

Comments on Doctrine & Covenants 60

At the end of the first conference held in Independence, Missouri, the Elders ask Smith what they should now do. They had been there approximately three weeks during late July through early August 1831. Those returning to Kirtland, Ohio wanted to know how quickly they should travel back and whether they should preach along the way. The Lord instructs them to return to their duties as traveling missionaries, and to be more diligent about it.

1 Behold, thus saith the Lord unto the elders of his church, who are to return speedily to the land from whence they came: Behold, it pleaseth me, that you have come up hither;

2 But with some I am not well pleased, for they will not open their mouths, but they hide the talent which I have given unto them, because of the fear of man. Wo unto such, for mine anger is kindled against them. 3 And it shall come to pass, if they are not more faithful unto me, it shall be taken away, even that which they have. 4 For I, the Lord, rule in the heavens above, and among the armies of the earth; and in the day when I shall make up my jewels, all men shall know what it is that bespeaketh the power of God.

5 But, verily, I will speak unto you concerning your journey unto the land from whence you came. Let there be a craft made, or bought, as seemeth you good, it mattereth not unto me, and take your journey speedily for the place which is called St. Louis.

6 And from thence let my servants, Sidney Rigdon, Joseph Smith, Jun., and Oliver Cowdery, take their journey for Cincinnati; 7 And in this place let them lift up their voice and declare my word with loud voices, without wrath or doubting, lifting up holy hands upon them. For I am able to make you holy, and your sins are forgiven you.

8 And let the residue take their journey from St. Louis, two by two, and preach the word, not in haste, among the congregations of the wicked, until they return to the churches from whence they came. 9 And all this for the good of the churches; for this intent have I sent them.

v1-9 In response to the question asked of the Lord, He says He is pleased they have gathered together (v. 1), but is not pleased they have been shirking their responsibilities (v. 2-4). He doesn't care how they travel (v. 5) as long as they go back and preach the word with faith and in purity (v. 7-8).

v2-4 A parenthesis on those with whom the Lord is not pleased. Note in v. 2 "mine anger is kindled", cp. 59:21's "against none is his wrath kindled save those who...". Obviously, there were those among the present company who did not take the warning of the previous day's revelation seriously. They had not performed their missionary labors zealously, and apparently still are not eager to do this type of work.

v4 This verse is an authority statement, largely intended to remind the elders Whom they are dealing with when they shirk their responsibilities.

"jewels", cp. Mal. 3:17, Isa. 49:18, Isa. 61:10, Isa. 62:3.

v5 "a craft", cp. D&C 62:7.

"it mattereth not unto me", in D&C 58:25-28 the Lord tells them He expects them to council among themselves and with Him, and that He doesn't intend to tell them everything they have to do. Here He is referring them to that, and saying "Make your own decisions".

The issue might also have simply been a distraction forwarded by those who feared man and hid their talent (v. 2), so the Lord sought to dismiss it and focus them on their calling.

v8 "congregations of the wicked", this unique phrase appears only in D&C 60-62. It is defined as "the inhabitants of the earth" in D&C 62:5. Its appearance in these sections might be a reflection of Smith's own unflattering description of the locals, appearing as a preface to D&C 57. See the historical material for D&C 57.

10 And let my servant Edward Partridge impart of the money which I have given him, a portion unto mine elders who are commanded to return; 11 And he that is able, let him return it by the way of the agent; and he that is not, of him it is not required.

v10-11 Partridge told to disburse money to the Elders.

12 And now I speak of the residue who are to come unto this land. 13 Behold, they have been sent to preach my gospel among the congregations of the wicked; wherefore, I give unto them a commandment, thus: Thou shalt not idle away thy time, neither shalt thou bury thy talent that it may not be known. 14 And after thou hast come up unto the land of Zion, and hast proclaimed my word, thou shalt speedily return, proclaiming my word among the congregations of the wicked, not in haste, neither in wrath nor with strife.

15 And shake off the dust of thy feet against those who receive thee not, not in their presence, lest thou provoke them, but in secret; and wash thy feet, as a testimony against them in the day of judgment.

16 Behold, this is sufficient for you, and the will of him who hath sent you. 17 And by the mouth of my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., it shall be made known concerning Sidney Rigdon and Oliver Cowdery. The residue hereafter. Even so. Amen.

v12-17 The admonition of v. 2-4 is restated, this time broadly applied to the rest of the rest of the Elders not currently present.

v15 They are told to shake off the dust of their feet as in D&C 24:15. Here it is made more explicit that the purpose of this action is not to be an affront to those who reject you but to be a witness to their lack of hospitality, so they are told not to do it in public. This is alluded to in the D&C 24:15 reference to "by the wayside", but this statement make it more plain.

This prohibition may be the result of the exchange between Parley P. Pratt and Ashbel Kitchell, a leader of the Shakers, which resulted in a rather hostile situation and very negative outcome for the ecclesia when Lemman Copely left the Church and returned to the Shakers. See the historical material for D&C 49.

Historical Material Pertaining to Doctrine & Covenants 60

Smith's comments do not explain context. Pratt's comments indicate some of the other missionaries had not fulfilled their duties, as he himself had. Whitmer similarly notes some of the missionaries had established branches as they worked, implying some hadn't, without naming any names. The final excerpt is a blunt historical comment stating flatly what the problem was. See also the historical material for D&C 61 for the excerpt from Ezra Booth, wherein he makes it clear he and some others had no interest whatsoever in preaching.

It seems likely some of the Elders were hoping they would no longer have to act as traveling missionaries, hoping instead to act in some other capacity to help establish Zion there in Missouri. As such, they kept asking Smith for a revelation diverting them onto some other work.

This section was first published in the Book of Commandments in 1833, pages 142-144. It was published in the Kirtland edition Doctrine and Covenants in 1835, pages 198-199. It was published in Times and Seasons, volume 5, number 5, 451-452, dated March 1, 1844. It was published in the Millennial Star, volume 5, number 9, pages 133-134, dated February 1845.

Excerpt from History of the Church

On the 8th, as there had been some inquiry among the Elders what they were to do, I received the following:

[text of D&C 60 quoted]

On the 9th, in company with ten Elders, I left Independence landing for Kirtland. We started down the river in canoes, and went the first day as far as Fort Osage, where we had an excellent wild turkey for supper. (Joseph Smith, History of the Church, volume 1, pages 201-202)

Excerpt from Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt

Soon after the conference my brother and myself commenced our journey without any means to bear our expenses. We traveled through the States of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois and Missouri, in the midst of the heat of summer on foot, and faithfully preached the gospel in many parts of all these States. We suffered the hardships incident to a new and, in many places, unsettled country, such as hunger, thirst, fatigue, etc. We arrived in

upper Missouri in September, having baptized many people and organized branches of the Church in several parts of Ohio, Illinois and Indiana. On our arrival we found a considerable settlement of the brethren from Ohio, who had immigrated during the summer and taken up their residence in Jackson County. President Smith, and many of the Elders, had been there and held a conference, and, having organized a Stake of Zion, pointed out and consecrated certain grounds for a city and temple, they had again returned to the East. With them, the brethren whom I had left there the previous winter, had also returned.

I felt somewhat disappointed in not meeting with the brethren; but was consoled with the reflection that I had been diligent in preaching the gospel on my journey, while others had hurried through the country, perhaps, without tarrying to do much good. (Parley P. Pratt, Autobiography of Parley Parker Pratt, pages 53-54)

Excerpt from the Book of John Whitmer

Some of the elders who traveled to the land of Missouri and preached by the way, tarried here in this land, among whom is the Bishop E. [Edward] Partridge, Isaac Morley and John Corrill. Some were sick on their way to the land, but all were restored to health. Among those who were sick were John Murdock, Parley P. Pratt and Thomas B. Marsh-They all tarried until after they attended a conference in this land. They have since all gone to preach the gospel and call sinners to repentance.

There were some Churches built by the way as they journeyed to this land (Missouri) and the people were warned of the danger they were in, if they did not repent. (John Whitmer, Book of John Whitmer, chapter 9, paragraphs 7-8)

Excerpt from Church History and Modern Revelation

On the 8th day of August, 1831, at the close of the first conference held in Missouri, the elders inquired what they were to do. The Prophet inquired of the Lord and received a revelation giving them direction in relation to their return journey. The Lord commenced his instruction by saying that he was pleased with them for making the journey to Missouri, and now they were to return speedily to the land from whence they came. However, some of them received a rebuke for the Lord was not pleased with them because on the journey from Ohio, they had not followed the counsels that had been given. They had been

commanded to preach the Gospel along the way and bear testimony among the people, but some had failed to magnify this commandment because of their fear of man....

On this occasion the Lord gave a warning to those who had failed, and had "not opened their mouths," but had hid the talent the Lord had given them. They were told that the authority which had been given them would be taken away, if they did not improve in their ministry. "For I, the Lord, rule in the heavens above, and among the armies of the earth; and in the day when I shall make up my jewels, all men shall know what it is that speaketh the power of God."

[...]

The manner by which the returning brethren were to travel was pointed out to them. The Lord said: "Let there be a craft made, or bought, as seemeth you good, it mattereth not unto me, and take your journey speedily for the place which is called St. Louis." Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon were to travel together to Cincinnati where they were to lift up their voices and declare the word "with loud voices, without wrath or doubting, lifting up holy hands upon them, for I am able to make you holy, and your sins are forgiven you. The residue were to take their journey to St. Louis and declare the word among the congregations of the wicked. They were to travel two by two, not in haste, but to take time to declare the message of salvation among the people....

On the way to Missouri some of these missionaries had "idled away their time." The Lord was determined that this should not be the case on this return journey, neither on the part of those who were to remain in that land or who were yet to come (Joseph Fielding Smith, Church History and Modern Revelation, volume 1, pages 203-205)

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