

When wicked wants  
Of greed and fame  
Coax me to live the ways of men  
The Lifeline lassos  
Evil thoughts  
And whips me into shape again.

When all the world  
Is crashing down,  
When friends and family all  
desert,  
Within the rubble  
Comfort comes—  
The Lifeline takes away my hurt.

Holding fast,  
It gives me strength  
And power beyond my human  
being  
To bless and give  
To those in need  
And share with them the love I'm  
seeing.

Life's pathway leads  
To joy unknown  
When the Lifeline is my guide—  
Each step I take  
Brings peace of mind  
While grasping to it by my side.

The much relied-on  
Faithful friend

Is anchored in an unseen place—  
I long to know  
My Lifeline's source  
And meet this Savior face to face.

Oh, when I die  
And all my life  
Is lain before my eyes to view,  
I'll recognize  
The Savior's hand  
And know His lifeline pulled me  
through.

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### President Hinckley

Elder Rex D. Pinegar has just spoken to us.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "Praise to the Man," following which Elder Carlos E. Asay, a member of the Presidency of the First Quorum of the Seventy, will speak to us.

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The choir and congregation sang "Praise to the Man."

Elder Carlos E. Asay spoke without further announcement.

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## Elder Carlos E. Asay

### The oath and covenant of the priesthood

Of all the holy agreements pertaining to the gospel of Jesus Christ, few, if any, would transcend in importance the oath and covenant of the priesthood. It is certainly one of the most sacred agreements, for it involves the sharing of heavenly powers and man's upward reaching toward eternal goals. None of us can afford to be ignorant of the terms of this contract. To do so might cause us to miss the mark in our performance of duty and result in the forfeiture of promised blessings.

A gospel covenant is a holy contract. "God in his good pleasure fixes the terms, which man accepts" (Bible Dictionary, LDS ed., s.v. "covenant").

The two parties to the priesthood covenant are man and God. Man covenants to do certain things or meet certain conditions; God cites promises that he will give in return.

### Man's covenant

1. *Receive the Melchizedek Priesthood in Good Faith.* When a man has the Melchizedek Priesthood conferred upon him, he is expected to re-

ceive it in good faith. The word *receive* is used generously in the Doctrine and Covenants verses that describe the oath and covenant of the priesthood:

"All they who receive this priesthood receive me, saith the Lord; . . .

"And he that receiveth me receiveth my Father;

"And he that receiveth my Father receiveth my Father's kingdom" (D&C 84:35, 37-38).

As people are confirmed members of the Church, those in authority lay hands upon their heads and command, "Receive the Holy Ghost." Does not the same apply to the conferral of priesthood power? Several years ago, my father laid his hands upon my head to confer upon me the Melchizedek Priesthood and, as described in the Old Testament, to "put some of [his] honour upon [me] . . . and gave [me] a charge." (See Numbers 27:18-23.) I knew that he had power to bestow. I knew that that power was real, and I knew the ultimate source of that power. So I received the holy priesthood in good faith.

2. *Magnify Callings.* President Kimball defines *priesthood*, in part, as "the means whereby the Lord acts through men to save souls" (*Ensign*, June 1975, p. 3). This definition suggests action, not inaction. It implies that priesthood power is to be exercised in behalf of other people; it is not something to sit upon or to simply glory in. It suggests that priesthood callings are to be *magnified*.

The transcendent blessings of the priesthood do not come by ordination alone. We are instructed:

"Ordination to the priesthood is a prerequisite to receiving [blessings], but it does not guarantee them. For a man actually to obtain them, he must faithfully discharge the obligation which is placed upon him when he receives the priesthood" (Marion G. Romney, in Conference Report, Apr. 1962, p. 17).

What does it mean to magnify one's calling? According to *Webster's Third New International Dictionary*,

"to magnify" is "to increase the importance of: cause to be held in greater esteem or respect . . . to make greater." One magnifies a calling—

• By learning one's duty and executing it fully. (See D&C 107:99-100.)

• By giving one's best effort in assigned fields of labor.

• By consecrating one's time, talents, and means to the Lord's work as called upon by our leaders and the whisperings of the Spirit. (See Spencer W. Kimball, *Ensign*, Mar. 1985, p. 5.)

• By teaching and exemplifying truth.

Jacob, the Book of Mormon prophet, testified, "We did magnify our office unto the Lord, taking upon us the responsibility, . . . [teaching] them the word of God with all diligence; . . . [and] laboring with our might" (Jacob 1:19).

I underscore the words *taking responsibility, teaching the word of God, and laboring with might* in this inspired quotation. These are critical actions related to the exercise of priesthood power.

3. *Obey the Commandments.* In the revelation on priesthood, we read, "And I now give unto you a commandment . . . to give diligent heed to the words of eternal life" (D&C 84:43). "To give diligent heed," I believe, includes to *obey* the commandments.

No commandment or requirement of the gospel is nonessential. Each has its place, and all are to be respected. Not one is to be trifled with or placed aside as inconvenient.

A person who chooses to obey one commandment and ignore others is as foolish as the driver who adheres strictly to the posted speed limit but runs every stop sign and flaunts other rules of the road.

Let us remember that with every commandment, God has promised a blessing. If we expect to claim the blessing, we must keep the commandment. Otherwise, if we ignore or break the commandment, we are cursed by losing the blessing. (See

Deuteronomy 11:26–28.) It is a very simple but serious arrangement.

4. *Live by Every Word of God.* Addressing priesthood bearers, the Lord says, “For you shall live by every word that proceedeth forth from the mouth of God” (D&C 84:44; italics added). This statement reinforces the need for obedience. It also suggests the need to know the word of the Lord.

Words of eternal life come from one source: God. They are made available to us through the fountain of the holy scriptures and the fountain of living prophets and reconfirmed by personal revelation through the power of the Holy Ghost.

When we search the scriptures, we sit at the feet of prophets like Abraham, Isaiah, Peter, Paul, Nephi, Moroni, and Joseph Smith. These men received revelations in a former day and have much wisdom to share with us. Their counsel may be likened to a light positioned behind us. That light helps us understand things of the past and gives us partial vision for the future.

To receive added light, light positioned over and ahead of us, we must sit at the feet of living prophets, just as we are doing tonight. None of us need stumble along the way or depart from the path in the presence of such light. All we need to do is keep our eyes upon the prophets, heed their warnings, and live by their inspired words.

Men of the priesthood should burn these words into their minds:

“What I the Lord have spoken, I have spoken, and I excuse not myself; . . . my word . . . shall all be fulfilled, whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same” (D&C 1:38; see also 1:11–14).

I have indicated that a man who receives the Melchizedek Priesthood agrees (1) to receive it in good faith, (2) to magnify callings given, (3) to obey all the commandments, and (4) to live by every word of God. These four expectations compose man’s covenant as applied to the oath and covenant of the priesthood.

## God’s Promises and Oath

Next, let’s consider God’s promises and oath. You might ask, “If I fulfill my terms of the agreement, what has God promised in return?” Let us consider three promises:

*Promise 1. We Will Be Sanctified by the Spirit.* Note these words:

“For whoso is faithful unto the obtaining these two priesthoods of which I have spoken [Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthood], and the magnifying their calling, are sanctified by the Spirit unto the renewing of their bodies” (D&C 84:33).

On one occasion, President Hugh B. Brown testified that President David O. McKay had been sanctified by the Spirit unto the renewing of his body. And, he added, “Some of the rest of us are better off today than we were many years ago so far as physical health is concerned—and we attribute that fact to [the Lord’s] blessing” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1963, p. 90).

Many of us have felt the influence of this “renewal promise.” Without it, scores of our assignments might have gone unfinished.

*Promise 2: We Will Be Numbered with the Elect of God.* It is said of those who receive the holy priesthood and remain true to their covenants, “They become the sons of Moses and of Aaron and the seed of Abraham, and the church and kingdom, and the elect of God” (D&C 84:34).

Elder Bruce R. McConkie explains:

“These are the portion of church members who are striving with all their hearts to keep the fulness of the gospel law in this life so that they can become inheritors of the fulness of gospel rewards in the life to come” (*Mormon Doctrine*, 2d ed. [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966], p. 217).

We do not become saints automatically by entering the waters of baptism. We become saints, in the true sense of the word, as we live saintly

lives and cultivate Christlike attributes. Similarly, we do not become the elect of God instantaneously by receiving the priesthood. Such honor will come only so fast as we remember and perform according to the priesthood covenant.

*Promise 3: We Will Be Given All That God Has.* This all-encompassing promise is stated by Christ in these words: "All that my Father hath shall be given unto him" (D&C 84:38).

Few of us, I suppose, can comprehend all that this promise means. Even though we know that it includes eternal life, or the inheritance of exaltation, still it is so great and so wonderful that it defies proper explanation. It is sufficient for me to know that God in heaven is my Father and that he will bless me with all he has to offer, if I prove myself to be a faithful son.

I stand in humble adoration of my Maker when I realize that he has sworn and confirmed his part of the agreement with an oath. (See Hebrews 6:13-17.) He will never fall short of his promise, nor will he void it or compromise it in the slightest degree.

Perhaps I can place in clearer perspective all that I have said about the oath and covenant of the priesthood by relating a story based on a true experience.

The son of a very wealthy man was called to serve a full-time mission. He entered the mission field and began his work. At first things went well; however, as he met rejections and as other challenges of finding and teaching surfaced, the young man's faith wavered.

Mission associates gave encouragement, but it did not seem to help. One day the young man announced to the mission president that he was abandoning his call; he was returning home. The mission president did all within his power to dissuade the missionary. It was to no avail.

When word of the missionary's decision reached the father, he obtained permission to visit his son in the mission field. In one of many tense conver-

sations, the father said, "My son, I have lived for the day when you would serve a full-time mission. I did so because I love you and I love God. And I know that there is no work more essential than that of teaching truth to the peoples of the world."

Somewhat sobered by his father's words, the son meekly replied, "Dad, I didn't realize that a mission meant so much to you."

"It means everything to me," the father declared. Then he added with some emotion, "All my life I have worked and saved with one person in mind: you. And my one goal has been to provide you a decent inheritance."

"But Dad," the son interjected, "the work is difficult and I don't enjoy . . ."

The father didn't allow him to finish his sentence. Instead he asked, "How can I trust my businesses to your care if you cannot prove yourself by serving the Lord for two short years?"

There was an awkward pause as the son pondered the father's question and studied his anxious countenance.

Then with measured words, the father promised, "My son, my only heir, if you will be faithful in this calling and prove yourself worthy in every respect, all that I possess will be yours."

Noticeably touched by these earnest pleadings, the son rose to his feet, embraced his father, and sobbed, "I will stay."

The son did stay in the mission field; he did serve faithfully from that day forward. And yes, in due time, he received from his father the promised inheritance, even all that his father had to share.

My brethren, we are the sons of God. He has endowed us with his power, and he has called each of us to serve missions in a place called mortality. Our missions mean very much to him, and they should mean everything to us. In this mortal life, we are to prove ourselves worthy of his love and worthy of the inheritance he has offered.

What is that inheritance? It is all that he has, even eternal life. This blessed and promised gift will be ours only if we keep the covenants, particularly the covenant of the priesthood, and remain faithful to the end.

I pray that we will do so, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### President Hinckley

Elder Carlos E. Asay of the Presidency of the First Quorum of the Seventy has just addressed us.

We shall now be pleased to hear from Elder L. Tom Perry of the Council of the Twelve Apostles.

## Elder L. Tom Perry

### A special chat

I have invited a special young man to assist me with my presentation tonight. I would like to introduce Terry Haws, my oldest grandson.

Terry, how old are you?

Terry: Twelve.

What special event has happened in your life this year?

Terry: I received the Aaronic Priesthood and was ordained a deacon.

Terry, again I would like to congratulate you on the preparation you have made in your life to be worthy of receiving this great gift. As I stood in the circle on that special occasion and listened to the blessing you received from your father as he conferred the Aaronic Priesthood upon you and ordained you a deacon, I was impressed with the special privilege this is in your young life.

I wanted to have a little grandfather-to-grandson chat right afterward, but unfortunately I had an appointment with an airplane. So I'm taking advantage of this assignment to have our little visit. Let's make it public just in case what we talk about might be of benefit to other young bearers of the Aaronic Priesthood listening to us tonight. All right?

Terry: Okay.

### Conditions in the world today

Terry, I am not overly pleased with worldly conditions that you and

other young men are inheriting as you assume your role in moving toward manhood. While those of us who are older have been of an age and position to influence the world, I believe we've greatly failed you in what we have allowed the conditions in the world to become. This places you in a position where many of those with whom you must associate have not been reared with an understanding of or respect for traditional values. Thus, peer pressure becomes much more difficult and extreme.

We have brought into our homes radios, record players, and television sets. While each has the potential of providing wholesome entertainment, so much of what has been produced for our listening and watching pleasure is not of the caliber to inspire and encourage young men. In fact, most of what is produced is degrading. The flip of a switch right in your own home has the potential of destroying within you a sense of what is right and what is wrong.

Some athletes today who are the heroes of many young men like you have lowered themselves to endorsing products that can only destroy your body. Recently some of these celebrated athletes have found themselves on trial for violating laws governing the distribution and use of drugs.