

D&C 35
A Mission of Saving
(D&C 4; 18; 52; 81)
By Lenet Hadley Read

I. The two groups of handcart pioneers who suffered so greatly with some dying have caused a lot of criticism toward the church. **The criticism is not deserved.**

A. The handcart companies were unfortunately delayed because so many others were heading to Zion they used all the usable wood for their wagons and carts.

B. Thus these later pioneers were forced to try to start with wood that was green. The result was that their carts constantly broke down, causing delays.

C. But once they had started, there really was no turning back. For there were no stopping places on the road which could have provided enough shelter and food to sustain them.

D. Thus they were caught in a terrible vise: they knew staying would be disastrous. There might be hope if they continued on. Usually bad snows did not happen in October.

E. And they made that decision themselves.

F. That they voted to continue on shows their great trust in the Lord.

II. So now we must ask. Why did the Lord seem to abandon them in spite of that faith?

A. As there are so many miracles for Mormon pioneers who went west, we know that the Lord was with the pioneers overall. Even this group saw many miracles among them.

B. But this did not mean that the Lord would not greatly try the faith of some of the saints.

C. As the Savior and Joseph Smith gave their lives for the Lord and for a great saving work, so some of those who tried to come to the Promised Land did as well.

D. To the spiritually unschooled, that God the Father would not save all, but allow the sacrifice of some lives engaged in His work, seems a terrible injustice and tragedy. **But for those who know, death is simply passing through a door into a far greater world. It is the safe return to God.**

1. It is a quicker **Entrance into the True Promised Land.**

2. They did not miss the end goal of their journey after all. Rather, **they got to the real Promised Land First!**

3. So when we sing, “And if we die before our journey’s through, happy day, All is Well,” it is really true.

III. While the trials of these handcart pioneers wrenches our heart, their rescue is one of the great chapters in the Church’s history.

A. The principle of saving all was a deeply ingrained concept in this Latter-day Exodus.

B. “Let each company bear an equal proportion, according to the dividend of their own property, in taking the poor, the widows, the fatherless, and the families of those who have gone into the army, that **the cries of the widow and the fatherless come not up into the ears of the Lord against this people**” (D&C 136:8).

C. Brigham Young’s call to rescue the handcarts was full of great compassion and concern.

D. The Saints had been schooled from the beginning of the need to be rescuers.

1. They had been taught, “the worth of a soul is great” (D&C 18:10-16). And knowing their full Eternal potential, they fully understood the greatness of that worth.

IV. Brigham Young asked teams of men to go into the snows on the plains and help rescue the handcart companies who were stranded. They risked their own lives in doing so.

A. Two of my own ancestors were among those who responded to go and rescue.

B. Not only did the saints rescue the handcart pioneers in one of the great and touching stories of the Exodus, the story of that rescue continues to motivate the saints through the ages.

C. Even before, and especially since, saints continue to rescue others, both as commanded, and by feeling the spirit.

D. My own ancestor, Thaddeus Alvord and his older sons, were asked to go back into Missouri (which was very dangerous due to the state's "extermination order" against the Mormons.

However, they found people in that particular area of Missouri more accepting of Mormons).

They went there because they had been asked to make wagons for the other saints. This required Thaddeus' wife, Sally, to remain in Winter Quarters by herself, caring for the younger children, which was a great hardship to her.

The whole family were thus delayed in getting to the West themselves as they had labored to help so many others.

V. We have never stopped being called upon to rescue.

A. Hopefully all our lives are full of instances when we have heeded such a call, either by the priesthood or by the Spirit.

B. One of our great works is to rescue the deceased.

C. I am pleased to have accepted heading up a project in my Utah ward of helping rescue the deceased of a small rural branch in Texas.

1. That branch, being quite some distance from a temple, and having many widows and part member families, have found it very challenging to do the work for **their deceased male ancestors**.

2. So we are asking our priesthood members to take a name for this small TX branch when they go to the temple if they do not have one of their own. It is a very rewarding project.

VII. It is beautiful that the Lord has a marvelous way of allowing even the most disadvantaged among us to help rescue.

A. As an ordinance worker in the Provo Temple, it is thrilling to me to see that among those who come to work for the deceased are many who have disabilities in this life.

B. They come on canes, with walkers, in wheelchairs, with oxygen tanks, with braces on their backs and on their legs. But they come. And they forget their pains and their troubles and their disabilities because they are engaged in a mighty work.

It is marvelous to see that they too are blessed to be engaged in the most Holy Work of rescuing others.

And so are we all.