

# *The Power to Change*

RUTH LYBBERT RENLUND

Good morning, brothers and sisters, I am delighted to be here with you today. I appreciate the beautiful music, singing praises to our Heavenly Father for the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

The world you were raised in and live in today is full of superheroes. They are on movie and television screens, they fill the pages of comic books, and they consume much of our popular culture. Now perhaps you have engaged in conversations with friends trying to identify which is your favorite superhero and what superpower you would most like to have.

Maybe you would like to be Elastigirl, with the ability to reach around corners and hug a roomful of people. Or maybe Superman is more your style, with superhuman vision, agility, and speed. Who couldn't use that most days?

Well, these characters and their powers are of course fictional. But have you wondered what your spiritual "superpower" is? You can have

a superpower greater than that of any fictional power ever conceived. You can have God's power in your life—the ultimate and very real superpower.

In the October 2019 general conference, President Russell M. Nelson taught that God's power flows from priesthood covenants and that understanding this will change your life.<sup>1</sup> God's power, the power of godliness, is the power to change. With God's help we can change from women and men driven by carnal desires and selfish concerns to holy women and holy men prepared to enter the kingdom of God. We change little by little by making and keeping priesthood covenants. Priesthood covenants are the way we receive the Savior's Atonement into our lives.

Let's consider, for a moment, the power we receive through the covenant of baptism and the sacramental covenants. When we are baptized, we covenant to be disciples of Jesus Christ and to be members of His Church. Our understanding

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*Ruth Lybbert Renlund, wife of Elder Dale G. Renlund, delivered this devotional address on December 3, 2019.*

of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ enlarges when we prepare for and worthily partake of the sacrament. Prayers offered on the sacrament each week help us understand that partaking of the bread and drinking the water is more than renewing our covenant at baptism. We witness anew that we “are willing to take upon” us His name “and always remember him and keep his commandments which he has given [us].” When we make this covenant, we have this promise that we “may always have his Spirit to be with [us].”<sup>2</sup>

We can receive the power and encouragement to change as we witness to God, our Father, that we are willing to take upon ourselves the name of Jesus Christ. When we take upon us the name of Jesus Christ, we identify ourselves with Him as His disciple. We link ourselves with His name. Linking ourselves with His name helps us identify with Him and changes us as we take on His attributes and characteristics.

Let me explain how this change can happen with an example involving a man who changed his attitude and behavior because his name became linked with that of Russell M. Nelson. Not too long ago, Elder Renlund and I had an opportunity to attend a special meeting that was hosted by the president of the University of Utah. A special position was being created in the department of surgery that was being funded by significant financial donations from many individuals. Such an academic position is called an endowed chair. This endowed chair was designated for the division of Cardiothoracic Surgery and was being named for Russell M. Nelson and his late wife, Dantzel W. Nelson. The large financial endowment of the position, or chair, ensures that whoever is chosen to hold the chair will have funding for his or her research efforts in perpetuity. It is a great honor and benefit for the one who is appointed to the chair and an honor for the one after whom it is named.

On the evening of this official creation of this endowed chair in cardiothoracic surgery, the first person appointed to the special position, Dr. Craig H. Selzman, addressed the assembled group. Dr. Selzman is a renowned professor of

surgery at the University of Utah and the chairman of the division of Cardiothoracic Surgery. He is a wise, mature man who is not of our faith. His remarks were enlightening and demonstrated both a profound respect for Dr. Russell M. Nelson as well as Dr. Selzman’s own humility.

Dr. Selzman explained that a few days earlier he had operated all day. In the evening, before going home, he returned to the intensive care unit to check on the patients on whom he had operated earlier in the day. After examining one of the patients, Dr. Selzman realized that this patient needed to go back to the operating room. He was frustrated. He was displeased with the situation. He was disappointed that he was going to spend another long night in the hospital.

Dr. Selzman explained that when he is frustrated and unhappy, his surgical team sometimes knows it, and it affects them too. At that point, instead of yielding to his emotions and frustrated attitude, he reflected on the fact that he was going to be appointed to the Russell M. Nelson Chair in Cardiothoracic Surgery later that week. He contemplated that Dr. Nelson had been known as a surgeon who was always a gentleman. He was always in control of his emotions, always in control of his operating room, and always professional and kind and caring with his operating team. Dr. Selzman thought that since he would be holding a position named after Dr. Nelson, he should try to follow Dr. Nelson’s example. Dr. Selzman decided to change his attitude. He calmed himself and notified the operating team in a caring manner. Then he went into the operating room in control of his emotions, and the interactions and outcome were better as a result.

As Dr. Selzman spoke, I was struck by how just the very thought of linking his name to Russell M. Nelson’s name caused him to change both his attitude and behavior. Going forward, Dr. Selzman said he would try to be more like Dr. Nelson.

Perhaps we should reflect on what can and should happen to us as we link ourselves with the name of our Savior. As we do, we too can change. We will gain power—superhuman power—the godly power to turn toward our Savior and

become more like Him. We can have the power to resist temptation, to be protected from the evil one, to accept and fulfill challenging callings, to discern truth from error, to make critical decisions in our lives that will keep us on the covenant path, to find joy regardless of our circumstances, to sort through life's many activities, and to choose those things that are higher and holier.

I am so grateful for priesthood ordinances and covenants that endow us with power to spiritually survive this mortal existence and allow us to change and become more like our Savior. As we begin to change and take on His characteristics,

we will also experience in our life the fruits of His Atonement: greater peace, greater charity, greater love, and greater gratitude for our Savior, Jesus Christ. I know this is true. This is the mighty miracle that is offered to each of us through priesthood covenants: the power to change and to become more like God. I say this in the name of our beloved Savior, Jesus Christ, amen.

#### Notes

1. See Russell M. Nelson, "Spiritual Treasures," *Ensign*, November 2019.
2. D&C 20:77.