

Good morning, brothers and sisters. I have been asked to speak on the same topics covered in Elder M. Russel Ballard's recent general conference address entitled, "This Is My Work and Glory". Brother Jarman advised that this should not be a summary of Elder Ballard's talk, but that while guided by the subject matter, I should draw upon my own experiences to express the same faith-promoting message and admonitions. Being largely about priesthood power and authority, I'm afraid to say that, despite Brother Jarman's kind insistence to the contrary, I do not have any great experiences with the priesthood in my attempts to use it in administering to other people. Being a fairly new father with one daughter and a son on the way, perhaps this will change.

Most of my experiences with the priesthood are on the receiving end. Of the many examples of this, the one that takes the forefront of my mind at this time would be my being set apart as a missionary a very long time ago. I could tell that the stake president wasn't speaking his own mind. He wasn't saying what he wanted to say or what he wanted for me as a new missionary. His words came from the Holy Ghost. They were given to him. There were blessings, promises, warnings and counsel given. I recall being advised to leave everything behind – counsel that I wish I had followed. I was also counseled to use my testimony as a shield against arguments that would try my faith. In a related, but separate priesthood blessing, I recall a promise given that although I may become home-sick or lonely, that when I prayed in the mission field, the Lord would give me the comfort and assurance that I was doing His work.

More than once as a missionary on the streets of Los Angeles, I was put into a very familiar position in which a missionary and his companion find themselves. A member of the church, less active or bed-ridden, sick or otherwise afflicted, has reached out to the missionaries and desired a priesthood blessing. I must admit to feeling a great deal of relief on such occasions when I was chosen to anoint while my companion that of sealing the anointing. All I had to do was get the individual's name right. To give the body of the priesthood blessing, on the other hand, required a great deal more. I knew many missionaries that were very good at it. They always had so much to say. Always being at a loss for words, as our poor unfortunate Elders Quorum can attest, when it was placed upon me to exercise the priesthood in giving the blessing, it is needless to say that it didn't go very well. In any case, despite my fears, I always wanted to seek Heavenly Father's will in giving priesthood blessings, that He would inspire and direct me.

As I've read over Elder Ballard's talk again and again, I want to be careful here to avoid, as Brother Jarmin advised against, giving a summary of the address. But if the congregation will indulge me for a moment, I, having a poor knowledge of many gospel topics, not the least of which is the priesthood power and authority of God, would like to share with you what I hope is not a misinterpretation of a few teachings and principles conveyed in Elder Ballard's talk, which things I have, at length, given a great deal of effort toward understanding. Perhaps such things can only come through prayerful and worthy understanding, and experience.

One of Elder Ballard's teachings is a distinction he makes between the power and authority of the priesthood. While one may be authorized to act in God's name, the power of the priesthood comes only when that worthy individual is also acting in accordance with God's will. I believe that Heavenly Father's will can be made known to us in the very moment it is sought, if we are worthy of and honor the priesthood we hold. Elder Ballard quotes President Kimball as declaring, "The Lord has given to all of us, as holders of the priesthood, certain of his authority, but we can only tap the powers of heaven on the basis of our personal righteousness." By certain of his authority, I wonder if here President Kimball is referring to the concept of priesthood keys given to those holding certain priesthood offices. It would be interesting to learn more about and understand the full structure of the priesthood.

Another teaching conveyed by Elder Ballard relates the priesthood and procreative powers and their respective roles in building an eternal family. Elder Ballard says, "In the eternal perspective, both the procreative power and the priesthood power are shared by husband and wife." For the procreative power, this sharing is obvious. For the priesthood power, I believe we must realize that a priesthood holder never exercises his priesthood for his own benefit, but only for the benefit of others; in this case, his family. Furthermore, while the procreative power simply grows a family by numbers, there must be some quality of the family that is grown by the application of priesthood power. I suppose that this quality, among others, helps qualify a family for membership in God's kingdom. The qualities of being sanctified, purified and sealed are mentioned by Elder Ballard as being bestowed upon family members by priesthood power for its primary purpose in bringing us home to our Heavenly parents.