

Episode 12

Legacy LIBERTY JAIL

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NATHAN WRIGHT: One of the most remarkable aspects of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is its unique history. Throughout the world, great stories from faithful church members have only added to that history. This program shares some of these incredible stories of faith, perseverance, hope and inspiration. You are listening to Legacy. I am your host, Nathan Wright.

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MATT HENDERSON: I am Matt Henderson, filling in for Nathan Wright. From December 1838 to April 1839, the prophet Joseph Smith, along with several other church leaders, was unjustly imprisoned in a rough stone dungeon measuring 14 x 14 feet, with a ceiling just over six feet high. Only two small barred windows allowed light and air into the cell. The six prisoners suffered from the cold winter weather, filthy conditions, hunger, and illness. While in Liberty Jail, the prophet wrote letters to his family and to the Saints. His correspondence contains some of the most poignant revelation found in scripture. Joining me in studio today are Gary Boatright Jr., Amy Nuffer, and Melanie Hinton. Gary has worked for the Church History Department since the year 2000. His current assignment is historic sites researcher, where he is involved in writing historic site guides for the missionaries who work at these sites. He received a bachelor's degree in history and geography from Weber State University and a master's degree in museum studies from the University of Oklahoma. Amy and Melanie are both interns with the Church Historic Sites Group. Amy graduated from Brigham Young University with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in History. She has since worked at a museum near her home town of Portland, Oregon and is currently enrolled at San Jose State University in their Master of Library and Information Science Program. Melanie has a Master's Degree in English from Brigham Young University and is currently working on a PhD in 18th century British literature from the University of Utah. She is originally from Washington, Utah. Thanks for joining me.

MELANIE HINTON: Thanks for having us.

GARY BOATRIGHT JR.: Glad to be here.

MATT HENDERSON: Before we get into the subject of Liberty Jail, could you just tell the listeners, what is the Historic Sites Group, and what do they do?

GARY BOATRIGHT JR.: In the Historic Sites Group, we are obviously part of the Church History Department, and we work very closely with the Missionary Department and the Physical Facilities Department. The three departments have responsibility for managing, developing, and operating the many historic sites that the Church owns. As the historic sites group of the Church History Department, we provided the interpretive material for the missionaries. We assist in doing the research for historic sites. We write the historic site guides, which the missionaries use to help give them the historical background of the site and then any other questions that pop up about a history or the preservation of the site. We lend our hand there to make sure that we preserve these sites for a long, long time.

MATT HENDERSON: Wow, I bet that is a fun job. I bet as interns it has been a fun job for you.

MELANIE HINTON: It has been. It has been an education for me.

AMY NUFFER: Yeah, we really enjoy the work and the people we work with and being able to find out about all of the sites and everything. It is a lot of fun.

MATT HENDERSON: Liberty Jail, Joseph Smith said of Liberty Jail, he said “We cannot get into a worse hole than this is.” Will you give us a physical description of Liberty Jail, where it is located and a physical description of it?

GARY BOATRIGHT JR.: Well today the Liberty Jail historic site it is about 20 minutes northeast of downtown Kansas City, and it is just east of I-35. The actual jail itself has long since disappeared, but in the early 1960’s the Church reconstructed the jail and the visitor center around it. The jail itself at the time of Joseph, as you mentioned in your introduction, it was just about 14 feet square and had two levels-- the upper level is where the jailer and his family resided and then the lower level, which was referred to as the dungeon. The jail kind of had a unique makeup. It was made of rough hewn limestone walls that were two feet thick and then there is a space about a foot thick and then the interior was built of oak logs that were hewn, and they were about a foot thick. Between the gap, between the stone and the wood, they put in loose rocks that would be another barrier that people would have to try to get through if they escaped.

MATT HENDERSON: Before they tried to dig a hole through the wall, you had to get through the pile of rocks.

GARY BOATRIGHT JR.: That is right. So basically, this was a four foot wide barrier that anybody who had to try to escape would have to go through. Many believe that it was impossible to escape from.

MATT HENDERSON: What are the events that led up to Joseph being imprisoned in Liberty Jail?

AMY NUFFER: Well it started off in the fall of 1830. Joseph Smith received a revelation that called Oliver Cowdery to go on a mission to the Lamanites. They understood that the Native Americans were the descendants of the Lamanites, so Oliver, well first three other men, and then they had a fifth man join them, but they went to Missouri to go preach to the Lamanites. Along the way they stopped at some places and met with other Native American groups and also in Kirtland, Ohio, which is where they met Sidney Rigdon. He had been a friend of Parley P. Pratt, who was also one of the missionaries. When they were in Kirtland that is where Sidney and a lot of his followers joined the Church. So that was a huge milestone in the Church's history in and of itself that happened with the Lamanite mission, but they eventually reached Missouri and did not spend a whole lot of time preaching to the Indians because of different legalities. They did not have everything, the paperwork and everything they needed. Eventually they just settled in Independence for a few months, and then that summer some more of the Church was called to travel to Independence. So, Joseph Smith and some of the other leaders and a branch called the Colesville Branch that had traveled from New York to Ohio. They were also instructed by revelation to go to Zion, which they were not exactly sure where that was, but they knew it was near the borders near the Lamanites, so they all traveled to Missouri in the summer of 1831. While they were there that summer, they received the revelation that the center place of Zion was in Independence, Missouri, and they dedicated a spot for a temple and dedicated the land for Zion. That kind of started the flood gates of immigration I guess you could say.

MATT HENDERSON: So this is the edge of the frontier?

AMY NUFFER: Yes it is. The descriptions of what Independence was like at the time are very interesting because, yes, this was a frontier of the organized states of the United States. The Indian Territory was just on the other side of the

Missouri border, so it attracted a lot of people who were trying to escape the law because they went to Independence and if they heard that there was a lawman nearby, they could just cross the border real fast and get away from that.

MATT HENDERSON: And the Indian Territory is out of his jurisdiction.

AMY NUFFER: Yes, exactly.

MATT HENDERSON: Interesting.

AMY NUFFER: A missionary who was from the American Home Missionary Society in about 1831, he was writing letters back to report on his missionary efforts in Independence and he called it “such a Godless place filled with so many profane swearers would be difficult to imagine. Christian Sabbath observance here appears to be unknown. It is a day for merchandising, drinking, gambling, and general antichristian conduct. Gouging and more serious forms of violence are common. The sheriff confided to me that the citizens do not care to have the lawless punished.”

MATT HENDERSON: Wow.

AMY NUFFER: I thought that was a very fitting description of what Independence was like when the Saints arrived there in the summer of 1831, and started to gather there, and trying to establish a community in a society like that, you can imagine how that would be very difficult and create a lot of conflict.

GARY BOATRIGHT JR.: When it was revealed to the prophet that Independence was the center place where Zion should be established, there is this great, almost a fervor amongst members of the Church who wanted to go there. Many picked up their stuff, packed their bags and went to Zion. They wanted to be a part of the building up of Zion. As Church history has shown numerous times, when large bodies of Saints tend to gather, they bring with them different ideals and philosophies and understandings of life and politics, and the local people were starting to be outnumbered and started getting a little upset at it.

MATT HENDERSON: Did the local people there know a lot about the Mormons?

AMY NUFFER: I don't think they knew hardly anything. It was such a fresh, I guess, religion, you could say. Word had spread I think, but I think they just distrusted them because they did not know a whole lot about them.

MATT HENDERSON: So the Church has only been organized eight or nine years at this...

AMY NUFFER: Well at this point.....

MATT HENDERSON: Oh when they first arrived there, yeah...

AMY NUFFER: When they first arrived in 1831 it is just over a year old.

MATT HENDERSON: Yes, and when he was imprisoned, it was only eight or nine years.

GARY BOATRIGHT JR.: The thing, too, that caused some of the conflict was a difference between cultures. I mean most of the Saints were from New England and the northern states.

MATT HENDERSON: So they were conservative Protestants and Quakers.

GARY BOATRIGHT JR.: And most of the folks that immigrated to Missouri or moved to Missouri were from the southern states. You know, slave holding and those ideals. So you have, you know, what we see later happen in the Civil War, these two cultures fighting. We had kind of a mini version of that, where the northern culture and the southern culture were just rubbing against each other just because of their different ideals.

AMY NUFFER: It all, I guess, erupted in the summer of 1833. That is when the major events happened in Jackson County where they had the destruction of the W.W. Phelps Printing Press and office and tarred and feathered Bishop Partridge and Charles Allen and these other events; lots of harassment of the Saints and things that eventually drove the Saints into surrounding counties. Most of them went to Clay County just across the Missouri River, but all of those things contributed to the Saints eventually being forced out of Jackson County.

MATT HENDERSON: And they were accepted in Clay County originally?

AMY NUFFER: Yes.

GARY BOATRIGHT JR.: For a time. People were quite kind when they first came. The citizens of Clay County were very sympathetic to the Saints and their cause, but over time as, again, more and more Saints came into the county, they kindly asked them to leave.

MATT HENDERSON: I can imagine they were probably seeing more and more come in, and it is a little unnerving. What's going to happen? Are they going to take over?

AMY NUFFER: Yeah, and when the Saints first came to Clay County, it was sort of understood that it would just be a temporary thing, because the Saints were expecting to go back to Jackson County. They were expecting to go back to the lands they had bought there and everything, so the citizens of Clay County were like, "Okay, you can take temporary refuge here", so when it looked like it was not going to be temporary...

MATT HENDERSON: They started building homes...

AMY NUFFER: Exactly. They said "Okay, we would like you to leave." That is when the Saints started looking farther north in Missouri and found some places. At the time, it was Ray County still. They bought some land there, and that is what became Far West. It was on the borders of Shoal Creek, and this was in 1836. In the fall of 1836, they decided to create two new counties that would enable the Saints to all gather in one place and kind of have their own county that they would not be bothering anyone, and no one would bother them and they could just live in peace. That did not turn out exactly as they had planned because originally they just wanted to create one county for the Saints and what happened was in the land where they wanted the one county, they divided it into two counties.

MATT HENDERSON: Now this would be Caldwell and Daviess?

AMY NUFFER: Yes. So the Saints were supposed to settle in Caldwell County, where originally they were planning to settle on the land in all the space of Caldwell and Daviess County. They kind of got confined to just Caldwell County. It kind of happened as more and more Saints came to Far West and Caldwell County, it kind of got pretty full, and they started settling

into Daviess County as well, where Adam-ondi-Ahman was, and that started creating more tensions with the other people around Daviess County because they said “You guys were not supposed to settle here”, kind of the same exact pattern again that had happened in Jackson and Clay Counties, where a lot of people started getting scared of all of the huge numbers of Saints that were there.

MATT HENDERSON: Interesting. So Joseph Smith, first of all he was with other people in the jail. Do you have their names right off the top of your head?

MELANIE HINTON: Joseph Smith was in the jail with all the members of the First Presidency, so him and his counselors. His two counselors at the time were Sidney Rigdon and Hyrum Smith. In addition, Lyman Wight was there and Caleb Baldwin and Alexander McRae. Those were the six men that were put into Liberty Jail.

MATT HENDERSON: Now I am a little confused about, had he actually been charged with something at this point when they were in Liberty Jail. Had there been a trial yet, or were they awaiting trial?

GARY BOATRIGHT JR.: There was. Let’s go back just a minute to Far West. The prophet was experiencing numerous difficulties in Kirtland. During most of the Missouri period the prophet was in Kirtland, but with the tension and dissension that was going on there, he came to Far West and it is almost immediately after his arrival that things really started to flare up. Eventually what had happened is the Missourians had really had enough. Governor Boggs issued his extermination order, and the Missouri Militia basically laid siege to Far West. In negotiations, Colonel Hinkle, who was a member of the Church and also a leader of the Mormon Militia, he was negotiating with the Missouri Militia to have a peaceful settlement to this. Unknowing to the prophet, Colonel Hinkle agreed to turn over Joseph Smith and other leaders of the Church. So when he came back to the Saints, he basically told the prophet that “I have arranged a meeting where we can negotiate the settlement of the difficulties”, but when they arrived in the Missouri camp he basically told the Missourians “Here are the prisoners as promised.” So the prophet and numerous other men were taken prisoners, and eventually they were taken to Richmond where there was a preliminary hearing that was held. This hearing, basically what it was, was to find out if there was enough evidence to show that a crime had been committed. The prosecuting attorneys focused their case on three points. The first was the burning and plundering of homes in Daviess County by the Mormons, and that was again, you know with the tensions going on there. There is fighting going on back and forth. The second was the battle of Crooked River, which was literally a battle between the

Saints and the Missourians. There were a few Saints who were killed and I believe a Missourian.

MELANIE HINTON: One Missourian and three Saints.

GARY BOATRRIGHT JR.: So it was a costly battle. The third charge was the supposed treasonous activities by the leaders of the Church. This preliminary hearing went on for about two and a half weeks, and numerous witnesses were called, members of the Church and nonmembers. Some who were once loyal to the prophet had turned against him, and other members said they were forced to testify against the prophet. Eventually, at the end of the hearing, the judge determined that there was enough evidence to hold the prophet and these other brethren in jail, but there was no jail in Richmond at the time, so they were sent to Liberty Jail for their confinement. On December 1st, after a day of travel from Richmond they arrived in Liberty Jail. As they were brought into town, there were a number of town folk who came to witness the Mormon prophet and these others being taken to the jail. One of these people wrote that the Prophet Joseph Smith was the last prisoner to leave the wagon. He says that the prophet climbed the stairs, turned partly around with a slow and dignified movement and looked at the multitude then turning away he lifted his hat. He said in a distinct voice "Good afternoon gentlemen." Then he entered the jail. That is kind of, in a nutshell, the events that kind of lead the prophet and the other brethren to be in Liberty Jail. They were confined in jail because the charge of treason was a nonbailable offense. They could not post bail and await their hearing at home. They had to be confined until a court could be convened to hear the charge.

MATT HENDERSON: So clearly things were not going well for the rest of the Saints while he was in prison, and I had not made that connection really in the past when I have thought about Liberty Jail. I had not made that connection that things were not going well for the Saints either. So, the main concentration of the Saints was in Missouri...in Far West at this time?

MELANIE HINTON: Yes

MATT HENDERSON: And what was life like for them? We have discussed a little bit about the wars and so on, but how many, do we know how many Saints approximately that there would have been?

MELANIE HINTON: I am an English major and I do not know much about numbers. I can tell you that life was really transitory at the time. There was the extermination order that was kind of looming over their head that says “You have got to get out of here as soon as possible.” When the militia came... part of the agreement with Colonel Hinkle that the militia made said that the Saints needed to get out of town, basically, as soon as possible and that they needed to give up their weapons. So the militia came into Far West and kind of took over. People in Adam-ondi-Ahman, which was the other large collection of Saints in Missouri, left Adam-ondi-Ahman by order of the militia almost as soon as their church leaders were gone. Everybody was in Far West. Half of the people there had come from Adam-ondi-Ahman and did not have homes, so they were camping on people’s lawns. This was after they had filled up all of the house space, all of the floor space of the homes that actually did exist, and the militia was there. They were literally preying on the people there. The accounts that especially the women there told are really horrific of men who would just come and shoot a cow while a girl was milking it or take all of their food, take the corn in their fields and their chickens and things like that and then just ransack their homes for bedding and things like that. So they had very, very little to live off of, material possessions, and they were in the process of trying to move out of the state.

AMY NUFFER: Sorry to interrupt. Also at this time I think a lot of the men had either been arrested, there were 50 some men who had been arrested, so they were either gone in Richmond or other jails, or they had fled to avoid arrest. That is why I think a lot of the accounts come from women because there were a lot of women there by themselves with just their children. There were men there, of course, but a lot of them had either been arrested or fled to avoid arrest, so that also added to, I think, a lot of the difficulties.

MELANIE HINTON: People started moving to Illinois, the ones who were able, almost as soon as they could. The Saints, as a body, still kind of hoped that the extermination order would be rescinded and they would be able to stay. It eventually became clear to them that they could not, and they had to leave. Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball were the ones who really masterminded the effort of getting the poor people across the river into Illinois. It was a massive effort. They, in the process, had to sell all their lands, including the lands that they still held in Jackson County, and they got the Saints out just in time.

MATT HENDERSON: Do we know how seriously the citizens of Missouri took the extermination order?

MELANIE HITON: There is a chance that by extermination, Governor Boggs meant simply they need to be run out of the state. That was another definition that was floating around at the time for the word “exterminate”.

AMY NUFFER: It was also a military order.

MATT HENDERSON: So the citizens were not to do it, but it was a military action?

AMY NUFFER: Yes. It was a military action that was to be enforced only, basically, in time of war. It was not necessarily this open-ended feel free to shoot a Mormon if you see one, so the citizens, I am sure, knew about it. It was not necessarily just a free-for-all kill anyone who looks like a Mormon and you are okay.

MELANIE HINTON: Certainly, they did not do that because we would have accounts if they did.

MATT HENDERSON: And you find it difficult to believe that Clay County would be accepting and then within a short length of time be killing people?

AMY NUFFER: Yes, exactly.

MATT HENDERSON: I find that hard to believe.

GARY BOATRIGHT JR.: There was one exception to that, and I think that you know that was the Haun’s Mill Massacre.

MELANIE HINTON: Right, but they did not at the time know about the extermination order.

GARY BOATRIGHT JR.: That is correct.

MELANIE HINTON: That was just a band of vigilantes, basically, that just decided that they were going to go take matters into their own hands, and they had not heard the extermination order by the time they did that.

MATT HENDERSON: I read that they did get visitors. Hyrum Smith blessed his baby there, and Emma visited several times.

GARY BOATRRIGHT JR.: The visitors they received was one of the few comforts that they had. Being in this miserable hole, I mean it is the only way you can call it, and to have loved ones come and frequently they were able to stay the night with them and see their children, and Hyrum, his youngest son, Joseph F. Smith. The first time that he saw him was in Liberty Jail, and as you mentioned, he was able to bless him. Between family members, Joseph and their wives and Don Carlos Smith their brother came and also family members of the other prisoners frequently came to visit them. It brought great joy and, I think, relief to one see their loved ones and two to see them safe, but also at the same time when they did visit they would bring the news of the sad condition of the Saints and their plight in trying to leave Missouri. In one hand it was a blessing and a relief to have them with them but in another hand the sad news that they brought with them just was heart wrenching for the prophet and Hyrum and the other brethren in the jail to hear.

MATT HENDERSON: They feel responsible for taking care of the Church, and there is nothing they can do about it.

GARY BOATRRIGHT: There literally was nothing they could do. They wrote numerous letters to give counsel and guidance.

AMY NUFFER: And they sent money at least twice, I think, to the Saints to try to help them.

MELANIE HINTON: We think about the whole reason why the Church came to Missouri in the first place. It really kind of hits home that one of the really difficult parts of being in Liberty Jail was that separation when they would come to gather together as a people and now the people are scattering out of the state, and their prophet is not with them.

MATT HENDERSON: And you are on the frontier. Who knows if you are going to be able to gather everyone back together. Very difficult situation. Some of the letters that Joseph wrote, I mentioned in the opening that they were some of the most poignant things that we have in scripture.

MELANIE HINTON: Yes.

MATT HENDERSON: Do you have some of those to read?

MELANIE HINTON: I Do. Some of the quotes that you have been mentioning.

MATT HENDERSON: Of course the English Major has the letter.

MELANIE HINTON: I spent a lot of time reading the letters, and I feel like I grew really close to the people who wrote them because letters are so intimate, right. So there are these letters that Joseph wrote to his wife, to the Church. He wrote a letter to Heber C. Kimball and Brigham Young giving them instruction about how to get the Saints out of the state and some other things he wanted them to do. These are letters that still exist, so there were probably other letters. In fact, we know that there were other letters that were written, but these are the letters that we still have. There is one letter from Emma to Joseph. There are a series of letters from Hyrum to his wife and one letter from her back to him and letters from other church members to the prisoners. What would you like to know about the letters?

MATT HENDERSON: Whatever you would like to tell us. We will leave that up to you.

MELANIE HINTON: Okay. One of the things that I think is the most interesting... I have really been taken (Amy and Gary both know this) with Hyrum's letters. He wrote a series of letters to his wife that he wrote most of them within a one week period, and for some reason he became obsessed with this idea that his wife had abandoned him or deserted him. He writes about it quite often. His first one is very positive. He does not say anything about that, and he is talking about how they are being imprisoned like the prophets of old like Joseph of Egypt and all is well because they will be saved for their efforts, and then things kind of quickly go downhill from there, and he talks about how as he is writing despite his manhood, his tears are watering the paper as he writes. Then he starts to say things like "Why haven't you written me. If you have deserted me at least you could tell me how the kids are doing," and all sorts of things. So you have all of this pain that you can see him really struggling with and then there is this letter that Mary writes him back. She wrote it on April 11th 1839, so it did not have time to reach him while he was in the jail, but her answer to him, she says it pretty early on in her letter, she says "Okay there is this thing that we need to address and it is this concern that you have had about me abandoning you", and she says "I have something to say to you about

that”, and this is what she says, “I cannot bear the thought of you having any such suspicion, surely you had not. If so, you are yet unacquainted with the principles of my heart what should I forsake a friend and a bosom friend in the time of adversity and affliction when all the sympathy and affection I am capable of feeling is called for to soothe and comfort as far as possible under such circumstances as you are placed in? No. Reason, religion, and honor and every feeling of my heart forbids such a thought to enter there.” Then she talks about how something must have possessed him, some sort of fear or something from the adversary must have taken over his thoughts to make him.

AMY NUFFER: I think it is really indicative of their experience of how they were feeling, how all of them were feeling, like Hyrum’s letters are so, as Melanie said. He is so almost depressed and just very low, and he feels these fears, and I think that is very indicative of how all of them felt.

MELANIE HINTON: Yeah. The other thing that I think is really, or that really stood out to me in the letters is in Joseph’s two letters that he wrote to the Church. He wrote one in December on December 16th 1838 to the Church, and he wrote another one in March. It was dated March 20th.

MATT HENDERSON: So the December one is early on?

MELANIE HINTON: Right, so there is quite a gap of time between them. The difference of the tone of the two letters is really striking. In the first one he is angry; you can tell he is, and he has a right to be angry. He has had a lot of difficulties that he is dealing with, and he is in the pit of a dungeon. He is writing, and he is angry. Then in the second one it is very tempered. There are a couple points of interest I think. In the first one, for instance, he talks about a lot of the dissenters. He calls them by name. He compares them to people in the Bible that came to violent ends, like Haman and Korah, Dathan and Abiram, who were buried alive. At one point he compares W.W. Phelps to Job’s friends in the bible who told him that he had sinned, and that he had brought on all of his difficulties. In the second letter he is a lot more calm, and he talks a lot about how friendship, tokens of friendship can heal all of these wounds between friends. Then he talks about, he records the Lord telling him “You are not yet as Job.” In the first letter W.W. Phelps is Job’s comforter, which would make him Job, right, and in the second one he is not yet as Job. Things are not quite as bad.

MATT HENDERSON: That gives me a whole new insight to that reference, “You are not yet as Job.” I did not know where that came from. That is interesting. I did not know that about W.W. Phelps.

GARY BOATRIGHT JR.: Really it was the second letter, written on the 20th of March in 1839, that the Liberty Jail is really known for, because it is from that letter that we get sections 121 and 122 and 123 from the Doctrine and Covenants. These sections were all pulled from that letter. The whole letter itself is just a fabulous piece of writing, and there are numerous truths and insights into the prophet and really who he was that come from this letter. You know, these three sections were pulled and canonized as inspired writings as revelation given to the prophet Joseph. Elder Neal Maxwell, in referring to these writings and this whole Liberty Jail experience, he said that “in the midst of his adversity (meaning the prophet’s) there came one of the most sublime and significant revelations ever received by Joseph or any other prophet that now numbered sections 121 and 122 of the Doctrine and Covenants. These revelations are so invested with rich truths that any focusing on one portion is apt to even unintentionally to neglect another.” So these were seen as, you know, as some of the greatest revelations ever received by a prophet of God.

MATT HENDERSON: It gives you a great insight. I love hearing things that show the human side of the prophets, and so in his first letter where he is upset, it shows that he behaves like other humans would behave in a situation like that.

MELANIE HINTON: At the same time you also see this huge growth that he went through while he was in the jail. You can see the humility and the charity that has increased in him for the people associated with this situation that he has found himself in. I think that says a lot about him also, especially as a prophet, that he took this really dismal, really awful experience and became a better person because of it.

GARY BOATRIGHT JR.: It was a refining experience. I mean Alvin R. Dyer, he published a book about the Missouri period. I believe it is called “The Refiner’s Fire.” For the prophet personally and for the Church it really was a refiner’s fire. I mean, they went into this horrible experience and dealt with it and languished in the Liberty Jail for months, but they emerged from it better people, stronger people, more faithful people, and Elder Maxwell, again referring to the prophet said Joseph was more obedient after this. So he had learned obedience through this experience.

MATT HENDERSON: It brings to mind B.H. Roberts's reference to the prison, I mean Elder B.H. Roberts, but he was a great historian of the Church too, and he referred to it as the prison temple. One of you elaborate on that; the idea of this being a prison temple?

AMY NUFFER: We are going to let Gary take care of this one.

GARY BOATRIGHT JR.: Yes, as you mentioned, B.H. Roberts coined the phrase "a prison temple." He used this phrase. Okay, let me back up. B.H. Roberts coined the term "prison temple", and it was used specifically to describe the Liberty Jail. Since that time, it has been used widely. I mean the exhibits there it is mentioned. Elder Maxwell in one of his books for a small moment he refers to Liberty as the prison temple, and even as recently as last year, Elder Holland referred to it as a prison temple. We kind of struggled with that concept, because when we think of a temple, you know, we think of a beautiful, quiet, sacred, clean place. The Liberty Jail was the farthest thing from that, but Elder Holland, in this talk that he gave last year at a CES Fireside called "Lessons from Liberty Jail", he gives a reason why B.H. Roberts really saw this as a prison temple. I would just like to quote from this talk that Elder Holland gave. In speaking of Liberty Jail he said, "Certainly it lacked the purity, the beauty, the comfort and the cleanliness of our true temples, our dedicated temples. The speech and behavior of the guards and criminals who came there was anything but temple-like. In fact, the restricting brutality and injustice of this experience at Liberty would make it seem the very antithesis of the liberating, merciful spirit of our temples and the ordinances that are performed in them. So in what sense could the Liberty Jail be called a temple, or at least, a kind of temple in the development of Joseph Smith personally and in his role as a prophet?" Elder Holland continues a little bit later in his talk, and he says that the thing that we should really learn from this, and I am quoting again, "When you have to, you can have sacred, revelatory, profoundly instructive experience with the Lord in any situation you are in. Indeed, let me say that even a little stronger. You can have sacred, revelatory, profoundly instructive experience with the Lord in the most miserable experiences of your life, in the worst settings, while enduring the most painful injustices, when facing the most insurmountable odds and opposition you have ever faced." I look back in my own life and the times when I have felt the closest to God or have really felt that I have been taught from God are the most miserable times in my life. That is when I think we are driven to our knees, and we are humble enough to ask God for help, and he blesses us with these experiences. Going back to the prophet in Liberty Jail, you know he had been there for almost four months. He had been in this miserable condition, in this hole where they did not get good food to eat. It was a horrible place to try to sleep and then hearing of the condition of the Saints

as they were forced out of Missouri. All this weighed on the prophet. I think it was frustrating to him. Here he was the leader, God's chosen prophet to lead these people, and he was languishing in this horrible jail. In the letter on March 20th 1839, it is almost like he has finally kind of had enough. He has done everything that he can, and so he cries out "Oh God, where art thou, and where is the pavilion that covereth thy hiding place." Then he goes on asking God how long are these wrongs and unlawful oppressions going to accompany our people and this is coming from section 121 in verse 5, he says "Let thine anger be kindled against our enemies and in the fury of thine heart, with thy sword avenge us of our wrongs." So he is almost asking God to just come down and wipe out these people. He has just kind of had enough. Then the Lord, being the Lord, says in verse 7, "My son, peace be unto thy soul; thine adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a small moment. And then, if thou endure it well, God shall exalt thee on high; thou shalt triumph over all thy foes." So the Lord reminds the prophet that the Lord is in charge. He is fully aware of the prophet and his surroundings. He is aware of His people and the sufferings that are taking place. Later in section 121, The Lord is kind of foreshadowing the blessings that will come, not only to the prophet, but to the Church as a whole for having gone through all these experiences. He said that in verse 26, the Lord revealed that "God shall give unto you knowledge by his Holy Spirit, yea, by the unspeakable gift of the Holy Ghost, that has not been revealed since the world was until now; Which our forefathers have awaited with anxious expectation to be revealed in the last times, which their minds were pointed to by the angels, as held in reserve for the fullness of their glory." So the Lord is going to bless the Saints with this wonderful blessing that prophets for generations have waited for. Then in verse 28, He says "A time to come in the which nothing shall be withheld." Then in 29 he says "All thrones and dominions, principalities and powers, shall be revealed and set forth upon all who have endured valiantly for the gospel of Jesus Christ." Well, we know that those blessings came about with the temple in Nauvoo. As you read those words, you can think of the temple. They are similar things that we hear in the temple. So this refiner's fire that the prophet and the Saints went through, it really refined the Church. The unfaithful, the people who really were not supportive of the prophet, who really were not members of the Church, they were members of the Church on a list, I mean they were not really the true and faithful that The Lord needed. So it was kind of like a weeding process, where only the true and faithful who went through these and settled on the banks of the Mississippi River in Nauvoo and constructed the temple. You know, they were able to receive the blessings of the endowment and the temple and everything that is associated with that.

MELANIE HINTON: In Doctrine and Covenants 122, again, coming from the same letter that Joseph wrote from Liberty Jail. The Lord promises Joseph that all of these things will give thee experience and will be for thy good, and there are so

many ways, this being one of them. That experience wound up being for the good of the Church and for the people involved in it.

GARY BOATRIGHT JR.: And even for us today, and I think this is one of the reasons The Lord revealed this, and it was placed in the Doctrine and Covenants. As we go through our lives, you know, we are all going to face adversity and difficulties and probably nothing near what the prophet went through, but we are all going to face challenges. It is a part of life. Being who we are, you know, humans and imperfect people. Sometimes we can forget and that the Lord does love us. He is aware of our plight and of our situations, but if we faithfully go through these experiences, then we will come out better people for it. We will come out stronger people as a result of it. Again, thinking back in my own life, recently my father-in-law passed away from a three year struggle with cancer. At his funeral I was asked to speak, and instantly I went to this section, section 122, and I thought back, okay of everybody in my family and my wife's family, how are we stronger because of this experience we went through. We came together as a family. We are a much stronger family now. We were able to serve my father-in-law and care for him and bless his life and be able to know him, and myself, I am a better person because of the time I spent with him and got to know him and even looking at my father-in-law having to go through that experience when he passed to the other side of the veil, he passed through being a stronger person, having gone through the miserable experience he went through. I think if all of us look at our lives and the tough times that we have had in our lives, it is hard to see when we are going through them, but hindsight we can look back and I think we really say that the Lord is mindful of us. At times when we thought we were alone, he was with us more than we could ever imagine. I think this is something that the prophet learned personally, that he was God's chosen prophet, and he emerged from Liberty Jail stronger, more faithful, he learned to be more compassionate, he learned to be more patient, and I think he really stepped from the Liberty Jail with confidence knowing that he was God's chosen prophet. There is one thing I would like to read, and I am quoting from Elder Maxwell, he says "Earlier Joseph had Oliver Cowdery and Sidney Rigdon to be not only his aides to camp but also in measure his spokesmen. After the Liberty Jail experience, however, Joseph was clearly his own spokesman. From that time forward, we begin to receive Joseph's stretching sermons involving some of the gospel's most powerful doctrines." So I truly believe that Joseph emerged from Liberty Jail more confident in his calling as a prophet of God. He went from these horrible experiences in Missouri and within a short period of time built up Nauvoo, and it is a miraculous story of the accomplishment of the prophet and what the Saints did under his direction in Nauvoo, you know the building of the temple and the wonderful blessings that came out to the Saints because of that.

MATT HENDERSON: And he only lived five more years after Liberty Jail. He accomplished an incredible amount

GARY BOATRIGHT JR.: That is correct, and it is in those five and a half years that, as Elder Maxwell stated, that is when we truly get the doctrinal sermons and the teachings of the prophet Joseph. Fortunately, many of his sermons and discourses have been preserved by great journal keepers at the time, which in turn give us a better understanding of the gospel and I think a greater appreciation of the prophet Joseph and really the great man that he was and is.

[BEING MUSIC]

MATT HENDERSON: We have been visiting today with Gary Boatright Jr., Amy Nuffer, and Melanie Hinton. You are listening to Legacy on the Mormon Channel. I am Matt Henderson.

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