

Come Follow Me 23 D&C Sec. 60 - 62

I'm Taylor, and I'm Tyler. This is Book of Mormon Central's Come Follow Me Insights. Today Doctrine and Covenants sections 60 through 62.

So for today, let's begin with a quick overview. You have this group of people, lots of missionaries who by revelation were commanded to go to Independence, and they were commanded to take various routes to get there. Some of them were even told to go by way of Detroit, a much longer route, and the whole idea being to preach the gospel along the way.

Brothers and sisters, this is a journey of somewhere over 800 miles, roughly 1400 kilometers to much longer depending on how far they spread out. This is a long journey, and the reality is, you have your destination, but if we're not careful, we put so much effort on the destination that we forget the lessons that God has to teach us along the journey. And that's what he's put the focus on with this group is: make sure you're preaching the gospel and spreading out along the way; don't just run as fast as you can to get to Independence, Missouri.

As we go through sections 60, 61, and 62, we learn some interesting things, because now these sections are given beginning in Independence, as we now turn our attention to go back to Kirtland – another journey, very long journey awaits us, and God is giving some directions. So, it begins on August 8 of 1831 with section 60 in Independence. Taylor, you're from the Midwest. What is early August like weather-wise?

It is hot and humid. And there are a ton of mosquitoes. I grew up in Minnesota; in fact, we jokingly would say the mosquitoes are the state bird of Minnesota, and it's just tough and I actually was small – I was born in Jackson County, Missouri, not far from Independence, and it's a very lovely place, the trees are green, but I am very grateful to live in the latter days when there's air conditioning. It's one of the greatest blessings, I think, that I've ever experienced in my life.

And these people don't have an Interstate system; the roads at the time aren't paved, there's – there's no air conditioning. This is a tough journey; it's not – sometimes we read sections like this or we read stories like this and we forget the fact that, wait, they - they were paddling in canoes down the Missouri River to get from Kansas City – Independence area today -- all the way over to St. Louis where they would then be able to take the Mississippi and then the Ohio River up to Cincinnati. And then they're going to be out on the water in the heat with mosquitoes and other bugs and storms and struggles, and they don't have a hotel to check into every night. They don't have somebody to provide them with breakfast, lunch, and dinner. All of the physical needs, they have to take care of them out here in the wild to provide for their safety and their - their travel. This is a very difficult journey going either direction.

And the word “journey” actually comes from the word “day”, right? It's day by day, and every day. Here actually you see some interesting experiences where – we were talking about this before – how many of you have ever been on a family adventure or a family vacation or a family outing and there was some conflict or disagreement? Do you ever realize that these men have been gone

from their families now, they left what? Late June, July, they've been gone – they've been gone for a couple of months, they're out in the howling wilderness, I mean this is basically the exceeding frontier of the American west. And there are just no physical comforts, and there's all this concern about what do we do. And we'll see that it creates some conflict, that God has to intervene with some revelation to give them some perspective about the day-to-day experiences of life, about pursuing your journey, staying focused on God and finding a way to overcome with humility your own personal weaknesses, the fact that we're all human nature. I look at these guys and I think, you know, I've been on long trips before with a nice, air-conditioned car and I can pull over and get food whenever I want and all the water I want and I just don't know how well I would have done.

Now this is a difficult setting, so with that foundation, let's jump in. We're in Independence, it's August 8th. Some of these missionaries that have made this journey – they're getting restless. They - they want to get home. They want to return to their family, and so section 60 is given to this group. Now the caveat is, there's an entire other group of elders who have not yet arrived in Independence. Hyrum's group that went north – further north into Detroit and then down, they still haven't come; they're not here and partly because they've actually been preaching the gospel and taking a longer route to get there, and partly because John Murdock got sick and maybe some other sickness along the way delayed them, but they haven't yet gotten here. So, the group we're talking about here is a group that came fairly quickly to Independence, and remember they were told to preach the gospel along the way – spread out.

Look at section 60, verse 1: "Behold, thus saith the Lord unto the elders of his church, who are to return speedily to the land from whence they came: Behold, it pleaseth me, that you have come up hither." So there's some that he wants to return speedily and we'll talk about that a little later, Sidney Gilbert and W. W. Phelps for some specific reasons as well as Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, and Oliver Cowdery.

Look at verse 2: "But with some I am not well pleased, for they will not open their mouths, but they hide the talent which I have given unto them, because of the fear of man. Wo unto such, for mine anger is kindled against them." Brothers and sisters, for me the essence of verse 2 is tied into some things that - that Taylor has emphasized multiple times in the past, this covenant obligation that's given to us from God. It's rooted in here in verse 2, this idea that God gives us all of these amazing promises and blessings that flow from establishing that covenant with him. If we're his people and he's our God, he gives us land, he gives us priesthood power, he gives us posterity, he gives us possessions, and with all of those things that he's given us and all of that knowledge comes a responsibility. He doesn't want us to have all of that and then selfishly hide it and then keep it to ourself.

I love this hymn, "Have I Done Any Good?" and before I quote some of it, let's consider this, that what God is asking us to do, in this case he wanted people to open their mouth to preach the gospel.

I think a larger principle, that any ability you have to bless someone else's life and to do good for them, you shouldn't hide that, you shouldn't keep it back.

And so this hymn: "Have I done any good in the world today? Have I helped anyone in need? Have I cheered up the sad and made someone feel glad? If not, I have failed indeed. Has anyone's burden been lighter today because I was willing to share? Have the sick and the weary been helped on their way? When they needed my help, was I there? Then wake up and do something more than dream of your mansion above. Doing good is a pleasure, a joy beyond measure, a blessing of duty and love."¹

So when I read verse 2 of section 60 that's what comes to mind is that these beautiful words of this hymn remind me that it is not my job to save everybody in the world. That's God's job. But it is an invitation for me on a daily base, to see how I can share God's love with others, and any talent or time or ability that I have to lift others and help their lives be better, I shouldn't hold back and I should offer freely what God has given to me, and that is God's expectation. He gives to us freely that we might do the same to others.

So now, and keep in mind this group that hurried, many of them didn't pause to open their mouth or to share. And so that's specifically in this target audience here, but we can apply it to us today that we share that light and goodness that God has given to us. Verse 3: "And it shall come to pass, if they are not more faithful unto me, it shall be taken away, even that which they have." So there's a consequence that he attaches to this idea of if we selfishly hold on and don't share it with others, he says it's going to be taken away. And then he makes it very clear his authority to do that, verse 4: "For I, the Lord, rule in the heavens above, and among the armies of the earth; and in the day when I shall make up my jewels, all men shall know what it is that bespeaketh the power of God."

Now we shift. Look at verse 5. This is a beautiful concept that's going to repeat three times in the lesson today: "But, verily, I will speak unto you concerning your journey unto the land from whence you came. Let there be a craft made, or bought, as seemeth you good, it mattereth not unto me, and take your journey speedily for the place which is called St. Louis" (Doctrine and Covenants 60:5). So the Mississippi River is over here running north-south by St. Louis, and the Missouri River running just north of Independence is going to make its way over to, then dump into the Mississippi, and so the Lord's telling them, you can work your way all the way across the State of Missouri whether you go and buy a watercraft or whether you make a watercraft, "...it mattereth not unto me..." (Doctrine and Covenants 60:5).

Let me give you an example that my Stake President Clint Mortensen uses frequently and I've shared it before, but it's worth repeating here. He draws our stake or our area here in Springville on the board, and then he draws the temple that we go to, the Provo City Center Temple, and he asks people how they drive to the temple. And different people drive different routes to get to the temple, and then he asks the profound question, which one is the right way? Which is the right way to go to the temple? And the obvious answer is, there isn't a right way, it's just get to the temple. I think that might be the essence of what God is saying here in verse 5. It doesn't matter

whether you go and purchase a watercraft or whether you take a little bit of time and make a watercraft, that mattereth not to me, just get a watercraft and get on the journey. Get down the road, or down the river in this case.

Sometimes, brothers and sisters, if we're not careful, we will put less emphasis on what we're trying to accomplish, and we will turn the how into doctrine, as if there's only one right way to do things. This is how you have to do it. And I think the Lord's making it clear in section 60, 61, and 62, he's going to repeat this phrase, "it mattereth not unto me" (Doctrine and Covenants 60:5). Just figure it out. Part of the beauty of life and agency is this freedom to explore the how as we try to discover what God wants us to do, and in this case, we know what the journey is. Get home. But figure out the best way to make that happen.

You know, the first time I really paid attention to this lesson, that God, "...it mattereth not [to him]" how we make our journey unless he explicitly tells us, is years ago when I was an undergraduate, I was roommates with one of my best friends and he was my cousin, Joe Balstead (Doctrine and Covenants 60:5). And still to this day he inspires me. He is very thoughtful and he learns truth through his mind and through his spirit, and I remember as an undergraduate, just watching all the different ways that he was learning things, and I was impressed because of his ability to have the Spirit guide him in a lot of ways. Well, one day he came home from classes and he said, you know, I learned a really interesting lesson today. He's somebody who always has a prayer in his heart, and he said, I was kind of praying as I was biking to campus, like, where should I park my bike? And when I got closer, God's like, it doesn't matter. Just park your bike and don't be late to class. And Joe reminded me that some things just don't matter that much.

Now if there was somebody who truly needed some help, God likely would have inspired him to park his bike in a certain spot. But for the most part it just doesn't matter whether you park in that spot or this spot or over here, and I remember just being impressed that God has sent us to this earth so we can practice our agency. We can choose. We can learn. We can grow. And if God had to command us in all things, it actually would compromise our agency. There are times that God does need very specific things to happen and he wants us to then follow his instructions. And then usually it will be very clear. We have the scriptures and modern-day prophets to provide that, and so in your own life, you might ask yourself, where has God been explicitly clear about things that I should be doing? And then be joyfully happy that God has given you your agency to go pursue good as you see fit.

Now he gives some other directions to specifically Joseph and Oliver and Sidney Rigdon in verse 6 that they need to go on a faster track to get to Cincinnati where he wants them to preach repentance to that particular city, but the rest in verse 8, the residue, take their journey from St. Louis "...two by two, and preach the word..." along the way by land and take their time teaching the gospel along the way. Then he gives some instructions about money being given by Edward Partridge, the bishop, before they leave, and this is an interesting concept that this money has been

consecrated to the Church. Edward Partridge as the bishop is in charge of those temporal affairs like our presiding bishopric today to give certain amounts of money as needed.

Look at the wording here: "... let my servant Edward Partridge impart of the money which I have given him, a portion unto mine elders who are commanded to return; And he that is able, let him return it by the way of the agent; and he that is not, of him it is not required" (Doctrine and Covenants 60:10-11). So they counsel about what the amount is. There's beautiful truth in this, that revelation is scattered among us, that we counsel and we say, what do we think the needs are going to be? Okay, give me that amount, maybe a little bit more in case there's an unforeseen trouble along the way, and at the end it's not a use it or lose it principle here. It's a I won't spend it unless I need to, and when I get back to Kirtland if there's extra, I'll give it to your agent Sidney Gilbert and that money will return back. There's a beautiful principle of industry and saving there, rather than just squandering and spending it because I've got it, that would bless - that the Church has employed for decades, and it's been a huge blessing to us financially as a whole.

Now look at verse 12. He now speaks to this group who's here about the group who has not yet arrived: "And now I speak of the residue who are to come unto this land. Behold, they have been sent to preach my gospel among the congregations of the wicked; wherefore, I give unto them a commandment, thus: Thou shalt not idle away thy time, neither shalt thou bury thy talent that it may not be known" (Doctrine and Covenants 60:12-13).

And then he tells them after they have come here, after they arrive, so this revelation's given so Edward Partridge and others here have this revelation so that when they do arrive, they can say, oh, here's what the Lord wanted you to do. They're going to have a little conference and celebrate coming to Zion, and then they're going to speedily return to Kirtland again, doing the same thing: spreading out, preaching the gospel along the way.

So they got the revelation on the 8th of August to leave, so on the 9th of August they launch a canoe in the Missouri River and were off. So the first day it's great. We're paddling down the river, we're making some good progress, and they in their journals they even report having a lovely meal of wild turkey that night, so that's a good day. And then they sleep, and the next day they go, so now this is the 10th, and then the 11th, it's day three when things get really, really interesting, because the Missouri River is known as the River Destruction. In fact, when this revelation was first written down, it was recorded as taking place on the River Destruction and then in parentheses (or Missouri). It's a very perilous waterway with a lot of submerged trees called sawyers, that they're stuck. They've floated down the river and now they've gotten lodged in the bottom and you can't see them until you come over the top, and it can capsize a canoe or ruin a steamboat paddle wheel or cause a lot of destruction for people.

That's what they run into at a particularly difficult bend in the river. They're – you can picture it. These are not people who have been raised in canoes or swimming or on waterways. They're farmers for the most part, or printers or these trades; they're not probably the most skilled water craftsmen as far as guiding these – this canoe. So you can picture people saying, no, you're doing

it wrong. You need to paddle over on this side or you need to push off there; it's your fault. No, if only you would have done this we wouldn't have hit this. You can see how these kinds of struggles begin where we think we have it figured out and other people don't and we want to tell them how to do the job so that it fixes the problem. Well they end up on the 11th with some pretty serious discord and some fighting.

And here's some of what was recorded. The morning after they left Independence the conduct of some of the elders displeased Oliver who uttered a malediction something like, "As the Lord liveth, if you do not behave better, some accident will befall you."¹ In the afternoon of the third day while negotiating some treacherous, treacherous waters, Joseph took command and issued some orders which were resented by the brethren in one of the canoes and they refused to obey, and in so doing they became tangled in some brush and almost capsized. This frightened Joseph who ordered them all ashore while some of the brethren felt they should continue. Once on shore, tempers flared and words were exchanged. Joseph and Oliver were accused of being highly imperious and quite dictatorial. Joseph was also called a coward. After much emotional discussion apologies were made and a reconciliation of sorts reached.

Now I grew up in the Midwest. About fifteen minutes from where I grew up there was a large river. In fact it's so large it's a mile and a half wide at points. Most people have never even heard of this river unless you're from the Midwest. It's called the St. Croix and it flows into the Mississippi. These are mighty, massive rivers and if you don't know how to swim, this is nothing to take lightly. And I totally understand, I mean, I've been on ward canoe trips and I understand the conflict that can break out when a group of people who an hour before were actually all good friends when there's a little bit of stress going on and people's lives might be in danger, things flare up.

But I also love, we'll see here, is that God is very merciful. He calls people to repentance. He asks them to be humble but we'll see several occasions where God says, "...thy sins are forgiven" (Doctrine and Covenants 90:1). It's amazing. These are just normal humans who are fallen nature, on a day to day basis make mistakes and forget that they should be seeking for higher things. And they might not treat their friends and family members properly, but God's like okay, you recognize you did something wrong but I can forgive you.

So as part of this event on the afternoon of the 11th when all of this is taking place, they've pulled the canoes to the side; they are now going to have this struggle on the bank of the river. W. W. Phelps at that point reports seeing the devil riding on the face of the water, on this Missouri River. Nobody else saw in vision what W. W. Phelps did. Many of them reported hearing something going, and so then they finally let the tempers calm down, they resolve the struggle and the concern, and the next morning on the 12th of August the Lord gives section 61.

¹ Various Authors. "12 After Much Tribulation." *12*, 2018, www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/history/saints-v1/12-after-much-tribulation?lang=eng.

So it was the day before when we had all that struggle on the river and now this: "Behold, and hearken unto the voice of him who has all power..." (Doctrine and Covenants 61:1). That's important to note, considering that the day before W. W. Phelps saw the devil, and if we're not careful, brothers and sisters, that will cause us to now fear the water. God doesn't want to increase your fear. He wants you to increase your faith and decrease your fear. If we're spending too much time worrying about what Satan can do, we're going to be spending less of our time and energy and effort focusing on what God does do, not just what he can do but what he is doing in our life. So "[he] has all power, [he] is from everlasting to everlasting, even Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end" (Doctrine and Covenants 61:1).

Okay, look at verse 2: "Behold, verily thus saith the Lord unto you, O ye elders of my church, who are assembled upon this spot, whose sins are now forgiven you, for I, the Lord, forgive sins, and am merciful unto those who confess their sins with humble hearts." You'll notice he didn't say, I'm merciful to those who never sin. I'm merciful to those who never mess up. I'm merciful to those who always say exactly the right thing in exactly the right spirit in the right tone. Because there was only one person who ever fit that description and none of us is Jesus. That was -- he's the only one who is perfect. So I love the fact that he's merciful to us if we'll just confess our sins with humble hearts. Apparently this group finally got to that point when they said, you're right. We got caught in the heat of the moment and the tension and the pressure of that experience and that was poorly done, please forgive me, and God does forgive them.

Now look at verse 5: "... I, the Lord, have decreed in mine anger many destructions upon the water; yea, and especially upon these waters." I don't know all of the significance of this, brothers and sisters, but the Missouri River is, even to Lewis and Clark who navigated this river going the other direction to go clear up into - even into Yellowstone and far into the west, this was not a pleasant river for them. The people who lived back then, they said the river was angry; it looked like it was roiling and ready to destroy you. I don't know how much time or effort or energy we should spend focusing on what God decreed about the Missouri River specifically back in 1831 for today, but it was a big deal to them, because it was a means of travel east and west. And he's going to tell the saints that are going to be coming to Independence that they can use the canals, but not to use these rivers for travel because it was dangerous, and quite frankly, often there would be entire boats filled with people that would go down and lives would be lost and so the Lord's warning them against that.

How much does that apply in the 21st century to us? Whenever questions like that come up I would say, when is the last time you heard God's prophets and apostles warning against that or teaching a doctrine about that or giving us more light and knowledge about that? And the fact is, Taylor, I can't remember the last General Conference where we were told to avoid the water.

And actually it can turn into some funny or perhaps some embarrassing situations. I grew up in Minnesota. Almost all my friends were not members of the Church, but they were very – we were great friends, they actually respected that I was a member of the Church. And I remember I was

about to head off on my mission, and we're out golfing and we were talking about me being on a mission. And they'd heard some rule that missionaries couldn't swim, and they're like, tell us more about that. And these are good, smart teenagers, they're just curious about what it means to be a missionary. And I said some wild thing like Satan controls the waters. Luckily for me, I had friends that knew me well enough that they were willing to put up with a couple of weird comments like that. Satan does not control the waters. God is in control, he has all power.

If Satan was really in control of the water as I erroneously thought, why would we ever baptize people in water or partake of the water in the sacrament or ever shower or bathe, for that matter? So this, again, is what happens when we look at verses sometimes in isolation and we start creating grand theologies far beyond what God intended. And way back in 1831, this was the main highway to get back and forth from one end of Missouri to the other. And God's saying, I don't need a bunch of my saints dying on the river, so I just want you to be careful, so you might consider going another way, and it's what a wise God would do. And in our day, we've had modern-day prophets who provide us guidance so that we also will not be disrupted by the destruction that is around us, so that we can pursue on the journey pressing forward and helping to spread the gospel.

Now one of the ironies of this is it was W. W. Phelps who on the 11th saw the destroyer on the water and there are two people who are going to be commanded by God to continue their journey speedily on that very river, all the way down to St. Louis. Everybody else has to get out and walk but two people: W. W. Phelps, the guy who saw the devil, and Sidney Gilbert, who – they need to get back to Kirtland very quickly for specific reasons and purposes.

Notice verse 10, brothers and sisters: "... inasmuch as they are faithful they shall be preserved, and I, the Lord, will be with them." It doesn't matter if all of the hosts of hell are riding on the Missouri River. If you have the Lord with them, they're going to be okay. And they were okay, and they went quickly on their journey.

And I see it as God wanting to build the faith of W. W. Phelps, like, okay, you had this vision of the destroyer. Well, let me show you who I am. And he spends I don't know how many days on the river which is a pretty – it's called the mighty wide Missouri. And I - it would be interesting to go back into his journals and find out, did he feel like his faith and confidence in God the Father was increased because of his salvation that he experienced on that journey?

Beautiful. Now look at verse 18: "And now I give unto you a commandment that what I say unto one I say unto all, that you shall forewarn your brethren concerning these waters, that they come not in journeying upon them, lest their faith fail and they are caught in snares." So that's what we've been talking about is he's saying we're going to forewarn everybody else. Don't come on these particular waters. There are other water systems you can use but just – in the 1830s, don't come west on the Missouri River.

Look at verse 19 and 20: "I, the Lord, have decreed, and the destroyer rideth upon the face thereof, and I revoke not the decree. I, the Lord, was angry with you yesterday, but today mine anger is

turned away." Huh. This isn't the first time that the Lord Jesus Christ has said similar things like that. If you – if you turn back to Isaiah chapter 54 or in your Book of Mormon, look at Jesus himself delivering the words of Isaiah 54 in 3rd Nephi 22, he says, verse 7: "For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment, but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer." I love that. I love that concept that I'm not going to hold you hostage for the rest of your life to those negative experiences on August 11th. August 11th is not going to define you and me and our relationship. He says, I've turned away mine anger. You can now move forward on your journey.

Brothers and sisters, this is an object lesson in story form of the covenant path, of "...the first principles and ordinances of the gospel...", trusting, having faith in Christ, repenting of our sins, acknowledging with humility that we aren't who we need to be yet, and the Lord forgiving us -- that renewal of those baptism covenants where he turns away his anger and we are allowed to move forward with the help of the Holy Ghost as we endure to the end (Articles of Faith 1:4).

Now look at verse 21: "Wherefore, let those concerning whom I have spoken, that should take their journey in haste – again I say unto you, let them take their journey in haste." So be quick. Don't hesitate, 22: "And it mattereth not unto me, after a little, if it so be that they fill their mission, whether they go by water or by land; let this be as it is made known unto them according to their judgments hereafter." He doesn't say, I'm going to have to compel you in every teeny, tiny step you take along the way; he's saying "it mattereth not unto me..." (Doctrine and Covenants 61:22). This is number two, use your agency, whether you go by land or whether you go by water, you're commanded get there quickly. This group, don't hesitate along the way.

Now jump down to verse 24: "Behold, I, the Lord, have appointed a way for the journeying of my saints; and behold, this is the way – that after they leave the canal they shall journey by land, inasmuch as they are commanded to journey and go up unto the land of Zion; And they shall do like unto the children of Israel, pitching their tents along the way or by the way."

Can you see the connection here? They're going to take some canals and then by land they're going to be doing like the ancient Israelites, pitching their tents in the wilderness along the way. The Lord uses ancient prophets and ancient stories of Israel and the gathering of Israel into a promised land. And he's going to bring to their mind today memories of that from these ancient stories and ancient scriptures to say, you're on a symbolic journey as well, to a promised land, and you're going to be like Israel of old, sleeping in tents along the way. And it gives us this feeling of connectedness to these people and these prophets through the corridor of time as we do our best to gather Israel and to gather to the promised land in the stakes of Zion.

Verse 27: "Nevertheless, unto whom is given power to command the waters, unto him it is given by the Spirit to know all his ways." So he does give power for those who are going to be on the water. You don't need to be afraid. You don't need to fear.

Now look at verse 36: "Now, verily I say unto you, and what I say unto one I say unto all, be of good cheer, little children; for I am in your midst, and I have not forsaken you." Keep this in its context. We're still sitting in this same spot on the river as the day before all these bad things happened, and he says, I'm in your midst, and he just called them little children. Is that to say that the Lord is being derogatory towards them? Is he making fun of them? Or is it possible that he's saying, I love little children. And little children may be immature in some ways, underdeveloped in some ways, they haven't fully reached their capacity, their potential.

I love the fact that he's speaking to them in this way where he's working with little children so they can then learn and grow and become who they were intended to become and reach their potential. And he tells them in verse 37, "inasmuch as ye have humbled yourselves before me, the blessings of the kingdom are yours." I think he just put on a silver platter for us one of the secrets, so to speak, of the gospel is you don't have to be perfect and get it right all the time. Just be humble. Be like a little child who is willing to submit to whatever the parent sees fit to instruct that child with and you'll grow. You're going to get the blessings of the kingdom.

So, verse 38, "gird up your loins and be watchful and be sober, look forward for the coming of the Son of Man, for he cometh in an hour [that] you think not." It's this idea of you've still got a long journey ahead of you, little children, so what do you do? Take one more step. Put one more foot in front of another. Put another paddle in the water and take another stroke if that's the way you're going, and I'm with you. And by the way, verse 39: "Pray always that ye enter not into temptation." I don't know that God is commanding us to every five minutes kneel down and offer up a prayer. I think what he's saying is, can you just have your life become increasingly more connected with me, have your thoughts and your hearts drawn more heavenward and focused on what you can do to help build my kingdom and I'll guide you; I'll lead you along.

Which now leads us to the 13th of August which is the next day, so they got this revelation on the 12th at the - what is called McIlwaine's Bend, what they're referring to, and then on the 13th they get a little further down the river and not on the river but walking, and they run into a particular group of people.

So we look back at section 52, there was a Church conference and missionaries are called out, including Hyrum Smith with John Murdock, and David Whitmer eventually became companions with Harvey Whitlock. And it just so happens that as they were making their way down into Zion to Independence, they bump into Joseph Smith and his group coming back. Can you imagine the joyous reunion? You haven't seen your brother and other members of the Church for months and you meet them out here in the wilderness and you get this beautiful experience. And I also love that Hyrum gets another section delivered directly to him, section 62, and it's interesting that we haven't heard from him for a while.

Section 11 was in some ways a bit of a patriarchal blessing, and we have this joyous reunion and we hear some interesting principles that we can think about how they apply to our lives today, and I'll just point out one. I love that God says again, "...your sins are forgiven" (Doctrine and

Covenants 62:3). Again, we're talking about the power of journeying and not to be fixated on destinations and that many of us, we get on journeys and often conflict arises. And God understands that in the process, we're going to hit up against and have friction moments, and he has to then guide us and teach us that yes, you can repent and I will forgive you. I just love it. He's had to say that multiple times, your sins are forgiven, so keep pressing forward. I take heart and solace for all of us in our journey back to God's presence, that he has said to us multiple times, your sins are forgiven. In fact, that is the promise you get every single week when you partake of the sacrament. He says this to you, that your sins are forgiven, just like we see in verse 3 of section 62.

And then after promising them that their sins are forgiven them, he tells them to continue going west to Independence. Have this meeting, have this conference with your group, and then verse 5: "... then you may return to bear record, yea, even altogether, or two by two, as seemeth you good, it mattereth not unto me." There's the third time, section 60, 61, now 62, using this exact phrase, "it mattereth not unto me" (Doctrine and Covenants 62:5).

Brothers and sisters, I think the Lord really is trying to get their attention, and by default what he says unto one he says unto all. He's saying to us, part of wisdom is figuring out what I absolutely need to be guided on versus what – I shouldn't sit and wait for a revelation but I should simply move forward and do the best I can. A wise person will be able to distinguish the difference between those two and move forward. The Lord loves effort. He rewards effort. We've heard that from our prophets and apostles. It's really hard to steer a car that's in park. It's really hard to guide a boat with its rudder when it's not moving. When a boat or a car is moving forward, then the Lord can help guide us.

Some of the most amazing experiences of life come when I'm not sure what I'm doing or how I'm even doing it but I'm doing the best I can and I move forward. And then when needs are manifest and the Lord has a specific thing that needs to be accomplished, then the revelation comes. It's easy to move in those directions when you're already moving forward on the covenant path.

Notice his – the conclusion to verse 5: "...only be faithful, and declare glad tidings unto the inhabitants of the earth or among the congregations of the wicked." But whether you do that two by two or as a whole group, "it mattereth not unto me" (Doctrine and Covenants 62:5). Just make sure that you're accomplishing what I want you to accomplish, which is to declare these glad tidings, the good news of the gospel as you go. And he promises them, verse 7: "I, the Lord, am willing, if any among you desire to ride upon horses, or upon mules, or in chariots...". Are you noticing he's leaving – he could have said it again but he didn't, it mattereth not unto me. "...He shall receive this blessing, if he receive it from the hand of the Lord, with a thankful heart in all things" (Doctrine and Covenants 62:7). And then he finishes with: "Behold, the kingdom is yours. And behold, and lo, I am with the faithful always. Even so. Amen" (Doctrine and Covenants 62:9).

Now let me pause here. Do you think it would be possible for this group that has taken the long journey and taken their time doing what they were commanded to do back in section 52, do you

think it would be easy for them to throw a pity party and say, well, we did what we were supposed to do? Now, granted they were delayed a week because of some sickness with John Murdock, but still could they say, we missed out on all of the exciting reveal and the foundation stone of the temple being laid and the land of Zion being dedicated, and we missed out on all of it because we were doing what we were asked to do? I love the fact that Hyrum never seems to - to wallow in that mire from - from what we can see moving forward. They simply part ways – Joseph's group and those who are with him continue east, and Hyrum and his group continue west and fulfill that assignment.

Now let me finish with a personal story. Let me tell you about Grace. Some of you think I'm going to talk about the doctrine called grace and that will absolutely be a part of this. But I want to tell you about Grace, who happens to be my mother. She was named Grace. My mother gave birth to nine children. I was number seven of that nine, that group of nine kids. And she and my father, they raised us to the best of their ability, and it's really easy for a younger generation to notice the flaws in an older generation right above them and to point out what they're doing wrong or where they've messed up or where they could have done better.

My mother, she started to experience some things and I don't know at what point in her life they started to happen because I was born later in the family. She was starting to treat people in a way that even at a young age I could tell wasn't – wasn't normal or wasn't healthy. It wasn't right. It was later on that she was diagnosed with a personality disorder, and this particular personality disorder meant that she would push people away from her. She would say things that were really, really mean. She would treat people in ways that would cause them to say, whoa, I'm not going – I'm going to avoid her in the future. And so what happened is, her circle of friends and her circle of loved ones got pushed out away from her. This was painful because I watched her get more upset and more angry and more bitter at everybody, and she thought that she was the only one who was still sane and everybody else was going crazy.

It was painful because this woman had given her life to raising us and she had served so many people. I can't tell you how many times we would be ready to eat Sunday dinner and she'd say no, we're not eating until you deliver this food to a widower or a widow or somebody who was sick in the neighborhood or in the ward or in the stake. But now, the older she got, the more those kinds of things went away and bitterness was setting in, and it confused me and I was frustrated. Then her physical body started to – to have more struggles, and my brother and sister-in-law in Colorado took my mother in for quite a few months, and then we had to bring her out to Utah again and put her in a care facility.

Brothers and sisters, my mother got dementia and we watched her brain capacity decrease and her memory and her ability to think and to communicate decrease. And most people, when they talk about dementia, they talk about what you lose and how sad and how tragic it is to see somebody lose that capacity mentally. In our family, we look at dementia a little differently now, because dementia on my mom's journey of life actually cured her personality disorder. For the last year of

her life – she passed away in July of 2019 – but for the last year and a couple of months of her life, when we had her in a care facility really near our home close by, my wife and my children and I were able to visit her on almost a daily basis, almost every day we were there, and when we came into the facility she would smile. She would – she would get excited to see us, things that we had never experienced before as a family. She was a different person with dementia to the point where now, she would hug my wife. She would hug my children, she would – she would be delighted to see them, rather than angry and upset.

Now what's the point? Brothers and sisters, I told you at the beginning of sharing this story that I wanted to talk to you about Grace. And I just told you one little portion of the life of Grace Griffin, but in the process, what I've really been telling you is about the grace and the goodness of God as it's manifest not just in the life of my mother and my relationship with her and my wife and my children's capacity to be able to have this relationship with her, it's this idea that for decades it was a difficult journey for my mom. And she recognized that there were times when I thought, is it worth it, where I was tempted to just say, I'm done, I'm done interacting.

But it was the grace of God who granted me a small view of something that made all the difference. I saw in the midst of a really difficult, painful journey, wondering, should I – should I keep trying to be a dutiful son or should I just do what a lot of other people have done and just leave her? I saw my mother and my father in a more eternal role and a more eternal setting, and I saw a look on my mom's face, a look of normal mental and psychological and physical abilities. And she and my father were just sitting there smiling and she had a glow about her; she had a look about her that was grace. That vision in my mind made it so that I could keep going for more than a decade at that point, moving forward in difficult circumstances on this journey, holding onto the fact that these struggles that my mom was facing were not eternal. They were part of a mortal trial of faith, not just for my mom, but for all of us.

There are a million different struggles, physical, mental, emotional, psychological identity crises that people are going through at different phases of their life that manifest themselves in different ways. And this could be for you, this could be for your parent like it was in my situation, it could be for a spouse, it could be for a child who is struggling with something. It could be with a grandparent, a sibling, a co-worker, colleague, all kinds of different people are affected with different elements.

Brothers and sisters, among the million problems that are out there, there's only one solution, and as we look to God we recognize that there are some things that he empowers us to be able to fix. But, brothers and sisters, there are some things that we can't fix in this life. We have to drop those burdens at the feet of the Lord and say, help, help me to do whatever I can to make the situation as manageable as possible, not just for that individual but for other people around that individual, and in thy own time and in thy own way and thy grace will be sufficient to make right everything that currently is wrong.

So as you move forward with your own relationships, recognize there will be times with – with family members or even children or grandchildren where you can't fix it. All you can do is love and you can turn to the Lord and say, make me an instrument to do whatever I possibly can to help them feel whatever degree of heavenly love that they need to feel to move forward and accomplish their life's mission along their life journey.

Brothers and sisters, our message today is the grace of God is real, and he will guide you if you keep moving forward doing the best you can to fulfill the commandments and the covenants that he has made with you. His promises are sure. There will be a day when he will wipe away all tears, when he'll clean up every skinned knee and bruised elbow and patch everything up from mortality in perfected states in eternity when we don't have to deal with all these tests of mortality forever. So may the Lord bless each of us on our journeys as we move forward to recognize his grace.

It was a sacred occasion, brothers and sisters, when family was able to gather as we were with my mother, and as we brushed up close to that veil to send her peacefully onto the other side and to be able to genuinely look at many of those family members and feel a genuine love and charity for her that God feels for her, that she wasn't defined by that personality disorder, that thanks to the grace of God we were able to recognize that she was defined by her eternal identity.

God lives. He knows what you're going through and I leave that with you in the sacred name of Jesus Christ. Amen. Know that you're loved.

Bibliography

- 1) Thompson, Will L. "Have I Done Any Good?" *The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints*, www.churchofjesuschrist.org/music/library/hymns/have-i-done-any-good?lang=eng.
- 2) Various Authors. "12 After Much Tribulation." *12*, 2018, www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/history/saints-v1/12-after-much-tribulation?lang=eng.