

Come Follow Me Class Insights – 22 – D&C Sec. 58 and 59 - Class Transcription

I'm Taylor, and I'm Tyler, and I'm Alex Baugh. This is Book of Mormon Central's Come Follow Me Insights. Today, Doctrine and Covenants sections 58 and 59. And we are so grateful to have Alex join us again. I'll just say that of all the people I know, I don't think there's anyone alive on this earth who knows more about the Missouri era of the history of our Church than Alex Baugh. So, this is a treat. Thank you for coming back and joining us again.

Well, thank you. It's an honor to be with you.

All right, well, let's begin with a little question. Has there ever been a time in your life when you had huge anticipation for something where you had built up this expectation for either a particular event, or a location, or destination you're going to, or a relationship, somebody you were going to meet, or something where expectation is really high, and then that day comes when you arrive at whatever it was that you were expecting, and there's a serious feeling of letdown? You look around and say, really? This is what I was so excited, this is what I was looking forward to? This isn't exactly what I want. How does that relate to section 58 and 57 before that?

Actually, that's a great analogy, Tyler. I think you can take the whole Jackson County experience of the Latter-day Saints between 1831 and 1833 and say high expectations--things did not work out in any way, shape, or form that they anticipated. I think the Lord really refined and polished these people in ways that he's building, not only trying to help them build Zion, but not only that, but to build a Zion person "of one heart and one mind", and this will be a great schoolmaster for the Latter-day Saints.

That's an interesting point, because sometimes it's really easy for us, sitting in the comfort and the ease of the 21st century, looking back through the corridor of time and space and distance at these people, and reading their stories, and seeing what's going on, it's really simple for us to make fun of them, or mock them, or look down our nose at them when they struggle, when in reality, I don't know anybody who would want to trade places with any of these people in Jackson County in 1831 through '33 and what they, what tribulation they have in front of them, and what they're going to go through. So it was, when some of them struggle, I think we should have a little bit of historical compassion and say, you know what, let the Lord be their final Judge. Let's learn what we can from their example at the end of the day, not have it be an exercise in judgment and condemnation.

Very well said. These people are on the edge of the American frontier. This is not New York City, this is not Ohio. This is rough conditions, plus--not only environment, but again, the people they're associating with are of a different mindset, different values, different culture, different backgrounds. This is going to be a real struggle for Latter-day Saints to – I kind of like to compare it with oil and water. They just, it's not a real good mix, and yet, in spite of that, they--I have to admire them for what they tried to do in really laying the foundation of Zion and trying to establish it as the Lord tried to direct through the revelations for them to do.

That's a good point, because today in our Church, we're still benefitting from and building more upon that foundation which they laid in Jackson County in 1831 through '33. Still, to this day, we're benefitting and continuing to build Zion in many ways across the world in all of the stakes of the Church, not just in this center place in western Missouri, but across the world we're benefitting from some of the tribulations that they endured.

And the most interesting thing I think today is we're actually back in Jackson County. The Church is very strong there; we have kind of planted ourselves again in that area. We have a temple there. The Lord's preparing that place. It is not to be moved out of its place. If there's no other place for the City of the New Jerusalem save Independence, so although they didn't establish it, we are still, in a sense, as Latter-day Saints, helping to prepare the way for the full, how do I say it, development of the City of Zion for the return of the Savior.

Okay, now let's get ready to dive in here. So, before we launch into section 58, give us a quick overview. Bring us back up to speed from section 57 and the journey westward.

I think that's important. You've got to lay the groundwork for this early period of Jackson County and the saints. So, what happens here is, of course, in section 52, Joseph Smith has this conference in Kirtland, and during that conference in section 52, it's actually fourteen companionships, or 28 elders, are called to journey to Missouri. We have the branches from New York are all there now, and we're going to now call the opportunity for elders to go down and actually begin that process of establishing Zion, and then in the next succeeding chapters, sections, I should say, we have others added to that group. We have A. Sidney Gilbert – we'll just call him Sidney Gilbert in section 53. Section 54, the Colesville branch is asked, all of them, to go down and establish Zion because of some problems there with Leman Copley, which you've talked about. And then in section 55, we have W. W. Phelps, and he's arrived, is going to be baptized. He's a printer, and they're saying, well, if we're going to establish Zion let's have a printing company down there, and Phelps is the perfect one. And then in section 56, poor Thomas B. Marsh has got a problem with his companion and can't go, so the Lord gives him another companion, Selah Griffin. And so we have that companionship worked out, but Selah Griffin's companion was Newell Knight, and Newell Knight's now going to lead the Colesville branch. So, we've got everybody now kind of lined up, and all total, thirty individuals are now going to go to Missouri during the months of June, July, August.

Now, there's 29 men and one woman, and Sidney Gilbert's wife goes with him, and on June 19th, 1831, Joseph Smith and seven others in his party make their way to Zion, to Missouri. They arrived on July 14, and Joseph's now surveying the area, going, okay, this is it, and he comes to Independence, we know that. By the way, this would have been a wonderful reunion with Joseph and Oliver. He hadn't seen him for nine months. Peter Whitmer, Jun. and Ziba Peterson, and he meets Frederick G. Williams, who had joined that missionary to the Lamanite contingent, and so he's becoming familiar with the area, and then, of course, here comes section 57. Joseph is seeing the little, small, development community – settlement community-- of Independence. There's a two-story brick courthouse in the public square, and not surprising, that's the kind of focal point of the community. And so what does the Lord tell Joseph Smith in section 57, but the – we're going to come down here, and this is the first time he really mentions temple, and he says that the spot for a temple--and boy, Joseph's probably thinking Jerusalem and everything else--is on a spot not that far from the courthouse lying westward. You look at that today, it's about a half a mile just down the Westport Road. So, and in that revelation, of course there's other directions. They're supposed to purchase the land, and that's one of the reasons Partridge is there, and also A. Sidney Gilbert is to be the negotiators and get that land started to be purchased. We got a little change of assignment: W. W. Phelps is actually called to be the printer, and Oliver is to assist him. Initially, it was Oliver, and William to assist him, but definitely Phelps is the better of the two; he's more experienced. And so now they're there, and the Latter-day Saints who are supposed to be there are starting to come. And so on July 26th the first group of - coming from

the Colesville settlement arrive. They don't arrive in Independence; they arrive a little west, come up the – they're actually on a boat, or a steamboat - they come up the Blue River, and they come and settle right there at the home of Joshua Lewis, and this is the, I think he's an important figure.

He's one that most probably haven't heard of, but we should have heard of him. Yes. And Joshua Lewis is a convert of the mission to the Lam – missionaries to the Lamanites, and he owns 28 acres, and his property will become the Whitmer settlement, part of that. And so, they come here, and now Joseph goes, wha – boy, we have enough people here, let's see what we need to be doing. And four days later, five days later, we have the August 1 revelation, section 58. So now it's going to – this revelation's going to instruct them. What do we need to do, now that we're starting to assemble in Jackson County?

Yeah, there's one other event that's taking place, or this underlying historical interaction between Joseph Smith, who has arrived in July, and the bishop, Edward Partridge, whose job it is to take care of the Saints, to build up the temporal needs, and the affairs, and all the consecrated United Order efforts, and he's, what's he feeling about Independence?

This is - Partridge is just kind of flabbergasted. This is, again, a highly undeveloped area. He is not impressed at all with this area. Now he's again, he's been very successful as a Painesville hatter; he's come from a nice area of the community, and the civilized world of New York, and he comes down there, and he goes, I just don't see this. And Joseph has a greater vision of this. It may look not very promising to you, but it's quite a rebuke, and I've kind of felt sorry for Partridge because he's such a stalwart, Tyler. In section 41 he is told that he is a man without guile. That's without hypocrisy, without guile - deception – he is one genuine individual, and this, you can see this here, I mean, it's a very stern rebuke.

In the work of God, we're dealing with human beings, all of which who have agency, they have their own preferences, we have our own experience, our own view, our own outlook on life, our own persuasions. And even though, at times, you might get what's going on here, which is a pretty sharp - this isn't just a small disagreement between the Lord's bishop and the Lord's prophet regarding building up the land of Zion here. Section 58's going to help work that out. But my point is this: don't be shocked in your Church service, or your Church experience, if you run into situations where things don't just move forward like a well-oiled machine, where everybody agrees with everybody on every point and every decision that's made in a council meeting. Sometimes there are these struggles that happen, and somehow, God's okay with it. His work still moves forward in spite of our mortal imperfections.

They worked it out, and again, there was – Partridge said he felt like Joseph had an abusive power, I mean he was just abusing that, and yet at the same time again Joseph has this much different vision than Edward Partridge for this area. I think a good example of how he really – Partridge – came in line was that when all of this episode in June, July, August of their experience together, Joseph goes back. Partridge stays there, and he doesn't go back to get his family, even though he's commanded to bring his family to Missouri. He's so dedicated to doing what now Joseph expects him to do, and what he thinks the Lord is expecting of him, that he is just – he stays there, he'll stay through the winter; he doesn't go back, he sends for his wife and family. And really, Tyler, for the next, really through the entire Missouri period, he is a leading player, if not many times the leading player in trying to develop the concept of Zion and to do as the Lord directed in the revelations. This shows a real quick repentance, and a determination to,

okay, I know what I – I know what the Lord expects of me; I'm going to do my very best. And he does. He's an absolutely marvelous figure. I just love Edward Partridge and his example to the Latter-day Saints. They have a disagreement, but once he realized, okay, I was probably in error, I apologize, I'm going to do what the Lord expects, and what Joseph expects of me.

There are a lot of lessons that we can learn from stories like this. One of the many, for me, is the fact that when God calls prophets, he places these prophets in a different position than what the scriptures often refer to as the residue of the people, or the rest of humanity. They have this elevated position. They're watchmen on a tower. They see things that maybe you and I don't have the perspective to see a long way off. So, in my mind, one of the ways to look at the situation with Sidney Gilbert and Joseph Smith is, Joseph's not looking at Independence, or at Western Missouri, as wow! This is the greatest land ever. That's what you and I could see. That's what our perspective would be limited to is, really? This? This isn't great – Joseph, there's – there are a lot of other places we could go to build up Zion that would be way better than this. But God called a prophet as a watchman on the tower who sees the long vision and says, this is the place. And, by the way, this isn't the first time that that's happened.

When Brigham Young comes into the Great Salt Lake valley, I don't imagine that many people in that vanguard company are saying, wow! we've arrived in the Garden of Eden. I think many of them were thinking, really? Here? We're going to build Zion here? And possibly, in the biblical context, there are parts of the Holy Land that probably many of those Israelites would have said similar things to God's prophet. But that's why I think we should be more grateful to actually stand and say, “we thank thee, O God, for a prophet to guide us in these latter days.” (Hymns No. 19)

Some people would accuse us, as members of the Church, of being blind followers of the prophet. Brothers and sisters, I follow God's prophet, not blindly, but I recognize that, in many ways, I am blind, and so I follow God's prophet because I recognize my own limitations and my own blindness, but I don't blindly follow him. I follow God's prophet because I recognize that he can see some things down the road, and in the past, and in the present that I just – I'm not aware of, and what a privilege it is to be led by prophets, seers, and revelators in the latter days.

Now, let's dive in. Section 58, starting in verse 1: "Hearken, O ye elders of my church, and give ear to my word, and learn of me what I will concerning you, and also concerning this land unto which I have sent you." I love that. Joseph didn't bring you here. I brought you here. Look at verse 2: "For verily I say unto you, blessed is he that keepeth my commandments, whether in life or in death; and he that is faithful in tribulation, the reward of the same is greater in the kingdom of heaven." You might want to mark or at least pay close attention to this idea of tribulation. This group's going to hear a lot about tribulation.

It's mentioned three times in those first four or five verses, and I think that the great thing about that is, who gets the greatest glory: those who endure tribulation. Those are the ones who really paid the price for testimony, for their faith, and so on. It says, "...he that is faithful in tribulation, the reward of the same is greater in the kingdom of heaven." It's – who gets the greatest degree: those who can endure tribulation for Christ's sake.

So, if that's true, it makes me wonder, the scriptures are this repository for the gospel of Jesus Christ, the good news, and yet tribulation doesn't feel like good news if you're wearing mortal blinders. Tribulation isn't good news; it's terrible. But the blessing of the gospel of Jesus Christ is this eternal perspective, and verse 2 takes off those mortal blinders and says, now, you're going

to have tribulation in this life. Well, look at the greatest of all, the Lord Jesus Christ himself – “a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief;”. And he is the embodiment, he's the pattern; he's the model for us to try to become more like. It doesn't mean that you should now be scared if you try to become a disciple of Christ. Oh no, now what bad, horrible things are going to happen? Mortality - bad things are going to happen to us regardless, but as we get on the covenant path and move forward, it then puts those tribulations into perspective to say, oh, these are refining opportunities for me, where God can now actually consume my dross in my soul and help me to become a better person.

Look at verse 3. I love verse 3: "Ye cannot behold with your natural eyes...". Remember those blinders, those mortal eyes only? "Ye can't behold with your natural eyes, for the present time, the design of your God concerning those things which shall come hereafter, and the glory which shall follow after much tribulation." He's giving us this heavenly perspective, saying, I see all things. You can't see it; you don't understand it. To me, verse 3 is Jesus basically saying to these people, you have to trust me. You have to have faith in me.

It reminds me of a verse, of course he mentions eyes here: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, [nor yet] entered into the heart of man, the things of God that God has prepared for them that love him". (1 Corinthians 2:9) And if you love him, you'll be willing to suffer for his sake, and the eternal reward is worth it. It's all worth it.

Absolutely. Now, to finish off that introduction, look at verse 4: "For after much tribulation...", notice that's twice now that we've seen this "...after much tribulation" at the bottom of verse 3, and now again at the top of verse 4, "after much tribulation come the blessings. Wherefore, the day cometh that ye shall be crowned with much glory; the hour is not yet, but is nigh at hand." So, brothers and sisters, as we now embark into this Missouri era, it's going to get heavy. There are going to be some terrible stories, and seeming tragedies, that come out of this particular part of our Church history. I think it's helpful for us, as we embark into this period of our Church history, to remember verse 4: that the Lord is preparing them for “much glory” that's going to be given to them, lest we start feeling like God didn't love them, or wasn't powerful enough to protect them, or didn't have enough foresight to prevent these things from happening.

And he acknowledges that sacrifice when he says, in verse 6 and 7, that you are the ones who are – and really will be – honored for laying the foundation. I don't know about you, but there's always been something in my heart that if I could be the first of something, the first to do something – but these are the first people to actually enter, and locate, and relocate, I guess you might say, in the land of Zion, and I honor these people. During this period of what we call the Jackson County period, 1831 to '33, 1200 Latter-day Saints will gather and do their very best – again, they weren't perfect, as we will find out in section 101 and 103 and others – but they tried, and they did their best, and I honor them for their effort and to be the ones who at least tried their very best to establish Zion in the early 1830s.

I love that, and you'll notice that it's not just focused on them, there, at that time. Look at verse 9: "Yea, a supper of the house of the Lord, well prepared, unto which all nations shall be invited." These 1200 people that you're talking about, they form this core, right there in Jackson County, but it wasn't ever intended to just be for people there. It's going to culminate with this message that goes to all the nations, and everybody's invited.

I'd like to maybe just comment here, he kind of gives a little parable here in terms of, okay, how's this going to happen? And he says it will begin first with the rich, the nobles, that kind of

thing, and then eventually, to the poor. I think the analogy here the Lord's trying to illustrate is that we'll establish the gospel in nations that are rather developed: the United States, Canada, Europe, and then get a pretty good base of Latter-day Saints of the Church, a firm foundation of the Church. And with that prosperity, then we can take the gospel to the rest of the world. I mean, the Church is in Kenya. There's 60,000 members in Kenya. The Church is in Zimbabwe. I think they have 54 congregations. Zimbabwe! Now, that couldn't have happened in 1830, probably, in the 19th century. But as the Church grew in these more developed regions and areas of the world, this made it possible for us to now take the gospel to the more remote, or less developed, countries, and that's how we get the gospel out there. We start with a pretty good base, and then go from there to the other nations of the world, and I think you see that happening today. So, this, to me, is an example of the Lord's vision of how Zion will be developed. We'll begin in these other countries, but we'll eventually be able to take it to all the nations of the earth, and more to come as the Church grows, there's — strengthened. Yeah.

Now, watch what happens as the Lord transitions from a more general to a very specific audience in verse 14 and 15. And by the way, to me, this is the embodiment of Edward Partridge being without guile, because quite frankly, brothers and sisters, this is not an easy thing to be sitting there, knowing that you've had a serious disagreement, a serious contention with Joseph over the very things that are being discussed here, and then to sit there and have Joseph speaking directly for the Lord, and here comes your name now. And your name is going to be put in this book of revelations that's going to go to the whole world. This is a man without guile, who didn't let his pride or worldly ambitions get in the way. I love Edward Partridge for this.

Listen to what the Lord tells him, verse 14: "Yea, for this cause I have sent you hither, and have selected my servant Edward Partridge, and have appointed unto him his mission in this land. But if he repent not of his sins, which are unbelief and blindness of heart, let him take heed lest he fall." I'm just going to say it: if I'm in that situation, I'm going to be sorely tempted to let my pride say, me, unbelief and blindness? Oh yeah, what about you, Joseph? But he doesn't do that. He doesn't take the 'let me tell you what's wrong with you' approach; he takes the "Lord, is it I?" (Matthew 16:22) approach.

Brothers and sisters, in your own relationships where there might be some contention, have you noticed that every time you try to point out what's wrong with somebody else, that, I don't know, I could be wrong, but I guess it's high 90 percent of the time, or more, when those people don't say, oh, thank you for pointing that out. Thank you for telling me what my weakness is. I'm now going to change. You're right. I'm wrong. Will you please forgive me? That isn't usually how those conversations end, is it? But when you can take some time, go to the Lord, and say "Lord, is it I?" (Matthew 16:22) Because I can't control what you do, I can't control how you use your agency, but I can control how I use mine in those relationships. And I love this little section here because, to me, Edward Partridge had to have done that. He had to have had that, Lord, I'm sorry. Yes, I'll repent and get in line.

It kind of reminds me of the story of one time, I think it was Brigham Young's daughter who told the story that in Kirtland, at one time, Joseph Smith just kind of really went after Brigham, and just kind of laid into him. And Brigham stood up, I believe it was, and said, "Joseph, what would you have me do?"¹ And I can see Partridge doing that. I see no other place in the rest of his life —

¹ Madsen, T. G. (2021, March 15). *Joseph Smith Lecture 6: Joseph Smith as Teacher, Speaker, and Counselor*. BYU Speeches. <https://speeches.byu.edu/talks/truman-g-madsen/joseph-smith-teacher-speaker-counselor/>.

he dies in Nauvoo – where Partridge ever faltered again, never. He was as committed and as dedicated as any person on planet earth. And so I think he learned his lesson. He quickly said, okay, I'm going to catch the vision you have for this, and I'll move forward. And as I indicated earlier, he stays down there, and his life is completely devoted to building Zion in Missouri, all the way through. And when the Saints are leaving Missouri in 1838 - '39, he's trying to wrap things up. He's the first on the scene, and he's the last to go, and then he, of course, ends up having an early death, you might say, in Nauvoo. But he is a wonderful, powerful figure of righteousness and obedience.

It's a beautiful example for us to learn from. Again, from hindsight, we can see there's going to be problems. And I think it's interesting that again, the Latter-day Saints will be persecuted, there will be a lot of political friction, a lot of friction between Missourians and Latter-day Saints, but he warns them and counsels them, keep the laws. “Let no man break the laws of the land...”. I mean, you don't really have a right to go after them. We'll try to be law abiding citizens here, in this area that's going to be very difficult because of persecution. So that's why I said, just be subject to the powers that be until I reign, whose reign it is to be. But in the meantime, do your best to keep the laws of the land here in Missouri.

Very good. Now we jump down to verse 26 and 27, where God introduces this incredible concept that is rooted in agency, which is so interesting because this is that concept, that gift of God given to us in the pre-mortal realm that we're taught in the Book of Moses, that Satan sought to destroy; “the agency of man” is the way it words that. Satan is doing everything he can to attack this. Notice what God does to empower this, to unfold more opportunities for us to use agency. Look at verse 26: "For behold, it is not meet that I should command in all things; for he that is compelled in all things, the same is a slothful and not a wise servant; wherefore he receiveth no reward." It's this idea of a person saying, Lord, here I am. I'm your instrument; I'm your servant. I'll do whatever you tell me to do. Whatever you tell me to do, I'll do it. I'm waiting. And we don't move. Why do you think, Alex, that he used the word “slothful”? Why that word?

Well, you look up the definition, and it means “slow”. And boy, I just have to think of that, of a – about an actual sloth. There's various – how do I say it? – breeds: there's a two-clawed sloth, and the three-clawed sloth, the three-toed, but they move slowly. Ninety percent of the time, they're motionless. Ninety percent. I just kind of wonder what their function is, in terms of the creation story but they can't quite crawl on the ground very well. It takes them a minute to go nine feet. And I've just joked with my students, at times, that I think the Lord created the sloth just so he could use it in section 58. It's such an example of a creature that is just – doesn't do a lot, in terms of his motion and his activity, and so I think – and again it mentions “sloth”, “slothful” a couple of times, the variation of the word there. So, I think it's highly descriptive. It's saying, take action, move, let's make things happen, and use your agency. I don't have to tell you everything. Take some initiative on your own.

It's interesting if you look at it from this perspective of a member of the Church who maybe sits and waits for God to give them revelation or inspiration to go and visit that person, or to make a ministering visit to this family, or to make a meal for that family, versus the saints who, verse 27: "Verily I say, men should be anxiously engaged in a good cause, and do many things of their own free will, and bring to pass much righteousness;".

There will be times – now, we need to be careful here that we don't demonize either side. There will be times when you'll be going through life, and the Lord will inspire you, he will give you directions – go, that person needs your help, or this situation needs your attention. And that's wonderful, and we act on that. I think the essence of verse 26 and 27 is, don't have those be the only times when you're going out and doing good things for people. In other words, there may be times when you decide to go and make a ministering visit without having felt inspired or prompted at all. You just think, I'm going to go visit so-and-so, and you might end up standing on somebody's front porch knocking on a door saying to yourself, I don't have a clue what I'm going to say here, but you know what? I'm - it's a good thing to do. Or you might take some nice gift, or a meal, or some treat to somebody, not because you have this revelation that they're struggling and they need it, but because that's a nice thing to do. Or you might sit down and talk to somebody, not because you were inspired that they're in the depths of despair, but because it's a nice thing to do to build them up. Some of my most memorably powerful experiences with people in ministering have come when I was just trying to be a good person, not because I had had some big, grand revelation telling me I needed to go and do it, but because I just go out, and I try to be good, and I try to do good things.

It reminds me of the wonderful LDS Hymn, "Have I done any good in the world today? Have I helped anyone in need?"

Just for fun, some of you have probably heard that old story that goes way back of the guy who, every morning on his exercise routine, would walk clear down to the train station, to be able to sit there and watch the train come in and then depart at 5:30 a.m. every day from the train station. The station master finally one day said, why do you come clear down here this early in the morning every day? And he said, it's because I want to see something move without me having to push it before I begin my day at work. It's just nice to see something happen without me having to make that happen. It's a silly story with, I think, a pretty profound lesson: that the Lord doesn't want us to have to be compelled. He doesn't want to have to push us in everything. As we become more like him, we just start inherently and naturally doing more of what he would do, which is turning outward, serving people, whether we get that push or not. We just do it.

And that's where true happiness comes. I'm impressed with section 58, that the Lord would mention, again, Martin Harris. This is the first time Martin kind of comes up.

Yeah.

After some of the problems associated with the lost 116 pages, and he's on the trip, and you might ask the question, why is Martin going along? Well, Martin, he's our person who has some means, and in section 58, he mentions here that Martin needs to consecrate, let's – you be the first to show everybody what you need to do, or we need to have you do, so that they may follow your example. And I think it's very impressive, Tyler, that we have good record that Martin Harris gave \$1200 to help now purchase the land – begin to purchase the land in Zion. And I just sit there and take my hat off to him. He's financed the Book of Mormon; now he's going to finance the beginning of the purchases of the land purchases of the Church.

So, we need him, and he comes through again, which is fascinating because to – before we even get to his name, look at the description here in verse 28: "For power is in them, wherein they are agents unto themselves. And inasmuch as men do good they shall in nowise lose their reward." I think if we were to talk to Martin Harris today, I don't think he would say, oh, man, I wish I would have held onto more of my money. Think of all the worldly possessions I could have

purchased for me. I don't think he'd say that, versus the opposite. Look at verse 29: "But he that doeth not anything until he is commanded, and receiveth a commandment with doubtful heart, and keepeth it with slothfulness, the same is damned. Who am I that made man, saith the Lord, that will hold him guiltless that obeys not my commandments?"

Brothers and sisters, he's showing us here this – the difference between, it's kind of a good, better, best. It's good to keep a commandment, it's better to keep it, you know, kind of willingly, and it's best to keep it with this full perspective of, I love the Lord and I'll give everything and anything that is required. Look at verse 32: "I command and men obey not; I revoke and they receive not the blessing." What the Lord seems to be saying here is, if you choose not to obey, then I will occasionally have to revoke that blessing that was promised. What will sometimes happen, is people will point a finger of accusation or scorn at Joseph Smith, or at subsequent prophets in the Restoration and say, he can't be a prophet, because he said this would happen, and it didn't happen.

If you look really closely at verse 32, he says: "I command and men obey not; I revoke and they receive not the blessing." Some of those things that are promised – not all of them, because there are some that are independent of anything we do or don't do, they're going to happen, but some of the prophecies, some of the commands, are conditional. It requires our agency, and the type of agency, because you can slothfully keep a commandment, and not receive the same blessings or benefits as promised as those who keep it "with full purpose of heart", "with an eye single to [God's glory]." So sometimes, it would be like somebody going to a garden store and buying the best possible seeds for a particular variety of plant that they want to grow, or a particular vegetable. You could buy the very best seeds; you could go out into the very best plot of land and plant those seeds and then walk away in March. Brothers and sisters, you can't expect to come back in August and pick the very best fruits or vegetables off of that plant if you haven't nourished, and nurtured, and taken care of, and weeded, and provided the best environment for that plant to grow.

It's the same thing with many of God's promises, and commandments, and prophecies, is we have to use our agency to carry forth that work in our own little realm in order to produce fruit. We can't just say, oh, God's prophet made a promise. We'll just plant that seed in our heart and say, done. And then months later, when the fruit isn't produced, we can't blame God's prophet, and we can't blame God. But I can look in the mirror and say, "what lack I yet?" Where did I fall short? Because God's prophets, their words will be upheld, but if they're conditional, that's on me. I've got to do my part.

And then, when they don't get the blessing, what do they do? They say in their hearts, this is not the work of the Lord. I didn't get the blessing. Well, you didn't follow through. You didn't keep the commandment to begin with.

So, what would you say to somebody who's watching who maybe feels a little bit discouraged right now, listening to this segment thinking, yeah, I received a patriarchal blessing, and in that blessing I got all of these promises given to me. But I haven't realized some of them, and I don't feel like I've been a wicked person, and I haven't done terrible things. What would you say?

Well, as long as they keep on the covenant path, those blessings will be fulfilled, maybe in ways they don't recognize at the time or even understand. So interesting you'd say that. I just got an email a few days ago from a young man whose grandfather was my patriarchal bless – he gave me my patriarchal blessing. And he mentioned how his mother was the first one to get a

patriarchal blessing from his grandfather, and it was about a half a page. And she was rather disappointed and said, here's my own father, giving me my patriarchal blessing as a young woman. And then he said in there that years later, and now she's an older woman, every promise in there was fulfilled, even though it was short. And I have full confidence in the fact that it was totally inspired, and that the Lord came through. It may have not been the longest patriarchal blessing, but every promise was given.

Beautiful. So, we move forward. We move forward in faith. We don't define ourselves by past struggles, but by future blessings and benefits. One other concept that I wanted us to cover here in this section, before we shift over to section 59, is found in verse 42 and 43. This concept is profound: "Behold, he who has repented of his sins, the same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more." Brothers and sisters, that's pretty profound, coming from a God with infinite knowledge, infinite power, infinite glory, not bound by time. "...I the Lord remember them no more." It's not that he gets amnesia; it's not that, all of a sudden, it never happened, because you just can't remember it. It's that he chooses not to remember it, not to focus on it; he's not defining us by it.

Brothers and sisters, if a God with perfect capacity has the ability to not remember your low points of life anymore, then what about us with each other, or us with that person staring at you in the mirror? It's a beautiful thing when you can let go of those past wrongs. The worst thing in the world is if you let your present self be held hostage to your past self when you were 17, or 25, or whatever age when maybe you weren't as wise or as capable, or in an Edward Partridge situation. Isn't it great that he's able to leave that struggle with Joseph behind, and not focus on it, and remember it enough to know I'm not going to make that mistake again, but I'm going to move forward and be defined by who I can become, not by that moment of struggle and weakness?

I'm sure Joseph put that behind them. I don't see any friction between Partridge and Joseph Smith ever again. Another example of that is that actually again, Phelps here, who is the one being reproved, and as we – as you know, if you know your Church history, you know that in 1838, he causes some problems in northern Missouri, is finally excommunicated, goes back to Dayton, and then decides, you know, maybe it's time to rejoin the Saints. So, he writes Joseph and says, I'd kind of like to come back. Could you forgive me? And of course, the famous line: "Come on, dear Brother [for] the war is past, For friends at first are friends again at last." And I think what's significant about that, is Joseph put it behind him. Phelps – and who's going to speak at Joseph Smith's funeral? W. W. Phelps. Joseph is a perfect example of the Lord: no, that was – it's not there anymore. Don't worry about it, let's move on. Not surprising, at the death of Joseph Smith, Phelps was so honored to even be associated with Joseph Smith that he writes the famous, we call it "Praise to the Man". It was called Joseph the Prophet, the original poem, but it appeared in the first issue of the August 1844 *Times and Seasons*. And truly, that was a great relationship, even though even with Partridge, and also with Phelps, it was strained a little bit, but Joseph put it behind him.

So, brothers and sisters, in your own personal relationships with family members, or neighbors, or ward members, don't be afraid of having to occasionally work through some long periods of disagreement, or struggle, and even at times, contention. It's okay. You can work through those and, "By this ye may know if a man repenteth of his sins – behold, he will confess them and forsake them." We acknowledge, I was wrong, and we forsake it. We don't keep holding onto it; we let it go, we forsake it, and we move on.

So, before we transition to section 59, I wanted to share a humorous story about sloths. I was traveling with my wife at one point, and we went to an animal sanctuary, and they actually had a sloth. And my wife was holding this sloth, and somebody got a picture, and the comment was she just swapped one sloth for another. So maybe I should have been paying attention to the Lord's revelations in D&C 58. Actually, we're still happily married, if somebody is wondering.

I'd like to just share a perspective with you, another way you could look at sections 58 and 59, and what's going on here in Church history, and let me give you just a brief backdrop. So, I spent a lot of years in biblical studies, and in that study, I learned that recently, scholars – when I say “recent”, it was about back in the 1930s or so – scholars discovered a covenantal pattern that shows up throughout the Bible. And it centers on God's covenants with the Israelites, where he takes them out of civilization in Egypt, and he brings them into the howling wilderness of Sinai. And I've been there. Now, that is not a place you want to really stake – put down roots. And I think about the modern Israelites, the early saints, leaving civilization and they, too, going into the wilderness. And the pattern is that God takes his people to the wilderness, and there he establishes Zion, or he promises them Zion. But he wants to give them land, and what he will do is lay out his expectations for how they should be covenantally faithful to him so that they can prosper in the land that he wants to offer them. But this is his pattern: gather the people, offer them a promised land, put them there in that land, have them build a temple, and they will be blessed as they keep the commandments.

Now, I've written this pattern out that scholars have found in the Bible. And as I was reading it, I was actually really struck to see that this pattern. It actually shows up in the Doctrine and Covenants, even though it actually seems to originate with God way back in the Old Testament. So, the pattern's pretty brief. It starts with, God will introduce himself to the people, and if you go to Exodus chapter 20, you will see that in verses 1 and 2, and then we remind the people all the incredible things he's done for them on their behalf. He wants them to know he is their God. They can entirely and fully trust him; therefore, they should be loyal to him as he's been loyal to them in the Abrahamic covenant. And then what's interesting is part three, God lays out commandments, instructions, stipulations, laws for how people can show their loyalty. And I still remember this day, when I was reading this pattern and learned that the Ten Commandments are the stipulations, are the commandments, are the laws, are the instructions for how to be faithful to God.

I always just thought the Ten Commandments were just a nice, fancy list of things to do; I didn't realize it was part of a larger covenantal pattern, of a conditional covenant where God wants to give us peace and prosperity in the land, and we retain those blessings as we are faithful. And as the covenantal pattern continues, there are witnesses to the covenant, just like if you've ever signed a contract, there's always witnesses. God identifies the blessings and curses identified with whether you keep the commandments or not. If you do, here's the blessings; if you don't, here's what's going to happen, and then you record the covenant and put it in a sacred place. You might be familiar with the Ark of the Covenant for the ancient Israelites. This was in the Ark of the Covenant; in fact, particularly, this part here was written down on tablets and put in the Ark of the Covenant as a reminder to the Israelites that this is God's expectations. If you want the fullness of his blessings, then you show loyalty and faithfulness by keeping the commandments. So, it struck me as incredible how God is consistent with how he teaches his people and uses covenants.

I was reading some years ago, and got to D&C section 59, and was struck by the repetition of many of the Ten Commandments. Now, before in my life, when I read the Ten Commandments, like, oh, those are very nice to read about. But this time I had seen and it had been trained in the pattern of this conditional covenant type and I thought to myself, wait a second, I know in the Old Testament the Ten Commandments when they were given were simply the middle part of this conditional covenant God was offering his people, conditioned on their faithfulness. I wonder if something similar is going on in the Doctrine and Covenants. And so I carefully looked at the historical context of D&C 57, 58, 59, carefully read, and I propose that, yes, it's the same pattern. We can see the same pattern going on here, and then what really I found to be spiritually mind-blowing was that, what's the historical context, God has just revealed Zion. This is Zion. Like, this is the pattern you should expect when God asks you to keep the commandments and lays out the Ten Commandments, that land is promised and that is the land on which he will prosper you.

So I find it deeply compelling that God has covenantal patterns that he has used throughout his time with his people, and I also suggest that we can find this pattern in other places in scriptures. Just two quick examples: Consider the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus is the new Moses who gets on a mountain and receives a law or commandments or instructions for covenantal faithfulness, and he says, Moses taught you, here's how to show covenantal faithfulness. I say unto you, now do these things, and it actually essentially follows the same pattern, and it's interesting that God sends prophets, including Jesus, who is our Savior, to at times update, or expand or explain the instructions for covenantal faithfulness so that we can prosper in the land. And I might add this tidbit here, actually, it's not a tidbit, it's very crucial, the summary statement for this entire covenant is found throughout the Book of Mormon, and that phrase is if you keep the commandments, ye shall prosper in the land. That summarizes all of that.

One other place you can look for this is actually in the Book of Mormon. Remember King Noah—very wicked. He taught his people not to keep the laws and commandments. He was not covenantally faithful and the curses were going to follow, and God sent a prophet to remind them, if you want to prosper in this land you need to keep the commandments. And look carefully, what does Abinadi do? What did he teach the people? He actually reviews the Ten Commandments or the ten instructions for how to be covenantally faithful. In fact, his face even shone with the same luster that Moses's did when Moses was on Mount Sinai. Abinadi looked like Moses when he was reviewing the Ten Commandments. This is quite common, that God will remind us and review with us the commandments and instructions for faithfulness so that we can get all these blessings he's promised.

So let's bring this home today. Did you know that when you partake of the sacrament, that ritual of partaking of emblems of the body of Jesus and the blood of Jesus goes back to the Last Supper, which was a Passover meal which celebrates in part this covenant. Every single week when you partake of the sacrament, it is your opportunity to say, Lord, I accept your invitation and your instructions for covenantal faithfulness so that I can receive all the blessings. I am declaring my loyalty to you, and that's what this covenant is about, is for us to be loyal to God.

You know, Taylor, on this line, it's interesting because I think there are many people today, not just in the Church but in religions in general, in spirituality in general, who feel like we live in an enlightened age, an age of freedom, and they feel bound down and limited and entrapped, if you will, by commandments and expectations. It's like they're limitations, like God is impinging upon my agency. Why can't I just do what I feel like I want to do? Which you can. Which you can,

you have agency, but there are definite consequences attached to that agency. Look at verse – look at section 59 verse 3 and 4 in this context: "Yea, blessed are they whose feet stand upon the land of Zion, who have obeyed my gospel; they shall receive for their reward the good things of the earth, and it shall bring forth in its strength." I love that, that promise of not just eternal blessings, but the earth itself will bring forth in its strength good rewards if you keep this covenant.

Then look at verse 4: "And they shall also be crowned with blessings from above," so you're not just going to get earthly stuff, you're going to get blessings from above, "yea, and with commandments not a few." Wait a minute, so if I'm covenantally faithful to the commandments that God has given me, one of the blessings is, God will give me commandments not a few which is a blessing from above and "with revelations in their time – they that are faithful and diligent before me." So as I am faithful to the commandments that God has already given me, one of the blessings is he'll give me the blessings of this earth as well as from above, but part of that blessing from above is he'll give me even more commandments. We live in a world that would say what? You mean – you just got less freedom.

Brothers and sisters, this is the grand irony in the gospel of Jesus Christ. In fact, there's a beautiful talk given by Elder D. Todd Christofferson called moral agency where he says if you want more freedom, in essence if you want more agency, more capacity to live with power to act, then he said, here's the formula: learn as many of God's laws as you can and keep them. It's the total opposite of what the world would teach, and it's a beautiful pattern that ties into what you're teaching here. So next time you feel like you're constrained by a commandment, just look upward and pause for a moment and thank God for giving us that commandment because it's simply an invitation for us to become more like him. It's a blessing. The more commandments we get from God, the better.

Let me – let me add to that. This covenant is all about love, and I should have written that earlier. God has shown his love to the people, and he's, like, I want to be in a relationship with you. Think about a marriage, right? It's about love and God as a bridegroom is saying, I've loved you, I want you in this marriage, let me tell you how I experience love from you. These are the things, if you did these things, I will feel loved, and Tyler has often done this model of this covenant relationship. I will be your God, you are my people. Right. So well okay, how do we show our love to God? If you love me, keep my commandments. These are the instructions for how to be loving. And anybody in a relationship with friends or family or a marriage knows that everybody has different ways that they like to be shown love and loyalty. So really, let me just boil this down. All that God really wants from us is love and loyalty, and that is actually what this whole covenant that started at Sinai is all about that gets repeated in the Book of Mormon, and Mount Sinai and surprising – actually it shouldn't be surprising, incredibly, right here when Zion has been announced in D&C 57, and guess what? Okay, I love you guys, I've done all these incredible things for you, I want you to show your love and loyalty back to me because that's what a great relationship is. We mutually love and are loyal to one another. And it's right there, so it's back to your theme of agency. God does not constrain us. You can choose not to show God love in the way he would like to be loved. You are welcome to try other ways, but he's been pretty explicit, he's, like, I do have preferences for how I like to be loved. So you could choose to do it a different way and you can try to convince him, but I don't think it's going to work.

But you can't - you can choose, but you can't choose your consequence. Those are – those are immutably laid down before the foundation of the world. Look at verse 5 Taylor: "Wherefore, I

give unto them a commandment, saying thus: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God." How? With all thy heart, might, mind and strength. It's not half-hearted, it's not slothful, it's not begrudging, it's, I recognize who I am, I recognize who he is, and I am so grateful that he took the time to actually give me some directions on how to find peace and happiness, not just in this life but eternal rewards in the world to come, and then love thy neighbor as thyself as in verse 6. It keeps coming back to this.

So the invitation is, there's many compelling ways to read section 59 – 57 and 58 for that matter as well, but we encourage you to consider this is one approach to look at it as a covenantal text for the latter days where God has once again started to gather his people and he wants us to join with him and he's laid out the instructions for how to be loving and loyal to him, faithful in that covenant so we can have all the blessings that he has offered Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

So we've offered kind of this covenantal perspective, but let's actually step back into the history and like, how did we get to section 59? What happened from 57 to 58 that we would get to 59 when actually Joseph was even asking the question that leads to this revelation?

Thank you. That's really a good procedure that we probably need to look at. We talked about section 58 which was given on August 1st and immediately now with these Latter-day Saints assembling in Jackson County, Joseph moves forward to do and fulfill the obligation he feels and has for the establishment of Zion, and that's to actually locate some of the most important places and do the most important things. So on August 2nd, just the day after section 58, Joseph Smith and this group of saints who have assembled over there near the Joshua Lewis property, actually dedicate Zion, and they did it symbolically, they had a log and twelve men, seven of whom were Colesville branch, the other was Joseph, Sidney, and others, and they symbolically laid the first log in Zion or the establishment of Zion, so it's already been dedicated, and Sidney Rigdon dedicated the spot. So with Zion dedicated, the next thing Joseph does is the very next day on August 3rd, he and several other men went to the area of Independence and there it was revealed to him where the temple should be built, and he actually dedicates that. And so you see kind of again the covenant relationship, what can help you in that covenant? Temple blessing. When God gathers his people, it's build a temple and give them the covenants.

So that was dedicated on the 3rd and then on the 4th, they come back here to kind of have a culmination of back to the Colesville property or where the Colesville saints are, and they have a conference and basically say, okay, we've established Zion and Joseph and the rest of the elders are going to return, of course some are going to stay. So Joseph finds things that are essentially, basically done, and then in section 59 this is kind of his last- the last culminating revelation before he leaves to try to give them instruction on how do you build Zion? What do you have to do in that covenant relationship and as you've so well indicated here, Taylor, it's a matter of keeping the commandments and covenants that he's – he's given them.

So it's not surprising that he elucidates in section 59 many of those or reintroduces some of the covenant relationship. But you were talking about some of the focuses of God saying, okay, this is the latter days, yeah, keep the ancient commandments, but here's some things I want to focus on. What were some of the things that you would be seeing?

You definitely see in verse 5 exactly what – and I think you cited it, that we have to love God and his Son with all our heart, might, mind, and strength, and then here's some of those basic principles revealed to Moses and other prophets, love thy neighbor, not steal, not commit adultery or kill, do anything like unto it, and certainly have to offer appreciation and gratitude,

but I think at that point in time he really looks into the heart and how do you – how do you give your heart unto God? And the best way to do that, of course, is to have a broken heart and there's a whole lot of implication with that and how do you do that? Well, the best time to do that is on the Sabbath day in which you can focus all of your thoughts and feelings and energies on the worship of our Heavenly Father and his Son Jesus Christ on the Sabbath day.

So it's not surprising that he kind of outlines, here's some of the things you should do on the Sabbath day in terms of that covenant relationship and in worshipping him, which doesn't show up in the Law of Moses where he tells people to keep the Sabbath day holy, but there's interesting instructions here that we don't find in the Old Testament. In fact, you go back to verse 7 is also an addition that you don't get in the original Ten Commandments. God says thou shalt thank the Lord thy God in all things. He's basically updating, like, here's a way I'd like for you guys to show me that you love me. Just express gratitude.

Exactly. God isn't — make you feel happy, but it shows that you actually are aware that you're receiving the blessings that I've already laid out for you for your covenantal faithfulness.

He goes on, of course and says now there's one way you can really become a Zion person and keep yourself unspotted from the world, and that's by your worship on the Sabbath day. And he specifically says that thou shalt go to the house of prayer. It's nice to go up in the mountains and commune with God at times in nature, but we need the fellowship of the saints. They need to feel of our spirits, they need to hear of our testimony, our conviction, and you go to the house of prayer. Now they don't have a house of prayer yet in Jackson County. They have a schoolhouse in Kirtland, but of course this is something vital to our worship today is to actually go to a physical meeting house and a place where we can worship together.

These are great insights. And we just hope you feel the love that God has for us and just the love that we can feel in the scriptures, God's care and concern for us. He's not trying to limit our lives; he's just saying, look, if you want to have a happy, prosperous life where the Spirit is with you, do these things, and if you struggle or fall, guess what – every week you can come back into my presence at the sacrament table and pledge again your desire to be loyal to me, and I will not remember the past where maybe you have fallen, and just every week we get that opportunity of renewal. I just find it so incredible. There is nothing in this world that has that much staying power, that much power of forgiveness. I mean, I've been in lots of institutions and lots of organizations, I've been in lots of relationships, God is just above everything. I love how he just invites us again and again into his loving embrace.

I think it's important on the Sabbath day, too – at least the commandment to keep the Sabbath day holy and again you would know this as well as anyone, Taylor, in giving the Sabbath to the Israelites the idea, of course, was not only their personal sanctification, but at the same time, it would - the way we worship God on the Sabbath day – the Israelites, that would send a message that the Israelite God is God. And I think that's the same way today. If Latter-day Saints would really live the law of the Sabbath, other people, other groups would say, boy, the Latter-day Saints' God is God. They observe the Sabbath much, much differently than I think most other Christian and other denominations worship on the Sabbath. I really – it distinguishes us as a people and should, anyway, and of course what does he say in there is that nevertheless even though you're worshipping on the Sabbath, "Nevertheless thy vows shall be offered up in righteousness on all days and at all times." Just because you worship on the Sabbath doesn't mean you forget the Lord during the rest of the week. So we have to continue that process of

offering our love and our devotion and our commitment to the Savior and to his gospel all the time. You've always heard the words, oh, they're just Sunday Mormons or the phrase Sunday Mormons and they go to church but during the week they kind of forget what's going on.

He's saying if you're going to be a member of the Church, it's not just a Sunday activity. It's every – every day. And, of course verse 12: "But remember on this, the Lord's day, thou shalt offer thine oblations," if you want to look at oblations down there in the bottom of footnote, "offerings, whether of time, talents or means, in service of God and our fellowman." And again, you can go to the New Testament, what did Christ do on the Sabbath? He healed people, he did things against their – their traditional laws but he went about doing good. Yes, he was doing his oblations. And then of course, "and thy sacraments unto the Most High, confessing thy sins unto thy brethren, and before the Lord," and then of course we certainly can worship around a table of food, and I don't know about you, but the best meals of the week are on Sunday when we get our family together and are able to worship together and rejoice together on the Sabbath day. And then, of course, we should fast occasionally on the Sabbath day and, of course, the Church now has given us the opportunity every once a month to offer up a fast and a generous fast offering.

And as a reminder, the word fast, it doesn't mean quick, like I'm a fast runner, it actually comes from the word strong, just like a fastener makes something strong and secure. So the word fast literally means to become strong and by controlling your body you become strong in God. That's what fasting – one of the purposes of fasting.

And look at the promise, "that thy fasting may be perfect, or in other words, that thy joy may be full." I don't know about you but I know on the times when I sincerely fasted, I have felt great peace and joy knowing that I have forsaken my physical needs, I've put aside my physical needs and really focused on those things that are most important with my relationship with God or with others who I'm fasting for.

I've had times where sometimes I feel like it's an imposition and I don't feel joy but like you, the times when like the purpose of my fasting is to bring me to the Lamb of God, it is a joyful experience. I'm not worried about oh man, I missed a meal. So it's amazing how God invites us to do things that may be hard, but ultimately, bring us a better life.

And I think oftentimes if we don't fast with a purpose, all we're really doing is going hungry. Yeah. And so this is where again I think the joyful experience of fasting can be part of our – our worship on the Sabbath. And then, of course, it's a little different day on that day, we shouldn't be doing some activities that probably would bring us a little more frivolity, hence, "Inasmuch as ye do these things with thanksgiving, with cheerful hearts and countenances, not with much laughter, for this is sin, but with a glad heart and a cheerful countenance."

So it's not the comedy day. Right. I don't know if you have to – we probably shouldn't have a roaring game of pinochle, you know what I mean? But just do it with a sincere desire to worship our Heavenly Father and his Son. But the great thing is, and again, you outlined it very well here, is that if you'll do these things, what can God give you? What are the blessings, and Tyler mentioned this as well. He – if you can worship God in the right way why couldn't he bestow on you all the blessings of the earth, that the earth can bring forth for you? And to gladden the heart and please the eye, all of the wonderful things the earth, that earth life has for us if we can worship him in the right manner and the right spirit.

So I wanted to just tie a couple of thoughts together here with what Alex and Taylor have shared with you. Look again closely at verse 14, "Verily, this is fasting and prayer, or in other words, rejoicing and prayer." It's interesting to hear you two talking about fasting, how the physical body isn't looking at the calendar saying, oh good, this weekend is fast Sunday. No mortal flesh likes fast Sunday. It's just not our favorite, but I love the fact that God takes fasting and prayer, or in other words, rejoicing and prayer. He just linked fasting with rejoicing. What a rejoicing thing when the spirit of the Lord can inspire our spirits to put aside the needs of the flesh for a day appropriately, and it's this rejoicing thing, it's this empowering, this fastening thing, it fastens us to God.

Look now at verse 21: "And in nothing doth man offend God, or against none is his wrath kindled, save those who confess not his hand in all things, and obey not his commandments." Could it be possible that applies not just to all the blessings that I received, but also scriptures, prophets, covenants, that I acknowledge the fact that wow, the God of the universe has given me all these things, and now all he's asked in return, with all that investment he's made in me, the only thing he asks from me is, Tyler, can you just trust me? Can you just obey the covenants or the commandments that I've given you? That's a pretty small price tag to put on this – this bounteous blessing of life and agency and the abundance of mortality that he provides for us.

And then in verse 23: "But learn that he who doeth the works of righteousness shall receive his reward, even peace in this world, and eternal life in the world to come." Brothers and sisters, he just gave you one side of a coin there. There is another side to that coin. There are people who are going to use their agency, who choose to not follow his commandments or hearken to his voice but who hearken to the voice of the adversary. And in other places in scripture we're told basically, if you do the work of the devil, you need to be prepared to receive the devil's wages, and if you do the work of the Lord, then he is preparing you to receive his wages and he tells you what his wages are, peace in this world and eternal life in the world to come.

So, Alex and Taylor, as we finish this particular block of scriptures, I think it's not saying too much or over-emphasizing this fact to say, what a blessing to have modern prophets and to have the blessing of ancient and more recent prophets and the words of God given to us as the extensions of his love for us, and now as we move forward to be able to just try a little harder to love God more, love each other, work forward through all the struggles and the difficulties that we face, knowing that he's in his heavens and he knows what he's doing.

And I might add to that, of course these scriptures are about Zion, and it did not happen the way these early saints anticipated it would, but the good ship Zion is still going, and we're part of it, and I think the message for me also today is how can I help to bring forth Zion in my own life, among my own family, among my own community, and hopefully that I'll do my part so that someday when that Zion is absolutely established, definitively, when the Savior will come to that great place in Jackson County, Missouri – it will not be moved out of its place – that I've done my part, that I contributed to building up the kingdom of God, and hopefully, that personally I became a Zion person, one of pure heart and mind, and I'm grateful for the opportunity to be with you today and discuss these marvelous, marvelous revelations and to pay tribute to those who tried to establish Zion in 1831.

Yeah, we thank all of you for being with us today and we encourage you to spread light and goodness wherever you go. Know that you're loved.

Bibliography

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