

Comments on Doctrine & Covenants 82

This section follows up the subject of D&C 78, namely the Law of Consecration. The members in Missouri were not doing well at adhering to the content of D&C 78, so this revelation was sent to admonish and exhort them to do better.

Based on subject the text can be arranged as follows:

Sermon on sin (v. 1-7)

A - (v. 1) I forgive you, if you forgive each other

B - (v. 2) All of you have sinned, refrain from any more sin

C - (v. 3) Sin against more light gets more condemnation

C - (v. 4) Failure to keep words results in judgement

B - (v. 5-6) None do good, all have gone out of the way

A - (v. 7) Sin no more

Law of Consecration (v. 8-19)

D - (v. 8-10) I give unto you a new commandment

E - (v. 11-12) Bound together to manage affairs of the poor

F - (v. 13) For the benefit of the Saints land consecrated

G - (v. 14) Stakes strengthened, Zion arises

D - (v. 15) Bind yourselves by this covenant

E - (v. 16-17) You are to be equal

F - (v. 18) For the benefit of the Church improve talents

G - (v. 19) Men love their neighbors, glory of God

Sinning against the Order (v. 20-21)

H - (v. 20a-b)

I - (v. 20c)

I - (v. 21a-b)

H - (v. 21c-d)

Three Closing Admonitions (v. 22-24)

1 Verily, verily, I say unto you, my servants, that inasmuch as you have forgiven one another your trespasses, even so I, the Lord, forgive you. 2 Nevertheless, there are those among you who have sinned exceedingly; yea, even all of you have sinned; but verily I say unto you, beware from henceforth, and refrain from sin, lest sore judgments fall upon your heads. 3 For of him unto whom much is given much is required; and he who sins against the greater light shall receive the greater condemnation.

4 Ye call upon my name for revelations, and I give them unto you; and inasmuch as ye keep not my sayings, which I give unto you, ye become transgressors; and justice and judgment are the penalty which is affixed unto my law. 5 Therefore, what I say unto one I say unto all: watch, for the adversary spreadeth his dominions, and darkness reigneth; 6 And the anger of God kindleth against the inhabitants of the earth; and none doeth good, for all have gone out of the way. 7 And now, verily I say unto you, I, the Lord, will not lay any sin to your charge; go your ways and sin no more; but unto that soul who sinneth shall the former

sins return, saith the Lord your God.

v1-7 Inasmuch His servants have forgiven each other, He has forgiven them (v. 1), even though some of them have sinned greatly. The Lord warns them to stop sinning, or they will be judged (v. 2), because those who are given more are required to do more (v. 3). They ask for revelations, but do not follow them, and so they become transgressors (v. 4). The Lord warns them against the adversary's plans (v. 5), and against following the world (v. 6). But, if they repent, they will be spared. And if not, then they are judged for all their sins (v. 7).

The general theme is sinning. Precisely what sin is not explicitly mentioned, but it is likely the primary issue being addressed is connected to the rest of the text. Thus, they are being admonished for failing to observe the previous command, in D&C 78, pertaining to the Law of Consecration.

v3-4 Compare Alma 32:19.

v5 The Lord is trying to establish Zion among the Saints (v. 14), in contrast to the adversary's kingdom which is spreading among the worldly.

8 And again, I say unto you, I give unto you a new commandment, that you may understand my will concerning you; 9 Or, in other words, I give unto you directions how you may act before me, that it may turn to you for your salvation. 10 I, the Lord, am bound when ye do what I say; but when ye do not what I say, ye have no promise.

11 Therefore, verily I say unto you, that it is expedient for my servants Edward Partridge and Newel K. Whitney, A. Sidney Gilbert and Sidney Rigdon, and my servant Joseph Smith, and John Whitmer and Oliver Cowdery, and W. W. Phelps and Martin Harris to be bound together by a bond and covenant that cannot be broken by transgression, except judgments shall immediately follow, in your several stewardships-- 12 To manage the affairs of the poor, and all things pertaining to the bishopric both in the land of Zion and in the land of Kirtland; 13 For I have consecrated the land of Kirtland in mine own due time for the benefit of the saints of the Most High, and for a stake to Zion. 14 For Zion must increase in beauty, and in holiness; her borders must be enlarged; her stakes must be strengthened; yea, verily I say unto you, Zion must arise and put on her beautiful garments.

15 Therefore, I give unto you this commandment, that ye bind yourselves by this covenant, and it shall be done according to the laws of the Lord.

16 Behold, here is wisdom also in me for your good. 17 And you are to be equal, or in other words, you are to have equal claims on the properties, for the benefit of managing the concerns of your stewardships, every man according to his wants

and his needs, inasmuch as his wants are just-- 18 And all this for the benefit of the church of the living God, that every man may improve upon his talent, that every man may gain other talents, yea, even an hundred fold, to be cast into the Lord's storehouse, to become the common property of the whole church-- 19 Every man seeking the interest of his neighbor, and doing all things with an eye single to the glory of God.

v8-19 The Lord explains to them for their own good (v. 8-9) that He does not have to support them if they do not keep their side of the covenant (v. 10, 15). The covenant in question being the Law of Consecration, so that all men may benefit from working to improve their lot and helping their neighbor (v. 11-14, 16-19).

Note the practical application (v. 11-14) is placed in parallel with the theological discussion (v. 16-19)

v8-10 Abiding the Law of Consecration is again equated with obtaining salvation, as was the case in D&C 78.

These verses are frequently used out of context, usually in justifiable manner, as a general statement on the nature of covenants with the Lord. However, it is important to remember the original context is the passage is referring to the Law of Consecration, particularly given the contemporary Temple Ordinances associated with it.

v11 Compare D&C 78:11.

v14, 19 In the textual arrangement forwarded above, the beauty of Zion in v. 14 is equated with the glory of God in v. 19. This follows equations Isaiah makes between the redemption of Israel and the glory of the Lord in that the Lord manifests His power in exalting Zion above all nations of the earth, cp. Isa. 52, Isa 54. Isa. 60, especially see Isa 60:1.

v17 Compare D&C 51:3, D&C 78:5-7.

20 This order I have appointed to be an everlasting order unto you, and unto your successors, inasmuch as you sin not. 21 And the soul that sins against this covenant, and hardeneth his heart against it, shall be dealt with according to the laws of my church, and shall be delivered over to the buffetings of Satan until the day of redemption.

v20-21 The Law of Consecration is to be observed in the Church throughout the generations (v. 20), and those who sin against it will be rejected on the day of Judgement (v. 21).

These verses compliment the discussion on sinning (cf. v. 1-7) as it more specifically emphasizes punishment rather than forgiveness.

Whereas the Church historically attempted to implement the institution of the United Order, which attempt failed, the Church now resolves to apply the Law of Consecration as a voluntary measure adopted at the individual level through the Temple Endowment.

22 And now, verily I say unto you, and this is wisdom, make unto yourselves friends with the mammon of unrighteousness, and they will not destroy you. 23 Leave judgment alone with me, for it is mine and I will repay. Peace be with you; my blessings continue with you. 24 For even yet the kingdom is yours, and shall be forever, if you fall not from your steadfastness. Even so. Amen.

v22-24 These verses conclude the revelation with a rather obscure set of admonitions. It appears to be addressing the Saint's concerns about those who are unfavorably disposed towards them. The Lord tells them to use "mammon of unrighteousness" to make friends with people (v. 22). Second, they are to leave judgement alone, presumably referring to offenses they have suffered at the hands of their persecutors, following the message of D&C 64:9-11, as they will be blessed with peace by the Lord (v. 23). Finally they are told that despite the censure they just received they are still eligible to inheriting the kingdom, if they do not fall (v. 24).

v22 "make friends...with the mammon of unrighteousness", the Saints are encouraged to be generous and wise with their material possessions (i.e., their unjust riches, or temporal goods, as opposed to their just riches, or eternal wealth) so those who are not members of the Church will be favorably disposed towards them.

Aside from the obvious reading of winning people over so they will not be hostile, the "they will not destroy you" could also mean the Lord will protect the Saints from their persecutors such that they can do them no harm. If the Saints are exceptionally generous benefactors and their persecutors still attack them despite this, then the Lord will be ever more the Saint's Vindicator.

Historical Material Pertaining to Doctrine & Covenants 82

Under difficult circumstances in Kirtland and along the way, Smith and others travel down to Missouri to get the Saints there back on the straight and narrow with respect to the United Order. And, some other tangential matters regarding lingering personal conflict between Rigdon and Partridge are dealt with as well.

Excerpt from History of the Church

On the 26th, I called a general council of the Church, and was acknowledged as the President of the High Priesthood, according to a previous ordination at a conference of High Priests, Elders and members, held at Amherst, Ohio, on the 25th of January, 1832. The right hand of fellowship was given to me by the Bishop, Edward Partridge, in behalf of the Church. The scene was solemn, impressive and delightful. During the intermission, a difficulty or hardness which had existed between Bishop Partridge and Elder Rigdon, was amicably settled, and when we came together in the afternoon, all hearts seemed to rejoice and I received the following:

[text of D&C 82 quoted]
(Joseph Smith, History of the Church, volume 1, page 267)

Excerpt from Doctrine and Covenants Commentary

In the Revelation recorded in Section 78, our Savior commanded His servants of the High Priesthood to effect an organization for the temporal benefit of the people, and directed the Prophet Joseph, Newel K. Whitney, and Sidney Rigdon to go from Hiram, Ohio, to Missouri, and "sit in council with the Saints which are in Zion," on that matter. The Prophet commenced the journey on April 1st, 1832, accompanied by Newel K. Whitney, Peter Whitmer, and Jesse Gause, and they were joined by Sidney Rigdon at Warren, the same day. The excitement of the mob in Kirtland, owing to the falsehoods circulated by apostates, was so intense that the Prophet and his companions avoided passing through the city. Some of the mobbers followed them all the way to Cleveland, but the protecting hand of the Lord was over His servants. The captain who took them to Louisville protected them in his boat, and gave them their meals, free of charge. They arrived at Independence, Missouri, on the 24th of April, and were greeted with joy by the Saints.

On the 26th a general council of the Church was called. The Prophet was acknowledged as the President of the High Priesthood, to which exalted position he had been ordained at the Conference at Amherst, Ohio, Jan. 25th, 1832. Bishop Partridge gave him the right hand of fellowship in behalf of the Church.

On this occasion a misunderstanding between Sidney Rigdon and Edward Partridge was cleared up, and unity and peace prevailed. The Lord then gave this Revelation. (Hyrum M. Smith and Janne M. Sjodahl, Doctrine and Covenants Commentary, page 489)

Excerpt from The Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith

A revelation given to Joseph Smith on 1 March 1832 (section 78) instructed Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, and Newel K. Whitney to "sit in council" with the Saints in Jackson County, Missouri, then numbering about four hundred. In response, these brethren, accompanied by Jesse Gause, left Ohio on 1 April 1832 and arrived in Jackson County on 24 April. It was a busy and difficult time for the Church leaders, intensified by the sickness of the Prophet's and Sidney's children who had the measles. Recounting the inauspicious occasion the Prophet wrote,

[We left] our familys in affliction admidst of death [and] upon the mercy of mobs & of brethern who you know sometimes are found to be unstable unbelieving, unmerciful and in this trying situation to keep the commandment of God we took our lives in our hands and traveled through every combination of wickedness to your country for your salvation.

Two days after their arrival in Independence, 26 April 1832, a general council of the Church was convened in which the Missouri Saints acknowledged Joseph Smith as President of the High Priesthood. At the close of the conference, the Prophet received section 82. The minutes of the meeting, dated 26 April 1832, state,

Joseph Smith acknowledged by the High priests in the land of Zion to be President of the High Priesthood according to commandment and ordination in Ohio, at the Conference held in Amherst January 25, 1832.... Br. Sidney Rigdon then stated the items embraced in a Revelation received in Ohio [section 78] & the reason why we were commanded to come to this land & sit in Council with the high priests here, for the particulars of which read the Commandment.... All differences settled & the hearts of all run together in love A Revelation received through him whom the Church has appointed respecting organization.

Section 82 concerns itself with the organization of a branch of the United Firm in Missouri and the responsibilities of the

members of the firm to "manage the affairs of the poor." Verse 1 specifically refers to difficulties between Joseph Smith and Church leaders in Missouri and an eight-month-old disagreement between Sidney Rigdon and Edward Partridge. The former problem was referred to in a letter from Orson Hyde and Hyrum Smith to Church leaders in Missouri, 14 January 1833:

At the time Joseph, Sidney, and Newel left Zion, all matters of hardness and misunderstanding were settled and buried (as they supposed), and you gave them the hand of fellowship; but, afterwards, you brought up all these things again, in a censorious spirit, accusing Brother Joseph in rather an indirect way of seeking after monarchial power and authority.... We are sensible that this is not the thing Brother Joseph is seeking after, but to magnify the high office and calling whereunto he has been called and appointed by the command of God, and the united voice of this Church [i.e., President of the High Priesthood].

We lack some details of the latter problem, but the factors involved were "money," Rigdon's near drowning in the Missouri River on his return trip to Ohio from Missouri in 1831, and inconveniences suffered on the 1831 Missouri trip. Although the matter was considered resolved at the 26 April 1832 meeting, it surfaced again after Rigdon's return to Kirtland in May 1832. Sidney became so disturbed over this affair that he became mentally depressed and preached falsely in public in Kirtland. On Sunday, 10 June 1832, Rigdon delivered "a disgrace upon the privileg of Jew & Gentile he determined there was no difference nor respect to persons with God." And at a meeting held in Kirtland on Thursday, 5 July 1832, Sidney Rigdon informed his hearers of a revelation he had received. According to Charles C. Rich, present on this occasion, Rigdon

came into the meeting and told the congregation they might as well go home as God had rejected them. He left the meeting but shortly returned and gave the meeting another speech, telling them it was useless to pray or do anything, that the Kingdom was sent from the people. This caused confusion in the congregation both before and after dismissal. Hyrum Smith said he did not believe a word of it and said if he had a horse he would go and see the Prophet, then in the town of Hyrum [Hiram].

On the following day, Friday, Hyrum Smith took Charles Rich's horse to Hiram, Ohio, to notify the Prophet of Rigdon's

statements and actions. Both Joseph and Hyrum Smith returned to Kirtland on Saturday, 7 July 1832. On Sunday, the following day, "Everybody turned out to meeting—Joseph preached, denouncing the doctrine of Rigdon's as being false, took his licence from him and said, "The Devil would handle him as one man handles another—the less authority he had the better."

Rigdon quickly became aware of his error, sought forgiveness, and on 28 July was reordained as a member of the Presidency of the High Priesthood. A letter from Joseph Smith, to William W. Phelps dated 31 July 1832, mentioned the Rigdon-Partridge controversy, the trip to and from Missouri in 1832, and Rigdon's fall from grace:

Our object in going to Zion was altogether to keep the commandment of the most high [section 78]. when bro Sidney learned the feelings of the Brethren in whom he had placed so much confidence for whom he had endured so much fatiague and suffering & whom he loved with so much love his heart was grieved his spirit failed & for a moment he became frantic & the adversary taking the advantage, he spake unadviseable with his lips. after receiving severe chastisement [he] resigned his commision and became a private member in the church, but has since repented...and after a little suffering by the buffetings of Satan has been restored to his high standing in the church of God.

(Lyndon W. Cook, The Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith)

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