

# Heavenly Powers

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In harmony with the spirit and fever of this football season, I thought you might want to hear of an experience I had some two years ago.

I looked at my stake conference schedule and discovered that I had what is called a “arm free” weekend. This meant that my assignment was to remain at home and to attend to my family responsibilities. This freedom pleased me very much because on that particular weekend, Brigham Young University was scheduled to play a very crucial football game; and, inasmuch as I’ve learned to appreciate the finer things in life, I promptly made arrangements to attend that game.

The Monday preceding that special Saturday, I told my wife how pleased I was with the prospects of the forthcoming weekend. Friday of that week I told her that I had it made because I was certain that they wouldn’t touch me with an assignment and that I would be able to see BYU play.

Ten minutes after I arrived at my office on the Friday morning, the telephone rang. It was President Benson’s secretary. She informed me that President Benson had an emergency, and she wondered if I would accept his weekend stake conference assignment. I told her that I supposed I would. I then called home and said something like this to my wife: “Honey, there

goes my football game. Pack my bags. I have an assignment; I must leave at three o’clock this afternoon.” Colleen detected a ring of disappointment in my voice; and in her usual diplomatic way she said, “Carlos, you weren’t called to go to football games.”

Well, you may be interested in knowing that her statement was refuted two weeks ago. I was actually called or assigned to attend that Ricks College football game; and since I was already in that vicinity, I also dedicated the Viking Stadium.

It’s a thrill to be with you, my young friends, and to speak to you about a very serious subject. Not too long ago, I received a letter from the office of the Council of the Twelve authorizing me to interview a man to determine whether he was worthy to receive a restoration of blessings. Attached to that assignment letter were two pages of information about this individual. In reading these pages, I learned, among other things, that the man was a former Melchizedek Priesthood

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holder; that he had received his temple endowment years before; and that he had once been sealed to his wife and family. Moreover, I learned that the man had transgressed seriously several years ago and that, because of his transgressions, he had been excommunicated from the Church. Such excommunication resulted in his loss of membership, baptism, gift of the Holy Ghost, holy priesthood, endowment, and temple sealing. All of these sacred privileges and blessings had either been cancelled or withdrawn.

On the appointed day and hour, I met with the man. With him was his lovely wife. Once the greetings and niceties had been exchanged, I invited my friend to tell me his story. He told me of his conversion and of his varied activities in the Church. He told me about his first wife, his first marriage, and the subsequent birth of three children. He also told me of his love for his family and his desire to provide them with security and with the luxuries of life. Then, with some display of emotion, he told me how his strong urge to gather these material things had caused him to neglect his wife and children. In time serious problems had developed between the man and his mate, and she had asked for a divorce.

The divorce was obtained. Feeling that his world had collapsed around him, the man lost all interest in life. He therefore sold his business, moved to a new location, and began to live after the way of the world. He drowned himself in drink, he turned to the use of tobacco, and he became heavily involved in sex. One affair led to another. Each nefarious incident caused him to sink deeper and deeper into the mire of sin.

Then he met a woman who was different. She had principles and standards and lived accordingly. He courted her for a brief time, and they were married.

A month or so after their marriage, the wife startled her husband by asking, "Why is it that I catch glimpses of goodness and greatness

in you and then they're gone?" She added, "Sometimes I feel as if I'm married to only half a man." The husband was moved by what his wife had said and replied, "I suppose it is time I leveled with you. I am a Mormon—a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints." He then explained to his wife what that Church membership had once meant to him. He spoke also of the basic principles and ordinances of the gospel. He described the priesthood and his temple marriage and sealing to his former companion.

When the explanations were over, the wife was crying. She told her husband that she had never heard anything quite so beautiful. She asked, "How can we bring those blessings back into your life so that they will remain?" He told her he would need to seek out a bishop, confess his sins, submit to court proceedings, and undergo a rather lengthy period of repentance. The woman said, "Whatever the price, we will pay it. And we will begin right now."

As the man had predicted, once a bishop had been located, a court was held, and he was stripped of all of his blessings. But as this good woman had committed, they climbed together the long path back. They had struggled for four years before he was rebaptized and finally given the gift of the Holy Ghost.

At the conclusion of this successful interview, I restored the man's blessings, including the priesthood, an office within that priesthood, the temple endowment, and the temple sealing. As soon as I had pronounced the "Amen," the woman rushed into her husband's arms and declared, "Now I have a complete man—a whole man!"

Too often, I fear we fail to appreciate the worth of something until it is either lost or taken away. We are prone to take health for granted until illness strikes. The heat of summer gives rise to complaint until the first snow flies. Even heavenly gifts and powers receive casual treatment until needs and urgencies

arise to remind us of our utter dependence upon the God who gave us life.

Such had been the case with my friend. Sin by sin he had suffered a dissipation of powers. The process had been too slow for him to recognize and to really understand what was being drained from his soul. It started with a leak in conscience; it continued as Church membership and entitlement to the gift of the Holy Ghost were revoked; it accelerated as priesthood powers were withdrawn; and it progressed almost to the point of no return as his temple endowment and sealing were cancelled.

Still, a glimmer of that once-held power was observed by his wife. Though she was unacquainted with heavenly powers, she saw that spark and felt of its uniqueness. What a blessing it was that she made the discovery she did and caused her husband to reflect upon what he had lost! And how blessed he was to find a companion who wanted him to be a complete man and who was willing to assist him in the struggle to regain precious powers.

Why is it that so many of us insist on learning the hard way? Should we not take a lesson from those who have stumbled and suffered, and choose our steps more wisely? The school of hard knocks, I suspect, has its place. However, when it comes to spiritual things, the risk of trial and error is much too high. One knock, one trial, one error may be fatal; or, in the vernacular of the day, it may blow the prospects of eternity.

I wonder if we recognize and appreciate the endowments of power associated with Christ, the priesthood, and his kingdom upon the earth. Do we fully understand what can be ours if we live in accord with divine law and draw upon the true source of light and truth? Permit me to refer to five powers—five precious powers—that are available to all of us. All of these powers make *complete* men and woman or *whole* men and women in Christ.

### Conscience

I speak first of the power associated with conscience. According to the scripture, every person born into this world is endowed with the light of Christ (see D&C 84:45–48). Elder Bruce R. McConkie explains:

*By virtue of this endowment all men automatically and intuitively know right from wrong and are encouraged and enticed to do what is right (Moroni 7:16). The recognizable operation of this spirit in enlightening the mind and striving to lead men to do right is called conscience. [Mormon Doctrine, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966), p. 156]*

How grateful we should be for that endowment, and how carefully we should guard against any loss of its quiet direction. The Apostle Paul warned that disobedience and sin stifle the voice of conscience. He wrote of sinners having their consciences “seared with a hot iron” (1 Tim. 4:2), and he also referred to the wicked and the unbelieving as having defiled minds and consciences (Titus 1:15). Is not the defiled mind a reprobate mind? And is not the reprobate mind void of judgment? (See Romans 1:28.)

Many of us have been exposed to individuals who seem to be void—completely void—of conscience. They wheel and deal and offend laws and principles left and right. Their speech is offensive, and their actions are expedient. They justify a little sin, a little lie, taking advantage of one because of his word, and digging pits for their neighbors. And in so doing, they allow the devil to cheat their souls. (See 2 Ne. 28:8, 21.)

One of the saddest commentaries ever made about a people is recorded in the Book of Mormon. It was said of a degenerate group that they were “without principle, and past feeling” (Moro. 9:20). Apparently, all conscience—all light of Christ—had been lost.

In your quest for knowledge and truth, whether you be a student or a missionary, you

must cling to this essential endowment of power. You need those instinctive feelings of rightness and wrongness to lead you. You need the enlightenment of Jesus Christ. Bear in mind that peace of conscience is synonymous with joy (Alma 29:5). And remember also that a clear conscience gives birth to confidence, a quality that we cannot live successfully without.

### Holy Ghost

I speak second of the power associated with the gift of the Holy Ghost. This gift is extended to all who have faith and are willing to repent and be baptized. As you know, it is given by the laying on of hands; it is received and retained through righteousness and circumspect living.

We should not forget that we, the members of the Church, are added upon when we receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. We are added upon because this additional endowment of power provides our conscience with guidance and leads us in all truth, added upon because multiple gifts of the Spirit are made available to us through this marvelous power.

One Church leader describes this power in these words:

*He [the Holy Ghost] teaches and guides, testifies of the Father and the Son, reproves for sin, speaks, commands, and commissions, makes intercessions for sinners, is grieved, searches and investigates, entices, and knows all things. [James E. Talmage, The Articles of Faith, 12 ed. (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1924), pp. 159–60]*

I love that which President Romney has written. He said concerning the Holy Ghost:

*I tell you that you can make every decision in your life correctly if you can learn to follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit. This you can do if you will discipline yourself to yield your own feelings to the promptings of the Spirit. Study your problems and*

*prayerfully make a decision. Then take that decision and say to him, in a simple, honest supplication, "Father, I want to make the right decision. I want to do the right thing. This is what I think I should do; let me know if it is the right course." Doing this, you can get the burning in your bosom, if your decision is right. If you do not get the burning, then change your decision and submit a new one. When you learn to walk by the Spirit, you never need to make a mistake. [Marion G. Romney, "Seek the Spirit," Improvement Era, Dec. 1961, p. 947; emphasis added]*

Like the Spirit of Christ, the power of the Holy Ghost is enjoyed by those who are clean and worthy to receive its companionship. It was said of one man that "he conducted a life-long courtship with the Holy Ghost." What a tribute!

Is this power—this enlightenment—this endowment—operative in your life? Can you testify that the Holy Spirit has been upon you continually as you have studied at this university? I would hope so, for that power should be yours as you read, speak, write, and consider truths found in the various disciplines. Would that all of you could testify of your experience here as Parley P. Pratt did of his experience in the Sandwich Islands. He said:

*Since I have arrived here I have been diligent in the duties of my calling [and my studies] every hour, and have called upon God for His Spirit to help me with all the energy I possessed, and without ceasing. The result is, the Spirit of the Lord God has been upon me continually, in such light, and joy, and testimony as I have seldom experienced. [Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1964), p. 386]*

Your professors, I think, would rejoice also if you could so testify.

### Priesthood

I speak third of the power associated with the holy priesthood. As you know, “priesthood is the eternal power and authority of Deity by which all things exist; by which they are created, governed, and controlled. . . . It is the power of God.” (*Mormon Doctrine*, p. 594.)

President Spencer W. Kimball provides this definition of priesthood:

*The priesthood is the power and authority of God delegated to man on earth to act in all things pertaining to the salvation of men. It is the means whereby the Lord acts through men to save souls. Without this priesthood power, men are lost. [“The Example of Abraham,” *Ensign*, June 1975, p. 3]*

We might add that without this power, men are incomplete.

The longer I live and serve, the more I appreciate the reality of priesthood power. For many years, as a young man, I marveled at the accounts of Peter and his fellow fishermen who were transformed into mighty men of God after receiving priesthood commissions. In more recent years, I have witnessed firsthand the expression of marvelous priesthood powers in the lives of modern Apostles and in many of my associates. Moreover, I have observed changes in the lives of other men in wards and stakes who have received, honored, and magnified priesthood callings. Priesthood power is real; it does exist!

We learn from modern revelations that through the priesthood and priesthood ordinances the power of godliness is manifest (see D&C 84:19–21). We are also told that “the rights of the priesthood are inseparably connected with the powers of heaven, and that the powers of heaven cannot be controlled nor handled only upon the principles of righteousness” (D&C 121:36).

Students, you must not place this priesthood power on the shelf during your university years. It must not be allowed to diminish

or atrophy through lack of exercise. Use your priesthood powers to bless the lives of family members and others about you. Use that power to declare the truth and to save souls. Make absolutely certain that the power of godliness is manifest through you.

### The Temple Endowment

Fourth, I speak of the power associated with the temple endowment. To endow, we’re told, is to enrich, to bestow power or ability, to give to another something long-lasting and of much worth. It is said of the temple endowment that (1) the one receiving the ordinance is given power from God. “Recipients are endowed with power from on high” (*Mormon Doctrine*, p. 227). And (2) the recipients of the temple endowment are also endowed with information and knowledge. “They receive an education relative to the Lord’s purposes and plans” (*ibid.*).

One Church publication contains this statement about the endowment:

*No jot, iota, or tittle of the temple rites is otherwise than uplifting and sanctifying. In every detail the endowment ceremony contributes to covenants or morality of life, consecration of person to high ideals, devotion to truth, patriotism to nation, and allegiance to God. [The House of the Lord (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1968), pp. 83–84]*

The endowment is a most important and significant blessing that God desires to share with his worthy children. We need the fullness of power found in these holy ordinances. Why do we locate the Missionary Training Center so close to a temple? Because in that temple, missionaries are given an endowment of power. And with that power, they go into the world to bring souls to Christ.

### Temple Sealing

Finally, I speak of the power associated with celestial marriage. Whenever I participate

or officiate in a temple marriage, I am overawed by the power given to bind on earth and seal eternally in heaven. I am reminded of a power and work that, if not effected, would result in utter waste—waste beyond our understanding.

A living Apostle informs us:

*So comprehensive is this power that it embraces ordinances preformed for the living and the dead, seals the children on earth up to their fathers who went before, and forms the enduring patriarchal chain that will exist eternally among exalted beings. [Mormon Doctrine, p. 683]*

Knowing what we know about celestial marriage and its attendant powers and blessings, I cannot picture any Latter-day Saint entertaining the thought of another form of marriage. Nor can I understand why people who have been sealed for time and all eternity will place themselves in compromising situations wherein they might forfeit the promises and blessings of temple sealings. Esau's sale of his birthright for some "pottage" pales in comparison with the loss of the eternal prospects associated with celestial marriage.

In conclusion, may I urge you to keep in mind the reservoirs of power extended to you through the gospel of Jesus Christ and through his kingdom on earth. Do not take for granted the powers of conscience, Holy Ghost, priesthood, temple endowment, and celestial marriage. Do not allow any influence to enter your life here or elsewhere that would rob you of your heavenly powers.

I hope you do not think that my thoughts concerning spiritual or heavenly powers run counter to the avowed purposes of this institution of higher learning. For I know, as you know, that the quest for knowledge and the powers related to knowledge are most important. All of us understand that the gaining of knowledge and intelligence through the best books and with the help of the best instructors

is a vital part of the gospel of Jesus Christ. However, the quest for knowledge must not be conducted at the expense of spiritual things. The two must be intertwined and perfectly balanced, as is so beautifully done at this institution.

When I think of this school and its special mandate, I am reminded of the challenging prophecy found in the Book of Mormon. One prophet, privileged to see the events of the latter days, saw the nations of the world gathered to fight against the people of God. In the prophecy, the Saints were seen as few in number; the opposition was seen as a multitude of nations. Note these words:

*I, Nephi, beheld the power of the Lamb of God, that it descended upon the saints of the church of the Lamb, and upon the covenant people of the Lord, who were scattered upon all the face of the earth; and they were armed with righteousness and with the power of God in great glory. [1 Nephi 14:14]*

Whenever I read that scripture, I think particularly of the youth. And I think particularly of the challenge which is ours to clothe our youth with power and righteousness so that future battles may be won.

This is a place of power. Brigham Young University is one of the most powerful institutions on earth, and I am referring to more than just the football team. Not only is its academic program laden with power, but the faculty is endowed with power. If you apply yourselves properly, in conformity with the standards of the school and the standards of the sponsoring Church, you will go forward from this place with the powers of knowledge and with the powers of righteousness—yes, even with heavenly powers.

It is my sincere prayer that all of you will do what is necessary to become complete and whole in the Lord Jesus Christ. May you draw claim upon heavenly powers and do all that is necessary to keep those powers with you

throughout all your lives. I testify of the reality of their importance, and I pray humbly that you will do what is necessary and required to make those powers yours, for your benefit and for the benefit of those around you. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.