

D & C Lesson 35

“A MISSION OF SAVING”

Prepared by Duane S. Crowther, September 2001

1. Why repeat the stories of the experiences of the early Latter-day Saint pioneers?

A. **President Gordon B. Hinckley:** “Stories of the beleaguered Saints and of their suffering and death will be repeated again and again. . . . Stories of their rescue need to be repeated again and again. They speak of the very essence of the gospel of Jesus Christ.”

[*Ensign*, November 1996, p. 86]

B. **President Gordon B. Hinckley:** [Referring to the pioneers] “I will never get over being thankful to them; I hope you never get over being thankful to them. I hope that we will always remember them. . . . Let us read again and again, and read to our children or our children’s children, the accounts of those who suffered so much.” [*Church News*, 31 July 1999, p. 5]

2. Videos from *Teachings from the Doctrine and Covenants and Church History*:

A. *Faith in Every Footstep* - Presidents Gordon B. Hinckley, Thomas S. Monson, and James E. Faust recount the Latter-day Saint pioneers’ journey from the banks of the Mississippi River to the Salt Lake Valley.

B. *Tried in All Things* - President Gordon B. Hinckley tells of three young men who sacrificed their lives to save the suffering pioneers in the Martin and Willie Handcart companies.

3. October Conference, 1856, in Salt Lake City, in the “old tabernacle”:

A. “On Saturday of that conference, Franklin D. Richards and a handful of associates arrived in the valley. They had traveled from Winter Quarters with strong teams and light wagons and had been able to make good time. Brother Richards immediately sought out President Young. He reported that there were hundreds of men, women, and children scattered over the long trail

. . . . They were in desperate trouble. Winter had come early. Snow-laden winds were howling across the highlands. . . . Our people were hungry; their carts and their wagons were breaking down; their oxen dying. The people themselves were dying. All of them would perish unless they were rescued.”

[*Gospel Doctrine Teacher’s Manual*, 1999, p. 203]

B. Brigham Young’s instructions as he met with the Saints: “I will now give this people the subject and text for the Elders who may speak. . . . It is this. . . . Many of our brethren and sisters are on the plains with handcarts, and probably many are now seven hundred miles from this place, and they must be brought here, we must send assistance to them. The text will be, ‘to get them here.’ . . . *That is my religion; that is the dictation of the Holy Ghost that I possess. It is to save the people. . . . I shall call upon the Bishops this day. I shall not wait until tomorrow, nor until the next day, for 60 good mule teams and 12 or 15 wagons. I do not want to send oxen. Also 12 tons of flour and 40 good teamsters, beside those that drive the teams. . . . I will tell you all that your faith, religion, and profession of religion, will never salve one soul of you in the Celestial Kingdom of our God, unless you carry out just such principles as I am now teaching you. Go and bring in those people now on the plains.*” [In Leroy R. Hafen and Ann W. Hafen, *Handcarts to Zion*, 1960, pp. 120-21]

C. “That afternoon, food, bedding, and clothing in great quantities were assembled by the women. The next morning, horses were shod and wagons were repaired and loaded. The following morning, . . . 16 mule teams pulled out and headed eastward. *By the end of October there were 250 teams on*

the road to give relief. [Ensign, November 1996, pp. 85-86]

D. President Gordon B. Hinckley's account of the rescue: "It was in . . . desperate and terrible circumstances—hungry, exhausted, their clothes thin and ragged—that [the handcart companies] were found by the rescue party. As the rescuers appeared on the western horizon breaking a trail through the snow, they seemed as angels of mercy. And indeed they were. The beleaguered emigrants shouted for joy, some of them. Others, too weak to shout, simply wept and wept and wept. There was now food to eat and some warmer clothing. But the suffering was not over, nor would it ever end in mortality. Limbs had been frozen, and the gangrenous flesh sloughed off from the bones. The carts were abandoned, and the survivors were crowded into the wagons of the rescuers. The long rough journey of thee hundred, four hundred, even five hundred miles between them and this valley was especially slow and tedious because of the storms. On November 30, 104 wagons, loaded with suffering human cargo, came into the Salt Lake Valley. Word of their expected arrival had preceded them. It was Sunday, and again the Saints were gathered in the Tabernacle. Brigham Young stood before the congregation and said,

As soon as this meeting is dismissed I want the brethren and sisters to repair to their homes. . . . The afternoon meeting will be omitted, for I wish the sisters to . . . prepare to give those who have just arrived a mouthful of something to eat, and to wash them and nurse them. . . . Some you will find with their feet frozen to their ankles; some are frozen to their knees and some have their hands frosted. . . ; we want you to receive them as your own children, and to have the same feeling for them . . ." [Ensign, November 1991, p. 54]

4. The gospel of Jesus Christ is a message of rescue

A. The Savior rescues us through His atoning sacrifice. "It is because of the sacrificial redemption wrought by the Savior of the world that the great plan of the eternal gospel is made available to us, under which those who die in the Lord shall not taste of death but shall have the opportunity of going on to a celestial and eternal glory. In our own helplessness, *He becomes our rescuer, saving us from damnation and bring us to eternal life. In times of despair, in seasons of loneliness and fear, He is there on the horizon to bring succor and comfort and assurance and faith.* He is our King, our Savior, our Deliverer, our Lord and our God." **President Gordon B. Hinckley.** [Ensign, November 1991, p. 54]

B. As Latter-day Saints, we are to rescue those in need.

1. "Our mission in life, as followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, must be a mission of saving" **President Gordon B. Hinckley.** [Ensign, November 1991, p. 59]

2. "Our service to others may not be so dramatic [as the carrying of the entire Martin company across the Sweetwater River by three 18-year-old boys], but we can bolster human spirits, clothe cold bodies, feed hungry people, comfort grieving hearts, and lift to new heights precious souls." **President Thomas B. Monson.** [Ensign, May 1990, pp. 46-47]

C. How? The scriptures tell us:

1. *D&C 18:10-16: Preach the gospel:* "Ye are called to cry repentance unto this people."

2. *D&C 52:40: Care for those in need:* "Remember in all things the poor and the needy, the sick and the afflicted, for he that doeth not these things, the same is not my disciple."

3. *D&C 81:5: Strengthen others:* "Succor the weak, lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees."

4. *D&C 138:58: Do temple work:* "The dead who repent will be redeemed, through obedience to the ordinances of the house of God."

5. *3 Ne. 18:31-32: Minister to those who have fallen away:* "Ye know not but what they will return and repent, . . . and ye shall be the means of bringing salvation unto them."

6. *D&C 68:25-28: Raise your children in righteousness:* “Teach [your] children to pray, and to walk uprightly before the Lord.”

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