

- 47–50; Conference Report, Apr. 1998, 66–70; or *Ensign*, May 1998, 49–51.
12. See 2 Nephi 2:27.
 13. See Moroni 7:14.
 14. 3 Nephi 18:18.
 15. Doctrine and Covenants 50:3.
 16. See *Ensign*, Jan. 2001, 2–11.
 17. See www.lds.org. Click on “Serving in the Church,” “Aaronic Priesthood / Young Men,” “For the Strength of Youth.”
 18. Doctrine and Covenants 21:6.
 19. See Doctrine and Covenants 8:2.
 20. See Doctrine and Covenants 18:36.
 21. See Joseph Smith—History 1:11–20.
 22. See Moses 1:1–22.

Elder Robert C. Oaks

Who’s on the Lord’s side?

This evening I would like to focus my comments on a favorite hymn’s rousing call to service: “Who’s on the Lord’s side? Who? / Now is the time to show” (“Who’s on the Lord’s Side?” *Hymns*, no. 260).

In this, the dispensation of the fulness of time, as we prepare for the final satanic battles in anticipation of the return of Christ to the earth, it is very important to know who is on the Lord’s side. The Lord needs to know on whom He can rely.

You would hope that every priesthood holder could be counted on to show up for service in the ranks of the Lord’s army. Today in the Church there are about three million priesthood holders, split evenly between the Aaronic and the Melchizedek Priesthoods.

Unfortunately, far too many of these men, young and not so young, are missing, absent without leave, AWOL.

One day they each sat humbly while men of authority laid hands upon their heads and conferred the priesthood upon them. That day they all made a covenant of obedience and service with the Lord.

Authority of the Aaronic Priesthood

To understand the importance of these covenants, we need to ask ourselves, “What is the priesthood?” Every alert deacon knows the answer to this question: the priesthood is the power to act in God’s name.

What does this mean to you deacons, teachers, and priests? First, it means you are authorized to pass, prepare, and bless the sacrament. Is this a big deal? Absolutely!

Who administered the first sacrament service that we have any record of? Of course the answer is the Lord Jesus Christ. The evening before His suffering in the Garden of Gethsemane, Christ prepared, blessed, and passed the sacrament to His disciples. So when we perform this sacred ordinance, we are actually standing in for the Savior Himself. That is special!

John the Baptist laid his hands on the heads of Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery and conferred upon them the priesthood of Aaron and declared, “I confer the Priesthood of Aaron, which holds the keys of the ministering of angels, and of the gospel of repentance, and of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins” (D&C 13:1). That is a significant responsibility for men of any age. With that charge, we are clearly on the Lord’s side.

Authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood

What of the Melchizedek Priesthood? The 84th section of the Doctrine and Covenants reads, “And this greater priesthood administereth the gospel and holdeth the key of the mysteries of the kingdom, even the key of the knowledge of God” (v. 19). This priesthood holds the power to administer and lead, to bless and heal, to teach

and seal. These priesthood service activities clearly place the practicing brethren on the Lord's side.

One of the greatest examples of priesthood sealing power is the story of Nephi, son of Helaman. Because of his diligence in declaring the word of God, the Lord gave him sealing power that "whatsoever ye shall seal on earth shall be sealed in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Helaman 10:7). Nephi would have been a mighty leader in the Lord's army in any dispensation.

What a great act of trust it is on the part of our Father in Heaven to share with us a part of His power, that we might assist Him in His grand work as it rolls forth to fill the earth.

Conferral of priesthood authority

Note how carefully we have been instructed on how to confer priesthood authority. When I turned 12 years old, my father, Charles Oaks, and my bishop, George Collard, laid their hands on my head and conferred upon me the Aaronic Priesthood and ordained me a deacon.

Several years later, then Elder Gordon B. Hinckley used this same heavenly directed procedure to ordain me a Seventy. Each ordination reflects additional divine trust and a new opportunity to serve on the Lord's side.

The battle for souls

When armies are formed, battles are generally fought on vast battlefields. But this battle for souls is quite different. The conflict goes on each day in individual lives and pits the Lord's troops against Satan's forces of greed, selfishness, and lust.

The muscular young men of Helaman's 2,060 stripling warriors, shoulder to shoulder, imply the need for great physical strength to join their ranks. But there is room for every stout-hearted soul in this endeavor.

Weapons of eternal worth

We have an 11-year-old grandson, Andrew, who is confined to a wheelchair, maybe for the rest of his life. He will be ordained a deacon in the fall and will join the priesthood army of the Lord. His physical handicap will not limit him in this war, because the weapons of choice are not spears and swords wielded on a chaotic field of battle.

Rather, the weapons of eternal worth reflecting the whole armor of God are *truth, righteousness, faith, prayer*, and the *word of God* (see Ephesians 6:13–18). These weapons are wielded in our minds, mouths, and movements. Every righteous thought, word, and deed is a victory for the Lord.

That is why Andrew has no handicap in this battle. His parents have taught him well. He stands ready to join the ranks of the priesthood brethren.

The stakes are extremely high. The prizes are the very souls of the sons and daughters of God—their eternal salvation. And these souls will be won or lost on the basis of virtue and cleanliness, on the basis of charity and service, and on the basis of faith and hope.

Take care of your wingman

Andrew will join the deacons quorum in his home ward. They will teach him to pass the sacrament and to collect fast offerings. They will look after him, because that is what priesthood quorums are all about—caring for one another. In fact, that is how the Lord's priesthood army is organized—into quorums.

I spent a majority of my life as a pilot in the United States Air Force. The men of my squadron remain, to this day, a tight-knit group, keeping in close touch after 40 years.

In our training as fighter pilots, one of the first and most basic rules was, "Take care of your wingman. Constantly check

his six o'clock to make certain no enemy is sneaking up behind him."

If it is good advice to protect comrades in a fighter squadron, it is great advice to stay close to and protect our quorum members as we strive to stand firm on the Lord's side. We should be eager to go out and find them when they stray.

The end is drawing near

Standing firm on the Lord's side is especially valuable today. Our prophet regularly points out that these are the last days. We know from the signs of the times that the end is drawing near. And Satan knows it as well. He and his forces never seem to sleep.

In a worldwide priesthood leadership training meeting, President Hinckley, noting the immoral conditions in the world, stated, "I do not know that things were worse in the times of Sodom and Gomorrah."

He went on to say: "They and their wicked inhabitants were annihilated. We see similar conditions today. They prevail all across the world. I think our Father must weep as He looks down upon His wayward sons and daughters" ("Standing Strong and Immoveable," *Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting*, Jan. 10, 2004, 20).

I do not know how much more our prophet has to say for us to consider ourselves warned.

Prepare temporally and spiritually

In a recent conference talk, Elder Daltin H. Oaks stated: "These signs of the Second Coming are all around us and seem to be increasing in frequency and intensity. . . . While we are powerless to alter the fact of the Second Coming and unable to know its exact time, we can accelerate our own preparation and try to influence the preparation of those around us. . . . We need to make both temporal and spiritual preparation for the events prophesied at the

time of the Second Coming" (in Conference Report, Apr. 2004, 5-7; or *Ensign*, May 2004, 7-9).

And these statements of warning came well before a season of unprecedented hurricane destruction in the Caribbean area and the tsunami devastation in East Asia.

Now is the time

Our hymn "Who's on the Lord's Side?" instructs us, "Now is the time to show." Now is the time to stand fast in our faith and on our principles, as did Captain Moroni. We are needed *now*, deacons, teachers, priests, bishops, elders, high priests, and patriarchs. Now is the time to show our appreciation for the atoning sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ. Now is the time to show our faith through our obedience to such basic commandments as the laws of chastity and tithing, the Word of Wisdom, and keeping the Sabbath day holy.

Now is the time to warn our neighbors by sharing the gospel message with them. Now is the time to provide the world with an example of decency and modesty, an example of virtue and cleanliness. We should never squander our priesthood power, wallowing in the corruptive, corrosive filth and slime of pornography.

Now is the time to review the covenants we have made with the Lord at the waters of baptism, covenants we made when we accepted the oath and covenant of the priesthood, and covenants we have made in His holy temples.

Now is indeed the time to show we are on the Lord's side.

Brethren, this is His work. The gospel of Jesus Christ has been restored in its fullness in these last days through the Prophet Joseph Smith. Christ stands at the head of this Church, leading it forward through His living prophet, Gordon B. Hinckley. Christ will return to the earth to rule and reign, and we will each, one day, stand before Him to be judged on our thoughts, our deeds, and the desires of our hearts.

He is our Savior and our Redeemer, and I so testify in His holy name, amen.

President Monson

We will now be pleased to hear from President James E. Faust, Second Coun-

selor in the First Presidency. The choir and congregation will then sing “High on the Mountain Top.” Following the singing, it will be my privilege to address you.

President James E. Faust

I wish to welcome those Brethren who were called and sustained this afternoon to be members of the First and Second Quorums of the Seventy. Each one is a man of faith and ability and commitment, and we certify to you that they are worthy in all respects to hold these offices.

My dear brethren of the great worldwide brotherhood of the priesthood, we commend you for your faithfulness and your dedication to the work of the Lord. We thank you for your commitment and your devoted service. You contribute much to the strength of the Church.

Lessons learned from serving a mission

It is wonderful to be in this meeting with all of you who hold the Aaronic Priesthood. When I was your age, I used to wonder, “What will be my place in this world, and how will I find it?” At that time, about my only firm goal was to serve a mission. When my mission call came, I served, and my mission became like the North Star to guide me into the other pursuits of my life. One of the important things I learned was that if I faithfully persevered in my Church callings, the Lord would open up the way and guide me to other opportunities and blessings, even beyond my dreams.

Serving a mission can do this for all you young men. A young man recently shared with me how much he had learned from his perseverance as a missionary. I draw from his experience some of the

things you can learn that would bring opportunities and blessings to you:

1. How to organize and use time wisely
2. The importance of hard work—that you reap what you sow
3. Leadership skills
4. People skills
5. The value of gospel study
6. Respect for authority
7. The importance of prayer
8. Humility and dependence on the Lord¹

Persevere to achieve your potential

When I went to Granite High School in Salt Lake City in the 1930s, I had some friends who excelled in athletics, drama, music, and speech. Some of them went on to achieve success in life, but too many of those gifted and able young people did not persevere and failed to achieve their potential. In contrast, several less visible young men and women at the same school worked diligently, persevered, and continued with their education and became outstanding doctors, engineers, educators, lawyers, scientists, businessmen, artisans, electricians, plumbers, and entrepreneurs.

Success is usually earned by persevering and not becoming discouraged when we encounter challenges. Paul Harvey, the famous news analyst and author, once said:

“Someday I hope to enjoy enough of what the world calls success so that someone will ask me, ‘What’s the secret of it?’ I shall say simply this: ‘I get up when I fall down.’”²