

D&C Lesson # 27
They Must Needs Be Chastened and Tried, Even as Abraham
(D&C 101, 103, 105).
By Lenet Hadley Read

(Here is inspirational background and evidences supporting the Restoration)

I. The Savior sought to prepare His followers of all dispensations against what they would be called to undergo by following in His footsteps. Doing so He tells why they would suffer.

A. "I am the... vine, [and ye are the branches]. Every branch ... that beareth not fruit he taketh away; **and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit**" (John 15:1-2).

B. This is a great key to understanding why the most righteous often undergo the most suffering.

II. We can see this played out in the lives of the Latter-day Saints who tried to establish Zion in Missouri.

A. While the Saints had shown righteousness in accepting the Lord's prophet and modern day prophecies, still they were not perfected. They had been living in Babylon, and many saints still clung to Babylon, particularly in their actions. Thus the Lord found it necessary to purge them.

"I the Lord have suffered the affliction to come upon them, wherefore they have been afflicted, in consequence of their transgressions;... Therefore they must needs be chastened, and tried, even as Abraham, who was commanded to offer up his only son. For all those who will not endure chastening, but deny me, cannot be sanctified.

"Behold, I say unto you there were jarrings and contentions, and envyings, and strifes, and lustful and covetous desires among them; therefore by these things they polluted their inheritance" (D&C 101:2-6).

B. We should note that **not all of the Saints were guilty of these things**. As Joseph Smith said of them when he arrived in Missouri, he "received a welcome only known by brethren and sisters united as one in the same faith, and by the same baptism, and supported by the same Lord" (*Our Heritage*, p. 39). **Such was the beginning of a true Zion**.

C. We must also understand that the Saints were caught in the midst of a great growing political battle in the country --- with circumstances beyond their control.

1. There was a struggle already between those who wanted to expand the practice of slavery in the land and those who opposed it. Many people in Missouri were deeply concerned about how the Mormons would affect the situation not only with slavery, but also with the Indians, just on their western border.

2. They also felt in general, that a large group of Mormons would obtain too much power at the ballot box. Some of the first physical skirmishes were because Mormons tried to vote.

III. While the Saints were undergoing great trials, to become perfected, the Lord made clear that He had not forsaken them, and after trials, like Abraham's, they would become great in His kingdom.

A. "Yet I will own them, and they shall be mine in that day when I shall come to make up my jewels" (D&C 101:3).

B. “In that day [the time of His Coming] all who are found upon the watchtower, or in other words, all mine Israel, shall be saved. And they that have been scattered shall be gathered. And all they who have mourned shall be comforted. And all they who have given their lives for my name shall be crowned. **Therefore, let your hearts be comforted concerning Zion; for all flesh is in mine hands; be still and know that I am God.** Zion shall not be moved from her place, notwithstanding her children are scattered. They that remain, and are pure in heart, shall return, and come to their inheritances, they and their children, with songs of everlasting joy, to build up the waste places of Zion” (D&C 101:12-18). (Emphasis added)

C. When one examines the events of this time, it is really as if the Lord had prepared a crucible in which to try the Saints. Once they had passed through it, growing from it, they would be more pure, and thus be able to establish a more righteous Zion.

IV. Our views of all events in Missouri have often been too near sighted.

- A. We tend to read about the “establishment of Zion” with our own limited view, and not with the view from the Lord’s perspective.
- B. When we study *all* the scriptures, we should realize that from the beginning, the Lord had prophesied **the whole Celestialized Earth will become the Promised Land, or Zion.**
- C. So when the Lord commanded Joseph to go to Independence as “the Center Place” and dedicate it as Zion, He was **only establishing the beginning of Zion, newly restored in the Last Days.**
- D. Being temporarily driven out of Missouri was not going to cause the failure of these prophecies. Nor was being denied the opportunity to build a Temple there at that time. **Eventually, the whole earth will be Zion, and it will be dotted with temples.**
- E. Therefore, we must broaden our view to the Lord’s view as given throughout the scriptures.

V. The March of Zion’s Camp, the group of men sent to rescue the Missouri Saints, was also an important crucible.

- A. They endured many trials, including an attack of Cholera.
- B. While the journey would appear to have been fruitless, as they did not succeed in their desires to keep the Saints from being driven out of Missouri, it had positive purposes.
- C. **Zion’s Camp eventually proved to be a great blessing to the church.**
 - 1. As is often explained, most of the members of the Council of the Twelve and all seventy of those called as seventies came from the brethren who made that journey, who were literally “chastened and tried” in preparation for their great responsibilities.
 - 2. Another result is that **the organizing of this group of men to travel the 1,000 miles to Missouri served as a great preparatory experience for Brigham Young and his associates.**
 - 3. First, he would be called upon to bring out all the saints from Missouri, under terrible conditions, while Joseph was still in Liberty Jail, and not to abandon any!
 - 4. But he was also being prepared to **organize and lead thousands of Saints, including women and children, through a much more barren wilderness into the Great Salt Lake Valley, a distance of about 1250 miles** today, but a much more meandering route for the pioneers who did not have the convenience of bridges nor modern highways which do not need to wind around physical barriers.
 - 5. And ultimately, the leadership of the Church were being tried and prepared to lead the Saints to a more glorious Promised Land --- that of Eternal Life.

a. “And by hearkening to observe all the words which I, the Lord their God, shall speak unto them, **they shall never cease to prevail until the kingdoms of the world are subdued under my feet. And the earth is given unto the saints, to possess it forever and ever**” (D&C 103:7). (Emphasis added)

VI. The Lord had given the following forewarnings to all His servants who would suffer in their obedience to Him. He gave them just prior to His own terrible sufferings.

- A. “If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world ... therefore the world hateth you.” (John 15:18-19).
- B. “Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you. But all these things will they do unto you for my name’s sake, because they know not him that sent me” (John 15:20-21).
- C. “They shall put you out of the synagogues; yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service” (John 16:2).
- D. “I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned to joy.”
- E. “A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come; but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world” (John 16:20-21).

What was being born in this case was Zion --- the Lord’s Latter-day Kingdom. And as in all births, it too had to be born out of great tribulation and trial.