

Like the words of the popular song:

Is this the little girl I carried?
Is this the little boy at play?
I don't remember growing older.
When did they?
When did she get to be a beauty?
When did he grow to be so tall?
Wasn't it yesterday when they were
small?

Sunrise, sunset,
Swiftly fly the years.
One season following another,
Laden with happiness and tears.**

May we strive to rededicate and
strengthen our relationships with

**"Sunrise, Sunset," from *Fiddler on the Roof*, lyrics by Sheldon Harnack (New York: Sunbeam Music Corp., 1964). Used by permission.

our children and to lend even greater help and leadership to the lovely mothers of this church as we work to bring the principles of righteousness and truth and joy and peace and happiness to the youth of our families, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President Harold B. Lee

Elder Loren C. Dunn of the First Council of Seventy has addressed us.

Elder Franklin D. Richards, Assistant to the Twelve, will now address us, and our concluding speaker will be Elder Ezra Taft Benson of the Council of the Twelve Apostles.

Elder Franklin D. Richards

Assistant to the Council of the Twelve

My dear brothers and sisters, I stand before you with a humble heart. I am grateful for the privilege of attending this semiannual conference and have been inspired by the words of our great leaders. We have received counsel that will be helpful to us in living a happy and successful life at this particular time in the history of the world.

The purpose of trials

When Adam was cast out of the Garden of Eden, he was told that "in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken." (Gen. 3:19.)

I am told that over the entrance to a great European university campus there is an inscription that says that "nothing worthwhile ever comes to a person

except by the anguish of his soul and the sweat of his brow."

Ella Wheeler Wilcox, in her beautiful poem entitled "Gethsemane," expressed it this way:

"All those who journey, soon or late,
Must pass within the garden's gate;
Must kneel alone in darkness there,
And battle with some fierce despair.
God pity those who cannot say:
'Not mine but thine'; who only pray:
'Let this cup pass,' and cannot see
The purpose in Gethsemane."

Although it is not customary for one to seek out the difficult or unpleasant experiences, it is true that the trials and tribulations of life that stand in the way of man's growth and development become stepping-stones by which he climbs to greater heights, providing, of course, that he does not permit them to discourage him.

The story of most men and women who attain a degree of greatness and achievement is generally the story of a person overcoming handicaps. It appears that there are lessons that can only be learned through the overcoming of obstacles.

Journey of Zion's Camp

Two of the most interesting and trying experiences of this dispensation are those of the Zion's Camp and Liberty Jail, both of which not only influenced the lives of great men but also greatly affected the history of the Church.

The members of the Church in Missouri were being persecuted, and the Prophet Joseph made it a matter of prayer and received a revelation on February 24, 1834. The Lord instructed the Prophet to assemble at least one hundred young and middle-aged men and to go to the land of Zion, or Missouri. (See D&C 130:19-34.)

Zion's Camp, a group of approximately one hundred and fifty men, gathered at Kirtland, Ohio, in the spring of 1834 and marched to western Missouri. By the time they reached Missouri, the camp had increased to approximately two hundred men.

The purpose of the trek was to join the Saints in Missouri and buy lands in Jackson County and surrounding counties and retrieve those lands taken by the mobs who had dispossessed the Missouri Saints of considerable of their property.

Upon reaching Missouri, and after extensive negotiations with Governor Dunklin failed to produce results, it was felt advisable to disband Zion's Camp and await some future opportunity for the redemption of Zion.

Most of those who had formed Zion's Camp returned to Kirtland,

which was at that time the center of ecclesiastical activity.

Lessons from Zion's Camp

The "journey of Zion's Camp" was regarded by many as an unprofitable and unsuccessful episode. A brother in Kirtland who did not go with the camp, meeting Brigham Young upon his return, said to him, "Well, what did you gain on this useless journey to Missouri with Joseph Smith?" "All we went for," replied Brigham Young. "I would not exchange the experience I gained in that expedition for all the wealth of Geauga County," the county in which Kirtland was then located. (B. H. Roberts, "Brigham Young, A Character Sketch," *Improvement Era*, vol. 6 [June 1903], p. 567.)

The journey covered more than one thousand miles and there were dissensions within and hostile demonstrations from without. There were hardships and disappointments, but these experiences had real value because from this group many became the leaders in the exodus of 12,000 people from Missouri to Nauvoo, and then later many became leaders in the great western exodus from Nauvoo to the Salt Lake Valley.

The Twelve and Seventies chosen

In February 1835 those brethren who had accompanied the Prophet Joseph to Missouri as members of Zion's Camp were called together, and from their numbers the Quorum of the Twelve and the Seventies were chosen. The Prophet explained that the trials and tribulations endured by the members of Zion's Camp were not in vain, and it was the will of God "that those who went to Zion, with a determination to lay down their lives, if necessary, should be ordained to the ministry, and go

forth to prune the vineyard for the last time." (*Documentary History of the Church*, vol. 2, p. 182.)

In the light of these events it is evident that the Zion's Camp experiences were of immense value to both the individuals involved and the Church.

Winter of 1838-39

One of the darkest periods in the history of the Church was the winter of 1838-39. The Saints had been persecuted, robbed, and murdered. The Prophet and his associates had been betrayed and were imprisoned in Liberty Jail. Dissension and apostasy were rampant, and the Church appeared to be faced with disintegration and ruin.

But emerging from this dark period were the men who led the Church through trying experiences as well as amazing growth and development. But this was not all. It was during these dark days that the Lord gave to the Prophet Joseph Smith, while in Liberty Jail, a great revelation. Liberty Jail for a time became a center of instruction.

Liberty Jail experience

Elder Brigham H. Roberts, in the *Comprehensive History of the Church*, has this to say: "The eyes of the saints were turned to it (Liberty Jail) as the place whence would come encouragement, counsel—the word of the Lord. It was more temple than prison, so long as the Prophet was there. It was a place of meditation and prayer. A temple, first of all, is a place of prayer; and prayer is communion with God. It is the 'infinite in man seeking the infinite in God.' Where they find each other, there is holy sanctuary—a temple. Joseph Smith sought God in this rude prison, and found him. Out

of the midst of his tribulations he called upon God in passionate earnestness." (Vol. 1, p. 526.)

The answer came as God replied, "My son, peace be unto thy soul; thine adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a small moment;

"And then, if thou endure it well, God shall exalt thee on high." (D&C 121:7-8. Italics added.)

The Prophet Joseph was told that if great tribulation should beset him and even "if the very jaws of hell shall gape open the mouth wide after thee, know thou, my son, that all these things shall give thee experience, and shall be for thy good.

"The Son of Man hath descended below them all. Art thou greater than he?" (D&C 122:7-8.)

Priesthood and Church government

One of the great truths that came from the so-called prison temple, Liberty Jail, had to do with priesthood and Church government. This is found in the 121st section of the Doctrine and Covenants, a part of which reads as follows: "Behold, there are many called, but few are chosen. And why are they not chosen?

"Because their hearts are set so much upon the things of this world, and aspire to the honors of men, that they do not learn this one lesson—

"That the rights of the priesthood are inseparably connected with the powers of heaven, and that the powers of heaven cannot be controlled nor handled only upon the principles of righteousness." (D&C 121:34-35.)

On one occasion the Prophet Joseph Smith was asked how he governed his people. His reply was, "I teach the people correct principles and they govern themselves." (Recalled by John Taylor, *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 10,

pp. 57-58.) The doctrine of righteous dominion so beautifully described in the 121st section of the Doctrine and Covenants is a good example of how the members of the Church are taught correct principles that enable them to govern themselves.

A refiner's fire

We believe that one of the important purposes of this life is to be proved, tried, and tested. Both the Zion's Camp and Liberty Jail experiences truly constituted a refiner's fire for those who participated in them, and they emphasize the necessity of experiencing difficult and complex situations in life in order to properly develop and draw close to our Heavenly Father. These experiences certainly give us a better understanding and appreciation of the greatness of the Prophet Joseph Smith and the early leaders of the Church.

Faith and endurance

But what can we learn from the Zion's Camp and Liberty Jail experiences that will be helpful to us?

Certainly two impressive truths are apparent: first, the importance of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and loyalty to our leaders and the Church; second, the need of enduring to the end regardless of how many difficulties we have to surmount.

In order to apply these principles in our lives, let us today commit ourselves to follow the counsel of our leaders, accept every opportunity to serve, and complete each assignment well—yes, endure to the end. Let us avoid setting our hearts upon the things of the

world, and as we exercise our priesthood, let us incorporate the great principle of righteous dominion. By so doing and keeping the commandments of the Lord, we shall have joy, happiness, growth, and development and "eternal life, which is the greatest of all the gifts of God." (D&C 14:7.)

Personal witness

Like those who participated in the Zion's Camp and Liberty Jail episodes, I can bear witness that God lives and that Jesus is the Christ—the Holy Ghost has borne this witness to me—and that Joseph Smith was and is a prophet of God, and that through him the power to act in the name of God and the gospel in its fullness have been restored to earth. I know that President Joseph Fielding Smith is God's mouthpiece on the earth today, and may the Lord bless and sustain him in his most important calling.

Let us never forget the great lessons to be learned from Zion's Camp and Liberty Jail, and remember that when trials, tribulations, and hardships come to us, as they will, these are the tests that we must meet in order to enjoy eternal life. May we meet them successfully, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President Harold B. Lee

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