

# Section 98

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In the summer of 1833, Oliver Cowdery wrote from Independence, Missouri, to Church leaders in Kirtland, Ohio, informing them that opposition from the Saints' Missouri neighbors was rising. By the time the letter arrived in Ohio, Bishop Partridge had been tarred and feathered in Missouri, the Church's press there had been destroyed, and the Saints had been given an ultimatum to leave Jackson County or face escalating violence.

In Kirtland, Doctor Philastus Hurlbut had been excommunicated twice from the Church in a short period, and he thereafter "sought the destruction of the saints," Joseph wrote, "and more particularly myself and family."<sup>1</sup> Section 98 is the Lord's prescription for peace and diplomacy amidst the strife and violence.<sup>2</sup>

Foreseeing the Saints' emotional reactions to hostility and violence, the Lord prescribes "be comforted," "rejoice," "give thanks," and wait "patiently" for him, the Lord of Hosts, the defender of his people, to answer their prayers, for he has covenanted to do so. He promises that "all things wherewith you have been afflicted shall work together for your good, and to my name's glory" (D&C 98:3).

The revelation then upholds the rule of constitutional law applied without bias. Freedom comes from God and "belongs to all mankind" (D&C 98:5, 8). The Saints

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<sup>1</sup> "Journal, 1832–1834," p. 48, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed July 9, 2020.

<sup>2</sup> "Revelation, 6 August 1833 [D&C 98]," p. 66, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed July 9, 2020.

should therefore do all that lies in their power to preserve freedom for themselves and everyone else.

Section 98 reiterates the law of sacrifice described in section 97. The Saints are being tried and proven to see “whether you will abide in my covenant,” the Lord says, “even unto death” (D&C 98:14; cross-reference Mosiah 18:8–10). Saints are commanded to “renounce war and proclaim peace” (D&C 98:16).

At verse 19 the Lord expresses his displeasure with materialistic Saints in Kirtland. Condemning pride, covetousness, and “all their detestable things,” he repeats the terms and conditions on which he will save or damn them.

Beginning in verse 23, the Lord reveals his law of forbearance and justified retaliation. It is the same law Nephi and Israelite patriarchs knew and obeyed. It applies to all people (D&C 98:32, 38). Simply put, the law requires Saints to bear attacks “patiently and revile not . . . neither seek revenge” (v. 23). After three offenses, patiently endured, the Saints are to warn their attackers in the name of the Lord to stop. If they do not, the Lord says, “I have delivered thine enemy into thine hands” (v. 29). At that point, the Saints can opt to spare the transgressor or deliver justice. “If he has sought thy life, and thy life is endangered by him, thine enemy is in thine hands and thou are justified” (v. 31).

The Lord’s law includes the commandment that his people should “not go out to battle against any nation, kindred, tongue, or people, save I, the Lord, commanded them” (D&C 98:33). When an enemy declares war, the Saints “should first lift a standard of peace” (v. 34). If that gesture is rejected three times, the Saints should testify to the Lord of their good faith efforts. “Then I, the Lord, would give unto them a commandment, and justify them in going out to battle against that nation,” and then the Lord would be on the Saints’ side (vv. 36–37).

Beginning in verse 39, the Lord adds another dimension to the law. It is that enemies are to be forgiven as often as they repent—truly repent. The Lord’s vengeance is just and sure, but it evaporates just as soon as there is real repentance (D&C 98:46–48).

Three days after section 98 was revealed, Oliver Cowdery arrived in Kirtland with the latest news from Missouri about the violent persecution and the Saints’ pending expulsion from Jackson County. Joseph was passionate about Zion and responded to

the crisis with a long letter in his own hand, written to the leaders in Missouri. Joseph's letter begins with a broken-hearted prayer that the Lord would comfort the Saints and curse their enemies before concluding, "O Lord glorify thyself thy will be done and not mine."

Joseph's first reaction was to curse the Saints' enemies, but he believed section 98's promises and bowed to its moderating instructions in response to the crisis. For example, he urged the Saints to "wait patiently until the Lord come[s] and resto[res] unto us all things and build the waist places again for he will do it in his time." He wrote to Zion,

th[ere] is no saifty only in the a[r]m of Jehovah none else can deliver and he will not deliver unless we do prove ourselves faithful to him in the severeest trouble for he that will have his robes washed in the blood of the Lamb must come up through~~t~~ great tribulation even the greatest of all affliction but know this when men thus deal with you and speak all maner of evil of you falsly for the sake of Christ that he is your friend and I verily know that he will spedily deliver Zion for I have his immutable covenant that this shall be the case but god is pleased to keep it hid from mine eyes the means how exactly the thing will be done.

Joseph concluded his letter "by telling you that we wait the Comand of God to do whatever he plese and if <he> shall say go up to Zion and defend thy Brotheren by <the sword> we fly and we count not ~~dear~~ our live[s] dear to us."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> "[Letter to Church Leaders in Jackson County, Missouri, 18 August 1833](#)," p. [1], The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed July 9, 2020.

