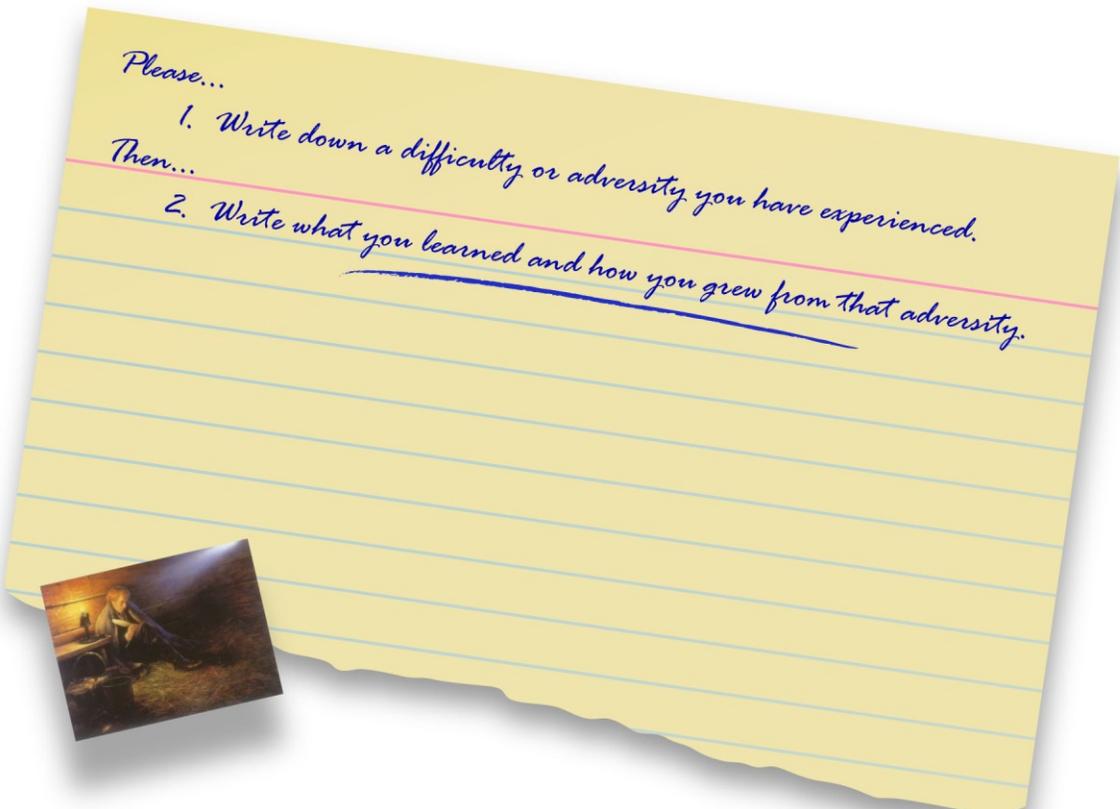




Lesson 28 "O God, Where Art Thou?", D&C 121:1-33; 122; Our Heritage, pp. 45-53.

Introduction



This lesson is about enduring adversity by turning to the Savior. Later in the lesson you will have an opportunity to share what you have written down.

Background

After the Saints were driven from Jackson County in late 1833, they found refuge in nearby Clay County until they were asked to leave in 1836. From Clay County, they moved about 60 miles north and established the community of Far West and other smaller settlements.

The Church prospered for a time in northern Missouri. The population grew rapidly, and temple sites were dedicated in Far West and Adam-ondi-Ahman. However, there continued to be conflicts among some of the Saints. Several leaders were excommunicated, including Oliver Cowdery and David Whitmer.

In addition to dissension among some Church members, there continued to be conflicts with other residents in northern Missouri. In 1838, mobs and militia members began more attacks. On 25 October, three Church members were killed during a battle at Crooked River, including David W. Patten, an Apostle. Two days later, Governor Lilburn W. Boggs issued an order that "the Mormons must be treated as enemies and *must be exterminated* or driven from the state" (*History of the Church*, 3:175).

On 30 October, a mob of approximately 200 men killed 17 men and boys at Haun's Mill.

Lesson Highlights

- Joseph Smith's prayer in Liberty Jail, and the Lord's response
- The Savior's perfect understanding of our sufferings and adversity
- Purposes of adversity
- The Lord's counsel to those who experience adversity
- The Lord's promises to those who are faithful in adversity

A study of this lesson will help us better endure adversity by turning to the Savior.

Next Week

#29 Building the Kingdom of God in Nauvoo, Illinois (D&C 124:1-21, 87-90, 97-110; 126; Our Heritage, pp. 51-52, 55-58, 61-62)



The next day, Joseph Smith and approximately 50 other Church leaders were arrested on false charges. Most of these leaders were released within three weeks. However, six of them, including Joseph and Hyrum Smith, were detained despite their innocence. In November they were marched first to Independence, then to Richmond, and then to Liberty, where they were incarcerated in Liberty Jail until April 1839.

Conditions in Liberty Jail were harsh. The prisoners were kept in the lower level, which was like a dungeon—dark, cold, and unsanitary. The food was inadequate and filthy. The Prophet and his companions had only a little straw on the stone floor for their beds, with meager blankets for cover. The ceiling was so low that some of the brethren, including Joseph and Hyrum, could not stand upright. They were also under constant threat of death.

Joseph Smith's prayer in Liberty Jail, and the Lord's response

D&C 121:1-6 record Joseph's entreaties to the Lord as he sought the welfare of the Saints.

D&C 121:7-33 and section **122** are the Lord's response to Joseph's prayers. In **121:7-10**, the Lord tells the Prophet that this is temporary and that things could be worse! Imagine in your mind how Joseph might have felt about that answer—and how you would feel in that situation! In the midst of this deep tribulation, the jail became a place of heavenly instruction.

The Savior's perfect understanding of our sufferings and adversity

D&C 122:5-8 taught the Prophet to put trials in perspective and learn from them. He also reminded Joseph that He was well acquainted with suffering, having "descended below" all things. (D&C 19:16-19)

The Savior descended below all things, He has a perfect understanding of all our trials.

Speaking of the supreme suffering of the Savior, **Elder Neal A. Maxwell** of the Quorum of the Twelve said:

Purposes of adversity

Adversity is part of God's plan for our testing and growth during mortality. We came to earth knowing we would experience pain, trials, and other difficulties.

The Prophet Joseph Smith experienced so many afflictions that he said they "have been my common lot all the days of my life; ... and I feel, like Paul, to glory in tribulation" (D&C 127:2). In addition to the comfort and counsel the Lord gave the Prophet in Liberty Jail, there were many other occasions when the Lord taught him about adversity. The rest of this lesson examines these teachings in the Doctrine and Covenants.

While the Prophet was imprisoned, about 8,000 Saints in Missouri were forced out of their homes as a result of the governor's extermination order. Many of them were robbed, beaten, and killed by the mobs as they fled to the state of Illinois. The Prophet heard reports of the Saints' suffering and pleaded with the Lord for help. In response, the Lord gave some powerful revelations. The Prophet included them in a letter to Church leaders in Quincy, Illinois, who were directing the Saints' exodus from Missouri. Portions of these revelations are now sections 121, 122, and 123 of the Doctrine and Covenants.

B. H. Roberts, "*The eyes of the saints were turned to [Liberty Jail] as the place whence would come encouragement, counsel—the word of the Lord. It was more temple than prison, so long as the Prophet was there. It was a place of meditation and prayer. ... Joseph Smith sought God in this rude prison, and found him*" (A *Comprehensive History of the Church*, 1:526).

"As part of His infinite atonement, Jesus ... has borne the sins, griefs, sorrows, and, declared Jacob, the pains of every man, woman, and child (see 2 Nephi 9:21). Having been perfected in His empathy, Jesus thus knows how to succor us. ... Nothing is beyond His redeeming reach or His encircling empathy. Therefore, we should not complain about our own life's not being a rose garden when we remember who wore the crown of thorns!" (Ensign, May 1987, 72).

The Lord revealed some purposes of adversity in the Doctrine and Covenants:

- a. **D&C 98:12, 14–15; 101:4; 136:31.** (The Lord allows adversity to come into our lives to try us and to prove us to see whether we will abide in His covenant.)
- b. **D&C 101:1–2.** (Some adversity is a result of our transgressions.)
- c. **D&C 122:7.** (The Lord allows adversity to give us experience and help us grow.)

"...peace be unto thy soul; thine adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a small moment; And then, if thou endure it well, God shall exalt thee on high..." (from D&C 121:7-8)

"...know thou...that all these things shall give thee experience, and shall be for thy good. The Son of Man hath descended below them all. Art thou greater than he?" (from D&C 122:7-8)



D&C 121:8 promises blessings if we “endure it [adversity] well”. Ponder what it means to “endure it well”.

Affliction is not just for punishment. It may come from transgression—that is one cause, but committing a sin or making a bad choice is not the only reason for adversity. Some adversity comes just because we live in a telestial world and its part of the requirement for “opposition in all things” (2 Nephi 2:11).

Another cause of adversity is the condition that others be allowed their free agency. In exercising their free agency, others may cause accidents or may choose to cause pain and suffering for us, taking actions that God could protect us from, but He may not do so

The Lord’s counsel to those who experience adversity

D&C 24:8; 31:9; 54:10; 121:7 encourage patience in afflictions and placing things in perspective

D&C 98:1 is counsel to rejoice in affliction and be thankful for it.

D&C 98:11 teaches us to remain obedient and continue seeking to do well.

D&C 101:36-38 counsels to care more for the soul than the body and seek the Lord.

The Lord’s promises to those who are faithful in adversity

D&C 3:8; 24:8; 112:13; 122:4 give us assurance that the Lord will be with us and heal us

D&C 58:2-4; 101:35-36; 103:12; 121:29; 127:4; 136:31 promise rewards of glory, joy, and other blessings for those who are faithful through their tribulations

D&C 98:3; 122:7 teaches the principle that all things work together for our good and to the glory of God

Elder James E. Faust said: “*In the pain, the agony, and the heroic endeavors of life, we pass through a refiner’s fire, and the insignificant and the unimportant in our lives can melt away like dross and make our faith bright, intact, and strong. ... It is part of the purging toll exacted of some to become acquainted with God. In the agonies of life,*

Conclusion

In April 1839, after the Prophet and his companions had been held in Liberty Jail for nearly five months, they were sent to Daviess County and then to Boone County for trial. While they were being moved to Boone County, the guards let them escape because some officials concluded that they could not be successfully prosecuted. Joseph Smith and the other prisoners then made their way to Illinois, where they joined their families and the rest of the Saints.

Read the revelations given in Liberty Jail in times of adversity. Through the Atonement Jesus Christ has borne our griefs. If we turn to Him, He will comfort and lift us even in our darkest days. Joseph Smith provided a wonderful example of dealing with adversity. We are greatly blessed by the willingness of Christ to help us endure and learn from adversity.

because of His respect for our free agency. And in some cases, adversity is a learning opportunity—maybe a really difficult one—but an opportunity all the same.

Elder Harold B. Lee said that “*living the gospel of Jesus Christ is no guarantee that adversity will not come into our lives; but living the gospel does give us the strength and faith and power to rise above that adversity and look beyond the present trouble to the brighter day*” (quoted by A. Theodore Tuttle, *Improvement Era*, Dec. 1967, 47).

For other scriptural teachings about the purposes of adversity see 2 Nephi 2:11; Alma 32:5–6; 62:41; and Helaman 12:1–3.

D&C 122:9 reminds us that God will be with us and we should not fear what man can do.

Remember that it is not what happens to you that matters, but how you handle it! Some react with bitterness, despair, hopelessness, or anger. Others are refined by the experience and learn empathy.

we seem to listen better to the faint, godly whisperings of the Divine Shepherd” (*Ensign*, May 1979, 53).

Elder Marion G. Romney said:

“*I have seen the remorse and despair in the lives of men who, in the hour of trial, have cursed God and died spiritually. And I have seen people rise to great heights from what seemed to be unbearable burdens.*

“*Finally, I have sought the Lord in my own extremities and learned for myself that my soul has made its greatest growth as I have been driven to my knees by adversity and affliction*” (*Improvement Era*, Dec. 1969, 69).

D&C 121:8; 127:2. Those who are faithful in affliction will be exalted.

Gospel Doctrine Notebook

Record your thoughts on the teachings discussed in this lesson.

- D&C 121:1-6—What are your thoughts and feelings as you read Joseph Smith’s pleadings with the Lord in these verses?
- How has knowledge of the Savior’s suffering helped you with faithful in the face of your own tribulations?
- How have prayer, humility, and faith in Jesus Christ helped you receive strength during times of adversity?

