

UPON

You

MY FELLOW  
SERVANTS



*Harnessing*  
the **POWER** of the  
**AARONIC PRIESTHOOD**



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# CHAPTER 1

## The Power of Godliness

*I Am a Beloved Son of God*

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Therefore, in the ordinances thereof, the power of godliness is manifest. And without the ordinances thereof, and the authority of the priesthood, the power of godliness is not manifest unto men in the flesh.

—DOCTRINE AND COVENANTS 84:20–21

**O**n a stormy night in 1752, Benjamin Franklin ventured out from the safety of his home in Philadelphia equipped with a kite, a small metal key, and a question. Could the electric fire that erupted from the sky on nights such as this be harnessed? Were there fundamental elements invisible to the eye that could provide new understanding of this power that seemed to only belong to the gods of ancient times? Could he prove that there was, in fact, an electrical energy consisting of positive and negative particles that might one day be bridled for the benefit of all mankind?

Though he had been mocked for his hypothesis, with undaunted optimism he built his kite and launched it into the windy air. With enthusiasm he described his experiment and the effects of the negative charged energy on his kite, the key, and the twine that secured them together before trickling

down to a small glass jar that included a crude capacitor that carried the hope of serving as a collector for the heavenly power:

To the End of the Twine, next the Hand, is to be tied a silk Ribbon, and where the Twine and the silk join, a Key may be fastened. This Kite is to be raised when a Thunder Gust appears to be coming on, and the Person who holds the String must stand within a Door, or Window, or under some Cover, so that the Silk Ribbon may not be wet; and Care must be taken that the Twine does not touch the Frame of the Door or Window. As soon as any of the Thunder Clouds come over the Kite, the pointed Wire will draw the Electric Fire from them, and the Kite, with all the Twine, will be electrified, and the loose Filaments of the Twine will stand out every Way, and be attracted by an approaching Finger. And when the Rain has wet the Kite and Twine, so that it can conduct the Electric Fire freely, you will find it stream out plentifully from the Key on the Approach of your Knuckle.<sup>1</sup>

I like to imagine Franklin's excitement as electricity literally filled the air and caused the threads in the twine to stand on end. Franklin's key unlocked the gate for other inspired individuals who each made tremendous contributions of their own to find purpose for this eternal power. Electricity would, in time, be harnessed to become a source of great power, giving light and enabling knowledge to be shared throughout the earth.

The key to applying this power for the benefit of man was to define the laws and establish the elements that measure the magnitude of this force. Soon a new vernacular, or language, was established that included words such as *amps*, *ohms*, *volts*, and *watts*. Amps would measure the speed of electricity running through a circuit. Like water pressure in a hose, volts would serve to measure the pressure of the electricity within a circuit. An ohm became the defining measurement of the amount of resistance placed on an electrical force. Finally, watts would become the very familiar term to define the absolute power produced by an electrical circuit.

Just sixty-eight years following Franklin's experiment, a young man similarly left his home with an honest inquiry occupying his mind and heart. Like Franklin's revelation on electricity, on that beautiful and sacred spring morning, the young prophet-to-be would make a discovery of even greater magnitude as he similarly set his eyes toward the heavens. In time, he too would learn a new set of laws and means for measuring this power of a loving God that was being restored to the earth for the benefit of His

children.

Like lightning in Franklin's bottle, young Joseph soon learned of the immensity and majesty of God's power. When Joseph entered the grove in the spring of 1820, he took with him the specific question of which church he should join. In addition to answering Joseph's specific question, in a very clear, but understated way, the Savior announced the restoration of the laws and ordinances of His gospel and declared to the world that all of God's children would now be able to fully partake of the Atonement to find peace, hope, and reconciliation with their Father in Heaven through the re-establishment of His priesthood power.

Consider the words of the Savior to Joseph on that marvelous morning and look for what the Lord tells Joseph about the words *godliness* and *power*: "I was answered that I must join none of them, for they were all wrong; and the Personage who addressed me said that all their creeds were an abomination in his sight; that those professors were all corrupt; that: *'they draw near to me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me, they teach for doctrines the commandments of men, having a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof'*" (Joseph Smith—History 2:19; emphasis added).

Those final words of the Savior give tremendous insight into the integral role the priesthood would play in the restoration of His gospel. Regarding the other sects and beliefs of the day, the Savior stated that they "teach for doctrines the commandments of men, having a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof." The words *godliness* and *power* provide an interesting insight into what happened on that spring morning.

What is godliness, and what is this power that enables it? To be like God is the fulfillment of women and men's greatest potential. Before coming to earth, each of us lived in the presence of God, and there we desired to be like our loving Father in Heaven. Through his glorious plan of salvation, our Father prepared a way that we might reach our full potential as His spirit children to progress and become as He is.

Just as a child grows to embody the attributes of his or her parents, our purpose here on Earth is to grow and progress to become like our Father in

Heaven. We know and trust that He is perfect and that He enjoys eternal happiness. Because of that, we want to grow and progress to similarly embody His attributes and character.

Critical to the fulfillment of His plan and our eternal purpose is the need to overcome the otherwise permanent effects of mortality, specifically death and sin, to become like our Father who lives free from both of these impediments. The power required to enable this progression and development is only available to God's children as they become unified with Him through the Atonement of His Son, Jesus Christ. Ultimately this change is effectuated as we make covenants and receive saving ordinances that are facilitated only by the power of God through priesthood power.

When Heavenly Father took His beloved Son to the grove, He knew very well that the world lacked the fulness of this power of godliness, this power to become as He is. With the Father and Son's arrival, Their identity and attributes would no longer have to be a mystery to mankind, and the reality that we are all His children divinely endowed to become like Him was suddenly obvious.

Twelve years after the First Vision, the Lord would shed further light on this power and the potential for godliness that He referenced in the grove in what is now known as the revelation on the priesthood. The Lord explained to Joseph that it is in the *ordinances* administered by God's priesthood that the *power of godliness*, or the power to partake of the Atonement to become like our Heavenly Father, is made manifest to His children on Earth.

As you read the following verses, look for ways the Lord references both the Aaronic and greater priesthoods. Also look for what the Lord says about where we can see His power being made manifest to us.

And the Lord confirmed a priesthood also upon Aaron and his seed, throughout all their generations, which priesthood also continueth and abideth forever with the priesthood which is after the holiest order of God.

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. Therefore, in the ordinances thereof the power of godliness is manifest.

And without the ordinances thereof, and the authority of the priesthood, the power of godliness is not manifest unto men in the flesh. (D&C 84:18–21)

Did you see it? The Lord references both priesthoods and then says that it is in the ordinances where the power to become like Him, the power of godliness, is manifest. Think about what this means for you. What ordinances have you received? What ordinances have you participated in? How have you seen those ordinances enable you or others to become more like God?

As I reflect on this verse, I am reminded of what the Lord told Joseph in the grove about what was absent from the earth: “They teach for doctrines, the commandments of men, having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof” (JS—H 1:19). Throughout the Apostasy, men, identified what they perceived to be commandments to perform ordinances as they understood them to be outlined in scripture. As people throughout history administered various forms of baptisms and sacraments within different religious traditions, they identified a way to pursue the Atonement. But they had, as the Savior stated, only a form of godliness. Without the restoration of priesthood power, these ordinances relied only on the merits of men’s understanding and consequently denied the power of God’s true influence or His godliness that is manifest only through ordinances performed under authorized priesthood power.

It is interesting to observe that the Lord’s first statement in the grove was a reference to the need for a restoration of priesthood power and its associated ordinances. The Lord declared that the power to overcome the frailties of mortality and to become like God is found in the ordinances administered under the restored priesthood power.

Like the people who came after Franklin and blessed the world through their diligent efforts to understand the laws and define the elements of electrical power, we, as members of Christ’s restored church, have a similar solemn opportunity and responsibility to enable the establishment of priesthood power to bring light, knowledge, hope, and happiness to all of God’s children. Like the prophet Joseph, we too have an obligation to allow the doctrine of the priesthood to distill upon our souls as the dews from heaven.

Establishing God’s power on earth begins with the preparatory

priesthood. The dews from heaven will distill doctrine as we seek to be taught by the Holy Ghost, who can prompt thoughts that enlighten and remind us of our understanding of the power and potential of the Aaronic Priesthood. Through this powerful priesthood process, we can experience a renewed joy in understanding what it means to possess the keys of the gospel of repentance, baptism, and the ministry of angels. Furthermore, we can look to the beloved Aaronic Priesthood holders in our lives and be filled with desire to help them realize their priesthood potential.

As stewards of the Aaronic priesthood, we should be inspired to find ways to maximize the volts that measure priesthood pressure, or perhaps more eloquently stated, priesthood influence on the world. We need to be prompted with ideas to increase the amps of the speed and efficiency of the Aaronic Priesthood quorums that we sustain and to which we pertain. In understanding the magnitude of Aaronic Priesthood potential, we should do everything we can to increase the ohms of resistance to the evil that seeks to derail Aaronic Priesthood purposes. Finally, as we harness this heavenly power, we can experience the watts that measure the true power of godliness being established in our families, wards, and throughout the world by virtue of the Aaronic Priesthood and its purpose to prepare each of us for the coming of the Lord.

## NOTE

1. Letter from Benjamin Franklin to Peter Collison, October 19, 1752. See I. Bernard Cohen's *Benjamin Franklin's Science* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), 66.

# THE POWER OF GODLINESS

## *I Am a Beloved Son of God*

### DOCTRINE

*Read Joseph Smith—History 1:19.*

Look for Jesus Christ to acknowledge to Joseph Smith the absence of priesthood authority with words such as *godliness* and *power*.

*Read Doctrine and Covenants 84:18–21.*

Look for the Savior to teach the importance of priesthood ordinances as the means for pursuing godliness.

### PRINCIPLE

*Lead your quorum or family in a discussion.*

- What is the relationship between pursuing godliness and priesthood power?
- How have the events of the Restoration influenced your understanding of your divine nature as a son or daughter of a Heavenly Father?

### THEORY

*Journal your thoughts on the following questions:*

- In what ways have you experienced high voltage priesthood influence to inspire you in your own personal decisions to come unto Christ?
- What does it mean to you to increase the amps or speed and efficiency of priesthood power?
- In what ways have you experienced the ohms of resistance to evil because of your association with priesthood power?
- How has priesthood power prepared you and your family to meet the Savior?

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