

**Lesson: We Must Always Remember –  
Spiritual Authority and Power are Conditional**

# The authority and power of priesthood are directly associated with our righteousness and the just exercise of our callings.

Joseph Smith III -"The powers of priesthood ... Are confirmed for no other purpose than the salvation of man, and are continued only in the just exercise of them in the pursuit of this object: hence any act of any man called to this calling, performed with any other intent, or attended with a different result is not authorized of God, and hence does not bind the powers of heaven."

*Joseph Smith, III, The Saints' Herald, vol. 24, pg.168. "*

DELEGATED AUTHORITY. The right understanding of this question is this; priesthood is delegated authority from God, and is given for a specific purpose, and while men are in the exercise of it within the province of this purpose they are agents for him who has bestowed it; and whenever they transcend the province of that authority they cease to act for God. Nor is it that which is inherent in the man by which everything that he does is qualifiedly of the Lord; and it is only when and so long as men speak with the direct recognition of him who has sent them and within the province of the delegated authority, that they speak as agents for God." *Supplement to The Saints' Herald. Lamoni, Iowa, July 22, 1893. Address to the Priesthood, Joseph Smith III*

## Priesthood Authority can be lost

“Saul was lawfully anointed as Israel’s first king and given authority of God to rule over her. Because Saul also sought to act in a sacred office [reserved for God’s prophet, Samuel] to which he had never been called, God took the kingdom away from Saul and bestowed it upon David. Because of his disobedience, Saul also forfeited his life. *1 Samuel 13*” *Presidency and Priesthood, Kelly*

# Priesthood Authority is limited/defined

***DC 104:44a*** Wherefore, now let every man learn his duty, and **to act in the office in which he is appointed**, in all diligence.

***DC 17:12a*** Every elder, priest, teacher, or deacon, **is to be ordained according to the gifts and callings of God unto him;**

# Priesthood Hypocrisy & Priestcraft

Accepting A Call

But Doing Nothing With It, or

Doing Something With It That Is Not Of God, or

Doing Something Which Only Appears to Be Good but In Fact Is Not, or

Doing Something With It For Personal Gain or Aggrandizement

## Priestcraft

DC 50:2-3 Behold, I the Lord have looked upon you, and have seen abominations in the church that professes my name; but blessed are they who are faithful and endure, whether in life or in death, for they shall inherit eternal life. **But woe unto them that are deceivers, and hypocrites, for thus saith the Lord, I will bring them to judgment.**

Behold, verily I say unto you, There are hypocrites among you, and have deceived some, which has given the adversary power, but, behold, such shall be reclaimed; but the hypocrites shall be detected and shall be cut off, either in life or in death, even as I will, and woe unto them who are cut off from my church, for the same are overcome of the world; wherefore, **let every man beware lest he do that which is not in truth and righteousness before me.**

2 Nephi 11:106 He commandeth that there shall be no **priestcrafts**; for, behold, **priestcrafts** are that men preach and set themselves up for a light unto the world, that they may get gain, and praise of the world; but they seek not the welfare of Zion.

# Priesthood authority not to be taken lightly

Behold, it pleaseth me, that you have come up hither; **but with some I am not well pleased, for they will not open their mouths, but hide the talent which I have given unto them, because of the fear of man.** Woe unto such, for mine anger is kindled against them — D&C 60:1b

# Spiritual Authority and Power are Conditional –

*Authority & Spiritual Power, Edwards, F. Henry, 1956*

“In the spiritual realm it is imperative that authority shall be more than legal. It must have what Dr. Williams calls "moral weightiness,"<sup>13</sup> That is, it must commend itself to persons of moral caliber by virtue of its own soundness.

**Negatively**, this principle demands

- that a **known evildoer** shall not be permitted to administer the ordinances,<sup>14</sup>
- that **an arrogant man** shall not be selected to lead, and
- that **an ignorant and unwise man** shall not be called upon to preach.

**Positively**, it demands

- that the **ministry of one who serves** at the table of the Lord shall be supported by his clean life,
- that **he who leads** in the affairs of the kingdom shall himself seek divine guidance, and
- that the **ministry of preaching** shall be exercised out of a background of sound understanding.”



# Authority Not Properly Maintained Can Be Suspended or Lost

Inasmuch as ye do it not, it shall be taken; even that which ye have received — D&C 43:3c

and in weakness have I blessed him, and I have given unto him the keys of the mystery of those things which have been sealed, even things which were from the foundation of the world, and the things which shall come from this time until the time of my coming, **if he abide in me, and if not, another will I plant in his stead.** - D&C 34:4f

And it shall come to pass, **if they are not more faithful unto me, it shall be taken away,** even that which they have — D&C 60:2a

# Authority Not Properly Maintained Can Be Suspended or Lost

“If the army of elders composing the priesthood have ever forgotten that they are men chosen for the accomplishment of a specific ensign had in view by Him who called them, that this calling gave no authority, and conferred no dignity not found in direct accord with the design, then has that army become deficient in the principal aid to their success; and every portion of it that persists in thus forgetting what they should certainly remember, disgraces this calling, and should be discharged from service.” — Joseph Smith, III, *The Priesthood Journal*, Vol. 9, October 1943, No. 4, page 13.

# Use and Abuse of Authority & Power

“ . . . . 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,

that they may be conferred upon us it is true, **but when we undertake to cover our sins, to gratify our pride, vain ambition, or to exercise dominion or compulsion over the souls of the children of men, in any degree of unrighteousness,**

behold the heavens withdraw themselves, the Spirit of the Lord is grieved, then amen to the priesthood, or to the authority of that man.”

— Joseph Smith Jr. - *Times & Seasons*, Vol

# Consequences of Breaking Our Priesthood Covenant

Therefore, all those who **receive the priesthood receive this oath and covenant** of my Father, which **he cannot break**, neither can it be moved; but whoso breaketh this covenant, after he hath received it, and altogether turneth therefrom, shall not have forgiveness of sins in this world nor in the world to come — **DC 83:6f-h**

I command and a man obeys not, **I revoke and they receive not the blessing**; then they say in their hearts, This is not the work of the Lord, for his promises are not fulfilled. But woe unto such, for their reward lurketh beneath, and not from above — **DC 58:6i**

# Priesthood Accountability

D&C 118:4c [ . . . . Let no one deceive himself that he shall not account for his stewardship unto Me.] is often misinterpreted as being applicable to temporal stewardship, but Joseph Smith, III in *The Saints Herald* of July 24, 1937 makes it plain that this is not the case. Speaking concerning this paragraph of Section 118, President Smith said: “When priesthood is conferred upon anyone who is called, the ordination places a responsibility upon him for which he must answer directly to God.”