about some of the particular

words of this statement given by John the Baptist when he restored this priesthood. I think you should be aware, if you are not already aware, of the powers you have in the priesthood you hold.

First, I should like to call your attention to the words "my fellow servants." Have you ever realized that in the holding and exercise of this priesthood you are a fellow servant with John the Baptist, the very man who, while he was alive, baptized Jesus, the Savior of the world and the Son of God, in the waters of the River Jordan? It is interesting to me that John spoke to Joseph and Oliver, when they were both young men and when they were not highly regarded by people of the world, as his fellow servants. He did not speak down to them as a king might speak to one of his subjects. He did not speak down to them as a judge might speak to an individual on trial before him. He did not speak down to them as a university president or a high school principal might speak to his students. Rather, he who was a resurrected being addressed these young men as his fellow servants. To me there is something wonderful in this. It speaks of the true spirit of the great and magnificent brotherhood of which we are all a part, the priesthood of God. We are all servants together, regardless of our position in the Church or in the world, regardless of wealth or lack of it, regardless of the color of our skin—we are all servants together, brothers one to another and sons of God as a part of this great body of sacred priesthood.

That should mean something to each of us. It does not demean us or put us down in any way. It elevates all of us as fellow servants of the Lord in the responsibility of carrying on the work of the ministry in his Church. You and I, including all of the Brethren seated on the stand in this Tabernacle, and each of you out across the Church in many places,

are all fellow servants of the Lord; we hold the holy priesthood and have the right to exercise it in the work of which we are a part. I hope you will never forget this, particularly you young men.

The next phrase to which I bring your attention denotes the authority in which John spoke. Said he, "in the name of Messiah." None of us exercises this priesthood in the power or authority which we have naturally within ourselves. Always in the exercise of the priesthood we do it in the authority of Messiah. Who was Messiah? He was Jesus Christ, the Son of God. John might have said "in the name of Jesus Christ," as we usually do. I hope you will never forget that in exercising your priesthood as young men, whether in passing the sacrament, in serving as a home teacher, in administering the sacrament, or in baptizing, you are acting as a servant of the Lord in his holy name and by his divine authority.

Boys, if you will remember this, it will have a tremendous influence upon your lives. You will know that if you are to serve in the name of Jesus Christ, as one holding the priesthood, you cannot with propriety be dishonest, you cannot abuse your bodies with drugs or alcohol or tobacco, you cannot take the name of the Lord in vain, you cannot be morally unclean. You hold the priesthood which authorizes you to act in the name of Jesus Christ. I plead with you tonight to live worthy of the exercise of this priesthood at all times and under all circumstances.

### **Right to guidance, protection, and blessings**

Then John the Baptist, in his bestowal of this authority, spoke concerning the powers of this priesthood. He said, among other things, that it "holds the keys of the ministering of angels."

When Wilford Woodruff, a man

who had lived many years and had many experiences, was the President of the Church, he said to the boys of the Aaronic Priesthood: "I desire to impress upon you the fact that it does not make any difference whether a man is a Priest or an Apostle, if he magnifies his calling. A Priest holds the keys of the ministering of angels," said he. "Never in my life, as an Apostle, as a Seventy, or as an Elder, have I ever had more of the protection of the Lord than while holding the office of a Priest." (*Millennial Star*, 53:629.)

Think of it, my dear young brethren. This priesthood which you hold carries with it the keys of the ministering of angels. That means, as I interpret it, that if you live worthy of the priesthood, you have the right to receive and enjoy the very power of heavenly beings to guide you, to protect you, to bless you. What boy, if he is thoughtful, would not welcome this remarkable blessing?

In the same talk from which I quoted a statement from President Woodruff, he also said: "After I came to these valleys and returned to Winter Quarters, I was sent to Boston by President Brigham Young. . . . While on the road there, I drove my carriage one evening into the yard of Brother Williams. Brother Orson Hyde drove a wagon by the side of mine. I had my wife and children in the carriage. After I turned out my team and had my supper I went to bed in the carriage. I had not been there but a few minutes when the Spirit said to me, 'Get up and move that carriage.' I told my wife I had to get up and move the carriage. She said, 'What for?' I said, 'I don't know.' That is all she asked me on such occasions; when I told her I did not know, that was enough. I got up and moved my carriage four or five rods, and put the off fore wheel against the corner of the house. I then looked around me and went to bed. The same Spirit said, 'Go and move your animals

from that oak tree.' They were two hundred yards from where my carriage was. I went and moved my horses, and put them in a little hickory grove. I again went to bed.

"In thirty minutes a whirlwind came up and broke that oak tree off within two feet from the ground. It swept over three or four fences and fell square in that dooryard, near Brother Orson Hyde's wagon, and right where mine had stood. What would have been the consequences if I had not listened to that Spirit? Why, myself and wife and children doubtless would have been killed. That was the still, small voice to me—no earthquake, no thunder, no lightning—but the still, small voice of the Spirit of God. It saved my life. It was the spirit of revelation to me." (*Millennial Star*, 53:642-3.)

Such was the testimony of a great and wise and prayerful man who became the President of the Church. He told that story while talking of the blessing that is yours as one who has received the priesthood and who is eligible to have "the ministering of angels."

Of course, you know, as I know, that none of us can expect this great blessing if our lives are not as they should be as Latter-day Saints who hold the priesthood.

### Teach repentance

The next words given by John to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery— "[the keys] of the gospel of repentance."

Many of you are teachers and priests and have home teaching assignments. You have the authority in this service to be teachers of repentance—that is, to encourage those Latter-day Saints for whom you have some responsibility to live the gospel principles more faithfully. A young man who is a priest comes to my home with his father as a home teacher. He has the opportunity and the responsibility to encourage me to

live more fully the principles of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ.

The great burden of our work in the ministry of the Lord is to teach repentance, to encourage people to resist sin and to walk uprightly before the Lord. This is the gospel of repentance, and yours is the responsibility and the authority under the priesthood which you hold to teach this gospel of repentance. You recognize, of course, that if you are to do so effectively, your own life must be an example.

And now the next statement of John the Baptist as he conferred the Aaronic Priesthood— “[the keys] of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins.”

As all of you who are priests know, you have the authority to baptize by immersion for the remission of sins. Have you ever thought of the wonder of that power?

If a man or woman has truly repented of his or her sins, then he or she may be eligible to be baptized by immersion with the understanding that those sins will be forgiven and that life can begin anew.

It is no small or unimportant thing to baptize an individual. You as a young priest, acting in the name of the Lord and under divine authority, wipe out, as it were, by the marvelous process of baptism, the sins of the past and bring about a birth into a new and better life. What a tremendous responsibility you have to live worthy of the exercise of this sacred power!

### **Cultivate Holy Spirit of God**

Now, as I speak to you young men I wish to repeat in conclusion some other words spoken by President Wilford Woodruff.

The occasion was a Sunday afternoon, on February 28, 1897. The place was this Tabernacle. It was in commemoration of President Woodruff's ninetieth birthday. This great building was filled to capacity

with all seats occupied and the aisles packed in every part of the building, such as we are not permitted to do now. It is estimated there were more than ten thousand young people present—a vast congregation of young men your age and young women of the same age. President Woodruff, who was then weak in body and whose voice was not strong, stood at the pulpit where I stand and said, particularly to the young men present, these words:

“I have passed through the periods of boyhood, early manhood and old age. I cannot expect to tarry a great while longer with you, but I want to give you a few words of counsel. You occupy a position in the Church and Kingdom of God and have received the power of the holy priesthood. The God of heaven has appointed you and called you forth in this day and generation. I want you to look at this. Young men listen to the counsel of your brethren. Live near to God; pray while young; learn to pray; learn to cultivate the Holy Spirit of God; link it to you and it will become a spirit of revelation unto you, inasmuch as you nourish it. . . .”

He went on to say: “God in heaven has willed to spare me to see this day. He has given me power to reject every testimony and reject every example that leads to evil. I say to you . . . do not use tobacco, liquor, or any of these things that destroy the body and mind, but honor Him and you will have a mission upon your heads that the world knows not of. May God bless you. Amen.” (*Wilford Woodruff: Fourth President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, prepared for publication by Matthias F. Cowley, Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1909, pp. 602–3.)

### **Walk in dignity of sacred calling**

I echo that great counsel of President Wilford Woodruff as I tes-

tify to you young men this night that God our Eternal Father lives and that Jesus Christ is his Beloved Son, that the priesthood of which we have spoken is verily here upon the earth, and that we are partakers of its blessings, powers, and responsibilities.

God bless the young men of the Aaronic Priesthood, that they may walk in the dignity of the sacred and marvelous calling and authority that has been conferred upon them through the mercy and goodness of the God of heaven.

### **Sacrament meetings—for spiritual growth**

And now, at the risk involved in speaking on an entirely different subject, I should like to say a few words to you older brethren, and particularly to those of you who serve in bishoprics. I wish to speak a few thoughts concerning sacrament meetings.

We who are responsible for these meetings deny our people a great blessing if we fail to see that they are spiritual, that they become meetings in which the gospel is taught and in which testimony is borne, particularly concerning the Savior of the world.

The sacrament meeting is not a time for entertainment; it is not a time for telling stories unrelated to the gospel. Rather, it is time in which to grow spiritually and in which to increase our understanding of the marvelous revelations of the Lord concerning his eternal plan and of himself as our Savior and our Redeemer.

It is in our sacrament meetings that we should be testifying of the Lord and teaching of his life and ways, and particularly of his redeeming sacrifice.

I think the Lord had in mind our sacrament meetings when, in a revelation given to Joseph Smith August

7, 1831, he said to us and to all of the people of his Church:

“And that thou mayest more fully keep thyself unspotted from the world, thou shalt go to the house of prayer and offer up thy sacraments upon my holy day; . . .

“Remember that on this, the Lord’s day, thou shalt offer thine oblations and thy sacraments unto the Most High, confessing thy sins unto thy brethren, and before the Lord.” (D&C 59:9, 12.)

How shall our people keep themselves unspotted from the world unless they develop within themselves the spiritual strength and capacity to resist temptation that is so rampant everywhere we go these days? And where shall they develop such discipline? I think the meaning of this revelation is clear: they shall develop such discipline of self and such desire to live above the stains of the world in their communion with the Lord as worshipers in sacrament meetings.

### **Spirit of reverence**

Every sacrament meeting ought to be a spiritual feast. It ought to be a time for meditation and introspection, a time for singing songs of praise to the Lord, a time of renewing one’s covenants with him and our Eternal Father, and a time for hearing the word of the Lord with reverence and appreciation.

I plead with you who are responsible for these meetings that you strive a little more diligently to program them in such a manner that each sacrament meeting will become a time for spiritual refreshing. I plead with all of you who participate in these meetings, and I include with some emphasis you boys, to see that there is cultivated a spirit of reverence in these sacred gatherings.

It is not easy to keep oneself unspotted from the world. Each of us needs all the help he can get. The

Lord has given us direction in how to achieve this. That direction is clear and unequivocal. I pray that we shall follow it, as I leave with you, my brethren of the holy priesthood, my testimony and witness of the divinity of this work, and invoke the blessings of the Lord upon you. In

the name of him whom we serve, even the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

### **President Hinckley**

President Romney will now speak to us.

## **President Marion G. Romney**

I have enjoyed being here with you in this meeting and have enjoyed the talks that have been given. I feel that the Spirit of the Lord has been with us.

his service in the respective offices in the priesthood that we hold.

### **The power of the priesthood**

It is a great thing to hold the priesthood of God, and that is what this is tonight—a priesthood meeting. The priesthood of God is power. It is an endowment, which the Lord has given to us who hold the priesthood, to perform sacred ordinances that have effect in this world and in the world to come. It is the greatest power in the world—the priesthood—and I am very happy that I have had the privilege through the years to bear the priesthood and to receive offices in the priesthood from deacon up to the offices of the Melchizedek Priesthood which I have had assignments to work in. I know that it is the priesthood that will save this world. It is not a man-made organization; it is not a man-prepared organization—it embodies a power revealed from heaven and sent here to us to help us prepare our lives for eternal life in the presence of our Father in Heaven.

### **The priesthood is sacred**

I have held the priesthood for three-quarters of a century, from the time I was a deacon until I now hold the Melchizedek Priesthood, and I have enjoyed it all through the years. It has been sacred to me, and it is sacred to me now. I hope that you have the same feeling about the priesthood. Don't ever do anything that you would be ashamed of, that you would be ashamed to talk to the Lord about, because we will meet him some day if we live the gospel well enough to have that privilege. We will be very grateful then, if we know, as he will know, that our lives have been in harmony with the teachings of the gospel and the responsibility that is placed upon us who hold the priesthood.

It is a great thing to see this building completely filled with bearers of the priesthood, both men who bear the Melchizedek Priesthood—old men like myself—and young men who bear the Aaronic Priesthood. I hope that we appreciate the authority that the Lord has given us to act in

### **Blessing**

I have enjoyed this meeting. I am glad I came, and I am glad I have heard what I have heard here tonight. I pray the Lord will bless each boy and man, old and young, that is here tonight with the feeling and determination that he will live the teachings of the gospel and magnify the priesthood which the Lord has given him. It will be a great day for us individually when we are called to give an account of our deeds down here on the earth, if