

Comments on Doctrine & Covenants 98

This section was received some four days after D&C 97 and addresses similar themes. The ecclesia in Missouri were subjected to increasing hostilities throughout the month of July 1833, and, as such, the Lord forbids revenge.

While the Lord is warning the ecclesia at Missouri, He also corrects the ecclesia at Kirtland (v. 19-22), which was also facing hostilities of their own, largely a result of [D. P. Hurlbut](#).

1 VERILY I say unto you my friends, fear not, let your hearts be comforted; yea, rejoice evermore, and in everything give thanks; 2 Waiting patiently on the Lord, for your prayers have entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth, and are recorded with this seal and testament--the Lord hath sworn and decreed that they shall be granted. 3 Therefore, he giveth this promise unto you, with an immutable covenant that they shall be fulfilled; and all things wherewith you have been afflicted shall work together for your good, and to my name's glory, saith the Lord.

v1-3 As was the case with D&C 97, the section starts with the Lord addressing His friends, the humble and meek among Zion. Based upon subject, the text can be arranged as follows:

- A - (v. 1b-c) Fear not, let your hearts be comforted
- B - (v. 1c-d) Yea, rejoice evermore
- C - (v. 1e) In everything give thanks
- A - (v. 2) Your prayers have entered into the ears of the Lord
- B - (v. 3a-b) He giveth...you...an immutable covenant
- C - (v. 3c-d) [Your afflictions] shall work together for your good

One would assume the prayers, promises, and covenants referred to in these verses are the same as those addressed in v. 11-22. One would naturally assume their prayers were against their enemies as well, which in this case would be addressed by the subject of v. 23-48.

The subject of the C's is that they are to tolerate their difficult circumstances, as all these things shall be for their good, cp. Matt. 5:10-12, 2 Cor. 11:20-28, Alma 14:10-11, D&C 122.

4 And now, verily I say unto you concerning the laws of the land, it is my will that my people should observe to do all things whatsoever I command them. 5 And that law of the land which is constitutional, supporting that principle of freedom in

maintaining rights and privileges, belongs to all mankind, and is justifiable before me. 6 Therefore, I, the Lord, justify you, and your brethren of my church, in befriending that law which is the constitutional law of the land; 7 And as pertaining to law of man, whatsoever is more or less than this, cometh of evil. 8 I, the Lord God, make you free, therefore ye are free indeed; and the law also maketh you free. 9 Nevertheless, when the wicked rule the people mourn. 10 wherefore, honest men and wise men should be sought for diligently, and good men and wise men ye should observe to uphold; otherwise whatsoever is less than these cometh of evil.

v4-10 These verses instruct the Church to uphold the constitutional form of government, as it makes them free. Verse 9 in particular states the problem is not the form of government, but the people chosen to represent and enforce its laws, cp. Mosiah 29:17.

Given the abuse of government power, it would have been a natural reaction for them to become hostile to the form as well as the administrators of the government. The Lord's admonition encourages them to recognize the constitution makes them free, and they should endeavor to support honest and wise men as leaders so they may enjoy those freedoms.

11 And I give unto you a commandment, that ye shall forsake all evil and cleave unto all good, that ye shall live by every word which proceedeth forth out of the mouth of God. 12 For he will give unto the faithful line upon line, precept upon precept; and I will try you and prove you herewith.

13 And whoso layeth down his life in my cause, for my name's sake, shall find it again, even life eternal. 14 Therefore, be not afraid of your enemies, for I have decreed in my heart, saith the Lord, that I will prove you in all things, whether you will abide in my covenant, even unto death, that you may be found worthy. 15 For if ye will not abide in my covenant ye are not worthy of me.

16 Therefore, renounce war and proclaim peace, and seek diligently to turn the hearts of the children to their fathers, and the hearts of the fathers to the children; 17 And again, the hearts of the Jews unto the prophets, and the prophets unto the Jews; lest I come and smite the whole earth with a curse, and all flesh be consumed before me.

18 Let not your hearts be troubled; for in my Father's house are many mansions, and I have prepared a place for you; and where my Father and I am, there ye shall be also.

19 Behold, I, the Lord, am not well pleased with many who are in the church at Kirtland; 20 For they do not forsake their sins, and their wicked ways, the pride of their hearts, and

their covetousness, and all their detestable things, and observe the words of wisdom and eternal life which I have given unto them. 21 Verily I say unto you, that I, the Lord, will chasten them and will do whatsoever I list, if they do not repent and observe all things whatsoever I have said unto them. 22 And again I say unto you, if ye observe to do whatsoever I command you, I, the Lord, will turn away all wrath and indignation from you, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against you.

v11-22 The subject returns to matters of primarily religion, however these verses weave together both physical and spiritual matters. Their difficult circumstances and poor treatment were very much physical, and a result of their failure to keep the commandments. The result is their faith and spirituality was being tested by their physical circumstances. This is standard Old Testament covenant theology: bad spiritual circumstances lead to bad physical circumstances, good spiritual circumstances lead to good physical circumstances.

The text can be arranged as follows:

- A - (v. 11-12) Forsake all evil...live by every word...of God
- B - (v. 13-15) I will prove you in all things, abide My covenant
- C - (v. 16) Renounce war...turn hearts of father to children
- C - (v. 17) Lest all flesh consumed, turn hearts of Jews to prophets
- B - (v. 18) I have prepared a place for you, with My Father and I
- A - (v. 19-22) They do not forsake evil...[or] observe words of wisdom

v11-12 The Lord instructs them to keep His commandments. Had they been observing His teachings all along He would have been blessing them with peace and protection from their enemies, cf. D&C 97:18-19. Instead, they have ignored them, and as a result fallen prey to their enemies. The result is the Lord is testing and trying them.

v13-15 Regardless of the difficult circumstances they find themselves in, a result of failure at a corporate level to keep the Lord's commands, the Lord admonishes His friends, the humble and meek among Zion, to be faithful so they may be proven in all things and ultimately found worthy of eternal life. This necessarily moves the subject from corporate to individual covenant keeping.

v16-17 A paraphrase of Mal. 4:6 which forwards a physical

interpretation, contrast this with the spiritual usage of the same passage in D&C 2:2. The Saints are instructed to seek for peace rather than retribution. While v. 16 is blatantly physical given the context, v. 17 presents another more spiritual reading encouraging them to maintain their duties as the ecclesia and seek to redeem Israel, rather than become completely sidetracked by the intrigue around them.

v16 "proclaim peace" cp. v. 34-35.

v18 This verse compliments v. 13-15 by informing them the Lord has prepared a place for them with Him in His Father's mansion.

v19-22 The Lord chastises the Saints at Kirtland, apparently as a negative example to those in Missouri, for failing to keep the principles outlined in v. 11-12, and they will be chastened until they repent, cp. Lev. 26:14, 21, 23, 27. Then v. 22 closes off with the statement that if they would do what the Lord commanded He would turn away both physical and spiritual torment from them, thus again uniting the subjects of their spiritual and physical circumstances.

While the Lord is primarily addressing the situation in Missouri, He also makes it clear to those in Kirtland they are held to the same standard.

23 Now, I speak unto you concerning your families--if men will smite you, or your families, once, and ye bear it patiently and revile not against them, neither seek revenge, ye shall be rewarded; 24 But if ye bear it not patiently, it shall be accounted unto you as being meted out as a just measure unto you. 25 And again, if your enemy shall smite you the second time, and you revile not against your enemy, and bear it patiently, your reward shall be an hundredfold. 26 And again, if he shall smite you the third time, and ye bear it patiently, your reward shall be doubled unto you four-fold; 27 And these three testimonies shall stand against your enemy if he repent not, and shall not be blotted out. 28 And now, verily I say unto you, if that enemy shall escape my vengeance, that he be not brought into judgment before me, then ye shall see to it that ye warn him in my name, that he come no more upon you, neither upon your family, even your children's children unto the third and fourth generation. 29 And then, if he shall come upon you or your children, or your children's children unto the third and fourth generation, I have delivered thine enemy into thine hands; 30 And then if thou wilt spare him, thou shalt be rewarded for thy righteousness; and also thy children and thy children's children unto the third and fourth generation. 31

Nevertheless, thine enemy is in thine hands; and if thou rewardest him according to his works thou art justified; if he has sought thy life, and thy life is endangered by him, thine enemy is in thine hands and thou art justified.

32 Behold, this is the law I gave unto my servant Nephi, and thy fathers, Joseph, and Jacob, and Isaac, and Abraham, and all mine ancient prophets and apostles. 33 And again, this is the law that I gave unto mine ancients, that they should not go out unto battle against any nation, kindred, tongue, or people, save I, the Lord, commanded them. 34 And if any nation, tongue, or people should proclaim war against them, they should first lift a standard of peace unto that people, nation, or tongue; 35 And if that people did not accept the offering of peace, neither the second nor the third time, they should bring these testimonies before the Lord; 36 Then I, the Lord, would give unto them a commandment, and justify them in going out to battle against that nation, tongue, or people. 37 And I, the Lord, would fight their battles, and their children's battles, and their children's children's, until they had avenged themselves on all their enemies, to the third and fourth generation. 38 Behold, this is an ensample unto all people, saith the Lord your God, for justification before me.

39 And again, verily I say unto you, if after thine enemy has come upon thee the first time, he repent and come unto thee praying thy forgiveness, thou shalt forgive him, and shalt hold it no more as a testimony against thine enemy-- 40 And so on unto the second and third time; and as oft as thine enemy repenteth of the trespass wherewith he has trespassed against thee, thou shalt forgive him, until seventy times seven. 41 And if he trespass against thee and repent not the first time, nevertheless thou shalt forgive him. 42 And if he trespass against thee the second time, and repent not, nevertheless thou shalt forgive him. 43 And if he trespass against thee the third time, and repent not, thou shalt also forgive him. 44 But if he trespass against thee the fourth time thou shalt not forgive him, but shalt bring these testimonies before the Lord; and they shall not be blotted out until he repent and reward thee four-fold in all things wherewith he has trespassed against thee. 45 And if he do this, thou shalt forgive him with all thine heart; and if he do not this, I, the Lord, will avenge thee of thine enemy an hundred-fold; 46 And upon his children, and upon his children's children of all them that hate me, unto the third and fourth generation. 47 But if the children shall repent, or the children's children, and turn to the Lord their God, with all their hearts and with all their might, mind, and strength, and restore four-fold for all their trespasses wherewith they have trespassed, or wherewith their fathers have trespassed, or their fathers' fathers, then thine indignation shall be turned away; 48 And vengeance shall no more come upon them, saith the Lord thy God, and their trespasses shall never

be brought any more as a testimony before the Lord against them.
Amen.

v23-48 Laws concerning how to deal with physical oppressors.

v23-31 We are to tolerate three offenses at the hands of our enemies, and if we do so then the Lord will consider us justified and bless us (v. 23-26). Failure to do so results in the Lord considering us getting what we deserve (v. 24). The three incidents we do tolerate stand as a witness against our oppressors (v. 27), per the Law that requires two or three witnesses to put someone to death (cf. Deut. 17:6). Given these three incidents, if the Lord has not already destroyed them Himself, we are to warn our enemy in the name of the Lord they are to no more come against us (v. 28-29). In this case, if we choose to spare them, we will be blessed (v. 30). Nevertheless, if we choose to destroy them, we are justified (v. 31).

v28 "unto the third and fourth generation", referring to the grandchildren and great-grandchildren of those who are currently their enemies. As long as the hatred of their enemies is brought to bear on subsequent generations, such that they remain hostile (cp. Mosiah 10:17), the Law of three offenses is in force.

The plain definition given here serves to explicitly explain the meaning of the phrase, as it appears undefined in Exod. 20:5, Exod. 34:7. Num. 14:18, Deut. 5:9 and various OT Prophets.

v32-38 A recounting of history behind the Law just given in v. 23-31. This Law was dispensed anciently (v. 32-35), and when applied properly the Lord would then go and fight their battles (v. 36-37). Compare Exod. 17:8-16.

v32 That this Law was given to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob indicates it predated the Law of Moses. The verse also states it was given to Nephi as well. We would assume this is in reference to the wars between the Nephites and Lamanites subsequent to their division, cf. 2 Ne. 5.

v34 Compare Deut. 20:10-12.

v39-48 The Law concerning the repentance of enemies. As often as the enemy repents we are required to forgive, and doing so

results in the offense not being allowed to be used as one of the three testimonies against them (v. 39-40). Regardless of whether or not the enemy repents, we are required to forgive them for three unrepented offenses (v. 41-43). With the fourth unrepented for offense, we are justified in not forgiving them and the Lord becomes our avenger for as many generations hate the Lord's people, and therefore Him (v. 44-46). However, if the children of the enemies repent and make reparations, then we are to forgive them and the previous three offenses held against them are absolved (v. 47-48).

Historical Material Pertaining to Doctrine & Covenants 98

The situation in Missouri began deteriorating in July, 1833 with the locals being incensed over seemingly anti-slavery comments published in the *Evening and Morning Star*. On July 23rd an armed mob of hundreds of locals enter Independence, whereupon the leaders of the Church state they will move out of the county by January 1, 1834, and publication of *Evening and Morning Star* ceases. In light of the hostilities, the Lord forbids the ecclesia from seeking revenge.

The first two excerpts are first-hand witness accounts of the events in Missouri, recounted by Parley P. Pratt.

The third excerpt discusses a tragic speech by Sidney Rigdon wherein he directly contradicted the counsel of D&C 98.

This section was first published in the Kirtland edition Doctrine and Covenants in 1835, pages 213-219. It was published in Times and Seasons, volume 6, number 6, pages 849-850, dated April 1, 1845. It was published in the Millennial Star, volume 14, number 32, pages 502-503, dated October 2, 1852.

Excerpt from Autobiography of Parley Parker Pratt

This revelation [i.e., D&C 97] was not complied with by the leaders and Church in Missouri, as a whole; notwithstanding many were humble and faithful. Therefore, the threatened judgment was poured out to the uttermost, as the history of the five following years will show.

That portion of the inhabitants of Jackson County which did not belong to the Church, became jealous of our growing influence and numbers. Political demagogues were afraid we should rule the county; and religious priests and bigots felt that we were powerful rivals, and about to excel all other societies in the State in numbers, and in power and influence.

These feelings, and the false statements and influences growing out of them, gave rise to the organization of a company of outlaws, whose avowed object was to drive the Church of the Saints from the county.

These were composed of lawyers, magistrates, county officers, civil and military; religious ministers, and great numbers of the ignorant and uninformed portion of the population, whose prejudices were easily aroused. (Parley P. Pratt, *Autobiography of Parley Parker Pratt*, pages 77-78)

Excerpt from History of the Late Persecution

But to proceed with my history. Pursuant to the last clause of the bond, the mob met at the court house, on the 20th of July, and proceeded immediately to demolish the brick printing office and dwelling house of W.W. Phelps & Co., and destroyed or took possession of the press, type, books and property of the establishment; at the same time turning Mrs. Phelps and children out of doors, after which they proceeded to personal violence by a wanton assault and battery upon the bishop of the Church, Mr. Edward Partridge, and a Mr. Allen, whom they tarred and feathered, and variously abused. They then compelled Messrs. Gilbert, Whitney & Co. to close their store and pack their goods, after which they adjourned to meet again on the 23rd of July; on which day they again met, to the number of several hundred, armed with fire-arms, dirks and sticks, with red flags hoisted, and as they entered town, threatening death and destruction to the Mormons. On this day, six individuals of the Church signed an agreement to leave the county, one half by the first of January, and the other half by the first of April, 1834; hoping thereby to preserve the lives of their brethren, and their property. After this the mob dispersed, threatening destruction to the Mormons on the next New Year's Day if they were not off by that time.

After this, an express was sent to the governor of the state, stating the facts of the outrages, and praying for some relief and protection. But none was afforded, only some advice for us to prosecute the offenders, which was accordingly undertaken. But this so enraged the mob that they began to make preparations to come out by night and recommence depredations. Having passed through the most aggravating insults and injuries without making the least resistance, a general inquiry prevailed at this time throughout the Church, as to the propriety of self-defense. Some claimed the right of defending themselves, their families and property, from destruction; while others doubted the propriety of self-defense; and as the agreement of the 23rd of July, between the two parties had been published to the world, wherein it was set forth, that the Mormons were not to leave until the 1st of January and 1st of April, 1834. It was believed by many of the Mormons that the leaders of the mob would not suffer so bare-faced a violation of the agreement before the time therein set forth; but Thursday night, the 31st of October, gave them abundant proof that no pledge, verbal or written, was longer to be regarded; for, on that night, between

forty and fifty, many of whom were armed with guns, proceeded against a branch of the Church, about eight miles west of town, and unroofed and partly demolished ten dwelling houses; and in the midst of the shrieks and screams of women and children, whipped and beaten in a savage manner, several of the men; and with their horrid threats, frightened women and children into the wilderness. Such of the men as could escape, fled for their lives; for very few of them had arms, neither were they embodied; and they were threatened with death if they made any resistance. Such, therefore, as could not escape by flight, received a pelting by rocks, and a beating by guns and whips.

On Friday, the first of November, women and children sallied forth from their gloomy retreats, to contemplate, with heart-rending anguish, the ravages of a ruthless mob, in the mangled bodies of their husbands, and in the destruction of their houses and furniture. Houseless, and unprotected by the arm of civil law in Jackson County--the dreary month of November staring them in the face, and loudly proclaiming a more inclement season at hand--the continual threats of the mob, that they would drive every Mormon from the county--and the inability of many to remove because of their poverty, caused an anguish of heart indescribable.

These outrages were committed about two miles from my residence; news reached me before daylight the same morning, and I immediately repaired to the place, and was filled with anguish at the awful sight of houses in ruins, and furniture destroyed and strewn about the streets; women, in different directions, were weeping and mourning, while some of the men were covered with blood from the blows they had received from the enemy; others were endeavoring to collect the fragments of their scattered furniture, beds, etc.

I endeavored to collect together as many men as possible, and after consultation, we concluded to embody for defense. Accordingly we collected some sixty men, armed ourselves as well as we could, and took shelter the next evening in a log house. We set a guard, and sent out spies through the different parts of the settlement to watch the movements of the mob; but sometime in the night two of the enemy advanced to our guard, being armed with guns and pistols, and while they were conversing I walked near them, and one of them struck me over the head, with all his might, with his gun. I staggered back, the blood streaming down my face, but I did not fall. As I had command of our party, I ordered our men to disarm the two ruffians and secure them, which was done; and this probably

prevented a general attack of the mob that night. The next morning they were let go in peace.

The same night (Friday) a party in Independence commenced stoning houses, breaking down doors and windows, destroying furniture, etc. This night the brick part of a dwelling house belonging to A.S. Gilbert, [Algernon Sidney] was partly demolished, and the windows of his dwelling broken in, while a gentleman lay sick in his house.

The same night the doors of the house of Messrs. Gilbert and Whitney were split open, and the goods strewed in the street, to which fact upwards of twenty witnesses can attest.

After midnight a party of our men marched for the store, etc. and when the mob saw them approach they fled. But one of their number, a Richard McCarty, was caught in the act of throwing rocks in at the door, while the goods lay strung around him in the street. He was immediately taken before Samuel Weston, Esq. and a warrant requested, that said McCarty might be secured; but his justiceship refused to do anything in the case, and McCarty was then liberated.

The same night many of their houses had poles and rails thrust through the shutters and sash, into the rooms of defenseless women and children, from whence their husbands and fathers had been driven by the acts of the mob which were made by ten or twenty men upon one house at a time. On Saturday, the 2nd of November, all the families of these people who lived in Independence, moved out of town about one half mile west, and embodied for the preservation of themselves and property. Saturday night a party of the mob made an attack upon a settlement about six miles west of town. Here they tore the roof from a dwelling, broke open another house, found the owner, Mr. David Bennett, sick in bed; him they beat inhumanly, and swore they would blow his brains out, and discharging a pistol, the ball cut a deep gash across the top of his head. In this skirmish one of their men was shot in the thigh. (Parley P. Pratt, History of the Late Persecution Inflicted by the State of Missouri Upon the Mormons, pages 11-15)

Excerpt from The Story of the Latter-day Saints

Independence Day, July 4, 1838, was crucial. At Far West the Saints celebrated the national holiday and laid the cornerstones of a temple. Orator for the day was Sidney Rigdon, who, despite recent illness, maintained the ability to whip feelings into high emotion. His speech, approved by Joseph Smith

and other Church leaders, was a declaration of independence for the Saints from any further mob violence or illegal activity. He concluded his long and stinging oration with words that must have sunk deep into the heart of every listener:

We take God and all the holy angels to witness this day, that we warn all men in the name of Jesus Christ, to come on us no more forever, for from this hour, we will bear it no more, our rights shall no more be trampled on with impunity. The man or the set of men, who attempts it, does it at the expense of their lives. And that mob that comes on us to disturb us; it shall be between us and them a war of extermination; for we will follow them, till the last drop of their blood is spilled, or else they will have to exterminate us: for we will carry the seat of war to their own houses, and their own families, and one party or the other shall be utterly destroyed.— Remember it then all MEN.

We will never be the aggressors, we will infringe on the rights of no people; but shall stand for our own until death. We claim our own rights, and are willing that all others shall enjoy theirs.

No man shall be at liberty to come into our streets, to threaten us with mobs, for if he does, he shall atone for it before he leaves the place, neither shall he be at liberty, to vilify and slander any of us, for suffer it we will not in this place.

We therefore, take all men to record this day, that we proclaim our liberty this day, as did our fathers. And we pledge this day to one another, our fortunes, our lives, and our sacred honors, to be delivered from the persecutions which we have had to endure, for the last nine years, or nearly that. Neither will we indulge any man, or set of men, in instituting vexatious law suits against us, to cheat us out of our just rights, if they attempt it we say wo unto them.

We this day then proclaim ourselves free, with a purpose and a determination, that never can be broken, "no never! no never!! NO NEVER"!!!

The jubilant audience responded: "Hosannah, hosannah, hosannah! Amen. Amen. Amen!" and repeated it three times.

Much of Rigdon's oration was obviously heated rhetoric, but it represented the determination of the Saints to fight back. When distorted reports reached the mobs and other Missouri citizens, however, it provided a basis for charges of treason and violence against the Saints that were fostered by those who wanted to drive them from the state. (James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard, *The Story of the Latter-day Saints*, page 133)

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