

Come Follow Me Class Insights – 36 – Doctrine and Covenants 94-97

I'm Taylor, and I'm Tyler. This is Book of Mormon Central's Come Follow Me Insights. Today, Doctrine and Covenants sections 94 through 97.

I want to begin today with a story. This happened a few years ago in our ward. You can picture in your mind's eye, hopefully, a sacrament meeting that is a fast and testimony meeting and partway into the meeting in the back door walked one of our ward members who had spent some time in jail. He'd had many, many struggles through his life, not an easy life. He was wearing jeans and a tee shirt and his hair looked pretty disheveled and he sat there on the back row all alone. Partway through this fast and testimony meeting this individual got up and started to come to the front and when he stood at the pulpit he looked out at the audience there, the congregation, and he started to apologize. He said how sorry he was to so many people in the congregation who had been his teachers back in Primary and in the Scouting program and in the Sunday School program and in Young Men's and he told them how sad he felt that he hadn't applied the principles or the teachings that they had given him in those classes. And then he apologized again for his lack of eloquence in bearing his testimony. He said I don't know all of the right words to say like the rest of you do and he said you have to forgive me because my testimony is under construction. And then he finished by saying there's only one thing that I really know. I know that God still loves me. And then he finished and he sat down. That was interesting because every testimony after him for the rest of that meeting the individuals who stood up said, my testimony is also under construction.

I like that. I like that idea of whether you're just beginning or whether you're right at the end of your life or whether you're halfway through your life starting over again trying to rebuild, all of us have testimonies that are under construction. None of us have arrived.

Now, with that foundation, we jump into sections 94 through 97. For starters, there's going to be a lot of discussion today reading these sections about building temples, about having these buildings be under construction. Now as we dive into the actual scriptures, it's helpful to recognize that section 94 is

chronologically out of place. It should actually come right after section 97 so it's right here, given on the same day as section 97, August 2nd, but because of a clerical error and because of so many script mess-ups, it ended up getting stuck with the wrong date, May 6, 1833 which turns out to be wrong based on further research that you can find at the Joseph Smith Papers Project, and other Church resources point us to placing this one in August 2nd. So we're going to begin today's lesson, we're going to do them in chronological order rather than in their section orders, so we're going to start in section 95.

Now, look at verse 1. "Verily thus saith the Lord unto you whom I love," and then he pauses, this is almost a parenthetical statement here, "and whom I love I also chasten that their sins may be forgiven, for with the chastisement I prepare a way for their deliverance in all things out of temptation, and I have loved you." It's this beautiful companionship that he puts together, this principle of if I love you, I'm going to chasten you. I'm going to help you find cleanliness from your sins, forgiveness of your sins but that doesn't come by constantly just patting you on the back and saying hey, keep up the good work; don't change anything.

So it's an interesting word here because we know the word chaste, which means to be like pure and actually the word pure comes from the word fire, it means to, you are purified by fire, chastening literally means to be pure. So God is trying to purify us which means he has to burn off the dross which is a little bit painful. I know I want in my own life, I want God to purify me but sometimes it's pretty painful and I'm like is there a way you can do this when it's not so difficult, that it doesn't feel like chastening? But it's this beautiful word that he wants us to be chaste, and so he chastens us.

It's beautiful. This reminds me Taylor of Enos, chapter 1 verse 1 when he says that he had benefitted from the nurture and admonition of the Lord. It's that – it's the nurture is that soft, congratulatory, encouraging side and then the admonition is that correction, that rebuke, that disciplining side that we need both, and by the way, have you notice in your own life that sometimes it's those difficult, purifying, fire chastening moments of life that are the most painful that actually turn out, once the pain is gone, that turn out to be in hindsight some of the most cherished and shaping experiences of our life

where we actually learn significantly more at times than if it's always patting on the back, well done thou good and faithful servant kinds of moments.

Well it makes me think about this faithful brother who you talked about who had some difficult life circumstances but he had been chastened and what he had learned was that God still loved him. God still loves all of us, but he's still under construction, his testimony is under construction. That makes me think about the analogy of the metaphor of a sculptor who can see the beautiful statue that's within the rock and the rock probably, if it had feelings, doesn't like being chiseled and hammered so that the beautiful image that is in there can be released, and that's what God is doing for us. That's what God was doing for this lovely brother who gave this amazing testimony and for all of us and as humans with fallen nature, we – we sometimes wish it would be a little bit easier that we would just plop out fully formed and not to have all that chiseling and hammering and the chastening and yet God in his loving kindness will remind us that his role is to help us become like him and this is all part of the plan and so when things get hard, we shouldn't be surprised, we shouldn't say woe is me, all is lost, just say God is doing his work with me and I can be part of this work.

Interesting, so instead of, you know what you're saying here, perhaps instead of scratching our heads saying why me? Why are all these bad things happening to me, maybe the better question would be to ask, Lord, what would thou have me learn from this? Because chastening doesn't have to be punitive in nature, it can be – it can be very shaping as we're going to see through here.

Look at verse 2. "Wherefore, ye must needs be chastened and stand rebuked before my face; for ye have sinned against me a very grievous sin, in that ye have not considered the great commandment in all things, that I have given unto you concerning the building of mine house." Interesting, the sin that they've committed is God commanded them to build a house. It's been about a year ago when that first came and they haven't done anything yet.

Look at verse 4. "For the preparation wherewith I design to prepare mine apostles to prune my vineyard for the last time, that I may bring to pass my strange act, that I may pour out my Spirit upon all flesh." I need you to build a

house in order for some things to occur for you that I can give you some things that you don't have any idea what I'm really trying to do because I've only given you point A where you are and I told you, point B, I need you to get that house. You have no idea where point Z is, but I can't get you to point Z until you've – you work with me on point B, is what he's saying.

I'm reminded of a time in my life when I was finishing up my master's degree at Utah State University in instructional technology and I had some incredible professors who came to me and encouraged me to continue on past the master's and get a PhD in instructional technology and I thought, I have no interest in a PhD and I decided on over twenty occasions and I'm not exaggerating, it was over twenty times when I decided, and my wife together and I, decided yah, no, I'm not going to do a PhD. But it would just keep coming up and it would keep coming up from different angles from different people and we would think about it and talk about it and ponder and even fast about it and the thought was, no, I don't need a PhD, I don't want to work on a PhD. I don't want to spend that time away from my family. I'm good. I'm good with a master's degree. And I'll never forget – and by the way – over twenty times deciding not to do it, that probably gives you a clue that it wouldn't leave me alone.

I'll never forget the occasion sitting on the couch in our home there in Brigham City, Utah watching General Conference that particular year, many years ago and President Hinckley said, we encourage you to get all of the education that you can. And at that moment, that thought came yet again, you need to go and get a PhD. I didn't know why. I didn't know what point Z was. I just kept getting this – this prompting and I kept resisting it and I kept ignoring it and I kept pushing it back and not doing anything about it. And in that moment it was a – it was a gentle chastening, it was a purifying fire of correction and rebuke, it wasn't a painful one, but it was a clear one and I decided then, okay, I need to do this. And little did I know what doors that particular decision was going to open for me. I didn't know what to even ask for, but God was guiding me.

With your testimony under construction, you'll notice that God usually isn't giving you the directions for point Z, he's usually giving you directions for point B and I'll never get to point Z and you'll never get to point Z until we act on

what he's already given us, and he's – he reminded these people on a few occasions to build that temple and they haven't done anything about it yet and so now the Lord ramps up that chastening and makes it very clear, I have to have you accomplish this. I'm going to be giving you some things you don't know about yet but you have to build a temple for me. Okay?

Look at verse 5. "Behold, verily I say unto you, that there are many who have been ordained among you, whom I have called but few of them are chosen." We're going to come back to that theme when we get to Liberty Jail in section 121, this idea of being called versus chosen. Verse 6, "They who are not chosen have sinned a very grievous sin, in that they are walking in darkness at noon-day." In your own realm, I'm sure you can think of times in your life when the Lord has given you direction but you haven't acted on it like I'm describing from my own personal background here, and it's interesting that the Lord would use this analogy of it's as if you were walking in noon day but you're choosing to walk in darkness. You have all this light that's available to you but you're choosing not to look to the light, for whatever reason. It either feels like a task that is way too big, it's a gargantuan effort and you don't feel like you have the means or the energy or the time or the money to be able to accomplish it, but I love the fact that he's saying, how much energy really does it take to walk in noon day light and acknowledge the light that comes from above. And, by the way, I love that concept that C. S. Lewis shared on one occasion, speaking of light and the sun, he said, I believe in the sun, not because I can see the sun, but because of the sun, I can see everything else clearly. You'll find that when we act on revelation that the Lord gives us, sometimes it's not just the end goal of that particular, specific revelation that gets illuminated, sometimes it illuminates all kinds of other things in our life that before were hidden in darkness, in dark corners of our life that we couldn't even see, we had no idea they were even there as possibilities for us. And so I love this concept that God is trying to bring these people into the light of his revelation which is all centered on what? Them building a temple.

So let's pick it up in verse 8: " Yea, verily I say unto you, I gave unto you a commandment that you should build a house, in the which house I design to endow those whom I have chosen with power from on high." So he gives them a hint that you're going to get power; you're going to be clothed, endowed,

empowered from on high, "For this is the promise of the Father unto you; therefore I command you to tarry, even as mine apostles at Jerusalem." This whole temple motif that we're going to now be focusing on over the next many years here in Kirtland and once we get to Nauvoo, in Missouri, we're going to see later on in this lesson, that second temple in Independence is a significant issue that we're going to have to wrestle with, God wants us to build temples. Fascinating.

If you look at 1st Corinthians chapter 3 over in the Bible, Paul gives us this little teaching that for me puts so much of our temple construction and temple worship and temple meaning into – into context. Look at 1st Corinthians chapter 3 verse 16. Paul, speaking to these Corinthian saints says, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are." Now it's kind of significant to recognize that in 1st Corinthians 3:16 and 17, the temple that he's referring to here, he's using the pronoun ye which, if you look in the Greek text, he's not speaking to individuals, he's speaking to the Church collectively in Corinth, the Corinthian branch of the church, or stake or ward, whatever you want to refer to them as, that group. He's calling them you collectively are the temple of our God and the Spirit of God needs to dwell in that congregation and if you defile the temple of God then what he says is God shall destroy that person. He doesn't want that individual destroying the collective.

Now let's go to the singular, because Paul later on in chapter 6 verse 19, he's going to give the same analogy of a temple but in this case it's in the singular form of the pronoun, so he's referring to individuals. Look at how the wording comes out. Chapter 6 verse 19: "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." So now he says oh, an individual is also a temple of the Holy Ghost and we're not our own.

So I love this idea that as we bring it back now into 1833 in Kirtland, God's asking them to build a temple. He wants a physical building so he can endow them with power from on high. That temple, that building in Kirtland is an

object lesson for what God is trying to do with you as an individual as well as what God is trying to do with you as a family, as a ward, as a stake, what he's trying to do with us as a Church across the world, as nations, as communities, is to build this place where God's spirit can feel at home, can feel welcomed and invited and to become a part of us.

Look – look now at verse 11 back in section 95. "Verily I say unto you, it is my will that you should build a house. If you keep my commandments you shall have power to build it." Now again, I get it. We're talking about the physical building in Kirtland right now, but we're also talking about your testimony that's under construction right now. If you have faith to keep the commandments that God has given you, if you act on the revelation that he's already given you, it might be simple things and it might be really big things that are scary for you, but if you do your best you shall have power to build that testimony, that conversion, that discipleship, you will be given that power along the way.

The beautiful concept for me when it comes to temple construction and temple building which we're in an era of the Church that is unprecedented with numbers of temples being built, I love the symbolism of watching all these temples being – being announced and built all over the world and yet at the end of the day, those temples aren't going to be saved in the Kingdom of God, the temples, those physical temples are simply a means to the end of what God's doing with you and what he's doing with me through them.

Now this happens in English, it's an interesting word, we use this phrase a building, so temples are buildings and as my son David reminds me, he's like we should call it a built because the building is complete and yet we call it a building as if it's still ongoing, in progress, in process, and that is the same with our testimonies, that our testimonies are a temple, it's a building that is ongoing. A couple of interesting thoughts point out here that in often in western culture we focus a lot on ourselves and it's interesting here that Paul was also focusing on the community. He wants the temple of the community built by individuals who are temple oriented. Like most of 1st Corinthians is focused on how do you build a solid group of saints who are unified? And it's interesting he focuses on you cannot have a holy society if people in that

society are unholy and so in order to have a holy society that we all focus on building, we also have to focus on ourselves.

This is interesting in verse 11, "If you keep my commandments you shall have power to build it." Now that phrase - if you keep my commandments – shows up all over scripture. It's usually the way that scripture ends, that if you keep my commandments ye shall prosper in the land. So look at this variant now, and know that that's the main phrase, if you keep the commandments, you prosper. Notice how God provides additional insights, if you keep my commandments you shall have power to build a temple, whether it's the temple of God that we all love to see and participate in or our own temple of our testimony. If you keep the commandments, God will continuously be building with you that sure foundation that leads you into his presence.

Let me just share one more final insight. What I love is how God works with his people, that in this section that's so focused on building temples, he has these little insights packed in here that are actually very temple focused. For example, he talks about back in verse 2, he says you must needs be chastened and stand rebuked before my face. And that little phrase before my face is actually temple language. If you think back to the time of Adam and Eve, they were with God face to face. Moses in Mount Sinai was with God face to face. The brother of Jared was on a high mountain with God face to face. Those were all temple experiences and when you go to the temple, symbolically, you are with God face to face. That's just what God wants. When he calls us, he is calling us that we might be face to face with him and be embraced by him and those who choose to be gathered are children, and those who decide to walk away lose that embrace and all of this is the purpose of temples is to symbolize and to enact that God is trying to envelop us in his love and his embrace and that is what it means to be before the face of God.

Excellent, now let's look at verse 13. "Now here is wisdom, and the mind of the Lord – let the house be built, not after the manner of the world, for I give not unto you that ye shall live after the manner of the world; therefore, let it be built after the manner which I shall show unto thee – or show unto three of you whom ye shall appoint and ordain unto this power." When we're building

up this temple in Kirtland, he's saying you're not going to build this after the traditional ways that other church houses or places of worship have been built in the world. It's going to be different and I will show it to you. And he's going to show this building committee that is selected here – he's going to give them a vision of what that building should look like. Interesting, it's kind of like Nephi's example back in 1st Nephi when he's going to build the boat and it's not after the manner of men, it's going to be after the manner that the Lord will show him. So whether we're talking about Nephi building the boat or Joseph Smith and the temple – or the construction committee building the temple, or whether we're talking about a relationship of marriage of a family or leadership or church callings that you have or the way you build your own personal discipleship and your own testimony, it can't be done after the manner of the world. If it's going to be a temple to our God, it needs to be using his blueprints, his guidance and his direction.

So I love that they have this command given and, by the way, can we just point out here that you have these two Church centers, okay? Kirtland, Ohio, Independence, Missouri clear out on that western frontier of Missouri, and both groups are going to be commanded to build a temple and both groups are about as poor as can be, and some of the people don't even have the resources to build a suitable house for themselves for their own family, and now the collective group is being asked to build a large temple, 55 feet by 65 feet, two stories high with all of these rooms and not build out of logs, this is a very, very expensive project that is commanded of very, very poor people who, as they look in the mirror, are probably thinking, why is God asking me to do this? I don't have what it takes.

But I love the fact that Hyrum Smith and a couple of the other people there on the committee, once the revelation comes, they may not have a lot of money in their pocket but Hyrum has a shovel in his hand so what does he do? He goes up to the property where it's designated that the temple is going to be built and Hyrum Smith takes that shovel and he starts digging. Isn't that interesting? He doesn't have money to buy lots of building materials at this point, but he at least has a shovel. I love the fact that a journey of a thousand miles begins with getting up and taking one step forward, right? So that's what Hyrum's doing, and brothers and sisters, whether it's a mission call, whether

it's a marriage, whether it's a calling, whether it's a new career, whether it's embarking on a difficult, long, drawn out medical battle that you're going to have to face because of a new diagnosis, whatever it may be, your footsteps of faith begin with that very first thing that you can do, stick your shovel in and start digging the foundation.

What's interesting is God's talking about building a temple up and what do they do? They start by digging down. At any time that you want to build anything of significance, you have to start by digging down so you can get a strong, firm foundation and before we turned on the camera we were talking about the Salt Lake City Temple, it took forty years to build that temple and they spent all that time digging the foundation, laying the foundation, they had it all set up, it was a lot of work, and then in the 1850s who shows up? Johnston's Army comes to town so they cover over that foundation. Yeah, the members of the Church were like we don't want the U. S. Military to destroy what we've done, let's cover it so they don't know it's there. It's probably a blessing that Johnston's Army showed up because when the crisis was over, the members of the Church unburied the foundation and discover the sandstone is all cracked; it actually looked like rock but was very, it wasn't a good foundation so they go down to Little Cottonwood Canyon and start getting Granite, really powerful rock, and they have to pull the foundation out. Now in my own life, I really don't like it when I put a lot of work into something and people say, nice effort, I think you need to start over. But ultimately, this symbol of our faith now stands strong and firm because of the strong foundations.

How firm a foundation is laid for your faith? There are so many things out there. Now if you're struggling, if you're struggling with personal issues or with doubts or with questions about our testimony or your conversion, I love something that Jared Halverson has shared in a couple of settings where he said it's best to go down to the foundation and analyze what you really believe, and if there are cracks in it, get rid of it and start over. Start at the ground. Start with your belief in God and then go from there to your belief in Jesus Christ and then from there to your belief in prophets and then build the foundation rather than persisting in trying to build on a faulty, sandstone foundation.

A great question that I think we can always ask in our lives is what have I learned? Because we do have foundations in many areas in our lives and at times we have to go back and look at how things are doing and we might say gosh, I don't want to spend all this time on this work but the process gives us the opportunity to grow and develop and this is one of the most powerful questions you can ask yourself on a regular basis, what have I learned because of this experience? What am I going to do about it? I might point out we've been using this Salt Lake Temple as a metaphor here, as a strong foundation, right now this video is getting filmed in 2021 and the Salt Lake City Temple, the foundation is being re-done right now and why is that? Because since the time of the early saints in the 1840s, 50s, 60s and 70s and 80s and 90s when they were building it, we have learned more geologically about the earthquake zone that is in Utah and we've realized that even though there's a really strong foundation to hold the temple up, if a large earthquake hit, it might be a problem and so they're making some updates to the foundation. They've learned things and said okay, let's actually strengthen the foundation even more. So what originally was sandstone became granite, and now from granite they'll add some other features to help the temple in case an earthquake ever happens, that that building will not fall. I just find that fabulously instructive for all of us. Wherever we are in our lives we can ask, what have I learned and what can I do to make sure my foundation continues to be strengthened?

I love that. So our testimony really is still under construction. Something as firm and steadfast and immovable as the Salt Lake Temple, it still could be improved upon. So when can you and I relax or rest and say ah, I've studied, I've prayed, I've fasted all I need to, I'm just going to coast for the rest of my life because I've built my testimony. I am no longer under construction. The minute we do that, then those earthquakes can come along and topple that which we thought was so – so unshakable, so immovable.

So let's just very quickly touch on section 96. This is, remember that the Church pulled together quite a bit of money to be able to be able to buy the Peter French farm and tavern up on this flat part of Kirtland, and that's where they're going to be building the temple and they're commanded to build another big house for the first presidency and a house for the printing and

then different lots for other houses. Well in section 96, this is the time when they ask John Johnson, you remember the Johnson farm out in Hiram, Ohio, John and Elsa Johnson? They've asked him now to join the United Firm which we now call the United Order and come and use his business expertise to help pay off some of the debt that is being incurred by the Church so that's all section 96.

Now we shift over to section 97 and we turn our focus and our attention westward to the branch of the Church out in Zion or in Independence. So we pick it up in verse 1. "Verily I say unto you my friends, I speak unto you with my voice, even the voice of my Spirit, that I may show unto you my will concerning your brethren in the land of Zion, many of whom are truly humble and are seeking diligently to learn wisdom and to find truth." Wow, that line is so prophetic. You'll notice the date. It's August 2nd. Well it was less than two weeks ago on July 23rd that everything seems to hit a boiling point in Jackson County, 800 – 900 miles away.

You have the mob who is kind of fed up with the Church members in Independence for a variety of reasons. You have this huge influx of members of the Church coming. Many of them are poor, they're not – they're not rich, they're not increasing the economy so to speak, they're bringing with them some ideals that don't always align with the Missourians because most people living in Jackson County, Missouri are very much oriented with the ideals of the southern states and Missouri is a slave-holding state and you've got many of these members of the Church coming and you've got some members of the Church who have been baptized who are freed blacks and they're coming and living here and a lot of these Missourians don't like what they see happening and they don't like the things that are being printed in the paper by W. W. Phelps about the promises of this land and what the members of the Church are going to do to Independence, doesn't exactly align with the political or personal ideals of the majority of the inhabitants of Jackson County.

So it was in July when many of these local Missourians took the law into their own hands and they said we're done, so it's at that point when they go and break into the printing office of W. W. Phelps, break into this home, go up to

the second floor, throw the printing press out the window into the street below, destroying the printing press, it's that time when they throw all of the papers that had been printed that are going to be – that were intended to be the Book of Commandments, the original what we would call today the Doctrine and Covenants, it's there where the two sisters, the Rollins sisters get those papers and run out into the cornfield, that's that day, so they ransack Sidney Gilbert's store, they tarred and feathered Bishop Edward Partridge and Charles Allen, and this is a terrible day and they demand that these Church leaders sign an agreement that they will leave, entirely leave Jackson County by the Spring of next year.

And here are these men. They are stuck between this rock and this hard place of what do we do because we know all the revelations about this land and now here's the mob telling us we have to sign this or they're going to kill us. And so finally they end up signing this document that they'll leave by April – March or April – Spring of the following year, and they're left now in these subsequent days – they've sent letters back to Joseph notifying him of things and those events that have transpired but they don't know what to do.

Now in that context, Joseph hasn't gotten word yet from any messengers coming east from Independence. No letters have arrived by section 97. Look at verse 1 one more time, the second half of it, "many of whom are truly humble and are seeking diligently to learn wisdom and to find truth." They don't have a clue what they're supposed to do at this point. "Verily, I say unto you, blessed are such, for they shall obtain; for I, the Lord show mercy unto all the meek, and upon all whomsoever I will, that I may be justified when I shall bring them unto judgment." It's this beautiful line saying you have a lot of questions but if you trust me and if you are meek, I'll guide you, I'll lead you along.

Now jump down to verse 7. "The ax is laid at the root of the trees; and every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit shall be hewn down and cast into the fire. I, the Lord, have spoken it." So let's look at verse 8. "Verily I say unto you, all among them who know their hearts are honest, and are broken, and their spirits contrite, and are willing to observe their covenants by sacrifice – yea, every sacrifice which I, the Lord, shall command – they are accepted of me."

Did you notice you've got a whole bunch of people out in Zion, they're trying really hard to be good. Some of them trying a little harder than others and some really, really terrible things are happening to them. Some unjust judgments are being passed upon them and some mob action is occurring against them. I love the fact that the Lord is reminding them that if their hearts are honest and broken and their spirits contrite, that they are accepted of him, that people on the earth can do really bad things to you, but at the end of the day, the most important thing is being accepted of the Lord, that he'll guide us, he'll lead us through those struggles, trials of life.

Look at verse 9. "For I, the Lord will cause them to bring forth as a very fruitful tree which is planted in a goodly land, by a pure stream, that yieldeth much precious fruit." Unfortunately, for you and me – it's fortunate but it doesn't always feel fortunate – he uses the analogy of a fruit tree. If you know anything about fruit trees, you know you can't just plant a fruit tree and then walk away and let it just absorb the nutrients in the water and it will become a fruitful tree. It doesn't happen. For it to be a fruitful tree, it has to be pruned with care which means that tree is going to get branches lopped off and cut off and pruned off, that it put great effort into building. It worked hard to produce that and now it's going to get cut off. So it is with the saints of God. The Lord of the vineyard is going to plant us in certain places, but he's also going to prune us. He's also going to chasten us along the way because that's what makes us fruitful. That's what causes the tree to realize, oh, my purpose in life wasn't to grow wood and leaves, it was to grow fruit and it's only once wood is cut off that the tree then puts more of its energy into the fruit which ironically carries in it the seeds for future generations of trees to be grown and to then start the process as well which ties in this multi-generational conversion and faith principle into this fruit tree analogy.

Now notice verse 15. "Inasmuch as my people build a house unto me in the name of the Lord, and do not suffer any unclean thing to come into it, that it be not defiled, my glory shall rest upon it." They are being told to build a temple in Jackson County after the mob has forced them to sign this thing saying we're going to leave. Wow! What do you do with this? Look at verse 16. Yea, my presence shall be there, I will come into it, and all the pure in heart that shall come into it shall see God. So here these people have a choice. Are

you going to start building a temple or are you going to turn horizontal in fear? Upward in faith or outward in fear as far as what the mob can do.

Verse 18, "Now behold, if Zion do these things she shall prosper." You'll notice that little two letter word if – you could circle that. I can't tell you how many times in my life where I've had promptings to do things that it made absolutely no sense. It either seemed like the wrong timing or the wrong – the wrong effort but there – there are so many examples where God will give you the instructions of what to do and if you just trust him – if you do these things, you shall prosper and Zion will then spread herself and become very glorious, very great and very terrible, and then there are all of these other promises of what's going to happen if they begin to build the temple.

Now we will never know what would have happened exactly and how that would have played out. Why? Because they didn't start building a temple. They didn't go to that land on that bluff west of the courthouse there in Independence and start constructing. And it's easy for us to judge them isn't it? It's easy for us to say, why didn't you just do it? I don't know what I would have done in that setting with those Missourians living in Jackson County, threatening me with violence. What we do know is that the mob realized that the members of the Church were probably going to continue to try to bring more people in and so they didn't wait until spring. They're going to actually ramp up the mob action and burn houses, burn crops, kill livestock, pillage – take anything they wanted from the saints, and push them out of Jackson County beginning in October and November of this year, of 1833. And so we're going to cover that in subsequent lessons here in the coming weeks, but it's interesting to me to come back to that two-letter word in verse 18, if Zion do these things. We'll never know because when they got this revelation later on in later August, they didn't start building a temple yet so we'll never get that end of the story.

Now we jump back to section 94 because that section was given on the same day as section 97. And now you'll notice in section 94 verse 1, "And again, verily I say unto you, my friends, I give a commandment unto you that ye shall commence a work of laying out and preparing a beginning and foundation of the city of the stake of Zion, here in the land of Kirtland, beginning at my

house." So they actually draw out a whole city plat plan with the temple at the center and going out. And they'd done the same thing for Jackson County with the temple at the center and a whole city plan for how it would lay out. But here, section 94, this is for Kirtland.

Look at verse 8. "Ye shall not suffer any unclean thing to come in unto it; and my glory shall be there, and my presence shall be there. But if there shall come into it any unclean thing, my glory shall not be there; and my presence shall not come into it." You'll notice we're talking about the temple and I think if the Apostle Paul were here he would say, what? know ye not ye are the temple of our God. We're talking about more than just brick and mortar; we're talking about the flesh that our spirits reside in. If we allow unclean things to come into our life, then what that does is it leaves less room for the Spirit to guide us, to be a part of us. We will have a harder time hearing him, hearing the voice of Jesus Christ and seeing his face, and seeing his hand in our life everywhere we turn. So for me, these sections, 94, 95, 96 and 97 are a gentle invitation and at times a loving rebuke – chastening from a God who loves us and who is saying I have so much light and truth and knowledge and power and intelligence to give you, but I can't give it to you if you don't build a temple in such a way that you could have on the face of the temple written Holiness To the Lord. This is a house of the Lord a house of glory, a house where the Spirit feels welcome.

So our hope and our prayer for us and for all of you is that as we move forward in life, don't be ashamed to say, my testimony is under construction. And for some of us, it might – it might be a vision of Hyrum picking up a shovel and walking over to a wheat field and pushing that shovel in for the first load. Your temple is now under construction. For some of you it might be standing back and making a really hard decision at looking at some past beliefs or past pursuits or past efforts and recognizing they're cracked. They're not strong. They're not a firm foundation and they need to be taken out and you need to start over with granite. For some of you, it might be that you're placing the capstone on your temple of conversion. For others it might be in the wintertime of your life where you realize that the building is fully constructed but now maybe you need to put the scaffolding back up and dig

down deeper and reinforce that foundation like is happening at the Salt Lake Temple.

The huge project to renovate the Salt Lake Temple continues. From my office I have a front row seat to watch the work taking place on the temple project. As I have watched workers dig out old tree roots, plumbing, wiring, and a leaky fountain, I have thought about the need for each of us to remove with the Savior's help, the old debris in our lives. The gospel of Jesus Christ is a gospel of repentance. Because of the Savior's atonement, his gospel provides an invitation to keep changing, growing and becoming more pure. It is a gospel of hope, of healing and of progress. Thus, the gospel is a message of joy. Our spirits rejoice with every small step forward we take.

Brothers and sisters, God loves you because you are his daughter or his son. He loves you way more than he ever loved a building out of brick and mortar or stone of any kind. The real construction project of the Savior is your conversion in your eternal life that can only come through him. He's the master builder and if we let him in, he'll do the constructing of those testimonies and conversions that we are seeking. Know that he lives, know that he loves you, and we leave that with you in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.