

# The Power of Sustaining Faith

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By raising your hand to sustain, you make a promise with God, whose servants these are, that you will sustain them.

Many times I have heard priesthood leaders give thanks for the sustaining faith of those they serve. From the emotion in their voices, you know their gratitude is deep and real. My purpose today is to convey the Lord's appreciation for your sustaining His servants in His Church. And it is also to encourage you to exercise and grow in that power to sustain others with your faith.

Before you were born, you demonstrated such power. Think back to what we know of the spirit world before we were born. Our Heavenly Father presented a plan for His children. We were there. Lucifer, our spirit brother, opposed the plan that would allow us freedom to choose. Jehovah, the Beloved Son of Heavenly Father, sustained the plan. Lucifer led a rebellion. Jehovah's sustaining voice prevailed, and He volunteered to be our Savior.

The fact that you are in mortality now assures us that you sustained the Father and the Savior. It took faith in Jesus Christ to sustain the plan of happiness and Jesus Christ's place in it when you knew so little of the challenges that you would face in mortality.

Your faith to sustain servants of God has been at the heart of your happiness in this life as well. When you accepted a missionary's challenge to pray to know that the Book of Mormon was the word of God, you had the faith to sustain a servant of the Lord. When you accepted the invitation to be baptized, you sustained a humble servant of God.

When you let someone place hands on your head and say, "Receive the Holy Ghost," you sustained him as a holder of the Melchizedek Priesthood.

Since that day, you have, by serving faithfully, sustained each person who has conferred the priesthood upon you and each who has ordained you to an office in that priesthood.

Early in your priesthood experience, each sustaining was a simple event of trusting a servant of God. Now, many of you have moved up to a place where to sustain requires more.

You choose whether to sustain all whom the Lord calls—in whatever the Lord has called them. That choice happens in conferences all over the world. It has happened in this one. In such meetings, names of men and women—servants of God—are read, and you are invited to raise your hand to sustain. You can withhold your sustaining vote, or you can pledge your sustaining faith. By raising your hand to sustain, you make a promise. You make a promise with God, whose servants these are, that you will sustain them.

These are imperfect human beings, as are you. Keeping your promises will take unshakable faith that the Lord called them. Keeping those promises will also bring eternal happiness. Not keeping them will

bring sorrow to you and to those you love—and even losses beyond your power to imagine.

You may have been asked, or you will be, whether you sustain your bishop, stake president, the General Authorities, and the General Officers of the Church. It may happen as you are asked to sustain officers and leaders in a conference. Sometimes it will be in an interview with a bishop or stake president.

My counsel is that you ask those questions of yourself beforehand, with careful and prayerful thought. As you do, you might look back on your recent thoughts, words, and deeds. Try to remember and frame the answers you will give when the Lord interviews you, knowing that someday He will. You could prepare by asking yourself questions like the following:

1. Have I thought or spoken of human weakness in the people I have pledged to sustain?
2. Have I looked for evidence that the Lord is leading them?
3. Have I conscientiously and loyally followed their leadership?
4. Have I spoken about the evidence I can see that they are God's servants?
5. Do I pray for them regularly by name and with feelings of love?

Those questions will, for most of us, lead to some uneasiness and a need to repent. We are commanded by God not to judge others unrighteously, but in practice, we find that hard to avoid. Almost everything we do in working with people leads us to evaluate them. And in almost every aspect of our lives, we compare ourselves with others. We may do so for many reasons, some of them reasonable, but it often leads us to be critical.

President George Q. Cannon gave a warning that I pass on to you as my own. I believe he spoke the truth: "God has chosen His servants. He claims it as His prerogative to condemn them, if they need condemnation. He has not given it to us individually to censure and condemn them. No man, however strong he may be in the faith, however high in the Priesthood, can speak evil of the Lord's anointed and find fault with God's authority on the earth without incurring His displeasure. The Holy Spirit will withdraw himself from such a man, and he will go into darkness. This being the case, do you not see how important it is that we should be careful?"<sup>1</sup>

My observation is that the members of the Church across the world are generally loyal to each other and to those who preside over them. There are, however, improvements we could and must make. We could rise higher in our power to sustain each other. It will take faith and effort. Here are four suggestions I make for us to act on at this conference.

1. We could identify specific actions the speakers recommend and start today to carry them out. As we do, our power to sustain them will increase.
2. We could pray for them as they speak that the Holy Ghost will carry their words into the hearts of specific people we love. When we learn later that our prayer was answered, our power to sustain those leaders will increase.
3. We could pray that specific speakers will be blessed and magnified as they give their messages. When we see that they were magnified, we will grow in our faith to sustain them, and it will endure.

4. We could listen for messages from the speakers that come as an answer to our personal prayers for help. When the answers come, and they will, we will grow in our faith to sustain all the Lord's servants.

In addition to improving in sustaining those who serve in the Church, we will learn that there is another setting in which we can increase in such power. There, it can bring even greater blessings to us. It is in the home and family.

I speak to the younger priesthood holder who lives in a home with his father. Let me tell you from my own experience what it means for a father to feel your sustaining faith. He may look confident to you. But he faces more challenges than you know. At times he can't see the way through the problems before him.

Your admiration for him will help him some. Your love for him will help even more. But the thing that will help the most is sincere words like these: "Dad, I've prayed for you, and I have felt that the Lord is going to help you. Everything will work out. I know it will."

Words such as those also have power in the other direction, father to son. When a son has made a serious mistake, perhaps in a spiritual matter, he may feel that he has failed. As his father, in that moment, you may be surprised when, after you pray to know what to do, the Holy Ghost puts these words into your mouth: "Son, I'm with you all the way. The Lord loves you. With His help, you can make it back. I know that you can and that you will. I love you."

In the priesthood quorum and in the family, increased faith to sustain each other is the way we build the Zion the Lord wants us to create. With His help, we can and we will. It will take learning to love the Lord with all our heart, might, mind, and strength and to love each other as we love ourselves.

As we grow in that pure love of Christ, our hearts soften. That love will humble us and lead us to repent. Our confidence in the Lord and in each other will grow. And then we will move toward becoming one, as the Lord promises we can.<sup>2</sup>

I testify that Heavenly Father knows and loves you. Jesus is the living Christ. This is His Church. We hold His priesthood. He will honor our efforts to grow in our power to exercise it and to sustain each other. I so witness in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.