

the forgiveness of that sin—for it is a most deadly sin.

The men who hold the Priesthood are but mortal men; they are fallible men; they are sinners. No human being that ever trod this earth was free from sin, excepting the Son of God, from the beginning throughout all the ranks of the Priesthood in every generation. Every human being has been a sinner, and has been forced to confess before the Lord that he was a sinner. None is exempt in this respect; there is no exception, aside from the Lord Jesus Himself. This is true concerning the Presidency of the Church; it is true in relation to the Apostles. Nevertheless, God has chosen these men. He has singled them out. They have not done it themselves; but He has selected them, and He has placed upon them the authority of the Holy Priesthood, and they have become His representatives in the earth. He places them as shepherds over the flock of Christ, and as watchmen upon the walls of Zion. And He holds them to a strict accountability for the responsibility and for the authority which He has given to them, and in the day of the Lord Jesus they will have to stand and be judged for that which they have done and the manner in which they have exercised this authority. If they have exercised it wrongfully and against the interests of His work and the salvation of His people, woe unto them in the day of the Lord Jesus! He will judge them, and, if worthy of condemnation, He will condemn them. But He does not give the authority to judge and condemn to man, only in the regularly constituted councils of His Church; and those who lift their voices and their heels against the authority of the Holy Priesthood, I tell you today, as a servant of God—and I wish these young men and young women to hear my testimony this day and to remember it as long as they live—they will go down to hell, unless they repent.

There are many examples in this Church of a character to prove what I here state. Oliver Cowdery, who received the same blessings and the same ordinations as the Prophet Joseph; or dained to the Lesser Priesthood at the same time as Joseph; ordained to the Melchisedek Priesthood by the same angels who visited Joseph; afterwards in the Kirtland Temple beheld the Son of God Himself, and received the keys of the gathering from Moses, and the gospel of Abraham and the promises that were made to Abraham, from Elias; and afterwards the keys for the turning of the hearts of the fathers to the children and the children to the fathers from Elijah—this man, so favored of God, after all this, lost the Spirit of God through opposing the Prophet Joseph! He might in one sense, and doubtless did in his feelings, rank himself as the peer of the Prophet; but God had given to Joseph the keys of the Priesthood and the authority to preside, and because Oliver Cowdery did not honor that Priesthood and that authority, God withdrew His Holy Spirit from him, and he lost his standing in the Church, and his Priesthood was taken from him and given to another, as you will find by reading the revelations. God gave the same authority that Oliver Cowdery held to Hyrum Smith, the brother of the Prophet Joseph and the father of Brother Joseph F. Smith here. Before his death Oliver Cowdery came back, humbly penitent, and was baptized into the Church again.

Not only this man, but no less than six of the Twelve Apostles lifted their heels against the Prophet of God; they murmured at him, questioned his authority, told lies about him, or believed lies about him, and as a result they lost their standing, and others were chosen to take their places. Sidney Rigdon, whom God designated as a spokesman for the Prophet Joseph, a man of great eloquence and of many gifts, a man who was favored of the Lord with that wonderful vision which is recorded in the 76th section of the Book of Doctrine and Covenants, who with Joseph beheld the glories of the celestial, the terrestrial and testial kingdoms,—this man fell. Why did he fall? Because he not only murmured against the Prophet of God, but he even murmured against God, because of the afflictions the Lord permitted to come upon him in Missouri. William Law, who was a counselor of the Prophet Joseph, took the same course, and he lost his Priesthood, and became one of the bitterest enemies of the Church of God. There is scarcely any room to doubt but what he was guilty of contributing to the shedding of the innocent blood of the Prophet and the Patriarch of the Church.

With these examples before us, my brethren and sisters, ought we not to be exceedingly careful how we speak and how we act in relation to the Priesthood. Think of this authority that God has given unto the officers of this Church! (our young men receive it as well as the older ones.)—the authority to go into the water and baptize people for the remission of their sins—the authority to lay hands on those who are baptized and confer upon them the Holy Ghost—the authority to lay hands on others and give them the same authority that they themselves possess—the authority to bind on earth and it is bound in heaven—to bind wives to husbands for time and eternity, and children to parents—to perform all the sealing ordinances that are necessary in order to connect one generation with another, until we shall go clear back to our great father Adam! Think of its importance, of its sacredness! Think of the beneficence of our God in bestowing it upon man! Suppose there was only one man upon the earth who held the authority that all you Elders in the congregation hold, what would be our feelings toward him? Why, we would feel like traversing sea and land, wearing out our lives if necessary, to get to such a man who could, by administering to us certain ordinances, insure to us the forgiveness of our sins and eternal glory in the presence of God and the Lamb. Is there any sacrifice that we would think too great? I know with the feelings we have had concerning the Gospel that we would not think any sacrifice too great to obtain this grand prize. But because we have it here among us shall we despise it? Shall we think lightly of it because it is so common? If we do this, God will hold us to a strict accountability therefor. Think of our great Father, accompanied by His Son Jesus, coming from the mansions of glory to prepare the way for the ushering in of this dispensation! We can form some idea of its importance when we reflect that He sent John, who held the keys of the Aaronic Priesthood, from heaven, and then sent Peter, James and John, who held the keys of the Melchisedek Priesthood, and continued to send angels

to confer all other keys that had been held in the various dispensations back to the time of our father Adam, each coming in his time and season to confer upon mortal man the keys that were necessary for the salvation of man, and for the organizing of this dispensation in such a manner as to prepare the way for the coming of the Lord.

I have not language to describe to you the importance of our relationship to the Priesthood, and the greatness and sacredness of the Priesthood which the Lord has bestowed upon us. I believe that in the day of the Lord Jesus one of the great causes of condemnation of the Elders of this Church will be their neglect in appreciating the importance of the Priesthood and in magnifying it as it should be. I ask myself frequently, are you living as you should live? Are you attending to the duties of your calling, so that the Lord will accept of you? Or will there be any of the blood of this generation found on your garments in the day of the Lord Jesus? For every one of the Latter-day Saints as well as the whole human family will have to stand before the judgment seat of Christ and be judged for the deeds done in the body. If we have used the talents, the opportunities, the authority and the power which God has given unto us aright, then, of course, we are promised great rewards—we are promised exaltation, and that we shall enter into the presence of God and sit down at His right hand. But there are great penalties attached to the conduct of those who do not walk as they should and discharge the duties and use the opportunities that the Lord has given them. The Latter-day Saints will be held to a stricter accountability than any other people.

I was greatly pleased this morning at the remarks which were made by President Joseph F. Smith respecting that which devolved upon us. It strikes me as the most absurd thing in the world for a man to call himself a Latter-day Saint who is a thief, or who is a drunkard, or who is a whoremonger, because with the name of saint is associated everything that is pure. It is a holy name, and how can we expect that the Lord will permit us to bear that name if we do not act consistently with it? I have sometimes thought that the promises which God has made to us as a people, and particularly those which are spoken of in the revelations contained in the Doctrine and Covenants, to the effect that after enduring severe punishment and making proper atonement there will be redemption for every human being that has not committed the unpardonable sin—I have thought that these promises have caused a good many of our brethren perhaps to imbibe the idea that they can commit sin with some degree of impunity. I recall to mind an expression that was made by Bishop George Miller, who was ordained a bishop after the death of Edward Partridge. The Lord speaks very kindly of Miller, and calls him a man without guile. Some years after this, when the Temple was completed, so that endowments could be given, George Miller received his endowments. Of course, great promises are made to us in the endowments. A great many blessings are sealed upon us by virtue of the Holy Priesthood, and we are promised that we shall come forth in the morning of the first resurrection, clothed with glory,