

D&C LESSON #26

"GO YE INTO ALL THE WORLD AND PREACH MY GOSPEL"

by Ted L. Gibbons

INTRODUCTION: The phrase "every member a missionary" became common during the administration of President David O. McKay. Of that requirement, he said,

In 1923 in the British Mission there was a general instruction sent out to the members of the Church advocating what Brother Gordon B. Hinckley has emphasized today. We did not spend money advertising in the press. The feeling in England was quite bitter at that time, but we said: "Throw the responsibility upon every member of the Church that in the coming year of 1923 every member will be a missionary. Every member a missionary! You may bring your mother into the Church, or it may be your father; perhaps your fellow companion in the workshop. Somebody will hear the good message of the truth through you." (President David O. McKay: C.R., April 1959)

In April 2001, Elder Holland said it this way:

Remembering always to act with courtesy and propriety, we have a responsibility to be witnesses of Jesus Christ "at all times and in all things, and in all places," (Mosiah 18:9) to proclaim each in our own way the great cause to which Christ has called us.

Now, you are already wonderful missionaries, better than you think you are, and there is more where that comes from! The 12-hour-a-day, heavy-duty effort we'll leave to the full-time missionaries, but why should they have all the fun? We are entitled to a seat at the abundant table of testimony as well, and fortunately a place has been reserved there for each member of the Church.

Indeed, one of the axioms of our day is that no mission or missionaries can ultimately succeed *without* the loving participation

and spiritual support of the local members working with them in a balanced effort. If today you are taking notes on a stone tablet, chisel that one in deeply. I promise you won't ever have to erase it. Initial investigators may come from many different sources, but those who are actually baptized and who are firmly retained in activity in the Church come overwhelmingly from friends and acquaintances known to members of the Church. (Jeffrey R. Holland, Ensign, May 2001, p. 14)

This was a requirement that church members in Kirtland understood and embraced.

1. THE LORD Poured OUT GREAT BLESSING DURING THE KIRTLAND PERIOD

Turn to the front of your copy of the Doctrine and Covenants and look at the *Chronological Order of Contents*. How many of the revelations contained in this volume of scripture were received in Ohio (Kirtland, Thompson, Hiram, Amherst)? 66 of the 138 revelations contained in the D&C (about 47%) were received during the Kirtland period of Church History. Review the list of revelations given in Ohio. What great doctrines came to the kingdom in this place? Kirtland, Ohio is the true cradle of the Restoration.

"Mormonism's" first converts had been made in the region where the Church arose—the farming districts of Western New York and Northern Pennsylvania. But Kirtland, Ohio, was the cradle of the Kingdom. There a Temple was built, and the Priesthood more perfectly organized, preliminary to the sending of the Gospel to foreign nations, and the gathering of scattered Israel to the Land of Zion. (Orson F. Whitney, Saturday Night Thoughts, p.155)

All of the events and revelations in the past 13 lessons grew out of the Kirtland experiences of the Church.

2. THE SAINTS IN KIRTLAND MADE GREAT SACRIFICES TO SHARE THE GOSPEL.

It was from Kirtland the first foreign missionaries went forth to preach in Canada and Great Britain. We have watched a multitude of missionaries in our own days depart for places those early missionaries could hardly dream of. We are appropriately grateful for the ease with which modern emissaries of the gospel can get to their fields of labor. The weeks and months spent traveling in the early decades of the Restoration are now devoted to finding and teaching. Think what it cost a man in Ohio to accept a call to England in 1837. But the Lord never said, "As soon as it is convenient, get this work done." He never invited his saints to wait to preach until it was easier to get to the place assigned to do the work.

Notice the nature of the commandments given concerning this matter:

And ye shall go forth in the power of my Spirit, preaching my gospel, two by two, in my name, lifting up your voices as with the sound of a trumpet, declaring my word like unto angels of God. (D&C 42:6)

And now this calling and commandment give I unto you *concerning all men*— That *as many as shall come before my servants* Sidney Rigdon and Joseph Smith, Jun., embracing this calling and commandment, shall be ordained and sent forth to preach the everlasting gospel among the nations— Crying repentance, saying: Save yourselves from this untoward generation, and come forth out of the fire, hating even the garments spotted with the flesh. And this commandment shall be given unto the elders of my church, that *every man which will embrace it with singleness of heart may be ordained and sent forth*, even as I have spoken. (D&C 36:4-7, *emphasis added*)

And again, I say unto you, I give unto you a commandment, that *every man*, both elder, priest, teacher, and also member, go to with his might, with the labor of his hands, to prepare and accomplish the things which I have commanded. And let your preaching be the

warning voice, *every man* to his neighbor, in mildness and in meekness. (D&C 38:40,41, *every man*)

And that *every man* should take righteousness in his hands and faithfulness upon his loins, and lift a warning voice unto the inhabitants of the earth; and declare both by word and by flight that desolation shall come upon the wicked. (D&C 63:37)

Behold, I sent you out to testify and warn the people, and it becometh *every man* who hath been warned to warn his neighbor. (D&C 88:81, *emphasis added*)

The repeated emphasis of these verses—“every man”—underscores the call of the prophets for every member to be a missionary. And if the early saints could sacrifice to do this work, why, so can we. And we must not wait until it is easy. We must wait only until it is possible. We too can sacrifice—our comfort, our fear, our reluctance. Elder Holland related a sweet story of a young sister missionary and the sacrifice made by her family so that she could serve:

I learned from a mission president recently that one of his young sister missionaries, nearing the end of her very faithful and successful mission, said through her tears that she must return home immediately. When he inquired as to the problem, she told him money had become so difficult for her family that to continue her support, the family had rented their home and were using the rental proceeds to pay her mission expenses. For living accommodations, they had moved into a storage locker. For water, they used a neighbor's outdoor tap and hose; and for a bathroom they went to a nearby gasoline station. This family, in which the father had recently passed away, was so proud of their missionary and so independent in spirit that they had managed to keep this recent turn of events from most of their friends and virtually all of their Church leaders.

When this situation was discovered, the family was restored to their home immediately. Long-term solutions to their economic circumstances were put in place, and the complete amount of

remaining missionary support for their missionary daughter was secured overnight. With her tears dried and fears allayed, this faithful, hardworking young sister finished her mission triumphantly and was recently married in the temple to a wonderful young man. (Ensign, May 2001, p. 16)

I do not believe that the Lord wants us to live in a carport and donate our house payment to the missionary fund of the Church, but I do believe in the eternal principle of sacrifice. And the saints in Kirtland set a wonderful example for us.

Consider the example of John Murdock:

John Murdock, recipient of section 99, was told "to proclaim mine everlasting gospel. . . . And after a few years, if thou desirest of me, thou mayest go up . . . unto the goodly land, to possess thine inheritance." (D&C 99:1, 7.) He served six missions for the Church before resting. The depth of his sacrifice is made clear by the fact that he laid a wife to rest in each of the early gathering places of the Saints: Kirtland, Ohio; Missouri; and Illinois. Such are his and their legacies of faith and perseverance. (Dale S. Cox, "To Hear or Not to Hear," *Ensign*, Jan. 1993, 46)

We have, I think, only three options related to missionary service. We can (1) be Missionaries, or (2) prepare missionaries—including ourselves, or (3) we can support missionaries.

What sacrifices have you made or are you willing to make in each of these areas?

(1) Are you willing to be missionaries in your own neighborhoods and among your family, friends, and acquaintances?

We can also pray daily for our own personal missionary experiences. Pray that under the divine management of such things, the

missionary opportunity you want is already being prepared in the heart of someone who longs for and looks for what you have. "There are many yet on the earth . . . who are only kept from the truth because they know not where to find it." (D&C 123:12) Pray that they will find you! And then be alert, because there are multitudes in your world who feel a famine in their lives, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the word of the Lord." (Amos 8:11) (Elder Jeffrey R. Holland, Ensign, May 2001, p. 15)

How many times in April Conference did we hear the call for more couple missionaries? Of course it would be a sacrifice, but that is just the point.

(2) What can you sacrifice to prepare missionaries? Can you sacrifice time each day to study the doctrine and teachings of the scriptures? Can you sacrifice time to talk to your sons and their friends about this great work. Can you teach them to work and to save and to be worthy?

(3) Missionaries need Books of Mormon for investigators. Does your ward have a fund? They also need financial support. Did you notice in the story above of the Sister missionary who was thinking of returning home that "the complete amount of remaining missionary support for their missionary daughter was secured overnight"? Someone made a sacrifice. And missionaries need the support of letters and love. Have you written to the missionaries from your ward and branch? Have they felt of your love and prayers?

3. MEMBERS OF THE QUORUM OF THE TWELVE TAUGHT THOUSANDS IN ENGLAND.

The call for the Twelve and others to go to Great Britain to preach the gospel came at a time when it seemed that the greatest efforts of the finest leaders were needed in Kirtland. Persecution, apostasy, and financial distress seemed to have weakened the foundations of the very church. No event in Church history is more indicative of the prophetic power of Joseph Smith than this call to take the gospel to Europe at this time. The efforts and successes of the missionaries transformed the church.

Converts embraced the gospel in dramatic numbers in every corner of the British Isles. Perhaps one rather familiar illustration will be appropriate here.

One of the most memorable missionary experiences happened to Elder Wilford Woodruff on the John Benbow farm in Herefordshire, England. He had been directed there by the Spirit early in 1840.

“When I arose to speak at Brother Benbow’s house, a man entered the door and informed me that he was a constable, and had been sent by the rector of the parish with a warrant to arrest me. I asked him, ‘For what crime?’ He said, ‘For preaching to the people.’ I told him that I, as well as the rector, had a license for preaching the gospel to the people, and that if he would take a chair I would wait upon him after the meeting. He took my chair and sat beside me. For an hour and a quarter I preached the first principles of the everlasting gospel. The power of God rested upon me, the spirit filled the house, and the people were convinced. At the close of the meeting I opened the door for baptism, and seven offered themselves. Among the number were four preachers and the constable. The latter arose and said, ‘Mr. Woodruff, I would like to be baptized.’ I told him I would like to baptize him. ...

“The first thirty days after my arrival in Herefordshire, I had baptized forty-five preachers and one hundred and sixty members of the United Brethren, who put into my hands one chapel and forty-five houses which were licensed according to law to preach in. This opened a wide field for labor, and enabled me to bring into the Church, through the blessings of God, over eighteen hundred souls [this number is given at a lower estimate in other accounts; it is approximate only] during eight months, including all of the six hundred United Brethren except one person.” (Richard L. Evans, “History of the Church in Great Britain,” *Ensign*, Sept. 1971, 28)

In a revelation to Thomas Marsh, President of the Quorum of the Twelve on July 12, 1837, the Lord said

Verily I say unto you, my servant Thomas, thou art the man whom I have chosen to hold the keys of my kingdom, as pertaining to the Twelve, abroad among all nations—

That thou mayest be my servant to unlock the door of the kingdom in all places where my servant Joseph, and my servant Sidney, and my servant Hyrum, cannot come;

For on them have I laid the burden of all the churches for a little season.

Wherefore, whithersoever they shall send you, go ye, and I will be with you; and in whatsoever place ye shall proclaim my name an effectual door shall be opened unto you, that they may receive my word.

Whosoever receiveth my word receiveth me, and whosoever receiveth me, receiveth those, the First Presidency, whom I have sent, whom I have made counselors for my name's sake unto you.

And again, I say unto you, that whosoever ye shall send in my name, by the voice of your brethren, the Twelve, duly recommended and authorized by you, shall have power to open the door of my kingdom unto any nation whithersoever ye shall send them—

Inasmuch as they shall humble themselves before me, and abide in my word, and hearken to the voice of my Spirit. (D&C 112:16-22)

This revelations was given on the day that modern apostles first preached the gospel in Great Britain. The injunction that the Twelve under the direction of President Marsh were to “unlock the door” of preaching in the absence of the 1st Presidency is most important. The 12 are called in D&C 107 a Traveling High Council, sent to bear witness of the Name of Christ in all the world. (Verse 23)

Their efforts and faithfulness in this matter, together with the faith of Church Members and the intervention of the Lord in the affairs of nations have opened a great many doors.

I remember walking the dusty (sometimes muddy!) streets of Brazil wondering what kind of war it would take to open the eastern block countries to the preaching of the gospel. I missed reality by a light year! We are now sending missionaries to places that my generation never dared to dream of.

I believe the Lord can do anything he sets his mind to do.

But I can see no good reason why the Lord would open doors that we are not prepared to enter. Why should he break down the Iron Curtain or the Bamboo Curtain or any other curtain if we are still unprepared to enter?

Are we thinking enough and praying enough and working enough? With the help of the Lord we must meet the task and be successful.

4. MANY SAINTS IN KIRTLAND REMAINED VALIANT DESPITE PERSECUTION.

Membership in the Church became a great trial for some during this period of church history. Financial setbacks and bitter apostates and the continuing demands of discipleship caused even some of the leaders to step aside in a search for alternate answers to life's questions. This uncertainty, combined with later forced moves from New York and Ohio and Jackson County and Missouri and Nauvoo, along with unrelenting bitterness, even hatred, drove many from the waters of salvation. But there were blessings from this as well. By the time Brigham Young said., "This is the right place!" all the members who were weak spiritually had abandoned the work. The Lord had refined pig-iron Mormons into Latter-day Saints of solid steel.

I truly think that refinement was the purpose of many of the afflictions suffered in the early years of the Restoration.. It may be that the cleansing of the church through these trials was what Zenos referred to in the verses below.

Wherefore, let us go to and labor with our might ***this last time***, for behold the end draweth nigh, and ***this is for the last time*** that I shall prune my vineyard.

Graft in the branches; begin at the last that they may be first, and that the first may be last, and dig about the trees, both old and young, the first and the last; and the last and the first, that all may be nourished once again for the last time.

Wherefore, dig about them, and prune them, and dung them once more, **for the last time**, for the end draweth nigh. And if it be so that these last grafts shall grow, and bring forth the natural fruit, then shall ye prepare the way for them, that they may grow.

And as they begin to grow ye shall **clear away** the branches which bring forth bitter fruit, according to the strength of the good and the size thereof; and ye shall not **clear away** the bad thereof all at once, lest the roots thereof should be too strong for the graft, and the graft thereof shall perish, and I lose the trees of my vineyard.

For it grieveth me that I should lose the trees of my vineyard; wherefore ye shall **clear away** the bad according as the good shall grow, that the root and the top may be equal in strength, until the good shall overcome the bad, and the bad be hewn down and cast into the fire, that they cumber not the ground of my vineyard; and thus will I sweep away the bad out of my vineyard. (Jacob 5:65-66, **emphasis added**)

I believe it is possible to see the *clearing away* of the bad in the trials of the church in those early days in Kirtland and other locations. But then as now, there were many so faithful that no amount of difficulty could turn them away from their devotion. That is the lesson we must learn from them. Trials will continue to come. The Lord has promised to prove all of us in all things:

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. For if ye will not abide in my covenant ye are not worthy of me. (D&C 98:14,15)

And when the trials come, particularly when men rise up to condemn the work and the Lord's chosen leaders, we have the obligation not only to be faithful but, to be "witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places that [we] may be in, even until death . . ." (Mosiah 18:9)

CONCLUSION: No place on the planet has a longer recorded list of heavenly visitors and visions than the Kirtland area in Ohio. At least three times the Father and the Son were seen there; the Savior himself came to the Kirtland temple on more than one occasion; Moses, Elias, and Elijah were there. A multitude of angels came to the dedication of the Kirtland Temple.

Pentecostal outpourings of the Spirit have occurred many times in many dispensations. One of these great latter-day Pentecostal periods was in connection with the dedication of the Kirtland Temple. For a period of weeks, the visions of eternity were opened to many, angels visited in the congregations of the saints, the Lord himself was seen by many, and tongues and prophecy were multiplied. (History of the Church, vol. 2, pp. 379-436.) On Sunday, March 27, 1836, in the dedicatory service itself, an almost exact repetition of the events of the New Testament day of Pentecost took place. "Brother George A. Smith arose and began to prophesy," the prophet recorded, "when a noise was heard like the sound of a rushing mighty wind, which filled the Temple, and all the congregation simultaneously arose, being moved upon by an invisible power; many began to speak in tongues and prophecy; others saw glorious visions; and I beheld the Temple was filled with angels, which fact I declared to the congregation. The people of the neighborhood came running together (hearing an unusual sound within, and seeing a bright light like a pillar of fire resting upon the Temple), and were astonished at what was taking place." (History of the Church, vol. 2, p. 428.) [Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, p.181 DAY OF PENTECOST]

We are the heirs, the recipients of that heavenly endowment, and we, like the early members, must make whatever sacrifice is necessary to take this message to the world. All the world is infected with a terminal spiritual disease which will unerringly lead to spiritual death. We have the only cure, delivered to us by Gods,

angels, and the Spirit. How will the Father respond if we fail to make it available to as many of his children as we possibly can?

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