

**LESSON 35**  
**“A Mission of Saving”**  
**D&C 4:3-7; 18:10-16; 52:40; 81:5-6; 138:58 Our Heritage, pages 77-80**

**OVERVIEW:**

President Brigham Young guided the rescue of the Martin and Willie handcart companies. The Savior rescues us through His atoning sacrifice. As Latter-day Saints, we are to rescue those in need.

**SCRIPTURES:**

DOCTRINE AND COVENANTS  
SECTION 4

3 Therefore, if ye have desires to serve God ye are <sup>a</sup>called to the work; ( My understanding is that the most important mission that I have in this life is: first, to keep the commandments of God, as they been taught to me; and next, to teach them to my Father's children who do not understand them. It is not necessary for you to be called to go into the mission field in order to proclaim the truth. Begin on the man who lives next door by inspiring confidence in him, by inspiring love in him for you because of your righteousness, and your missionary work has already begun. (Conference Reports, October 1916, pp. 50, 51.) George Albert Smith, CR, Oct. 1916, p. 50-51. As we have desires to serve in the Church, we are called to serve. We should consider every calling we have as important for the building of the kingdom.)

4 For behold the <sup>a</sup>field is white already to <sup>b</sup>harvest; and lo, he that thrusteth in his sickle with his might, the same layeth up in <sup>c</sup>store that he perisheth not, but bringeth salvation to his soul;

5 And <sup>a</sup>faith, <sup>b</sup>hope, <sup>c</sup>charity and <sup>d</sup>love, with an <sup>e</sup>eye single to the <sup>f</sup>glory of God, <sup>g</sup>qualify him for the work.

6 Remember faith, <sup>a</sup>virtue, knowledge, <sup>b</sup>temperance, <sup>c</sup>patience, <sup>d</sup>brotherly <sup>e</sup>kindness, <sup>f</sup>godliness, charity, <sup>g</sup>humility, <sup>h</sup>diligence. (As we serve God, we get something back, these divine attributes. Joseph Fielding Smith: It is true, we are engaged in a warfare, and all of us should be valiant warriors in the cause in which we are engaged. Our first enemy we will find within ourselves. It is a good thing to overcome that enemy first, and bring ourselves into strict obedience to the principles of life and salvation which he has given to the world for the salvation of men. When we shall have conquered ourselves, it will be well for us to wage our war without, against false teachings, false doctrines, false customs, habits and ways, against error, unbelief, the follies of the world that are so prevalent, and against infidelity, and false science under the name of science, and every other thing that strikes at the foundation of the principles set forth in the doctrine of Christ for the redemption of man and the salvation of their souls. (CR, October 1914, pp. 128-29.))

7 <sup>a</sup>Ask, and ye shall receive; <sup>b</sup>knock, and it shall be opened unto you. Amen. (Notice in these qualifications for those who labor in the kingdom, that it does not say that persons have talents, or abilities. The Lord qualifies those he calls.)

SECTION 18

10 Remember the <sup>a</sup>worth of <sup>b</sup>souls is great in the sight of God; (Let me emphasize that the noblest aim in life is to strive to live to make lives better and happier. The most worthy calling in life is that in which man can serve best his fellowman. David O. McKay, CR Apr 1961, p. 131)

11 For, behold, the Lord your <sup>a</sup>Redeemer suffered <sup>b</sup>death in the flesh; wherefore he <sup>c</sup>suffered the <sup>d</sup>pain of all men, (How can we begin to comprehend the cumulative suffering of all mankind, or as taught by Elder Orson F. Whitney, “the piled up agony of the human race”? What is thrown on the scale of

remorse, as observed by Truman Madsen, when we aggregate “the cumulative impact of our vicious thoughts, motives, and acts”? What, as Elder Vaughn J. Featherstone inquired, is the “weight and immensity of the penalties of all broken laws crying from the dust and from the future—an incomprehensible tidal wave of guilt”? How many searing consciences has this world produced and to what depths of depravity has this earthly sphere sunk? Can anyone possibly fathom the horrendous consequences of such sin? Not only did the Savior fathom it—he felt it, and he suffered it. (Tad R. Callister, *The Infinite Atonement*, 134)) that all men might repent and <sup>c</sup>come unto him.

12 And he hath <sup>a</sup>risen again from the dead, that he might bring all men unto him, on conditions of <sup>b</sup>repentance. (There is nothing in all the eternities—both the love and grace of Christ included—to which conditions are not attached. That which is without conditions is without existence. So it is that we understand that Christ came to save us from our sins not in them (Helaman 5:11). Through his atonement, Christ brings "salvation to all those who shall believe on his name; this being the intent of this last sacrifice, to bring about the bowels of mercy, which overpowereth justice, and bringeth about means unto men that they may have faith unto repentance. And thus mercy can satisfy the demands of justice, and encircles them in the arms of safety, while he that exercises no faith unto repentance is exposed to the whole law of the demands of justice; therefore only unto him that has faith unto repentance is brought about the great and eternal plan of redemption" (Alma 34:15-16). Repentance is the condition on which the receipt of all blessings is predicated (D&C 138:19). Revelations of the Restoration, p. 138)

13 And how great is his <sup>a</sup>joy in the <sup>b</sup>soul that <sup>c</sup>repenteth!

14 Wherefore, you are called to <sup>a</sup>cry repentance unto this people.

15 And if it so be that you should labor all your days in crying repentance unto this people, and bring, save it be one <sup>a</sup>soul unto me, how great shall be your joy with him in the kingdom of my Father! (We need to have the same love for God's children as God does. Ether12:33-34:)

16 And now, if your joy will be great with one soul that you have brought unto me into the <sup>a</sup>kingdom of my Father, how great will be your <sup>b</sup>joy if you should bring many <sup>c</sup>souls unto me! (Rudger Clawson: And if one of these men should labor all his days, and bring save it be but one soul unto Christ, and that one should be his wife, what great joy he would have with his wife in heaven. Then if he should labor all his days and bring unto Christ the souls of his wife and his children, and none else perchance, how great would be his joy in heaven with his wife and children. (CR, April 1901, pp. 7-8 ))

## SECTION 52

40 And remember in all things the <sup>a</sup>poor and the <sup>b</sup>needy, the <sup>c</sup>sick and the afflicted, for he that doeth not these things, the same is not my disciple.

## SECTION 81

5 Wherefore, be faithful; stand in the office which I have appointed unto you; <sup>a</sup>succor the <sup>b</sup>weak, lift up the hands which hang down, and <sup>c</sup>strengthen the <sup>d</sup>feeble knees.

6 And if thou art <sup>a</sup>faithful unto the end thou shalt have a <sup>b</sup>crown of <sup>c</sup>immortality, and eternal life in the <sup>d</sup>mansions which I have prepared in the house of my Father.

## SECTION 138

58 The dead who <sup>a</sup>repent will be redeemed, through obedience to the <sup>b</sup>ordinances of the house of God,

## Supplemental Scriptures:

3 Nephi 18:31-32 - 31 But if he repent not he shall not be numbered among my people, that he may not destroy my people, for behold I <sup>a</sup>know <sup>b</sup>my sheep, and they are numbered. 32 Nevertheless, ye shall not cast him out of your <sup>a</sup>synagogues, or your places of worship, for unto such shall ye continue to minister; (Neal A. Maxwell: “Whatever the individual case, our task is to ‘continue to minister’ without cynically computing the odds, ‘for unto such shall ye continue to minister; for ye know not but what they will return and repent, and come unto me with full purpose of heart, and I shall heal them; and ye shall be the means of bringing salvation unto them’ (3 Nephi 18:32). Of course, the determined offenders may ignore even our best efforts. Being ‘free to choose’ for themselves, they may crash through all reproof and restraint. Nevertheless, in our sometimes collective failure to try at all, we all fail. Then we gather solemnly at the foot of the cliff, hoping to salvage something from the smoking, twisted human wreckage. Instead we might have been loving, restraining sentries atop the cliff, or workers called upon to oversee, repair, and replace the guardrails. You will be blessed to know how to proceed. Your love may not be reciprocated, but it will not be wasted. Don't fret over possible clumsiness on your part. Real love is felt even when it is poorly expressed. Furthermore, if we ‘[show] forth afterward an increase of love’ (D&C 121:43) we will more likely be seen as a true friend and not an enemy. Never forget Jesus' encouragement and direction: ‘Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother’ (Matthew 18:15). No one is finally lost until we give up! May you ‘gain’ back your friend. Mind the moment, and eternity will take care of itself.” (That Ye May Believe, p. 162-3)) for ye know not but what they will return and repent, and come unto me with full purpose of heart, and I shall <sup>b</sup>heal them; and ye shall be the means of bringing salvation unto them.

Moroni 7:45-48 - 45 And <sup>a</sup>charity suffereth long, and is <sup>b</sup>kind, and <sup>c</sup>envieth not, and is not puffed up, seeketh not her own, is not easily <sup>d</sup>provoked, thinketh no evil, and rejoiceth not in iniquity but rejoiceth in the truth, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. (Elder Bruce R. McConkie said: "Both Paul and Mormon expounded with great inspiration about faith, hope, and charity, in many verses using the same words and phrases. If there is any difference between them it is that Mormon expounds the doctrines more perfectly and persuasively than does Paul. It does not take much insight to know that Mormon and Paul both had before them the writings of some Old Testament prophet on the same subjects." ("The Doctrinal Restoration," in The Joseph Smith Translation: The Restoration of Plain and Precious Things, p. 18.) DCBM, 4:343)

46 Wherefore, my beloved brethren, if ye have not charity, ye are nothing, for charity never faileth. Wherefore, cleave unto charity, which is the greatest of all, for all things must fail—

47 But <sup>a</sup>charity is the pure <sup>b</sup>love of Christ, (Hugh Nibley: “Charity gives to those who don't deserve and expects nothing in return: It is the love God has for us, and the love we have for little children, of whom we expect nothing but for whom we would give everything.” (Latter-day Commentary on the Book of Mormon compiled by K. Douglas Bassett, p. 524))and it endureth <sup>c</sup>forever; and whoso is found possessed of it at the last day, it shall be well with him. (Above all the attributes of godliness and perfection, charity is the one most devoutly to be desired. Charity is more than love, far more; it is everlasting love, perfect love, the pure love of Christ which endureth forever. It is love so centered in righteousness that the possessor has no aim or desire except for the eternal welfare of his own soul and for the souls of those around him. Bruce R. McConkie, Mormon Doctrine, p. 121)

48 Wherefore, my beloved brethren, <sup>a</sup>pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with this love, (His love for us) which he hath bestowed upon all who are true <sup>b</sup>followers of his Son, Jesus Christ; that ye may become the sons of God; that when he shall appear we shall <sup>c</sup>be like him, (Christ carries the scars and wounds from his crucifixion. Maybe we too will carry our scars that were

necessary to keep the commandments. Maybe we will be like him in our small versions of suffering) for we shall see him as he is; that we may have this hope; that we may be purified even as he is pure. Amen.

Our Heritage, pages 77-80

### Handcart Pioneers

In the 1850s Church leaders decided to form handcart companies as a way to reduce expenses so that financial aid could be extended to the greatest number of emigrants. Saints who traveled this way put only 100 pounds of flour and a limited quantity of provisions and belongings into a cart and then pulled the cart across the plains. Between 1856 and 1860, ten handcart companies traveled to Utah. Eight of the companies reached the Salt Lake Valley successfully, but two of them, the Martin and Willie handcart companies, were caught in an early winter and many Saints among them perished.

Nellie Pucell, a pioneer in one of these ill-fated companies, turned ten years old on the plains. Both her parents died during the journey. As the group neared the mountains, the weather was bitter cold, the rations were depleted, and the Saints were too weak from hunger to continue on. Nellie and her sister collapsed. When they had almost given up hope, the leader of the company came to them in a wagon. He placed Nellie in the wagon and told Maggie to walk along beside it, holding on to steady herself. Maggie was fortunate because the forced movement saved her from frostbite.

When they reached Salt Lake City and Nellie's shoes and stockings, which she had worn across the plains, were removed, the skin came off with them as a result of frostbite. This brave girl's feet were painfully amputated and she walked on her knees the rest of her life. She later married and gave birth to six children, keeping up her own house and raising a fine posterity. Her determination in spite of her situation and the kindness of those who cared for her exemplify the faith and willingness to sacrifice of these early Church members. Their example is a legacy of faith to all Saints who follow them.

A man who crossed the plains in the Martin handcart company lived in Utah for many years. One day he was in a group of people who began sharply criticizing the Church leaders for ever allowing the Saints to cross the plains with no more supplies or protection than a handcart company provided. The old man listened until he could stand no more; then he arose and said with great emotion:

"I was in that company and my wife was in it. ... We suffered beyond anything you can imagine and many died of exposure and starvation, but did you ever hear a survivor of that company utter a word of criticism? ... *[We] came through with the absolute knowledge that God lives for we became acquainted with him in our extremities.*

"I have pulled my handcart when I was so weak and weary from illness and lack of food that I could hardly put one foot ahead of the other. I have looked ahead and seen a patch of sand or a hill slope and I have said, I can go only that far and there I must give up, for I cannot pull the load through it. ... I have gone on to that sand and when I reached it, the cart began pushing me. I have looked back many times to see who was pushing my cart, but my eyes saw no one. I knew then that the angels of God were there.

"Was I sorry that I chose to come by handcart? No. Neither then nor any minute of my life since. *The price we paid to become acquainted with God was a privilege to pay, and I am thankful that I was privileged to come in the Martin Handcart Company.*"

Our hymnbook contains a song about the early Church members who courageously accepted the gospel and traveled far to live on the outposts of civilization:

They, the builders of the nation,  
Blazing trails along the way;  
Stepping-stones for generations  
Were their deeds of ev'ry day.  
Building new and firm foundations,  
Pushing on the wild frontier,  
Forging onward, ever onward,  
Blessed, honored Pioneer!

Their example teaches us how to live with more faith and courage in our own countries:

Service ever was their watchcry;  
Love became their guiding star;  
Courage, their unfailing beacon,  
Radiating near and far.  
Ev'ry day some burden lifted,  
Ev'ry day some heart to cheer,  
Ev'ry day some hope the brighter,  
Blessed, honored Pioneer!

President Gordon B. Hinckley: I take you back to the general conference of October 1856. On Saturday of that conference Franklin D. Richards and a handful of associates arrived in the valley. They had traveled from Winter Quarters with strong teams and light wagons and had been able to make good time. Brother Richards immediately sought out President Young. He reported that there were hundreds of men, women, and children scattered over the long trail from Scottsbluff to this valley. Most of them were pulling handcarts. They were accompanied by two wagon trains which had been assigned to assist them. They had reached the area of the last crossing of the North Platte River. Ahead of them lay a trail that was uphill all the way to the Continental Divide with many, many miles beyond that. They were in desperate trouble. Winter had come early. Snow-laden winds were howling across the highlands of what is now western Nebraska and Wyoming. Our people were hungry, their carts and their wagons were breaking down, their oxen dying. The people themselves were dying. All of them would perish unless they were rescued.

I think President Young did not sleep that night. I think visions of those destitute, freezing, dying people paraded through his mind.

The next morning he came to the old Tabernacle which stood on this square. He said to the people:

“I will now give this people the subject and the text for the Elders who may speak. ... It is this. ... Many of our brethren and sisters are on the plains with handcarts, and probably many are now seven hundred miles from this place, and they must be brought here, we must send assistance to them. The text will be, ‘to get them here.’

“That is my religion; that is the dictation of the Holy Ghost that I possess. It is to save the people.

“I shall call upon the Bishops this day. I shall not wait until tomorrow, nor until the next day, for 60 good mule teams and 12 or 15 wagons. I do not want to send oxen. I want good horses and mules. They are in this Territory, and we must have them. Also 12 tons of flour and 40 good teamsters, besides those that drive the teams.

“I will tell you all that your faith, religion, and profession of religion, will never save one soul of you in the Celestial Kingdom of our God, unless you carry out just such principles as I am now teaching you. *Go and bring in those people now on the plains*” (in LeRoy R. Hafen and Ann W. Hafen, *Handcarts to Zion* [1960], 120–21).

That afternoon food, bedding, and clothing in great quantities were assembled by the women.

The next morning, horses were shod and wagons were repaired and loaded.

The following morning, Tuesday, 16 mule teams pulled out and headed eastward. By the end of October there were 250 teams on the road to give relief.

Wonderful sermons have been preached from this pulpit, my brethren and sisters. But none has been more eloquent than that spoken by President Young in those circumstances. (CR, Oct 1896, p. 117-18)

My beloved brethren and sisters, how blessed we are to meet together in peace in these comfortable and happy circumstances. As I have thought of this October general conference and of the inspired talks we have heard and will hear, my mind has gone back to the events of this same first Sunday of October 135 years ago when a similar meeting was convened here on Temple Square.

We did not have this great Tabernacle at that time. Our people then met in the Old Tabernacle, which stood just to the south of us. It was Sunday, October 5, 1856. On Saturday, the day before, a small group of missionaries returning from England arrived in the valley. They had been able to make relatively good time because their teams were strong and their wagons light. Franklin D. Richards was their leader. They immediately sought out President Brigham Young. They told him that hundreds of men, women, and children were scattered along the trail that led from the Missouri River to the Salt Lake Valley. Most of them were pulling handcarts, two companies of these, with two smaller companies following behind with ox teams and wagons. The first group was probably at this time in the area of Scotts Bluff, more than four hundred miles from their destination, with the others behind them. It was October, and they would be trapped in the snows of winter and perish unless help was sent.

Brigham Young had known nothing of this. There was, of course, at that time no rapid means of communication—no radio, no telegraph, no fast mail. He was then fifty-five years of age. The next morning, the Sabbath, he stood before the people in the Tabernacle and said:

“I will now give this people the subject and the text for the Elders who may speak. ... It is this. On the 5th day of October, 1856, many of our brethren and sisters are on the plains with handcarts, and probably many are now seven hundred miles from this place, and they must be brought here, we must send assistance to them. The text will be, ‘to get them here.’ ...

“That is my religion; that is the dictation of the Holy Ghost that I possess. It is to save the people. ...

“I shall call upon the Bishops this day. I shall not wait until tomorrow, nor until the next day, for 60 good mule teams and 12 or 15 wagons. I do not want to send oxen. I want good horses and mules. They

are in this Territory, and we must have them. Also 12 tons of flour and 40 good teamsters, besides those that drive the teams. ...

“I will tell you all that your faith, religion, and profession of religion, will never save one soul of you in the Celestial Kingdom of our God, unless you carry out just such principles as I am now teaching you. *Go and bring in those people now on the plains.*” (In *Handcarts to Zion*, Glendale, Calif.: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1960, pp. 120–21.)

The next morning anvils were ringing in the blacksmith shops as horses were shod and wagons were repaired and loaded.

The following morning, Tuesday, October 7th, “sixteen good four-mule teams and twenty-seven hardy young men headed eastward with the first installment of provisions. The gathering of more to follow, was pushed vigorously.” (Hafen, p. 124.)

“By the end of October, two hundred and fifty teams were on the road to give relief.” (Ibid., p. 125.)

There have been many eloquent sermons preached from the pulpits on Temple Square, but none more eloquent than those spoken in that October conference of 135 years ago.

Now let me leave that for a moment and pick up the story from another position.

A few weeks ago, it was my privilege to dedicate a monument to the memory of Ellen Pucell Unthank. It stands on the campus of Southern Utah University in Cedar City, Utah. It is a bronze figure, beautiful and engaging. It is of a little nine-year-old girl, standing with one foot tiptoe, her hair blowing back in the wind, a smile on her face, eagerly looking forward.

Ellen Pucell, as she was named, was born in a beautiful area of England where the hills are soft and rolling and the grass is forever green. Her parents, Margaret and William Pucell, were converts to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. From the time of their baptism in 1837 until the spring of 1856, they had scrimped and saved to go to the Zion of their people in the valleys of the Rocky Mountains of America. Now that was possible, if they were willing to pull a handcart one thousand miles across a wilderness. They accepted that challenge, as did hundreds of their fellow converts.

Margaret and William took with them their two daughters, Maggie, fourteen, and Ellen, nine. They said good-bye to loved ones they would never again see in mortality. Near the end of May they set sail from Liverpool with 852 of their convert associates. My wife’s grandmother, thirteen-year-old Mary Goble, was a part of that company, and, I like to think, played with those little girls aboard ship.

After six weeks at sea, they landed at Boston and took the steam train to Iowa City. They had expected their handcarts and wagons would be ready. They were not. There was a serious and disastrous delay. It was not until late in July that they began the long march, first to Winter Quarters on the Missouri, and from there to the Rocky Mountains.

The Pucells were assigned to the Martin Handcart Company. The Goble family, my wife’s forebears, became a part of the Cluff Wagon Company, which followed the handcarts to give help if needed.

With high expectation they began their journey. Through sunlight and storm, through dust and mud, they trudged beside the Platte River through all of the month of September and most of October. On October

19, they reached the last crossing of the Platte, a little west of the present city of Casper, Wyoming. The river was wide, the current strong, and chunks of ice were floating in the water. They were now traveling without sufficient food. Bravely they waded through the icy stream. A terrible storm arose with fierce winds bringing drifting sand, hail, and snow. When they climbed the far bank of the river, their wet clothing froze to their bodies. Exhausted, freezing, and without strength to go on, some quietly sat down, and while they sat, they died.

Ellen's mother, Margaret, became sick. Her husband lifted her onto the cart. They were now climbing in elevation toward the Continental Divide, and it was uphill all the way. Can you see this family in your imagination?—the mother too sick and weak to walk, the father thin and emaciated, struggling to pull the cart, as the two little girls push from behind with swirling, cold winds about them, and around them are hundreds of others similarly struggling.

They came to a stream of freezing water. The father, while crossing, slipped on a rock and fell. Struggling to his feet, he reached the shore, wet and chilled. Sometime later he sat down to rest. He quietly died, his senses numbed by the cold. His wife died five days later. I do not know how or where their frozen bodies were buried in that desolate, white wilderness. I do know that the ground was frozen and that the snow was piled in drifts and that the two little girls were now orphans.

Between 135 and 150 of the Martin company alone perished along that trail of suffering and death. It was in these desperate and terrible circumstances—hungry, exhausted, their clothes thin and ragged—that they were found by the rescue party. As the rescuers appeared on the western horizon breaking a trail through the snow, they seemed as angels of mercy. And indeed they were. The beleaguered emigrants shouted for joy, some of them. Others, too weak to shout, simply wept, and wept, and wept.

There was now food to eat and some warmer clothing. But the suffering was not over, nor would it ever end in mortality. Limbs had been frozen and the gangrenous flesh sloughed off from the bones.

The carts were abandoned, and the survivors were crowded into the wagons of the rescuers. The long rough journey of three hundred, four hundred, even five hundred miles between them and this valley was especially slow and tedious because of the storms. On November 30, 104 wagons, loaded with suffering human cargo, came into the Salt Lake Valley. Word of their expected arrival had preceded them. It was Sunday, and again the Saints were gathered in the Tabernacle. Brigham Young stood before the congregation and said:

“As soon as this meeting is dismissed I want the brethren and sisters to repair to their homes. ...

“The afternoon meeting will be omitted, for I wish the sisters to ... prepare to give those who have just arrived a mouthful of something to eat, and to wash them and nurse them. ...

“Some you will find with their feet frozen to their ankles; some are frozen to their knees and some have their hands frosted ... we want you to receive them as your own children, and to have the same feeling for them.” (*Handcarts to Zion*, p. 139.)

The two orphan girls, Maggie and Ellen, were among those with frozen limbs. Ellen's were the most serious. The doctor in the valley, doing the best he could, amputated her legs just below the knees. The surgical tools were crude. There was no anesthesia. The stumps never healed. She grew to womanhood, married William Unthank, and bore and reared an honorable family of six children. Moving about on those stumps, she served her family, her neighbors, and the Church with faith and good cheer, and



without complaint, though she was never without pain. Her posterity are numerous, and among them are educated and capable men and women who love the Lord whom she loved and who love the cause for which she suffered.

Years later, a group in Cedar City were talking about her and others who were in those ill-fated companies. Members of the group spoke critically of the Church and its leaders because the company of converts had been permitted to start so late in the season. I now quote from a manuscript which I have:

“One old man in the corner sat silent and listened as long as he could stand it. Then he arose and said things that no person who heard will ever forget. His face was white with emotion, yet he spoke calmly, deliberately, but with great earnestness and sincerity.

“He said in substance, ‘I ask you to stop this criticism. You are discussing a matter you know nothing about. Cold historic facts mean nothing here for they give no proper interpretation of the questions involved. A mistake to send the handcart company out so late in the season? Yes. But I was in that company and my wife was in it and Sister Nellie Unthank whom you have cited was there too. We suffered beyond anything you can imagine and many died of exposure and starvation, but did you ever hear a survivor of that company utter a word of criticism? Not one of that company ever apostatized or left the Church because every one of us came through with the absolute knowledge that God lives for we became acquainted with him in our extremities.’ ” (Manuscript in my possession.)

That speaker was Francis Webster, who was twenty-six years of age when with his wife and infant child he went through that experience. He became a leader in the Church and a leader in the communities of southern Utah.

Now, my brothers and sisters, I have spent a long time telling that story, perhaps too long. This is October of 1991, and that episode of 135 years ago is behind us. But I have told it because it is true and because the spirit of that saga is as contemporary as is this morning.

I wish to remind everyone within my hearing that the comforts we have, the peace we have, and, most important, the faith and knowledge of the things of God that we have, were bought with a terrible price by those who have gone before us. Sacrifice has always been a part of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The crowning element of our faith is our conviction of our living God, the Father of us all, and of His Beloved Son, the Redeemer of the world. It is because of our Redeemer’s life and sacrifice that we are here. It is because of His sacrificial atonement that we and all of the sons and daughters of God will partake of the salvation of the Lord. “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.” (1 Cor. 15:22.) It is because of the sacrificial redemption wrought by the Savior of the world that the great plan of the eternal gospel is made available to us under which those who die in the Lord shall not taste of death but shall have the opportunity of going on to a celestial and eternal glory.

In our own helplessness, He becomes our rescuer, saving us from damnation and bringing us to eternal life.

In times of despair, in seasons of loneliness and fear, He is there on the horizon to bring succor and comfort and assurance and faith. He is our King, our Savior, our Deliverer, our Lord and our God.

Those on the high, cold plains of Wyoming came to know Him in their extremity as perhaps few come to know Him. But to every troubled soul, every man or woman in need, to those everywhere who are pulling heavy burdens through the bitter storms of life, He has said:

“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

“Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

“For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” (Matt. 11:28–30.)

Now, I am grateful that today none of our people are stranded on the Wyoming highlands. But I know that all about us there are many who are in need of help and who are deserving of rescue. Our mission in life, as followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, must be a mission of saving. There are the homeless, the hungry, the destitute. Their condition is obvious. We have done much. We can do more to help those who live on the edge of survival.

We can reach out to strengthen those who wallow in the mire of pornography, gross immorality, and drugs. Many have become so addicted that they have lost power to control their own destinies. They are miserable and broken. They can be salvaged and saved.

There are wives who are abandoned and children who weep in homes where there is abuse. There are fathers who can be rescued from evil and corrosive practices that destroy and bring only heartbreak.

It is not with those on the high plains of Wyoming that we need be concerned today. It is with many immediately around us, in our families, in our wards and stakes, in our neighborhoods and communities.

“And the Lord called his people Zion, because they were of one heart and one mind, and dwelt in righteousness; and there was no poor among them.” (Moses 7:18.)

If we are to build that Zion of which the prophets have spoken and of which the Lord has given mighty promise, we must set aside our consuming selfishness. We must rise above our love for comfort and ease, and in the very process of effort and struggle, even in our extremity, we shall become better acquainted with our God.

Let us never forget that we have a marvelous heritage received from great and courageous people who endured unimaginable suffering and demonstrated unbelievable courage for the cause they loved. You and I know what we should do. God help us to do it when it needs to be done, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. (CR, Oct 1991, p. 76-77)

Thomas S. Monson: Let us for a moment join Captain Edward Martin and the handcart company he led. While we will not feel the pangs of hunger which they felt or experience the bitter cold that penetrated their weary bodies, we will emerge from our visit with a better appreciation of hardship borne, courage demonstrated, and faith fulfilled. We will witness with tear-filled eyes a dramatic answer to the question “Am I my brother’s keeper?”

“The handcarts moved on November 3 and reached the river, filled with floating ice. To cross would require more courage and fortitude, it seemed, than human nature could muster. Women shrank back and men wept. Some pushed through, but others were unequal to the ordeal.

“Three eighteen-year-old boys belonging to the relief party came to the rescue; and to the astonishment of all who saw, carried nearly every member of that ill-fated handcart company across the snow-bound stream. The strain was so terrible, the exposure so great, that in later years all the boys died from the

effects of it. When President Brigham Young heard of this heroic act, he wept like a child, and later declared publicly, "That act alone will ensure C. Allen Huntington, George W. Grant, and David P. Kimball an everlasting salvation in the Celestial Kingdom of God, worlds without end." ' ' (LeRoy R. Hafen and Ann W. Hafen, *Handcarts to Zion*, Glendale, Calif.: The Arthur H. Clark Co., 1960, pp. 132-33.)

Our service to others may not be so dramatic, but we can bolster human spirits, clothe cold bodies, feed hungry people, comfort grieving hearts, and lift to new heights precious souls. (CR, Apr 1990, p. 61-62)

President Gordon B. Hinckley: I am grateful that those days of pioneering are behind us. I am thankful that we do not have brethren and sisters stranded in the snow, freezing and dying, while trying to get to this, their Zion in the mountains. But there are people, not a few, whose circumstances are desperate and who cry out for help and relief.

There are so many who are hungry and destitute across this world who need help. I am grateful to be able to say that we are assisting many who are not of our faith but whose needs are serious and whom we have the resources to help. But we need not go so far afield. We have some of our own who cry out in pain and suffering and loneliness and fear. Ours is a great and solemn duty to reach out and help them, to lift them, to feed them if they are hungry, to nurture their spirits if they thirst for truth and righteousness.

There are so many young people who wander aimlessly and walk the tragic trail of drugs, gangs, immorality, and the whole brood of ills that accompany these things. There are widows who long for friendly voices and that spirit of anxious concern which speaks of love. There are those who were once warm in the faith, but whose faith has grown cold. Many of them wish to come back but do not know quite how to do it. They need friendly hands reaching out to them. With a little effort, many of them can be brought back to feast again at the table of the Lord.

My brethren and sisters, I would hope, I would pray, that each of us, having participated in this great conference, would resolve to seek those who need help, who are in desperate and difficult circumstances, and lift them in the spirit of love into the embrace of the Church, where strong hands and loving hearts will warm them, comfort them, sustain them, and put them on the way of happy and productive lives. (CR, Oct 1996, p. 118)



"When the Angels Come"  
By Clark Kelley Price

The story behind this painting is referenced from the Relief Society Magazine "Pioneer Women" pg. 8 January 1948. See also the devotional address given in the de Jong Concert Hall at Brigham Young University on 11 August, 1981 by Vaughn J. Featherstone, "Go and Bring In Those People Now on the Plains" (We Are Our Brother's Keepers).

#### "The Cart Began Pushing Me"

President David O. McKay, in an address given at an annual Relief Society Conference in 1947, the centennial year of the Saints' arrival in the valley, talked of the criticism given by a teacher conducting a class, who commented that it was very unwise to have even permitted the Saints to cross the plains under such circumstances, and they were talking about the Willie and Martin handcart companies who left later than they should have. President McKay said:

Some sharp criticism of the Church and its leaders was being indulged in for permitting any company of converts to venture across the plains with no more supplies of protection than a handcart caravan afforded. An old man in the corner [and this was written by President William Palmer, who was present] sat silent and listened as long as he could stand it, then he arose and said things that no person who heard him will ever forget. His face was white with emotion, yet he spoke calmly, deliberately, but with great earnestness and sincerity.

In substance the father above mentioned said, "I ask you to stop this criticism. You are discussing a matter you know nothing about. Cold historic facts mean nothing here, for they give no proper interpretation of the questions involved. Mistake to send the Handcart Company out so late in the season? Yes. But I was in that company and my wife was in it and Sister Nellie Unthank whom you have cited was there, too. We suffered beyond anything you can imagine and many died of exposure and starvation, but did you ever hear a survivor of that company utter a word of criticism? Not one of that company ever apostatized or left the Church, because everyone of us came through with the absolute knowledge that God lives for we became acquainted with him in our extremities."

"I have pulled my handcart when I was so weak and weary from illness and lack of food that I could hardly put one foot in front of the other. I have looked ahead and seen a patch of sand or a hill slope and I have said, I can go only that far and there I must give up, for I cannot pull the load through it." [And a wife with a baby in her arms by his side]. "I have gone on to that sand and when I reached it, the cart began pushing me. I have looked back many times to see who was pushing my cart, but my eyes saw no one. I knew then that the angels of God were there."

"Was I sorry that I chose to come by handcart? No. Neither then nor any minute of my life since. The price we paid to become acquainted with God was a privilege to pay, and I am thankful that I was privileged to come in the Martin Handcart Company."