

Instructions on Sale of Land in Zion p.31-33

The following is an excerpt taken from a communication to the Saints in Zion, who had been driven from their homes and basely persecuted by a mob in Jackson County, Missouri.

Kirtland, December 5, 1833

* * *

I wish, when you receive this letter, that you would collect every particular, concerning the mob, from the beginning, and send us a correct statement of facts, as they occurred from time to time, that we may be enabled to give the public correct information on the subject; and inform us also of the situation of the brethren, with respect to their means of sustenance.

I would inform you that it is not the will of the Lord for you to sell your lands in Zion, if means can possibly be procured for your sustenance without. Every exertion should be made to maintain the cause you have espoused, and to contribute to the necessities of one another, as much as possible, in this your great calamity, and remember not to murmur at the dealings of God with his creatures. You are not as yet brought into as trying circumstances as were the ancient Prophets and Apostles. Call to mind Daniel, the three Hebrew children, Jeremiah, Paul, Stephen, and many others, too numerous to mention, who were stoned, sawn asunder, tempted, slain with the sword, and wandered about in sheep skins and goat skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented, of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and in mountains, and hid in dens, and caves of the earth; yet they all obtained a good report through faith; and amidst all their afflictions they rejoiced that they were counted worthy to receive persecution for Christ's sake.

Russell's Thoughts:

Though my life is not free of challenges, I have “**not as yet been brought into as trying circumstances as were the ancient Prophets and Apostles**”. I'm sure the Saints desired that peace and prosperity of a promised Zion and were murmuring about the afflictions they were experiencing. They went to the prophet to know what actions to take and this letter is his response to them after petitioning the Lord on the matter.

For years financial ups and downs were a great stress in my marriage and affected so much of my self esteem as a husband and provider for my family. It was oppressive and became a point of avoidance in my marriage and drew me away from my wife. We had made attempts to go through the self reliance program in the past but with my work travel schedule we could never quite commit to completing the work required of us. I was working hard and making good money and we had a desire to get out of debt; but whenever we were close, something always drew us back into debt, despite making more than enough for our needs.

In October 2019 my wife picked up a Dave Ramsey book at the library, read it and asked me to read it. That book just clicked in my head and I was on fire or “gazelle intense” as Dave likes to say. I started listening to his podcast and I think it prepared me for hearing Micah's direct tone

when I found his YouTube channel later. We immediately laid out a plan to get out of debt and set our financial house in order. The COVID-19 pandemic provided opportunity to accelerate our plans to be debt free. We couldn't eat out and we couldn't travel, it kept us grounded in what was important and we worked together as a couple to meet our common goals. The Lord provided again and again as he worked with us to meet a righteous goal. As we followed the plan and my mind was no longer constantly occupied with the debt; the Lord began to help me set in order other parts of my life.

Fast forward to October 2020 where Elder Bednar gave a talk that left a really strong impression with me entitled, *We Will Prove Them Herewith*. In the talk he spoke of the importance of tests and how if we are prepared and press forward with steadfastness in Christ, we shall not fear.

Quoting from his talk...

"As disciples of the Savior, we are commanded to "prepare every needful thing; and establish a house, even a house of prayer, a house of fasting, a house of faith, a house of learning, a house of glory, a house of order, a house of God."

We also are promised that "if ye are prepared ye shall not fear.

"And that ye might escape the power of the enemy, and be gathered unto me a righteous people, without spot and blameless."

These scriptures provide a perfect framework for organizing and preparing our lives and homes both temporally and spiritually. Our efforts to prepare for the proving experiences of mortality should follow the example of the Savior, who incrementally "increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man"—a blended balance of intellectual, physical, spiritual, and social readiness."

This led me to taking an inventory of other ways I needed to get my house in order, devising a plan and taking those actions in my life. The Lord had set a pattern in my life with paying off the debt and was showing me other ways to prepare and press forward in steadfastness in Christ.

I can imagine the fear, confusion and stress the Saints were feeling in this time where they had visions built up of such a promising future only to have it taken away. It is important to note that the first thing the prophet focused on in his letter was the welfare of the Saints. He asked them to give an accounting of what had happened. How were they physically? What was the status of their sustenance? The Lord wants us all to be prepared and have our needs met especially through significant times of trial.

Joseph then instructed them not to sell their lands if possible... ***"Every exertion should be made to maintain the cause"*** of Zion, ***"to contribute to the necessities of one another"*** and ***"remember not to murmur"***. I've seen this expressed in the Discord and I think this is what a lot

of us have been feeling about our own preparedness by gathering more food storage, encouraging one another and those in our families, ward and community to prepare for the cause of Zion. We are being prepared of the Lord to help our families, fellow Saints and neighbors and not fear or complain about what is coming.

Then Joseph takes them down a peg and says to them... *"You are not as yet brought into as trying circumstances as were the ancient Prophets and Apostle."* Who *"...wandered in deserts and in mountains, and hid in dens, and caves of the earth; **yet they all obtained a good report through faith; and amidst all their afflictions they rejoiced that they were counted worthy to receive persecution for Christ's sake.**"*

People are given differing trials and I'm grateful for mine, especially for those where I have obtained a good report through faith and for those I'm still pushing through in faith. I find it somewhat comforting that Joseph received a similar chastisement when he was in Liberty jail from the Lord, but it perfectly mirrors what the Lord counsels to his Prophet and to his people. We have the same privilege of being refined and purified by our trials. Through our adversity and afflictions, we become like Christ.

D&C 121:

7 My son, peace be unto thy soul; thine adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a small moment;

8 And then, if thou endure it well, God shall exalt thee on high; thou shalt triumph over all thy foes.

9 Thy friends do stand by thee, and they shall hail thee again with warm hearts and friendly hands.

10 Thou art not yet as Job; thy friends do not contend against thee, neither charge thee with transgression, as they did Job.

In my study this week of D&C 106 Warren Cowdery is called to preach the gospel, lift up his voice and warn the people in the land of Freedom. I have to say that getting called to the land of Freedom sounds like an awesome mission call. I was called to Salt Lake City which was an amazing mission.

In verse 3 it reads...

3 And devote his whole time to this high and holy calling, which I now give unto him, seeking diligently the kingdom of heaven and its righteousness, and all things necessary shall be added thereunto; for the laborer is worthy of his hire.

This is similar to the counsel Joseph was giving to the saints in Missouri but in this case about a mission. I know some of us have had dreams about another mission; some to the same place

we have been called to before. As we prepare for what the Lord asks of us, whatever that calling may be, I think we too will want to devote our whole time, seek diligently the kingdom and its righteousness and then he promises us that all things necessary will be added because we are the laborers and we are worthy of his hire. I believe in Joseph's words that we too can obtain a good report though faith.

I will end with Elder Bednar's words regarding faithfulness...

"Faithfulness is not foolishness or fanaticism. Rather, it is trusting and placing our confidence in Jesus Christ as our Savior, on His name, and in His promises. As we "press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men," we are blessed with an eternal perspective and vision that stretches far beyond our limited mortal capacity. We will be enabled to "gather together, and stand in holy places" and "be not moved, until the day of the Lord come.""

Scott's Thoughts: Joseph is telling them to stand firm to the counsel and commandments they've received, In D&C 106:2 it is very clear that that the gospel needs to be preached and the warning voice raised to all the world, he is also hoping to teach them that the persecution they're experiencing can be for their benefit so they can be counted worthy of the lord's exaltation like those we've read about in scripture. Looking at this as a type or shadow of things to come is important, we know that the saints will be persecuted before the Lord returns, we need to bear it well, stay true in all things so we can be counted worthy. Elder Neal A. Maxwell said the following in his talk "If Thou Endure it Well" the Lord can help us in a most interesting manner. Our afflictions, said Alma can be quote "swallowed up in the joy of Christ." Alma 31:38. Thus afflictions are endured and are overcome by being overwhelmed by joy as the sour notes are lost amid a symphony of salvational sounds. Our afflictions brothers and sisters often will not be extinguished, they will be dwarfed and swallowed up in the joy of Christ. That's how we overcome, most of the time. It's not their elimination, but the placing of them in that larger context. Therefore there are times when we cannot be sure, and we must give the response Nephi gave when he was perplexed. "I know that God loveth his children, nevertheless, I do not know the meaning of all things." 1 Ne 11:17. There will be times in each of your lives, have been, will be, when that must be the bottom line. You don't know what's happening to you or around you but you know that God loves you and to know that for the moment is enough. Like Elder Holland mentioned in his talk from Oct. 2020 conference quoting Elder Maxwell about comfortable Christianity "one's life ... cannot be both faith-filled and stress-free." It simply will not work "to glide naively through life," saying as we sip another glass of lemonade, "Lord, give me all thy choicest virtues, but be certain not to give me grief, nor sorrow, nor pain, nor opposition. Please do not let anyone dislike me or betray me, and above all, do not ever let me feel forsaken by Thee or those I love. In fact, Lord, be careful to keep me from all the experiences that made Thee divine. And then, when the rough sledding by everyone else is over, please let me come and dwell with Thee, where I can boast about how similar our strengths and our characters are as I float along on my cloud of comfortable Christianity."¹²,

Micah's Thoughts: There are two quotes that come to mind; the first one is an Elder Maxwell quote, but Elder Holland in a recent talk added to the quote so I will just use Elder Holland's:

“With apologies to Elder Neal A. Maxwell for daring to modify and enlarge something he once said, I too suggest that “one’s life ... cannot be both faith-filled and stress-free.” It simply will not work “to glide naively through life,” saying as we sip another glass of lemonade, “Lord, give me all thy choicest virtues, but be certain not to give me grief, nor sorrow, nor pain, nor opposition. Please do not let anyone dislike me or betray me, and above all, do not ever let me feel forsaken by Thee or those I love. In fact, Lord, be careful to keep me from all the experiences that made Thee divine. And then, when the rough sledding by everyone else is over, please let me come and dwell with Thee, where I can boast about how similar our strengths and our characters are as I float along on my cloud of comfortable Christianity.” (Waiting on the Lord)

And the second quote is from Elder Orson Pratt:

“In order to do this, it is necessary for us, in our prosperity, to remember the Lord our God, for if men and women will not remember the Lord, when the heavens smile upon them, and when health is in their habitations—if they will not acknowledge the hand of God then, and be thankful for the blessings that they receive, you may be sure that they will not be so well prepared to endure trials, and to pass through adversities, as those who have, in the days of their prosperity, humbled themselves before the Lord, and acknowledged His hand in all things.” (Orson Pratt, Vol. 3, Disc. 3)

We know not what we shall be called to pass through before Zion is delivered and established; therefore, we have great need to live near to God, and always be in strict obedience to all His commandments, that we may have a conscience void of offense toward God and man. It is your privilege to use every lawful means in your power to seek redress for your grievances from your enemies, and prosecute them to the extent of the law; but it will be impossible for us to render you any temporal assistance, as our means are already exhausted, and we are deeply in debt, and know of no means whereby we shall be able to extricate ourselves.

Russell's Thoughts:

I love that we have points of reference in the scriptures that give us clues as to what we will “pass through before Zion is delivered and established”, but as Joseph states we really don't know yet what we will be called to pass through.

More great counsel follows from the prophet... “live near to God” and adhere by “strict obedience to all His commandments”. All this so “we may have a conscience void of offense toward God and man”. We know the early Saints went through so much more in the cause of Zion and more will be required of us as we take up that cause of Zion in our generation.

I like the scripture in Jacob 3 verse 1 which I think fits this section well.

*1 But behold, I, Jacob, would speak unto you that are pure in heart. **Look unto God with firmness of mind, and pray unto him with exceeding faith, and he will console you in***

your afflictions, and he will plead your cause, and send down justice upon those who seek your destruction.

I think the Saints had great cause to see this as a grave injustice against them and anyone looking at this now would be hard pressed to disagree though the world seems upside down now on matters of justice. When presented with one truth they will say it is an opinion and that is not my truth.

I had a co-worker that would state emphatically that his Nissan Maxima was the best car ever and that was a FACT. Several of us would state that this was his opinion and not indeed a fact. Despite all the evidence we presented he never changed his mind about that. It was his truth and he could not see beyond that. We will never win that argument in Babylon as people will always see their opinion as fact unless they repent and turn towards God, light and truth.

In D&C 93:24-28 we read...

24 And truth is knowledge of things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come;

25 And whatsoever is more or less than this is the spirit of that wicked one who was a liar from the beginning.

26 The Spirit of truth is of God. I am the Spirit of truth, and John bore record of me, saying: He received a fulness of truth, yea, even of all truth;

27 And no man receiveth a fulness unless he keepeth his commandments.

28 He that keepeth his commandments receiveth truth and light, until he is glorified in truth and knoweth all things.

“Truth is knowledge of things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come. Not my truth, or your truth, it is THE truth. Satan seeks to distort and diminish our knowledge of the truth.” (Seminary Manual) We should not follow after Satan’s counterfeit to knowledge, the philosophies of men mingled with scripture. We should strive to receive light and truth as we keep the commandments. The Savior has promised that we too can receive a fullness of truth, line upon line, until we are glorified in truth and know all things

We must also “look unto God” and have a “firmness of mind” in relation to His eternal truths and “pray unto him with exceeding faith”. When we do this He will “console us in our afflictions”, “plead our cause” and “send down justice upon those who seek our destruction.” As we declare His word purely in truth many will repent and come unto Zion.

This whole letter brought to my mind Elder Renlund’s talk titled Infuriating Unfairness. The Saints had been driven from their homes, their property destroyed, some people killed or injured by the mobs. And now to top it off the prophet tells them his hands are tied to provide temporal assistance due to the churches own debts. They are to help themselves and their fellow Saints and seek redress through legal means. Would we be prepared as a people for Zion

if its Saints are in debt and its church too? And if similar circumstances were to happen to us would we follow Jacob's counsel? Would we follow the keys or hold on to an idea that the Nissan Maxima is the best car and the Lord has nothing better for me in Zion?

Reading from Elder Renlund's talk...

"In mortality, we can "come boldly" to the Savior and receive compassion, healing, and help. Even while we suffer inexplicably, God can bless us in simple, ordinary, and significant ways. As we learn to recognize these blessings, our trust in God will increase. In the eternities, Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ will resolve all unfairness. We understandably want to know how and when. How are They going to do that? When are They going to do it? To my knowledge, They have not revealed how or when. What I do know is that They will.

In unfair situations, one of our tasks is to trust that "all that is unfair about life can be made right through the Atonement of Jesus Christ." Jesus Christ overcame the world and "absorbed" all unfairness. Because of Him, we can have peace in this world and be of good cheer. If we let Him, Jesus Christ will consecrate the unfairness for our gain. He will not just console us and restore what was lost; He will use the unfairness for our benefit. When it comes to how and when, we need to recognize and accept, as did Alma, that "it mattereth not; for God knoweth all these things; and it sufficeth me to know that this is the case." We can try to hold our questions about how and when for later and focus on developing faith in Jesus Christ, that He has both the power to make everything right and yearns to do so."

From the time the Saints were first driven out from Jackson county in 1833 to 1839 when Joseph was in Liberty jail almost 800 declarations were made by the Saints who were driven from Missouri as they attempted to gain what they had lost through legal means. Now the Lord will fight their battles and ours as we work to redeem Zion in our day.

Scott's Thoughts: couple of thoughts here, 1st when considering the referenced verses in D&C for tonight's fireside and the need to learn our duty and then not be slothful or lazy, but rather act in all diligence in the office or position we hold is so critical to our salvation. We cannot be learners only but we are required to be doers also. We have to be willing to take action, warning our neighbors, families. We also need to be aware of and understand ALL the commandments, the only way to do this is to be a true student of the gospel and feast upon the word daily, then we can be assured of having the Holy Ghost with us to further enlighten our minds and understanding. George A. Smith said "Then let us ask ourselves, are we prepared for the great blessings which God has bestowed upon us? Are we living up to our callings and magnifying the same? Do we observe the duties which are imposed upon us by our holy religion? Or are we foolish enough, while recognizing its truth, and professing to be Latter-day Saints, to treat it with carelessness and neglect, and failing to live up to our high and holy calling?" George A. Smith, JD 13:345

2nd thought, Joseph is very clearly telling the members in Missouri to use lawful means and not take any measures that would be considered "vigilante" and allowing the ends to justify the

means, he was also clear that there wouldn't be any help coming from the Kirtland area either financially or physically. I think his frankness on this matter is important because it forced the members to rely solely on the Lord and their own decisions at this time of uncertainty. There wasn't any waiting for Joseph to save the day, he gave them "counsel" and allowed them to make their own decisions.

Micah's Thoughts:

D&C 101:

85 Thus will I liken the children of Zion.

86 Let them importune at the feet of the judge;

87 And if he heed them not, let them importune at the feet of the governor;

88 And if the governor heed them not, let them importune at the feet of the president;

89 And if the president heed them not, then will the Lord arise and come forth out of his hiding place, **and in his fury vex the nation;**

90 **And in his hot displeasure, and in his fierce anger,** in his time, will cut off those wicked, unfaithful, and unjust stewards, and appoint them their portion among hypocrites, and unbelievers

"This is key for us to understand... Someone in the Discord recently asked me about the difference between the following verses, and let us see if with this key provided in D&C 101 we can clearly see the difference..."

D&C 87:

4 And it shall come to pass, after many days, slaves shall rise up against their masters, who shall be marshaled and disciplined for war.

5 And it shall come to pass also that **the remnants who are left of the land will marshal themselves, and shall become exceedingly angry, and shall vex the Gentiles with a sore vexation.**

3 Nephi 21:

12 And my people **who are a remnant of Jacob shall be among the Gentiles, yea, in the midst of them as a lion among the beasts of the forest, as a young lion among the flocks of sheep, who, if he go through both treadeth down and teareth in pieces, and none can deliver.**

13 Their hand shall be lifted up upon their adversaries, and all their enemies shall be cut off.

14 Yea, wo be unto the Gentiles except they repent; for it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Father, that I will cut off thy horses out of the midst of thee, and I will destroy thy chariots;

15 And I will cut off the cities of thy land, and throw down all thy strongholds;

16 And I will cut off witchcrafts out of thy land, and thou shalt have no more soothsayers;

17 Thy graven images I will also cut off, and thy standing images out of the midst of thee, and thou shalt no more worship the works of thy hands;

18 And I will pluck up thy groves out of the midst of thee; so will I destroy thy cities.

19 And it shall come to pass that all lyings, and deceivings, and envyings, and strifes, and priestcrafts, and whoredoms, shall be done away.

20 For it shall come to pass, saith the Father, that at that day whosoever will not repent and come unto my Beloved Son, them will I cut off from among my people, O house of Israel;

21 And I will execute vengeance and fury upon them, even as upon the heathen, such as they have not heard.

and finally:

D&C 101:

55 And the lord of the vineyard said unto one of his servants: Go and **gather together the residue of my servants**, and take all the strength of mine house, which are my warriors, my young men, and they that are of middle age also among all my servants, who are the strength of mine house, save those only whom I have appointed to tarry;

56 And go ye straightway unto the land of my vineyard, and redeem my vineyard; for it is mine; I have bought it with money.

57 Therefore, get ye straightway unto my land; **break down the walls of mine enemies; throw down their tower, and scatter their watchmen.**

58 **And inasmuch as they gather together against you, avenge me of mine enemies, that by and by I may come with the residue of mine house and possess the land.**

The other part of that quote I'd like to talk about is this line:

"it will be impossible for us to render you any temporal assistance, as our means are already exhausted"

“Without self-reliance one cannot exercise these innate desires to serve. How can we give if there is nothing there? Food for the hungry cannot come from empty shelves. Money to assist the needy cannot come from an empty purse. Support and understanding cannot come from the emotionally starved. Teaching cannot come from the unlearned. And most important of all, spiritual guidance cannot come from the spiritually weak.” (The Celestial Nature of Self-reliance, Marion G. Romney)

The inhabitants of **this county threaten our destruction**, and we know not how soon they may be permitted to follow the example of the Missourians; but **our trust is in God**, and **we are**

determined, His grace assisting us, to maintain the cause and hold out faithful unto the end, that we may be **crowned with crowns of celestial glory**, and enter into the rest that is prepared for the children of God.

Russell's Thoughts:

The Saints were getting it from all sides as they tried to establish Zion but they trusted in God and his prophet and had a determination for the cause. Many held out faithful to the end and will be crowned with crowns of celestial glory. They had a great work to do as do we.

Continuing in D&C Section 106

4 And again, verily I say unto you, the coming of the Lord draweth nigh, and it overtaketh the world as a thief in the night—

*5 Therefore, **gird up your loins**, that you may be **the children of light**, and that day shall not overtake you as a thief.*

I like the phrase gird up your loins which in biblical language means “to prepare for a journey or work. The servants of the Lord must be prepared to do His work, and go when He calls.” (Smith and Sjodahl, Commentary, p. 201.) We need to gird up our loins and proclaim the gospel.

President Spencer W. Kimball said when speaking on the gospel going to all the earth, “I feel that when we have done all in our power that the Lord will find a way to open doors. ... But I can see no good reason why the Lord would open doors that we are not prepared to enter.” (“When the World Will Be Converted,” Ensign, Oct. 1974, p. 7.)

Mosiah 5:

*7 And now, **because of the covenant** which ye have made ye shall be **called the children of Christ, his sons, and his daughters**; for behold, this day he hath spiritually begotten you; for ye say that your **hearts are changed through faith** on his name; therefore, ye are born of him and have become his sons and his daughters.*

If we are spiritually reborn, keep our covenants and do His work and go when He calls, we shall be called the children of light or the children of Christ, his sons, and his daughters. Our hearts will be forever changed through faith in Him. While the world may be overtaken by the coming of the Lord if we are His and keep our covenants, we will be the children of light and that day will not surprise us or catch us unprepared. A huge part of that is following the prophet.

From the journal of Oliver B. Huntington in my new/old Hyrum Andrus book “They Knew The Prophet.” – Page 63

“When the Saints were driven from the state of Missouri it was a very surprising circumstance that we could not understand. We naturally asked ourselves the question, “Where can we find another Holy land? How or when shall we get back to the consecrated spot for the New Jerusalem, that is to be built?”

Our only hope was that as God had given us a prophet, he would certainly tell us how to manage and where to go, or what to do.

Oh! What confidence we had in that man! What comfort we derived through our faith in God and Joseph Smith. How little we knew of the great future, and for that one thing I feel very thankful!"

Before I was called on my mission I questioned if that is what the Lord wanted for me. I took it to the Lord and fasted and prayed. I was at BYU at the time and traveled to Salt Lake to attend conference in person. As we waited for the prophet and others to enter the tabernacle I was thinking on my question to the Lord. We all stood up as the prophet, Ezra Taft Benson entered the room, I was overwhelmed by the spirit witnessing to me that he was a prophet of God and the Lord had a work for me to do. When I received my call to serve later in Salt Lake City, I did not even question it and served the Lord there from 1990-92.

We had a mission motto which I loved and continue it today as my motto in life and service to the Lord and his children.

Now is the time!
This is the place!
We are the ones!

Brothers and sisters, you are not awake on accident. We are called! We are chosen! Now is the time! This is the Place! We are the ones! Follow the prophet, he knows the way to Zion.

Scott's Thoughts: The times must have seemed very overwhelming to Joseph and the saints in Kirtland as well as those in Missouri but I love Josephs plainness in speech here, he has 100% placed his trust in God and is willing to lay it all on the line at this point if it comes to that. He knows that if his life is required right now that he and the other worthy saints will receive those crowns of glory, of course meaning exaltation in the Celestial Kingdom.

Micah's Thoughts: Reading this my mind is only taken one place and that is to an understanding of what our crowns of glory are; our crowns of glory is to be counted worthy to be a jewel in the Lord's crown and this ties in perfectly to what I shared in the previous point.

3 Nephi 24

16 Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard; and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name.

17 And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in that day **when I make up my jewels**; and I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.

18 Then shall ye return and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not.

We are now distributing the type, and intend to commence setting today, and issue a paper the last of this week, or beginning of next. We wrote to Elder Phelps some time since, and also sent

by Elder Hyde, for the list of names of subscribers to the Star, which we have not yet received; and, until we receive it, the most of **the subscribers will be deprived** of the paper; and when you receive this, if you have not sent the list, I wish you to **attend to it immediately, as much inconvenience will follow a delay.** * * *

Russell's Thoughts:

Joseph was keen to get the word out as to the plight of the Saints quickly. I wonder how many times I have delayed acting on a prompting from the spirit or on the words of the prophet and how much inconvenience I have had to go through or caused by not acting immediately? Who has been deprived by me not acting in faith and immediately?

My father when serving as Bishop had a plaque on his desk that read **Do it now!** When President Kimball first introduced this encouragement, it was simply "Do it." He later changed this to "Do It Now" to pointedly teach the need for timeliness.

In the talk entitled Do It Now by Elder Donald L. Hallstrom of the Seventy he spoke about this slogan. *"President Kimball also taught the profound principle that procrastination leads to the loss of exaltation. He said: "One of the most serious human defects in all ages is procrastination, an unwillingness to accept personal responsibilities now. ... Many have allowed themselves to be diverted and have become ... addicts to mental and spiritual indolence and to the pursuit of worldly pleasure" (Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Spencer W. Kimball [2006], 4–5)."*

In D&C 107:99-100 we read...

99 Wherefore, now let every man learn his duty, and to act in the office in which he is appointed, in all diligence.

100 He that is slothful shall not be counted worthy to stand, and he that learns not his duty and shows himself not approved shall not be counted worthy to stand. Even so. Amen.

We are all worthy of hire, but will be counted worthy to stand? Are we learning our duty in all diligence? Are we actively combating what President Kimball described as *"one of the most serious human defects in all ages..."* procrastination? Are we *"addicts to mental and spiritual indolence and the pursuit of worldly pleasure"*? Maybe I'm not a "lazy learner" but am I a lazy doer?

I had a great Bishop in my ward in New Jersey when we lived back east for a time. We had low attendance for our ward choir much like we do in my current ward. He challenged the ward members to not hide their light under a bushel and come sing with the choir. The challenge pricked my heart. I had taken a break from singing in the choir because it was hard to get the family ready and go earlier to church and sing with a young family. While the challenge was not accepted by everyone, I accepted it and made it a priority to sing in the choir. I love to sing, and it is one of the ways I feel the spirit most strongly through music. The Lord blessed me as I served in that choir and bore testimony of Him through song.

When Micah put out the ask to join him for the fireside I immediately shied away from the challenge. You're too busy I thought. No one will want to hear from you I thought. I don't have a YouTube channel. I haven't completed a single paper I've started. Though I will say the work I put into those papers I have started has been edifying to me personally. I started typing "sorry I can't do it" but quickly deleted the message before sending it as not wanting to put myself out there. Then Jonathan started ribbing the masses. I was like okay he's going to keep going and I need to say something. So, I assumed Micah was talking about conference weekend and I was like okay, built in excuse, I have a mission reunion and will be travelling so I won't have time to prepare anything. Dropped that nugget into the chat and Micah throws out this Rorschach mask icon on my comment.

I'm a fan of the Watchmen comic so I was intrigued and wondering what the heck is that, so I hovered over it and it said **Keep Not Silence**. Well I felt the same beating of my heart at that moment that I get when I have to bear my testimony at church. The same beating in my chest I felt when we were all getting prompted to share our gather to Zion dreams in Discord that one night. The same excitement I felt when I found others that had been having dreams of returning to their missions but this time as older men. At this point I could not deny what the Lord wanted me to do so I re-read Micah's ask in Discord and realized that it was for this Sunday and I had no more excuses to the Lord for not opening my mouth or hiding my light under a bushel. If that icon was created for nothing else then to get me off my rear, then it was worth it; at least to me. It was that Keep Not Silence icon just screaming at me through the spirit to **Do It Now!** So here I am...

I like what Elder Bednar said about these concerts of clarity and of the importance of not procrastinating our preparations.

"But repeated admonitions to prepare have been proclaimed by leaders of the Church for decades. The consistency of prophetic counsel over time creates a powerful concert of clarity and a warning volume far louder than solo performances can ever produce.

Just as challenging times reveal inadequacies in temporal preparedness, so too the maladies of spiritual casualness and complacency inflict their most detrimental effects during difficult trials. We learn, for example, in the parable of the ten virgins that procrastinating preparation leads to unsuccessful proving. Recall how the five foolish virgins failed to prepare appropriately for the examination given to them on the day of the bridegroom's coming.

"They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them:

"But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. ...

"And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.

"Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps.

"And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out.

“But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.

“And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut.

“Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us.”

“But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, Ye know me not.”

At least on this exam, the five foolish virgins proved themselves to be hearers only and not doers of the word.”

I will add my words that consistency in following promptings and following them in a timely manner will bring more light and knowledge into your life as we learn not to procrastinate our preparations and follow the Prophet and those concerts of clarity now. Let us be wise virgins and “Do It Now!”

As Elder Holland said to Elder Bednar before he delivered his devotional message to the students at BYU Idaho, in answer to the question “If you could teach these students just one thing, what would it be?”

He answered:

“We are witnessing an ever-greater movement toward polarity. The middle-ground options will be removed from us as Latter-day Saints. The middle of the road will be withdrawn.

“If you are treading water in the current of a river, you will go somewhere. You simply will go wherever the current takes you. Going with the stream, following the tide, drifting in the current will not do.

“Choices have to be made. Not making a choice is a choice. Learn to choose now.”

Scott’s Thoughts: I believe this was an important way at this time to spread the Gospel and help the Saints understand their covenants and strengthen their testimonies, there had to be a feeling of failure to live up to their High and Holy callings by not being able to distribute the paper to those who had subscribed.

Micah’s Thoughts: I can’t help but feel a little bit of Helaman 13 here,

25 And now when ye talk, ye say: If our days had been in the days of our fathers of old, we would not have [blank]...”

How many times have we heard something similar from our pulpits? "Please for the love of everything holy, we have asked for this list for months and the deadline is this weekend or early next week... DO IT NOW PLEASE!"

It's a little sad how ironic it is how similar we are to our fathers and how little effort most of us take to right wrongs or improve while pretending like we are "so much better than our

forefathers" ... Do better TODAY seems like a simple mantra, but it would change everything in the lives of most members

We learn by Elder Phelps, that the brethren have surrendered their arms to the Missourians, and are fleeing across the river. If that is the case, it is not meet that they should recommence hostilities with them; but, if not, you should **maintain the ground as long as there is a man left**, as the spot of ground upon which you were located, is **the place appointed of the Lord** for your inheritance, and it is right in the sight of God that you **contend for it to the last**.

Russell's Thoughts:

Stand in Holy places and maintain your ground. Maintain your ground as long as there is a man left. The spot of ground upon which these Saints were located is THE PLACE appointed of the Lord for our inheritance in Zion. Contend for it to the last!

Now is the time! This is the place! We are the ones! That mission motto can easily be applied to each of us as we stand in Holy places, perform our duties in the building up of the kingdom of God on the earth and work for the establishment of Zion. Whether you are in Canada, Colorado, Michigan, Australia or in New Jerusalem it does not matter. You decide this day whom you will serve and where you will stand and be not moved.

Continuing in D&C 106

*5 Therefore, **gird up your loins**, that you may be **the children of light**, and that day shall not overtake you as a thief.*

*6 And again, verily I say unto you, there was **joy in heaven** when my servant Warren **bowed** to my scepter, and **separated himself from the crafts of men**;*

There will be joy in heaven the more we bow to the Lord's will in our lives and separate ourselves from Babylon. I think of President Nelson's recent invitation at the beginning of April conference to remove the debris from our lives.

Here are a few things he said to us in that short message...

"We gather as a great global family desiring to worship our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ...I know for sure that the Lord directs the affairs of His Church. He said, "I will show [you] that I am able to do mine own work." ...

...He has interceded in extremely challenging circumstances after we had done our best and could do no more... I also understand better now what He meant when He said, "Behold, I will hasten my work in its time." Over and over again I have rejoiced as He has directed and executed the hastening of His work—even during a global pandemic...

...I have thought about the need for each of us to remove, with the Savior's help, the old debris in our lives.

The gospel of Jesus Christ is a gospel of repentance. Because of the Savior's Atonement, His gospel provides an invitation to keep changing, growing, and becoming more pure. It is a gospel of hope, of healing, and of progress. Thus, the gospel is a message of joy! Our spirits rejoice with every small step forward we take.

Part of the gathering of Israel, and a very important part, is the charge for us as a people to be worthy and willing to help prepare the world for the Second Coming of the Lord.

...I invite you to pray to identify the debris you should remove from your life so you can become more worthy.

...Heavenly Father and His Beloved Son know and love you individually. They stand ready to assist you in every step forward you take."

Back to D&C 106 in verse five the word overtake has a footnote cross reference to Revelation 16 where we learn more about the children of light.

*15 Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that **watcheth, and keepeth his garments**, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.*

Let us not get caught out unprepared as we are hope and watch in faith and strive to keep our covenants. Part of keeping our covenants is the charge to keep not silence. The Lord is calling us to cry repentance unto this people much like the calling and words of Samuel the Lamanite to the people of Zarahemla.

In Helaman 13 we read...

*5 And he said unto them: Behold, I, Samuel, a Lamanite, do speak the words of the Lord which he doth put into my heart; and behold he hath put it into my heart to say unto this people that **the sword of justice hangeth over this people**; and four hundred years pass not away save the **sword of justice falleth upon this people**.*

*6 Yea, **heavy destruction awaiteth this people**, and it surely cometh unto this people, and **nothing can save this people save it be repentance and faith on the Lord Jesus Christ**, who surely shall come into the world, and shall suffer many things and shall be slain for his people.*

*7 And behold, an angel of the Lord hath declared it unto me, and he did bring glad tidings to my soul. And behold, I was sent unto you to **declare it unto you also, that ye might have glad tidings; but behold ye would not receive me**.*

8 Therefore, thus saith the Lord: Because of the hardness of the hearts of the people of the Nephites, except they repent I will take away my word from them, and I will withdraw my Spirit from them, and I will suffer them no longer, and I will turn the hearts of their brethren against them.

*9 And four hundred years shall not pass away before I will cause that they shall be smitten; yea, I will **visit them with the sword** and with **famine** and with **pestilence**.*

I think about what debris do I need to remove from my life, what duty do I need to perform so I can qualify and be counted worthy to stand. In D&C 107:99-100 we read...

99 Wherefore, now let every man learn his duty, and to act in the office in which he is appointed, in all diligence.

100 He that is slothful shall not be counted worthy to stand, and he that learns not his duty and shows himself not approved shall not be counted worthy to stand. Even so. Amen.

I had a dream on September 11th. I do not remember the dream at all, but I was impressed to write something down at the time and I'm impressed to share that with you today. What I wrote down that morning which would not leave my mind was this **"Rise up ye millennial men of Ephraim and put on the holy garments and wield the sword of justice in defense of truth and virtue!"**

We are this generation whether you identify officially as a millennial or not. Technically I am Generation X but I choose to identify as one of Joseph's Boys or a millennial man of Ephraim. I think that is what we are all called to do, a literal fulfillment of the promises made in the endowment as we choose to keep our covenants, magnify our callings, and move forward in faith. Don't sell your birthright and lose the blessing for a bowl of pottage when the heat is on as Esau did to Jacob. Bear the heat! Do it Now! The Lord will fight our battles, the doctrine will defend itself as we share eternal truths with our brothers and sisters.

I love the hymn Ye Elders of Israel!

Ye elders of Israel, come join now with me
And seek out the righteous, where'er they may be –
In desert, on mountain, on land, or on sea –
And bring them to Zion, the pure and the free. Oh
Babylon oh Babylon we bid thee farewell we're going to the mountains of Ephraim to dwell.

And when our mission is complete then we will be again in Zion and comfort all that mourn and Christ will wipe away all our tears.

As we read in Isaiah 61:3

*3 To appoint unto **them that mourn in Zion**, to give unto them **beauty for ashes**, the **oil of joy for mourning**, the **garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness**; that they might be **called trees of righteousness**, the **planting of the Lord**, that he might be glorified.*

I've heard the tree of life described as our Savior. As we strive to be saviors on mount Zion and are found worthy to stand, he ultimately will plant us as his trees of righteousness, and we will glorify our Savior.

Scott's Thoughts: Keep the spiritual ground you already have to the end, don't give any ground to Babylon and the philosophy of men, Christ told his apostles to be sure to have a sword and Elder Holland told everyone to get their muskets right! But in all seriousness this is an example of it being ok to defend what we have been blessed with, basically following the constitutional rights of individual property rights. If we relate this to today and spiritual ground we have and the fight for freedom of religion, I think the same principle applies. We need to stand up for those rights and beliefs like Elder Bednar has talked about on multiple occasions and not let the government or politically correct winds of the day sway our willingness to stand firm on Gospel principles and Doctrine. We still have a responsibility to declare the Good Word to those around us, to help them navigate these troubled waters. That might be current members of the church as well as good Christians we rub shoulders with every day, I think lots of people will yet be drawn to the truth when they hear it.

Micah's Thoughts: Defending Zion in Discord shared following which I think relates really well to this:

"I found an interesting word connection between D&C 45:32 and D&C 109:24. The common word in both of these verses is "stand/standing". So what does it mean to "stand in holy places" or "standing in this thy house"?

Definition of "standing"-Continuance; duration or existence; Possession of an office, character or place;

Station; place to stand in; Power to stand; Rank; condition in society;

Those who hold a standing in the Lord's house are NOT those who just "attend the temple", but are those who have obtained the power to stand. They have actually received priesthood authority and priesthood power through the keeping of their covenants.

Ultimately, our standing or power to stand is irrevocable once we have had our calling and election made sure. Until that time, we are liable to fall [as Joseph Smith taught]:

Until we have perfect love we are liable to fall; and when we have a testimony that our names are sealed in the Lamb's book of life, we have perfect love, and then it is impossible for false Christs to deceive us.

Joseph Smith, TPJS, 9

The desolating sickness and overflowing scourge are the means by which the Lord is making our calling and election sure. This is how He is making us His jewels. He promises "they shall be mine". As Micah would say "#BeartheHeat"

In conclusion, Joseph Smith summed it up thus:

"A religion that does not require the sacrifice of all things never has the power sufficient to produce the faith necessary unto life and salvation."

Or as Jesus put it,

Matthew 10:

30 Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.

31 For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household.

32 He who loveth father and mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he who loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.

33 And he who taketh not his cross and followeth after me is not worthy of me.

34 He who seeketh to save his life shall lose it; and he who loseth his life for my sake shall find it.

35 He who receiveth you, receiveth me; and he who receiveth me, receiveth him who sent me.

36 He that receiveth a prophet, in the name of a prophet, shall receive a prophet's reward.

That last quote from Jesus should help us put some things into perspective recently asked of us from a prophet.

You will recollect that the Lord has said, that **Zion should not be removed out of her place; therefore the land should not be sold, but be held by the Saints, until the Lord in His wisdom shall open a way for your return;** and until that time, if you can purchase a tract of land in Clay county, for present emergencies, it is right you should do so, if you can do it, and not sell your land in Jackson county. **It is not safe for us to send you a written revelation on the subject, but what is stated above is according to wisdom.** I haste to a close to give room for Brother Oliver, and remain yours in the bonds of the everlasting covenant,

Joseph Smith, Jun.

--DHC 1:448-451

Russell's Thoughts:

Continuing in D&C 106...

*7 Therefore, blessed is my servant Warren, for I will have **mercy on him**; and, notwithstanding the vanity of his heart, **I will lift him up inasmuch as he will humble himself before me.***

*8 And I will **give him grace and assurance wherewith he may stand**; and if he **continue to be a faithful witness and a light unto the church I have prepared a crown for him in the mansions of my Father.** Even so. Amen.*

The Lord will open a way for us to return and build New Jerusalem as we humble ourselves, continue as faithful witnesses, and let our light shine. His grace and assurance will let us stand

in Holy places. Choices have to be made and we can choose for ourselves to be one of Joseph's boys (or women) in the bonds of the everlasting covenant.

When I was "waking up" I had some significant dreams about temple work, and I thought to myself maybe one day I will be called to serve in the temple. I was speaking with my cousin and she said that her and her husband were training to be temple workers before COVID and they had recently been asked to come back and begin their training at the Denver Temple ahead of it opening up. I was excited to hear that we might be more fully opening the temple soon and asked how they were called to be temple workers. To my surprise she replied, "Well we just asked to be temple workers, our Bishop and Stake President recommended us and now we are temple workers." I was so excited that next Sunday I walked up to the Bishop after sacrament and asked if he would recommend me to be a temple ordinance worker. We had a short interview later that day and he put my name forth to the Stake President. The Stake President recommended me to the Temple President and an interview was scheduled with a member of the Temple Presidency. I had an interview, they asked which shift I would like to work, and I started my training as an ordinance worker a week later.

Since I've been an ordinance worker I often feel in over my head, but I try to humbly accept whatever job they will give me each shift. I have been stretched and taught in the temple as I serve there each week. Choosing to serve in the temple has enriched my life and blessed my family. It does not matter what calling you have in the church, learn your duty and act in all diligence so that you can be counted worthy to stand.

Hopefully what I have stated tonight has been according to wisdom in God – even though imperfectly. It is my fear that I got something wrong or missed sharing something that could have been of value to one of you. If I did, it is my own fault, and not Micah's and his Rorschach emoji. Keep not silence brothers and sisters. Keep the faith and be happy. As President Nelson stated in the April 2020 Liahona...

"Why do we need such resilient faith? Because difficult days are ahead. Rarely in the future will it be easy or popular to be a faithful Latter-day Saint. Each of us will be tested. The Apostle Paul warned that in the latter days, those who diligently follow the Lord "shall suffer persecution" (2 Timothy 3:12). That very persecution can either crush you into silent weakness or motivate you to be more exemplary and courageous in your daily lives."

Come, come, ye Saints no toil or labor fear. But with joy wend your way. Though hard to you this journey may appear. Grace shall be as your day. 'Tis better far for us to strive Our useless cares from us to drive; Do this and joy your hearts will swell – All is well! All is well!

Brothers and Sisters, I have a testimony of this gospel and in the restoration through the Lord's prophet Joseph Smith in this the last dispensation of the fullness of times. I love you all and I'm humbled by your examples of faith and diligence in the face of great adversity. As we all seek further light and knowledge through keeping our covenants may we be counted worthy and rejoice in our Savior. May we all obtain a good report through faith in our Savior Jesus Christ.

Zion or bust, as many of us are fond of saying. We are not awake on accident. We are called! We are chosen! Now is the time! This is the Place! We are the ones!

In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

Scott's Thoughts: This decree that "Zion shall not be removed out of her place" has never been rescinded, I don't know why its such a hard concept for many members to understand! Joseph telling them not to sell their land in Jackson county and to keep it for Zion's sake rather than selling it to provide for their immediate needs had to be a difficult thing to hear. They pretty much knew they weren't going back anytime soon, however thinking along the lines of types and shadows this could mean we will be asked to do or perform some difficult things financially and physically, things that probably don't make any sense according to the ways of the world but make total sense according to the Lord.

Joseph is also stating here that this isn't a revelation but this is according to wisdom, I would consider that to be the same as counsel. So when we think about our day and words of counsel we receive from the prophet, it's just as important to follow that counsel and be obedient in all things if we want to have the right to the Holy Ghost and stay near to the Lord. We must be willing to increase our faith through feasting on the word daily and through our actions. One of my favorite quotes is found in DoS, and I believe applies here:

We have the right to the guidance of the Holy Ghost, but we cannot have that guidance if we willfully refuse to consider the revelations that have been given to help us to understand and to guide us in the light and truth of the everlasting gospel. We cannot hope to have that guidance when we refuse to consider these great revelations which mean so much to us both temporally and spiritually.

Now if we find ourselves in this condition of unbelief or unwillingness to seek for the light and the knowledge which the Lord has placed within our reach, then we are liable or in danger of being deceived by evil spirits, the doctrines of devils, and the teachings of men. And when these false influences are presented before us, we will not have the distinguishing understanding by which we can segregate them and know that they are not of the Lord. And so we may become prey unto the ungodly, to the vicious, to the cunning, to the craftiness of men." 43. 15

Micah's Thoughts:

D&C 101:

16 Therefore, let your hearts be comforted concerning Zion; for all flesh is in mine hands; be still and know that I am God.

17 Zion shall not be moved out of her place, notwithstanding her children are scattered.

18 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—

19 And all these things that the prophets might be fulfilled.

20 And, behold, there is none other **place** appointed than that which I have appointed; neither shall there be any other place appointed than that which I have appointed, for the work of the gathering of my saints—

footnote here on "place" in verse 20 takes you to

Doctrine and Covenants 57:1–4

1 Hearken, O ye elders of my church, saith the Lord your God, who have assembled yourselves together, according to my commandments, in this land, which is the land of Missouri, which is the land which I have appointed and consecrated for the gathering of the saints.

2 Wherefore, this is the land of promise, and the place for the city of Zion.

3 And thus saith the Lord your God, if you will receive wisdom here is wisdom. Behold, the place which is now called Independence is the center place; and a spot for the temple is lying westward, upon a lot which is not far from the courthouse.

4 Wherefore, it is wisdom that the land should be purchased by the saints, and also every tract lying westward, even unto the line running directly between Jew and Gentile;

Doctrine and Covenants 101:17–21. Zion and her stakes will be established

Despite the Saints' expulsion from Jackson County, Missouri, the Lord reaffirmed that "Zion shall not be moved out of her place, notwithstanding her children are scattered" (D&C 101:17). Although the stakes of Zion have spread over the face of the earth, "the center place," Jackson County, continues to be designated by the Lord as the location for the city of New Jerusalem (see D&C 57:1–3; 101:17, 20–21).

Elder Bruce R. McConkie (1915–1985) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught: "There is no occasion for uncertainty or anxiety about the building up of Zion—meaning the New Jerusalem—in the last days. The Lord once offered his people the chance to build that Zion from which the law shall go forth to all the world. They failed. Why? Because they were unprepared and unworthy, as is yet the case with those of us who now comprise the kingdom. When we as a people are prepared and worthy, the Lord will again command us and the work will go forward—on schedule, before the Second Coming, and at the direction of the President of the Church. Until then, none of us need take any personal steps toward gathering to Missouri or preparing for a landed-inheritance there. Let us, rather, learn the great concepts involved and make ourselves worthy for any work the Lord may lay upon us in our day and time. Some things must yet precede the building up of Jackson County" (A New Witness for the Articles of Faith [1985], 586). (LDS Student Manual)

Brother and Sisters I know that "though the children may be scattered, yet shall the remnant return and build up the waste places of Zion". I know that the redemption of Zion is real, I know that it will take place literally as the Lord "makes bare his holy arm in the eyes of all nations", and this he shall do "so that the words of the prophets may be fulfilled". May we be a "Zion focused and a Zion or bust" community that is counted worthy to be such Jewels that will be in the Lord's crown is my prayer. My fast for this week, and my commitment to everyone within

the sound of my voice, is to fast with full intent of heart that "the Lord will bring again Zion", in the name of Jesus Christ, amen