

Come Follow Me Class Insights – 37 – Doctrine and Covenants 98-101

I'm Taylor, and I'm Tyler. This is Book of Mormon Central's Come Follow Me Insights. Today, Doctrine and Covenants sections 98 through 101.

This - this is one of the most difficult periods of the entire history of the Church for the actual events of what the saints are going through. Before we dive directly into that, let me just ask the question, have you ever had a time in your life where you had been given some promises, there was a pretty high expectation for what was going to happen or occur, a nice blessing of some sort, and you worked towards it and it didn't happen and you started to get discouraged and you worked harder for it and it got further and further and further away from a possibility and you turn heavenward and say what's going on? I thought I was promised in my patriarchal blessing this, or I got a priesthood blessing from somebody and they promised that this would happen, or the Holy Ghost made it very clear to me that something was going to occur and now it's not happening. Well what do you do in those situations? That's – that's a very small way to introduce what's happening here in section 98 through 101.

So Joseph is about – as they would travel – it's about 900 miles from Kirtland in Ohio all the way out to Independence, Missouri, what they're calling Zion. Joseph gets section 98 before he could have possibly known all of the details. Now a letter was sent earlier in July that ooh, things aren't looking great here, they're starting to heat up between the settlers there in Independence and the saints. And so he would have known things are headed in the wrong direction but he wouldn't have had any idea the extent based on letters, it's based on revelation alone that we get section 98 and it proves to be prophetic on many, many counts.

It's beautiful that God understands his people, what they need, but he also lets people make choices. So God has revealed that this is going to be Zion and so the saints have been gathering there, they've been called to gather and they're just so enthusiastic (unclear) printing press, they're printing the Book of Commandments, later becomes the Doctrine and Covenants and they're declaring to everybody, this is where God will come, the Second Coming will

happen here and we're going to own all this territory and it created some conflict for the other settlers who felt like so you guys are just going to take over and we're going to get kicked out and there were other things going on and what I find significant is that God understands all of this. He lets events play out. He lets people make their choices and he gives line upon line to Joseph.

Now it's very interesting. God could have come in and just said Joseph, here's about what's about to happen and you need to go down there and solve all this, but instead, God gives very specific principles about how to deal with interactions with other people. And also his perspective of what happens when his promises seem to not be fulfilled on our timetable. And I find this very useful for all of us that whenever we have promises made, we can look to how can I be more in tune and in line with God's vision and his timeline for his promises for me?

And one of the – one of the struggles here with this particular situation in Missouri is the - the absolute unfairness of it all, that you have this bigger group of people coming in and forcing this smaller group of people out regardless of what the rationale or the reason for that is. It feels very unfair that they're getting their crops burned and their livestock stolen or killed and their home, in some cases, burned down and getting tarred and feathered, exactly, and their store plundered and their printing press totally destroyed and parts burned and everything seems very, very unfair.

In the April General Conference just past, of 2021, Elder Dale G. Renlund gave an incredible talk that ties into this. In fact, the title of his talk in that General Conference is Infuriating Unfairness. That's the title of the talk, and when that happens, not just to saints in Church history but to you or family members or loved ones today, it can be a serious trial of faith when there's infuriating unfairness. Listen to this one quote from his talk: In the eternities Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ will resolve all unfairness. Did you catch that? It's Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ who will resolve all unfairness; it's not us, it's not government, it's not the local policemen, it's – it's God and Jesus Christ who are going to do that. Notice he goes on to say, we understandably want to know how and when. How are they going to do that? When are they

going to do it? To my knowledge, they have not revealed how or when. What I do know is that they will. That - that statement right there applies to everything in 98 through 101 as well as anything I know. They wanted Zion redeemed right then. They wanted everything to be made right and justice to be brought down right then, but if you know the rest of the Church history story you know that it didn't happen. This last part: in unfair situations, one of our tasks is to trust that all that is unfair about life can be made right through the atonement of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ overcame the world and absorbed all unfairness. Because of him, we can have peace in this world and be of good cheer. If we let him, Jesus Christ will consecrate the unfairness for our gain. He will not just console us and restore what was lost; he will use the unfairness for our benefit. I think that these principles are applicable to these early saints in Independence, Missouri as much as any other time in Church history – these lessons taught by Elder Renlund. So let's jump in.

Look at the very first verse here. So again, Joseph Smith - God did not say everything's breaking out down here; it's total chaos. This is what God says. "Verily I say unto you my friends, fear not, let your hearts be comforted; yea, rejoice evermore, and in everything give thanks." Now that's a very interesting way to begin a section in the historical circumstances where people are probably not feeling very grateful to lose businesses and property and homes and their sense of security and peace. Now when I've had difficulty in life, the first thought to my mind is not to say thank you Lord for letting me suffer. It just (unclear) how he begins and then he goes on and says, "waiting patiently on the Lord, for your prayers have entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth and are recorded with this seal and testament – the Lord hath sworn and decreed that they shall be granted."

So I'm going to pause for just a moment on this phrase, Lord of Sabaoth. Now if we're reading quickly people might think this means the Lord of Sabbath but this is actually a transliteration of the Hebrew word that literally means the Lord of hosts. And this is the heavenly host, the armies of heaven and if we look at the whole context of this section, it's about God giving commands for his people to seek peace and justice and that ultimately, he is the military power, he is the Lord of all the military hosts coming from heaven that can set everything right, and I just find it significant that Joseph Smith who doesn't

know Hebrew gets this very specific definition or identity for who God is, that God would identify himself using this phrase in a section that's dealing with conflict, military conflict that's happening with the people in Independence essentially saying trust me, I am the one that has total power, total control, I control the hosts of heaven and I can provide full justice. Just trust in me and seek for peace and justice as much as possible before you try to take the law or military might into your own hands.

So look at verse 3 as he continues that idea, "Therefore," you notice the therefore is that cause and effect connecting word, so because of verse 1 and 2, the fact that you can rely on the Lord to take care of fighting those battles, look at verse three, the outcome is, "Therefore, he giveth this promise unto you, with an immutable covenant that they shall be fulfilled." All those promises aren't going to be ignored; they will be fulfilled, "and all things wherewith you have been afflicted shall work together for your good, and to my name's glory, saith the Lord."

So here are these people who – by the time they're going to get this section 98, things have gotten way worse, it's progressively getting harder for them to the point where they had originally been given until the spring to get out of Jackson County. They weren't excited about that and most of them weren't planning on leaving and the settlers there, the mob, realized that, and so they're going to ramp up the persecution and force them out in October and November in the cold as winter is setting in, but you'll notice he told them all things shall work together for your good and to my name's glory, saith the Lord.

Now it's easy to see how this applies to them back then, but we're confident that everyone who's watching this either yourself or a loved one, is experiencing some pretty difficult trials of your faith or medical issues or concerns or financial struggles or relationship concerns. I love the fact that the Lord doesn't leave exclusions or side principles that don't apply in verse 3, he says, "all things wherewith you have been afflicted." That's a hundred percent. They'll all work together for your good as long as and on the only condition being that you stay connected with the Lord Jesus Christ, that you trust him, you keep moving forward with faith in him.

Now we have to be careful that we don't misapply this principle because some people who find themselves in abusive situations will think okay, well I just need to be passive and let this abuse continue and God will fight my battle for me. No, we protect the innocent and we protect the people who are being abused first and foremost wherever possible and then let the vengeance be the Lord's from that point moving forward. We don't put ourselves or loved ones or other people into harm's way.

Now in verse 4 we make a transition into the laws of the land. You'll notice that Joseph Smith hasn't – hasn't paid much attention to the laws of the land, government and the Constitution of the United States or any of that previous to section 98. This is the first time where it has become very clear to him, the Lord is making very clear to him, Joseph, there's a reason for law and we need to let the law do what it's supposed to do and if it doesn't and when it doesn't, then vengeance will be mine at that point but first, don't you go out and fight these battles yourself, let the law run its course, and so section 98 and especially it's going to ramp up even more in section 101, there's this focus on the law of the land and paying attention to it. We've mentioned it briefly before but here it really becomes front and center.

Look at verse 4. "Now, verily I say unto you concerning the laws of the land, it is my will that my people should observe to do all things whatsoever I command them. And that law of the land which is constitutional, supporting that principle of freedom in maintaining rights and privileges, belongs to all mankind, and is justifiable before me."

Look down at verse 7. "As pertaining to the law of man whatsoever is more or less than this cometh of evil." Oooh, that should sound familiar to some of you because Jesus used that exact same idea, almost that exact, same phrase clear back in 3rd Nephi when he's teaching the Nephites and the Lamanites in chapter 11, at the very end of chapter 11 he gives the definition of what his doctrine is in 3rd Nephi 11:32 through 39, then listen to what he says, speaking of his doctrine in verse 40 he says, "And whoso shall declare more or less than this, and establish it for my doctrine, the same cometh of evil and is not built upon my rock; but he buildeth on a sandy foundation, and the gates of hell stand open to receive such when the floods come and the winds beat

upon them." So he establishes his gospel and his doctrine and he says anybody who tries to say okay, this is what Jesus' doctrine is and it's different than what he's established here, he says no, that's not of me. Well look what he did in verse 7 back here in section 98, "As pertaining to the law of man, whatsoever is more or less than this cometh of evil." Why? Because God gave us the law through - through inspired people.

Look at verse 8. "I, the Lord God, make you free, therefore ye are free indeed; and the law also maketh you free." Also in General Conference, this past General Conference in April 2021, President Dallin H. Oaks gave an incredible talk called Defending Our Divinely Inspired Constitution. President Oaks showed how that United States Constitution has been used as a pattern in so many other countries throughout the world to establish their own constitution. What's the whole point of the law given to us through the Constitution? Well, he's already been addressing it here and we'll cover it more in section 101. It's this ability to have maximum amounts of agency for the maximum amounts of people for the maximum amount of time going forward. It gives freedom, liberty, agency, so that we can make choices. Now listen to what President Oaks said: The United States Constitution is unique because God revealed that he established it for the rights and the protection of all flesh; that is why this Constitution is of special concern for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints throughout the world. God has given his children moral agency, the power to decide and to act. The most desirable condition for the exercise of their agency is maximum freedom for men and women to act according to their individual choices.

And then in section 101, later on, we're going to hear every man may be accountable for his own sins in the Day of Judgment. And then it's also in that section where he says it is not right that any man should be in bondage one to another. So now we're bringing in servitude into this, that that's taking away freedom and agency so as we jump in here further into section 98, we're seeing this need for the U. S. Constitution and for the law of the land to do what it's supposed to do, to protect all of the men and women who live as citizens under the umbrella, the protection of that law. Now we're going to see that break down here with this group of people.

And one way this breaks down is take a look at verses 9 and 10: "Nevertheless, when the wicked rule the people mourn. Wherefore, honest men" and women, "and wise men," and women, "should be sought for diligently, and good men," and women, "and wise men," and women, "ye should observe to uphold; otherwise whatsoever is less than these cometh of evil." So we live in a society here in the United States where we have the opportunity to vote and God is now commanding us to spend the time to seek after those who are honest and wise and good. And that takes a little bit of time and effort, it's a bit of a homework assignment and what God is trying to say is that the Constitution helps preserve freedom and when we have elected leaders who are honest and wise and good, they help to support the cause of freedom. Otherwise, we might find that our agency has been impinged. So this is interesting that God would reveal all this right in the middle of the chaos that's happening in Zion in Independence, where the Constitutional rights of the members of the Church are being infringed upon.

And so Joseph is going to get more and more into the political scene as far as seeking for help from those leaders and from the law and he is going to seek that help at every level and when he – when he keeps getting shut down and justice is not served, you'll notice it's ten years later when Joseph finally says, okay, I'm running for President, and he begins his presidential campaign at that point. And then he gets martyred and assassinated. So listen to this additional quote from President Oaks in his address: We are to be governed by law and not by individuals and our loyalty is to the Constitution and its principles and processes not to any office holder. In this way all persons are to be equal before the law.

So these principles are going to come out beautifully in section 98 and section 101. He goes on, listen to this: Such independent actions will sometimes require voters to support candidates or political parties or platforms whose other positions they cannot approve. That is one reason we encourage our members to refrain from judging one another in political matters. We should never assert that a faithful Latter-day Saint cannot belong to a particular party or vote for a particular candidate. We teach correct principles and leave our members to choose how to prioritize and apply those principles on the issues presented from time to time.

So Joseph Smith and these early church members are going to take that idea to heart; we're appealing to the office, not to the individual, we're appealing to law here and that's what they're going to be told to do.

I once had somebody say which political party would Jesus Christ support or which political party would he choose to be in? That's kind of an interesting, immature question, and the point is Jesus would not just be in one political party. He is bound by principle and by truth and it is our job, as we see in verse 10, to seek after honest, wise and good people who live these principles and perhaps not be so fixated on just specific party platforms, but have a party of God which is these are the principles that I seek to live.

Sometimes we get so concerned about putting a label on ourselves or other people that it becomes a box that has to define them and they're not allowed to get outside that box. I love the fact now that when you read these scriptures it's the Lord of the universe who is saying let me teach you correct principles and they're going to find different applications at different levels.

I think what God's encouraging us here is, I sent you to this earth, I've given you freedom and agency to act, here are some principles for using it well. Seek after honest, good, wise men and women, and when you do, you're far more likely to have your freedoms preserved.

Now look at – we move on. Look at verse 12. "For he will give unto the faithful line upon line, precept upon precept; and I will try you and prove you herewith." And then verse 13, "And whoso layeth down his life in my cause, for my name's sake, shall find it again, even life eternal." And now verse 14 put in the context of these Missouri saints, "Therefore, be not afraid of your enemies, for I have decreed in my heart, saith the Lord, that I will prove you in all things, whether you will abide in my covenant, even unto death, that you may be found worthy."

It's interesting to me to consider what is it that would cause you to lose your faith - that would cause you to walk away from your testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ? Is it – is it if health concerns stretch out too long, if it's financial struggles get too difficult, if it's certain things aren't taught from the prophets, seers and revelators, is it natural disasters that seem to be unjustified and

over the top, merciless? Exactly. Is it death? Is it the wrongs of the world? What is it? Because sometimes you get this idea as you look around at the lay of the land in which we live, that people are finding all kinds of reasons to walk away from their faith in Christ and their belief in God and their persevering on the straight and narrow way.

Look at verse 15. "For if ye will not abide in my covenant ye are not worthy of me." Those are sobering words. It was Elder Neal A. Maxwell who once used the phrase high yield, low maintenance saints. It's kind of like that car or that machine that just takes so much work; you have to keep putting so much work into it to keep it barely going. I don't want to be like that chain saw of mine that I have to – if I want to use that chain saw, I just know it's just faster – it's just faster to get out an old hand saw. I want to be the instrument in the Lord's hands that it doesn't take a lot of maintenance for the Lord to say Tyler, I need you to do this and to have it be high yield output where I'm not demanding Lord, I'm only going to serve you and I'm only going to believe in you if you do this and this and this for me because I've been a good boy here. That isn't – that isn't the kind of discipleship I want to strive for. I want to be the kind of disciple who says to the Lord, not my will but thine be done because Jesus taught us how to use that phrase and you'll notice when he used that phrase, the most infinite, terrible things happened to him and he didn't forsake us. He kept going. He stayed faithful. Once again Elder Maxwell said he partook of history's bitterest cup without becoming bitter. And then in return he gives us some bitter cups of infinitesimally smaller portions than his own and yet, unfortunately some of us end up becoming embittered in the process. Oh, I want to be more like Jesus and this is one of those areas of scripture where - where it becomes very clear that I have some work to do still, at a personal level.

Now look at verse 16. "Therefore, renounce war and proclaim peace, and seek diligently to turn the hearts of the children to their fathers, and the hearts of the fathers to the children." And it was President Russell M. Nelson who back in October of 2002 gave a talk called Blessed are the Peacemakers and in there he says as individuals we should follow after the things which make for peace. We should be personal peacemakers; we should live peacefully as

couples, families and neighbors. We should live by the golden rule. So now we get a repeat in verse 18. "Let not your hearts be troubled."

I find that so beautiful with all that's going on, he's like I know that things are crazy and chaotic, you're losing homes and property, but you can find peace in me.

Beautiful, and then verse 19 he shifts over to Kirtland, the people in Kirtland who are not forsaking their sins, they have pride in their hearts, they're coveting things and he tells them in verse 21 that he's going to chasten them. Look at the promise that they're given in verse 22. "Again I say unto you, if ye observe to do whatsoever I command you, I, the Lord, will turn away all wrath and indignation from you, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against you."

And then he shifts into this beautiful law, the Lord's law of war and the Lord's law of peace section. In verse 23 through 37 he's describing various scenarios. For instance, look at verse 23, if they come against you and you bear it patiently you shall be rewarded but verse 24 says, "If ye bear it not patiently, it shall be accounted unto you as being meted out as a just measure unto you." So be patient in your afflictions.

Then verse 25, if your enemy smite you the second time and you revile not, your reward shall be a hundredfold. And then a third time it will even be doubled unto you fourfold more than ever before and you've got these three testimonies and then you can be justified that the Lord has seen your offering, okay? Now turn the page over. He tells us this is the same law he gave to Nephi and Joseph and Jacob and Isaac and Abraham and all the ancient apostles is forgive, forgive, forgive, and some of you will remember that time when Peter comes to Jesus and says, am I – am I expected to forgive my brother til seven times? Which Peter is taking it from the Law of Moses level and from this pattern of three times that you're required to forgive and he's saying, seven times? I've more than doubled this. And Jesus' response was really powerful. He says seven times seventy which actually shows up again in verse 40, "And so on unto the second and third time; and as oft as thine enemy repenteth of the trespass wherewith he hath trespassed against thee, thou shalt forgive him until seventy times seven."

Now I've learned a little bit in school about math, I'm not always great, I usually have to pull out a calculator, but if I run the numbers, seventy times seven equals 490. So I'm going to keep a list of the times I get offended and as soon as it gets to 491 that's when I'm free to be really angry and get back at people, is that right? Did I get my math right? You got your math right. That's what God meant, right? You've got your math right; I'm not sure that's what he meant. I'm being silly about that; he didn't mean it. What we have here is actually I wonder if there's a little bit of symbolism and we have to be a little careful here because numbers can be a little bit interesting in terms of symbols but some people see the number seven as symbolic of perfection and the number ten is symbolic of completion. So what do we have then but perfectly complete perfection, meaning, I want your forgiveness to be utterly complete and perfect. So God asks us to forgive all people. We get this earlier in D. & C. 82. He wants us to forgive all people. That doesn't mean you have to accept abuse and injustice, but you do have to forgive people.

Which is interesting because if you look at the numbers - so verse 23 through 37 he told you that you're required to forgive up to those three times but you'll notice the qualifier is these people are not repenting, they're not recognizing the error of their ways, they're not asking you to forgive them and he says you still have to forgive them three - up to three times, and then he shifts that and so starting in verse 38 all the way down through verse 48 this is the group of people who does come to you and says I'm sorry, will you forgive me. Now this kicks in. So it's basically as oft as they come. We're not going to use the 490, we're going to say you're supposed to keep forgiving them but again, we would reiterate this, it doesn't mean if there's abuse going on that you keep putting yourself into that abusive situation, or injustice, that you just allow injustice to continue. There is a way to both forgive people who have been unjust or painful to you while also seeking to protect yourself and others from those abuses.

And, by the way, I have to say here that if you want to try, if you want to strive to be more like Jesus, that means you try to live your life the way he did, you try to take on his divine attributes and apply them in your own life, well he showed us what both of these look like. On the cross, the first thing we have out of his mouth after having been placed on the cross, Father, forgive them

for they know not what they do. It's not like the soldiers were coming to him saying, oh, we are so sorry, will you please forgive us? We really – now we see the error of our ways. They were gambling for his clothing at this point probably. They – they've been mocking him. There's no repentant spirit in their hearts at that point from what we can tell in the record and he's still saying forgive them, for they know not what they do.

I had a time in my life where some individuals did things that were quite painful to me and I had to extract myself from the situation so that I could have a little more peace and prosperity in my life and I learned a very interesting lesson about this, about Father forgive them for they know not what they do. Actually God taught me that those individuals that were hurting me actually knew what they were doing. And I had to learn, Father forgive them even though they know what they're doing. Like it's not my job to stay in the painful circumstance, I need to extract myself and change my environment and my circumstances but God, I'm going to leave them in your hands; it's not my job to hurt them in return, but it was a powerful lesson for me to learn that I had to let go of pain that had been caused, because if I hold onto that pain, they'd go on with their lives and me reliving the pain didn't hurt them, it only hurt me and so I had to let things go.

So if we apply this principle, we say I want to be more like Jesus and one of his characteristics is a forgiving spirit, even when people don't always necessarily deserve it. I want to be more like him. I don't want to hold onto those grudges because as Taylor was talking here, those grudges don't hurt the other person; they only hurt me.

Now we shift gears into section 99. This section is out of – out of chronological order by - by a year. It was given clear back in August of 1832, August 29th but it gets placed in here so it's – it's totally out of its chronological order, this section given to John Murdock. Some of you will remember that it was John and his wife who had three children and then his wife gave birth to twins and she lost her life in childbirth. At about the same time that Joseph and Emma had had twins and both of those twins had died, so John Murdock brings this little boy, Joseph Murdock and this little girl Julia, these two twin babies, and asks Joseph and Emma to adopt them and

care for them which they do. So this is his mission call a year ago at this point where he's called to go and preach the gospel. John Murdock is one of those incredible missionaries. He's on our short list of most effective missionaries in the – in the restoration of the gospel and yet he went out and served these missions at great personal sacrifice.

We don't talk about him very much. We know about Parley P. Pratt who actually baptized him on November 5, 1830. John Murdock then went and converted seventy of his neighbors in the Kirtland area. He served multiple missions, was the mission president in Australia, distributed - circulated 24,000 pamphlets out in Australia and the Pacific area. We just don't talk much about him as he was quietly going about doing good throughout his life and as you said, he served at tremendous cost. He lost four wives to death, he lost his children, and even at times there were members of the Church who falsely accused him of things and he had to then get support from Brigham Young to maintain his standing in the Church because people were making these false claims and yet he was totally dedicated to the end of his life of proclaiming the good news of the gospel. He is just one of the great luminaries of the early Church who, like Hyrum Smith, was meek and quiet, he was like Sam the brother of Nephi, he just was out doing good and it's not about him.

Section 100 is an interesting section. It comes to us from Perrysburg, New York because Joseph and Sidney have been talked into going onto this mission because there's a group of people there near Lake Erie, Lake Ontario on both – in Ontario on the Canada side as well as in the New York side, who, there's a lot of interest. And so they go on this mission and it turns out to be a very successful mission. They baptize a lot of people, a lot of branches of the Church are being built up in that region but while they're away they're really concerned about their family.

Now one of the background issues facing the saints in section 100 just like you have all of that terrible stuff happening over in Independence, you have in Kirtland some increasing pressure, increasing fear among members of the Church. There was a Doctor Philastus Hurlbut who was a member of the Church who had recently been excommunicated by a bishop's council. Joseph

temporarily – he reinstated Philastus and then shortly thereafter a general council re-excommunicated him. So from that point on, Philastus becomes one of our most bitter enemies fighting against the Church and threatening Joseph and Sidney and other leaders of the Church.

Sidney and Joseph, remember, had been dragged out of their homes just about six months before in the dead of winter in March and this is because of Ezra Booth who had become a bitter enemy of the Church so these men, Sidney and Joseph are now out of town and worried like what happens to our families while we're away when there's this much animosity towards us, our families and the Church? It wasn't like they could just get on their cell phones or check email and say hey honey, how are you and the kids doing? Like you're hundreds of miles away with no awareness of how is my family faring, there's this big concern and so God let us know, are our families safe while we are on this mission in your service?

I love how the Lord opens it up in verse 1. "Verily, thus saith the Lord unto you, my friends Sidney and Joseph, your families are well: they are in mine hands, and I will do with them as seemeth me good: for in me there is all power. There's nowhere I'd rather have my family be than in the hands of the Lord, way more in his hands than in my own hands even, (unclear) that they're good. And then God goes on to give them instructions about their preaching, look at verse 5. "Therefore, verily I say unto you, lift up your voices unto this people; speak the thoughts that I shall put into your hearts, and you shall not be confounded before men." He's basically promising them and reassuring them, look, you don't have to have a polished pre-prepared speech or lesson plan. Just open your mouth to share the thoughts that I will put into your – into your heart.

He's basically saying in our words today, we say be authentic. Just be yourself. Verse 6, "For it shall be given you in the very hour, yea, in the very moment, what ye shall say." If there are any of you who are teachers or leaders in the Church at your local level or parents and you sometimes feel anxiety, feeling like you're never going to be quite good enough, you're never going to be able to teach what your children need or what the flock that you're called to oversee is going to need, I love verse 5 and 6 and I would circle them

because that promise is given to all of us, that if we trust in the Lord, it will be given. We will be what those people or those children need at that time. Why? Because they're in the hands of the Lord, they're not in your hands; it's not your job to save them. It's your job to be an instrument in the hands of the Lord to help them connect with the Savior.

Now jumping down through the rest of this section, we'll jump down to verse 15. "Therefore, let your hearts be comforted; for all things shall work together for good to them that walk uprightly, and to the sanctification of the church." So are you noticing a pattern? It doesn't matter whether we're talking about the saints struggling in Independence, the saints struggling in Kirtland, or Joseph and Sidney struggling with some questions in Perrysburg, New York, or wherever you may live today, it's the same ques – or it's the same invitation, let your hearts be comforted because everything – all things are going to work together for your good if you trust the Lord and stick with him.

What I love is he doesn't chastise them saying, how many sections have I already revealed where I told you to fear not and be comforted. He realizes that they need this ongoing feeding and nurturing and he doesn't say, I already fed you that lesson a couple of years ago and that should have been enough. He's like, I understand that right now you feel the need for comfort, a little bit of fear, so I will tell you fear not, be comforted. So what I love about these revelations is that when we read them, they're for us and if we need comfort, we get that ongoing assurance and God does not reprimand us that we might fall - and struggle that we have a little bit of fear and we need that ongoing comfort.

You know Taylor, that's for me, that's - the beauty of scripture is the timeless nature of its teachings, that while it was given at that time for those people in those circumstances, the power of scripture is its universal applicability across space and time. You don't have to be living in the United States in the 19th century for section 98 through 101 to have power in your life. You can be living in any part of the world at any time now or moving forward in any situation and find power from these words, and it's not like the Lord is standing there just every second of every day telling you exactly what to do and giving you guidance, there are struggles, there are issues that we have to

fight our way through and wrestles that we are engaged in with the flesh and with our spiritual aspects, but I love the fact that we can keep coming back to the scriptures and be reminded of these principles over and over and over again and liken them unto ourselves but it can actually be for our profit and learning.

Now we shift into section 101. This section, you'll notice, is given in December of 1833. By this time the saints have now been pushed out of Jackson County north of the Missouri River so they're up in Clay County up in Liberty, a lot of them, and the word has now fully been given to Joseph Smith in Kirtland about what's happened. And here's Joseph saying, wait a minute, we were given all of these promises, all of these revelations about building up Zion and it's going to flourish and it's not going to be moved out of her place, and now it looks like they're moved out of their place and you have Edward Partridge and Oliver Cowdery and W. W. Phelps and all of these saints and their families saying, what do we do? How do we resolve this?

I love the fact that sometimes God doesn't put all of our answers on a silver platter for us, right when we kneel down and say what's going on? Sometimes he lets you stretch and sometimes he allows you to stretch a lot longer than you think you should have to. In this particular case, it's not a terribly long passage of time, but Joseph Smith tells us in his record for five days he said it was as if the heavens were sealed to him. He wasn't getting any answers – no direction as to how do we resolve this issue? The only thing that came to him during those five days regarding the situation in Independence was the line, be still and know that I am God. That's it.

And then one morning here in mid-December 1833, Oliver Cowdery who had been over in Independence when all of this breaks out, now he's come personally to Kirtland to report on everything, he and Joseph were up, it seems, through the night and the next morning when Ira Ames and Martin Harris came early in the morning to call on Joseph at his home, there was Oliver and Oliver Cowdery said to them, quote, good morning brethren, we have just received news from heaven. And there on the table next to them was a copy of the revelation that we now have in section 101. Finally the Lord spoke to Joseph about this situation in Independence.

What we notice here is that God uses some covenantal language and he indicates I made a covenant to be able to build up Zion but I need a righteous people, I need people to keep the commandments, to love their neighbors, to love me, and he lays it out clearly that part of the reason they were removed and that Zion was not built up at that point at that time in that location was that the people had not fully prepared their hearts. They still had contention and pride and greed and fear and other things and what God promises is that he will yet build Zion. That promise doesn't go away simply because some people weren't ready for it. God will bring forth Zion, it's just it may have to take a little bit of extra time as God works to prepare his people and they choose to let their hearts be softened and molded by his working and loving hands.

Now remember what we said just a few moments ago about forgiving people, look at verse 9. So verse 1 through 8 sets the stage for the Lord having allowed this to happen to chasten those saints because they were struggling with these things that Taylor has been talking about, but then look at verse 9. "Verily I say unto you, notwithstanding their sins, my bowels are filled with compassion towards them. I will not utterly cast them off; and in the day of wrath I will remember mercy." I like that. It sets the stage for everything that's going to come up for this group of saints to say you're not going to be utterly cast off. You're going to – you're going to wade through much affliction, there are going to be some sore trials in your future but God is going to have mercy on you ultimately.

And then you'll notice he comes down in verse 13. "They that have been scattered shall be gathered. And all they who have mourned shall be comforted. And all they who have given their lives for my name shall be crowned." And then this famous verse 16, "Therefore, let your hearts be comforted concerning Zion; for all flesh is in mine hands; be still and know that I am God." Those are the words that now come back, but they come in an improved context. He's saying all flesh is in my hands. In other words, Joseph, Oliver, others, I hold all flesh. I could force things but I'm going to let agency, I'm going to let law, I'm going to let freedom, people are going to act and there are going to be consequences and you've got to trust me. I am God. I know what I'm doing here, and look at verse 17, "Zion shall not be moved out of her

place, notwithstanding her children are scattered." Huh. This is interesting. This isn't the first time that Zion has had the chosen people of the Lord scattered and removed off the land and suffered great persecution and great tribulation and even bondage throughout the Old Testament and even into the New Testament and post-New Testament time periods in early Christianity history of the world. There - there is a repeating pattern that just because you try to be good, doesn't mean that you're going to live a trouble-free life, you're going to sometimes have to be put in a position where you have to completely put your faith and your trust in God and say I will be still and know that you're God because I don't have an answer to how to - how to resolve this moving forward.

When God teaches the principle there is opposition in all things, that is actually a difficult principle. I struggle with that one a lot. I just want it to be a nice, clear path, but he says you cannot become like me unless you experience life. It also means to think about how God has a plan and he invites us to participate in the plan, but he allows us to have our full agency and in the Pearl of Great Price when it talks about the creation, it talks about the council of the Gods giving commands for the creation and they watch until they are obeyed. And I see it similar that we are part of God's creation, he gives commands about what it means to build up Zion and in many cases he watches until he is obeyed and when we - when he isn't obeyed, the plan takes a little bit longer. It will always - the plan will happen. God will win. He is also very patient to let us work things out.

So now notice after verse 17, Zion shall not be moved out of her place, look at verse 21, "Until the day cometh when there is found no more room for them; and then I have other places which I will appoint unto them, and they shall be called stakes, for the curtains or the strength of Zion." Interesting that with Bedouin tents in the old world, you have these tents set up and then the curtains come out and what do you do? You then secure those curtains in the ground with cords with stakes so those stakes secure this covering, dwelling place for your family. So we - he says once Zion is going to be spreading, there will be other places and they're going to be called stakes or for the curtains or the strength of Zion. Now we're bringing in the allusion from Isaiah and the prophecies that says, you know what? You need to lengthen your

curtains. You need to stretch out the curtains, make it bigger and strengthen your stakes, put in more stakes to secure that – that dwelling place because you're going to have more people coming in than you ever thought possible.

We are seeing that being fulfilled today. God's kingdom continues to spread across the world. Sometimes we imagine it's simply by the number of members of the Church, but I wonder if we kept additional stats about the works of God spreading around the world, the acts of goodness that he is doing it for people that are doing it inspired by him, if we kept tally on that, we would see that God's work is strengthening across the world, and not just simply by the number of people who happen to be in the tent.

Absolutely. Now look at verse 23. "Prepare for the revelation which is to come, when the veil of the covering of my temple, in my tabernacle, which hideth the earth, shall be taken off, and all flesh shall see me together." When you no longer have to go into the tabernacle to walk through the outer courtyard into the Holy place and then through the veil into the Holy of Holies to be in the presence of God, he says no, when I pull all of that off, when all flesh shall see me together, this is Second Coming symbolism going on here.

It's a democratization also of salvation in the sense that it's not just a special once a year Jewish high priest that gets to go into the presence of God, now everybody, everyone is a high priest in the presence of God.

And so the day that he comes, he says bottom of verse 25, that all things shall become new, "that my knowledge and glory may dwell upon all the earth," not just in the Holy of Holies hidden in the tabernacle.

Look down at verse 28. "In that day Satan shall not have power to tempt any man." So in the millennium there's going to be no power for Satan to tempt anyone and in that day, verse 30, "an infant shall not die until he is old; and his life shall be as the age of a tree; and when he dies he shall not sleep, that is to say in the earth, but shall be changed in the twinkling of an eye," or a blinking of the eye – a blinking of an eye.

Look at verse 36. "Wherefore, fear not even unto death; for in this world your joy is not full, but in me your joy is full." Did you catch that? In me your joy is full. Jesus is making it very clear here, you're not going to find that – that

ongoing, fulfilling joy that is perpetual in the world. It doesn't exist. In fact one of my favorite, all time quotes on this subject comes from C. S. Lewis in his book *The Problem of Pain*. Quote: The settled happiness and security which we all desire, God withholds from us by the very nature of the world: but joy, pleasure, and merriment, he has scattered broadcast. We are never safe, but we have plenty of fun and some ecstasy. It is not hard to see why. The security we crave would teach us to rest our hearts in this world and oppose an obstacle to our return to God: a few moments of happy love, a landscape, a symphony, a merry meeting with our friends, a bathe or a football match, have no such tendency. Our Father refreshes us on our journey with some pleasant inns, but will not encourage us to mistake them for home.

So we keep moving forward. Verse 38, we "seek the face of the Lord always, that in patience ye may possess your souls, and ye shall have eternal life." Then he talks about salt that loses its savor and is to be cast out and trodden under the foot of men which is really the only good use for salt that is no longer edible, is it makes good ice melt and it can be cast out and trodden under the foot of men or it can be used to ruin your enemies' crops as well in antiquity is how they would often do it.

Verse 42, "He that exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that abaseth himself shall be exalted." That verse right there is interesting because some of the members of the Church in Jackson County had actually spent some time talking to their neighbors about how they were the chosen people, how we are going to take and build up this land and all these people are going to come, this exalting themselves kind of a mentality was alive and well with some of them in Independence.

It was a bit of a turn-off, you've got to imagine if you had a bunch of neighbors standing around talking about how they're super awesome and they're going to take over the town and neighborhood, it might make you a little worried. And it's interesting we get back to the basic two commandments, love God, love your neighbor. And I kind of wonder what if the early saints had been a little more thoughtful about how might our non-member neighbors feel as we proclaim the gospel and the coming forth of Zion. Have we really considered how the message sounds to them, and are we being inviting to them that this

is for all people and not just for a chosen, special few, but all are children of God, all are alike unto him. So – and again, I want to be careful here, because I don't want to make any claims against the early saints and their weaknesses because I may have fallen into the same (overtalk) trap, no doubt, so a little bit of historical compassion and charity is always in good order, amen, when we get into these sections.

Now you'll notice this fascinating parable that the Lord uses to teach this principle in verse 43 through 62. This is – this is unusual because we've given a few parables in the Doctrine and Covenants before, but this is – this is a very substantial parable; it feels very much like parables in the New Testament that Jesus would have used where he's teaching the principle in such a way that it's perhaps a little more palatable, a little easier to swallow and understand the principles than if he just comes right out and says certain things.

So in this parable you get this Lord of the vineyard who has his servants plant the vineyard, build up the hedge and then build a tower and put a watchman on the tower. Well the tower in the parable is going to be temple symbolism here. He has asked them to build a temple but what have they done in the parable? They've built the vineyard; they've built the hedges, they got complacent or lackadaisical thinking why do we really need a tower? We're good. All is well. It's peaceful. Let's spend our time and our energy and our effort building more of the vineyard itself rather than this tower, this temple in this context. And you'll notice that verse 51 shows the enemy coming by night, breaking down the hedge and they're affrighted and they fled and the enemy destroyed their works and broke down the olive trees and they have to leave because they didn't build the tower – they didn't build the temple.

So in the rest of this section you get this idea that you need to gather together your people and go, take your strong, your young and your middle aged men and go and redeem the Zion. This becomes the foundation for what is going to be called Zion's Camp. So Zion's Camp is going to leave and go to redeem Zion in May of 1834, the coming year for these people. But in the meantime they're told don't sell any of your land. In fact, go and buy more land in Jackson County and you're going to redeem this city.

Now look at verse 80. "For this purpose have I established the Constitution of this land, by the hands of wise men whom I raised up unto this very purpose, and redeemed the land by the shedding of blood." So you get this beautiful declaration that the Lord is saying the Constitution wasn't put together by random, willy nilly happenstance. I caused it to be written by people who I actually raised up for that exact purpose. I find it fascinating that the Lord gives these instructions to Joseph and Oliver and others there and in their mind they're thinking, oh, God's giving us this command so they're going to get a Zion's Camp together, they're going to go and they think they're going to redeem Zion and reestablish the saints in Independence, Missouri. Things aren't going to work out that way at all. You see, God isn't preparing them to redeem land. God's preparing them to redeem people at this point. Now there will be a day in the future where Zion is not going to be moved; those prophecies are going to be fulfilled some day in their fullness. But it's interesting that they're moving forward to the best of their ability with what they understand but I love the fact that God understands everything and sometimes our best conclusions or our best solutions are just a small step along a very long way of God's plan.

To illustrate that, go backwards now to section 101 verse 32. This is something that a good friend, Hugo Parengo who's our institute director there in Rome, Italy, an amazing saint. He shared this insight with me once and it's beautiful. Look at verse 32 through 34. "Yea, verily I say unto you, in that day when the Lord shall come, he shall reveal all things." Circle the all. Look at verse 33. "Things which have passed, and hidden things which no man knew, things of the earth, by which it was made, and the purpose and the end thereof – things most precious, things that are above, and things that are beneath, things that are in the earth, and upon the earth, and in heaven." Now here's the insight that Hugo shared with me, he said isn't that interesting that God is going to reveal all these hidden things that no man knew - past, present and future, above and below the earth and on the earth, which means we don't know everything. With all of our scientific instruments and all of our enlightened knowledge, there are apparently a whole series of things that we don't even have a clue about yet, but when Jesus comes again, he will pull back those curtains and reveal all these things and we'll be able to connect

the dots where we say, why did God allow this to happen? Or why didn't he prevent that? Or why didn't he help that group and why didn't he prevent that group? And what about the creation, and what about the end times and the millennium and all of these things?

Well Jesus is going to come and he's going to reveal all these things and I think we'll all say oh, yah, with all of that perspective now that little teeny piece of the puzzle makes sense. It's kind of like taking a thousand piece puzzle and having a handful of the pieces and trying to fit them together and saying, uh, I think I have a pretty good idea of what this puzzle is going to look like, but we really don't until Jesus reveals all things, hence the command to trust him and to be still and know that he is God and maybe not be so prideful in what we do know and feeling so puffed up that we've got it all figured out when in reality, he's assuring us there's a lot you don't know yet.

I love that God is so verbose here with all these instructions about Zion. In fact, section 101 has 101 verses, a hundred and one verses so it's one of the longest sections in the Doctrine and Covenants and it just matches the numbers both in terms of verse and the section itself.

So taking all that you know and combining all that you don't know and trying to make sense as we move forward with the tasks of life and the trials of faith that you face, I love this quote from President M. Russell Ballard when he said: Sometimes we can learn, study and know. And sometimes, we have to believe, trust and hope. So in whatever you face in your life, we are hopeful that you'll move forward trusting in the Lord that he is God and that we'll be still and recognize that we don't have all the pieces of the puzzle yet, but we have enough to be able to move forward in faith.

We want you to know that God loves you. He knows you and he is building Zion in your life and throughout the world. We encourage you to spread light and goodness wherever you go. Know that you're loved.