

of a single soul. Jesus Christ paid the supreme sacrifice in providing the infinite Atonement, which provides the only way for us to return and live with our Heavenly Father. When parents, bishops, and our young men understand this true doctrine, our young men will be prepared and have a desire to serve.

### Importance of missionary service

May I quote from Elder Joe J. Christensen:

"The Lord did not say, 'Go on a mission if it fits your schedule, or if you happen to feel like it, or if it doesn't interfere with your scholarship, your romance, or your educational plans.' Preaching the gospel is a commandment and not merely a suggestion. It is a blessing and a privilege. . . . Remember, . . . the Lord and His prophets are counting on you" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1996, 56; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 41).

There is not anything a young man can do that will be any more important than serving a full-time mission. The good they do as servants of the Lord Jesus Christ will carry on into eternity.

The greatest army of missionaries ever assembled in the history of the world is serving today. Don't let your sons miss being part of that great army.

These young men, trusted and proven before they came to earth, are not ordinary young men. They are choice spirits that have been held in reserve to come forth in this day.

As we ponder the great charge given to us by the Lord to proclaim the gospel to all the world, will you in your personal and family prayers plead with our Heavenly Father that every young man in the Church today will have the desire and live worthy to serve a full-time mission?

May our Heavenly Father bless us with the commitment to prepare our young men to serve. May the young men of the Church today become like the sons of Helaman, following every word of the Lord with exactness. May they become a light on a hill that shines brightly and says to all the world that they, like Joshua of old, have chosen to serve the Lord! I pray that it will be so, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### President Hinckley

Elder D. Todd Christofferson has just spoken to us, and he was followed by Elder H. Bryan Richards.

President James E. Faust will speak to us next. He will be followed by the choir and congregation singing "Ye Elders of Israel."

## President James E. Faust

My beloved brethren, I express my love and appreciation to you for your devotion and faithfulness as the bearers of the priesthood of God.

### Visit to World War I sites in France

Earlier this year, my three sons and I visited the sites in France where my father fought in the U.S. Army in World War I. Great was the suffering and terrible were the consequences to all in-

involved in that war. Millions lost their lives. Although my father was not killed, he carried mental and physical scars until he died. Despite his terrifying experiences, he prefaced his diary as follows: "If I had to do it again, I would do it because it was my duty."<sup>1</sup> As we traveled 80 years later through the beautiful countryside, we visited battle sites and cemeteries of the combatants on both sides. In the military cemetery outside Paris, with my hand resting on Stanford

Hinckley's cross, I called President Hinckley on a cellular phone to express my feelings on that occasion.

World War I was particularly tragic for our family because my father had some second cousins serving on the other side of that conflict in some of the same general battle areas. We eventually became acquainted with these relatives and found them to be decent, God-fearing Christians. They had nothing to do with the grand geopolitics or causes of the war. Like my father, they were serving their country because it was their duty. World War I and the wars that followed brought such great suffering and caused the deaths of countless innocent people. In its simplest terms, wars are so often caused by a great lust for power.

### **Priesthood is the greatest power source**

Tonight I wish to talk to you young men of the priesthood about power and its proper use and its companion, the performance of duty. Power is highly attractive. It can be both good and bad. In your formative years, you young men are attracted to power figures of one kind or another. These often include sports idols, entertainers, people of wealth, and those who have political power. Unfortunately, some young men, particularly those who fall short scholastically, who don't make the team, or who are not chosen to sing in a specially selected choir may feel rejected and be lured into groups that they think will compensate for their inadequacies. This hunger for acceptance or power draws them like a moth to a flame to street gangs and other associations that can be violent and encourage habits which are dangerous to the body and to the soul.

You young holders of the priesthood have access to the greatest power source in the world. It is the priesthood of God. In complete contrast to other power sources, the holy priesthood,

through its proper exercise, continues to build spiritual and physical strength which endures through the eternities. It is "inseparably connected with the powers of heaven" and can be "handled only upon the principles of righteousness."<sup>2</sup> Regarding the priesthood, the Prophet Joseph Smith stated:

"[It] is the channel through which all knowledge, doctrine, the plan of salvation, and every important matter is revealed from heaven. . . . It is the channel through which the Almighty . . . has continued to reveal Himself to the children of men to the present time, and through which He will make known His purposes to the end of time."<sup>3</sup>

### **Priesthood power comes from faithfulness**

This power comes in proportion to our faithfulness in fulfilling our duties. As the Prophet Joseph observed, "The Lord gave us power in proportion to the work to be done, and strength according to the race set before us, and grace and help as our needs required."<sup>4</sup> As an example, the prophet Elijah, using his priesthood, was able to call forth fire from heaven to demonstrate the power of God.

Before President Hugh B. Brown was a General Authority, he served in England as an officer in the Canadian army and had great power. Men stood at attention before him and called him "sir." One day Brother Brown received a message that he was wanted in the hospital. When he got there, someone directed him to a little room where a sick young man lay. Brother Brown remembered that he had once been that young man's Sunday School teacher. "Brother Brown," said the young man, "would you use your authority in my behalf? The doctors say I cannot live. Will you give me a blessing?" All the pride Brother Brown felt in wearing the uniform of the king disappeared as he laid his hands

upon the boy's head and gave him a blessing. The help that the boy needed was not from any authority of an officer in the king's army but from the authority of the priesthood.<sup>5</sup>

With the power of the priesthood come weighty responsibilities. Indeed, we can enjoy priesthood power only when we do our duty. The priesthood of this Church has in the past received some hard lessons regarding its duty. The early brethren were untested and untried. Under the Prophet Joseph's leadership, the Lord taught them and sifted them. They were persecuted and driven unmercifully in learning to do their duty. Many failed. Three times some of the early brethren endured searing, refining trials before they ultimately found refuge in these mountain valleys.

### The refining trials of Zion's Camp

The first of these tests was Zion's Camp in the spring and summer of 1834. The second came just four years later in removing thousands of Saints from the state of Missouri to Illinois. Twelve years later came the epic exodus from Illinois to Winter Quarters and the next year to the mountain valleys of the western part of the continent.

Zion's Camp was formed to reestablish the Saints in Jackson County, Missouri. In this "effort to redeem Zion,"<sup>6</sup> some 200 men traveled more than a thousand miles in the most trying circumstances under the personal leadership of the Prophet Joseph Smith.

George A. Smith, age 16, was selected to go on the camp and recorded some of the suffering, trials, and hardships the brethren endured. He stated that on May 26, 1834, "the day was exceedingly hot and we suffered much from thirst and were compelled to drink water from sloughs which were filled with living creatures. Here I learned to strain wigglers with my teeth."<sup>7</sup> The next

day, an exhausted Solomon Humphrey lay down on the ground and fell asleep. "When he awoke he saw a rattlesnake coiled up within one foot of his head and [lying] between him and his hat, which he had in his hand when he fell asleep. The brethren gathered around him, saying, 'It is a rattlesnake, let us kill it.' Brother Humphrey said, 'No! I'll protect him, you shant hurt him for he and I have had a good nap together.'"<sup>8</sup> I have no desire to have a nap with a rattlesnake!

Brother George A. Smith recorded: "The Prophet Joseph took a full share of the fatigues of the entire journey. In addition to the care of providing for the Camp and presiding over it, he walked most of the time and had a full proportion of blistered bloody and sore feet, which was the natural result of walking from 25 to 40 miles a day in a hot season of the year. But during the entire trip he never uttered a murmur or complaint, while most of the men in the Camp complained to him of . . . scanty supply of provisions, poor quality of bread, . . . maggotty bacon and cheese, &c. . . . Yet we were the Camp of Zion, and many of us were prayerless, thoughtless, careless, heedless, foolish or devilish. . . . Joseph had to bear with us and tutor us, like children. There were many, however, in the Camp who never murmured and who were always ready and willing to do as our leaders desired."<sup>9</sup>

Although Zion's Camp failed in its stated purpose of restoring the Saints to their lands in Jackson County, Missouri, it was invaluable as a stern schooling. They learned that faith is more important than life itself. At a conference held February 14, 1835, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and the Seventy were chosen from the ranks of those who had served in Zion's Camp. These valiant brethren led the Church for the next 50 years.

### **Caring for the poor is a priesthood duty**

The Lord taught another great priesthood duty during this period of Church history. In section 104 the Lord set forth the order of the Church concerning the poor:

"Therefore, if any man shall take of the abundance which I have made, and impart not his portion, according to the law of my gospel, unto the poor and the needy, he shall, with the wicked, lift up his eyes in hell, being in torment."<sup>10</sup> With this precedent, in January 1839, during the exodus from Missouri, many of the brethren covenanted to "stand by and assist one another . . . till there shall not be one left who desires to remove from the state."<sup>11</sup>

In the bitter cold of February 1839, Daniel Stillwell Thomas reflected, "Before we crossed [the Mississippi River,] we unloaded our wagon and sent it back to assist in removing the poor and thus to save their lives, the mob still threatening them."<sup>12</sup> Daniel Thomas had five children and only one pair of shoes between them, yet he still sent the wagon back to save the destitute Saints.

Later, on October 6, 1845, a body of the priesthood met in the Nauvoo Temple and solemnly signed their names to a written covenant to provide the means for taking the poor and the destitute with the body of the Saints in the great migration west. In 1846 the Council decided the trustees might even sell the temples in Nauvoo and Kirtland and all of the property of the Church to help the Saints move westward.<sup>13</sup>

The continuing duty of the priesthood of the Church today is to care for all members, including the poor and the needy, the widows, the orphans, the single mothers and their families. We have an additional duty in our time to increase our labors to love the spiritually poor among our brethren so that they and their families might enjoy "peace in this world, and eternal life in the world to come."<sup>14</sup>

### **Priesthood duties of young men**

You young men of the Aaronic Priesthood have only glimpsed the satisfaction that comes through the righteous exercise of your priesthood. This priesthood holds "the key of the ministering of angels."<sup>15</sup> Priests may be permitted to perform the sacred ordinance of baptism in order to have our sins removed. The Aaronic Priesthood administers and passes the sacred emblems of the sacrament. Both ordinances relate directly to the Savior's Atonement. In addition, as home teaching companions you are to help watch over the Church, urging members "to pray . . . and attend to all family duties."<sup>16</sup>

Another duty particularly pertains to you wonderful young men. That is the duty to follow the counsel of those in authority over you. Listen to your parents. Be obedient to them whether you agree with them or not. They love you more than anyone else and have your best interests at heart. Listen to your quorum president, your bishop, your stake president, the apostles, seers, and revelators and especially President Hinckley, as well as the other General Authorities of the Church. They will lead you into the ways of righteousness.

### **Be true to this great trust**

The priesthood of God has become the eminent power for good in the world. We are no longer a handful of people on the fringes of society. This great power for good has been entrusted to us; we must not weaken it by failing in our responsibilities. We must buckle on the armor of righteousness. We have the duty to be worthy in every respect so that we can invoke all of the great powers of the priesthood. We must be totally honest in all our dealings. We must be morally clean. We must help the poor and the needy. As the great army of God, we have the charge to foster the cause of truth and righteousness all over the world.

Brethren, we are the authorized servants of the risen Christ. With this authority comes the duty to move this holy work forward across the world. We are part of the greatest brotherhood in all the world. We will be held accountable for what we do with the keys, power, and authority granted to us. We must be true to this great trust in every way.

As we look to the future, we will continue to have obstacles, difficulties, challenges, and opposition. Satan has more tools at his disposal than ever before to deceive, distract, and corrupt our people. We will continue to be winnowed. One day in the future, we will have to account through President Gordon B. Hinckley to the Prophet Joseph for what we have done with this great power which the Lord has invested in us.

We are grateful that the work of God moves forward as powerfully as it does under the leadership of President Gordon B. Hinckley. After the death of the Savior, His Apostles did great and marvelous things in His name. Peter and John were asked by Caiaphas and other high priests, "By what power . . . have ye done this?"<sup>17</sup> Like Peter, we declare to the world that all this happens by and through the power of the holy priesthood and in the "name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth."<sup>18</sup>

This is my solemn witness in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. George A. Faust diary, in author's possession, 1.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 121:36.

3. *History of the Church*, 4:207.
4. *History of the Church*, 1:176.
5. Adapted from Hugh B. Brown, *Be What You Will to Be*, Brigham Young University Speeches of the Year (14 Feb. 1967), 8–9.
6. B. H. Roberts, introduction to *History of the Church*, 3:xl.
7. "History of George Albert Smith" (typescript), Historical Department Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 17.
8. "History of George Albert Smith," 18.
9. "History of George Albert Smith," 33.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 104:18.
11. *History of the Church*, 3:251; see also 3:250, 252–55.
12. "To the Editor and Readers of the Lehi Post" (typescript, n.d.), Historical Department Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 3; spelling modernized.
13. See Brigham Young, *Manuscript History of Brigham Young, 1846–1847*, comp. Elden J. Watson (1971), 145.
14. Doctrine and Covenants 59:23.
15. Doctrine and Covenants 84:26.
16. Doctrine and Covenants 20:51.
17. Acts 4:7.
18. Acts 4:10.

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The choir and congregation sang  
"Ye Elders of Israel."

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#### President Hinckley

We shall now be pleased to hear from President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency.

## President Thomas S. Monson

It is a joy and a privilege for me to stand before you, such a vast audience of priesthood holders both seen and unseen. General Church priesthood meetings have always been a treat—from

Aaronic Priesthood days until the present. To "come, listen to a prophet's voice, and hear the word of God,"<sup>1</sup> as a song from our hymnbook states, is a cherished blessing.