

Episode 40

Legacy

THE PRATT BROTHERS

[Background music]

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'm your host, Nathan Wright.

Four years before his death, Parley Pratt described his life as "stranger than fiction" and wrote that he had been a farmer, a servant, a fisher, a digger, a beggar, a preacher, an author, an editor, a senator, a traveler, a merchant, an elder and an Apostle of Jesus Christ. We're here today on Legacy to talk about the Pratt brothers. We have with us today Robert and Matthew Grow, a father and son team. Robert is the president of the Jared Pratt Family Organization, and Matt is a long-time lover of history and especially the Pratt family history. Let's just take a minute and have you both introduce yourselves. Robert, if you would, please.

ROBERT GROW: Well, I became involved in the Pratt family as a child when my mother, who was a convert to the Church, but a descendant of Parley Pratt, used to take us to Pratt family reunions, and she was very proud of her heritage. In fact, she joined the Church because an aunt, Amy Pratt, used to tell her about her heritage, and that is part of what helped her join the Church when she was friends with Helen Lee, Harold B. Lee's daughter, out on west side of the Salt Lake Valley, and so she became a genealogist involved heavily in the Pratt family research, and over the years involved her family. As she became very sick with ovarian cancer, she took me to the History Library to deliver all of the genealogy of the family, and she listed me as the submitter, unbeknownst to me. And so all of the Pratt family calls about genealogy started to come my way. She also nominated me to be president of the organization, which had become quiescent at that period, and so I have been president for about 25 years. We hold major reunions every several years to celebrate the Pratt family history and to teach that history to our children and grandchildren. And so the Jared Pratt Family Association comprises the descendants of the five boys in the Pratt family including Parley and Orson Pratt and three other brothers, most people have never heard of, but who were also great men, and a sister as well. And so I've been involved in the organization for a long time and it's a great experience. And the Pratt family continues to hold reunions to carry on those legacies and to pass it on to our children and to the Latter-day Saints. This coming year, 2011, it's the 200th anniversary of Orson Pratt's birth, and there will be a large family reunion, most likely in July

NATHAN WRIGHT: 24th probably? I don't know.

ROBERT GROW: Nope that's when Brigham Young got to the valley. [Laughter]. But it's on July 21st when Orson Pratt and Erastus Snow came to the valley, surveyed the area and began to dig the creek and start the irrigation and plant the potatoes. So when Brigham Young was up on the hillside on the 24th saying "This is the right place", the Pratts were here already planting the ground and hard at work. And so our reunion will be July 21st, 2011, in celebration of the 200th anniversary of the birth of Orson Pratt.

NATHAN WRIGHT: What do you do for a living besides being the president of this organization?

ROBERT GROW: I do large-scale real estate planning. In other words, I help plan cities looking out 25 and 50 years, so for example I am working now on designing a new city for a million people in Arizona for the state of Arizona. So I get the privilege of thinking about the future a lot and how we can best design things to make it great for our children.

NATHAN WRIGHT: Very good. Thank you. And Matt, it sounds like you've been a long time Pratt family historian. Tell us a little about what brought you to this point.

MATT GROW: Well, growing up with my dad and my grandma, that was a little bit inevitable that I would grow up with that Pratt family history, and instill the real interest in history more broadly in me. I currently teach History at the University of Southern Indiana, and I'm working on a biography of Parley along with Terrell Givens. So the Pratt family history has just always been of real interest and love for me.

NATHAN WRIGHT: Your dad mentioned before we started talking on the radio today of something you did back when you were an early teenager. Tell . . .

MATT GROW: Well, we were trying to find all of the descendants of Jared Pratt, Parley and Orson's father. We were compiling the genealogical records and someone had to put the information into the computer and that was me. So I entered a lot of the dates and names into the Personal Ancestral File and things like that.

NATHAN WRIGHT: Very good.

ROBERT GROW: We were one of the first large family organizations that tried to find the descendants using the new computer tools that were available in the late 1980s, and so we, in about a year's period, with the help of over 1000 members of the family, compiled the records of about 35,000 descendants of the Pratt family. That database has continued to grow and we maintain that database for temple work for people who are descendants who did not have those opportunities during their lifetime.

NATHAN WRIGHT: My, well, it sounds like we have the perfect pair to talk about the Pratt family today. So, let's start back with Jared and Charity Pratt. What were their early lives like?

ROBERT GROW: Jared and Charity were from New York. They lived not too far from Albany, in a very small area called Canaan, New York. They were born right around the time of the American Revolution and so they were pioneers in New York State. It was a difficult time. Jared was married once, had a daughter, his wife passed away, he married Charity who became the mother of the five boys. He was a farmer as well as trying a number of other things, including school teaching. Matt, what else did he do?

MATT GROW: He was a weaver for a period of time. They were like the Joseph Smith family, in that they were part of this generation of New Englanders who were leaving New England after the American Revolution because there was a shortage of land and a lot of these people go to New York. And, like the Smith family, they move around constantly, trying to get a break in life, and it never really happens for Jared and Charity. All of their children are born in different little towns in New York, and the sons have to board out with more prosperous farmers.

[INAUDIBLE BACKGROUND SPEAKING]

MATT GROW: They would, beginning in their early teenage years, they literally did not live at home any more after that. They lived with farmers who could put them up, who the boys would work for, and so they would live and work for these farmers and so it was their insertion into this economic opportunity, but they mostly find debt and disappointment in the New York Frontier.

ROBERT GROW: And Parley describes in his autobiography the experience of being essentially farmed out to other people to work for them, and talks about two employers, one who treated him like a machine, never said a kind word to him for an entire year, how difficult those circumstances were, and it talks about another one he boarded with for a year who treated him like a son, and he fell in love with that family. When he came back to New York the first person he wanted to teach the gospel to was that family who'd been so kind to him. And so that was a tough way to grow up and their opportunities for education were somewhat limited, although they did have some regular schooling. But they were self-taught men. Parley always loved to read.

MATT GROW: The other thing about Jared and Charity Pratt was that they were religious but not church-going. So they didn't belong to a formal denomination, but they taught their children out of the Bible, and instilled this love of the Bible into them. And from a very early age, Parley has religious inclinations, and he talks about how he wants to find the type of Christianity he reads about in the New Testament, and this is part of a larger movement at the time where people are looking for New Testament Christianity. They want to get back to the simplicity of those days.

NATHAN WRIGHT: It seems like there are a lot of parallels between this family and the Smith family that we're so accustomed to hearing the stories about.

ROBERT GROW: Yes, the parallels are very interesting, because Parley, for example, finds the Gospel and comes back to Canaan and teaches his parents, he teaches his younger brother, Orson, who is the first one to join the Church in the family. He teaches his aunt and his uncle, and of the original Quorum of the Twelve, two of them were the Pratt brothers, Orson and Parley. Their brother, William, was involved as a Seventy, so very much like the Young family, the Smith family, the Pratt family came as a group into the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

NATHAN WRIGHT: Parley was one of the early missionaries and went on a lot of missions. I mean, I can't even begin to describe or count the number of missions he served. Let me ask, who were some of the more prominent people that came into the Church because of Parley P. Pratt?

MATT GROW: Well, the most prominent is John Taylor, who was the third president of the Church. And that's a great story. Its 1836, so Parley has been an Apostle for a year. He's called on a mission to Canada and he doesn't particularly want to go. He's in debt, he's poor, his wife, whose name is Thankful Halsey, is sick, she's often been sick. And after nearly ten years of marriage, they have no children. And Heber C. Kimball knocks on his door and blesses Parley and promises him three things; the first is that if he goes on his mission to Canada, that they will conceive a child and a son will be born. The second is that through his mission to Canada, the doors of the Gospel will be opened to England, and the third is that someday Parley will have riches, more than he can count. And so he decides to go and he goes and meets John Taylor and soon thereafter, John Taylor is baptized. And also in England he baptizes Joseph Fielding and his sisters, Mary and Mercy, where, of course, Joseph F. Smith and Joseph Fielding Smith, that lineage comes from. And those people in Canada, like the Taylors and the Fieldings, still had contacts in England and so pretty soon they are called on a mission to England and they open up that English Mission. Parley returns to Kirtland, Thankful is pregnant, has a child, Parley Jr., though she dies soon after childbirth.

ROBERT GROW: I am constantly meeting people saying "Oh, my ancestor was taught and baptized by Parley. And so he was on missions for about 25 years, nearly constantly, from the time he joins the Church until the time of his death when he's 50 years of age.

NATHAN WRIGHT: So as I understand it, on a mission where he was going to teach Native Americans. In Missouri he swung by Kirtland to find one of his old friends, mentors, so to speak, who was that and what happened.

ROBERT GROW: Yes, in his search for early Christianity, he was essentially a seeker. He kept looking for the truth, and he found the truth, but he said, not the authority, but more of the truth than he had ever found before with a man named Sidney Rigdon, who was teaching in Ohio. Sidney had a congregation and a group of followers there, and so Parley actually became a preacher for Sidney Rigdon's group, which was called, Matt, what were they?

MATT GROW: It was called the Campbellites, who were the Disciples of Christ.

ROBERT GROW: Right. And so Parley, on the way to the Indian Mission with the three other missionaries, stopped in Kirtland and teaches Sidney Rigdon. And with Sidney then accepting the Gospel and many others of his congregation now seeing not just the truth they had, but more of the truth, and the Priesthood, and the authority, they began to join the Church in mass. So then Parley goes back to New York with Joseph Smith and the Church, then moved to Kirtland, and that becomes the base of the Church so that connection into that group who had been prepared with a good portion of the truth of ancient Christianity, accepted Joseph Smith and the Gospel and became then the population of the largest group of followers of Joseph Smith.

MATT GROW: And to set the context there, Parley joins the Church in September of 1830, six months after the Church is organized. A month later he is called on this mission to the Lamanites, so he's 23, he's been a member of the Church for a month, and he literally comes out of the baptismal font preaching, right? And so it's at that point that on the mission to the

Lamanites who are the American Indians, they stop by Kirtland and have this spectacular missionary success with Sidney Rigdon and his congregation.

ROBERT GROW: None of that would have happened except for Parley's strong inclinations towards religion anyway. He and his father and a brother tried to open a farm on what would have been an extension of the Erie Canal up into the Lake which was their hope to become prosperous. That effort failed and they lost the land. Parley, totally dejected, then moves to Ohio and goes off to a small area by himself in the woods, builds a little hut, and all he does all winter long is read the Bible and study the scriptures. If you look at the way he taught from the scriptures, he knew the Old Testament really well, not just the New Testament, and he saw the rise of ancient Israel in those prophecies and the fulfillment as he looked forward to what he received in the Gospel. So Parley then has a prosperous farm. He goes home, he finds Thankful Halsey and brings her out to Ohio, they have a beautiful farm they've created, and Parley feels the sense that he's got to go preach. And he had a feeling he was to preach to the Lamanites, to the Indians. And so he is on his way back along the Erie Canal, back to New York with Thankful, having sold the farm, and all of a sudden he gets the impression to leave her on the boat going home, and he gets off near Palmyra, just a spiritual feeling, and he's wandering, talking to people and he finds somebody has a Book of Mormon. And he reads the Book of Mormon and he is so struck by it, he can't sleep, he can't eat, everything is a burden except for reading. He accepts the Book of Mormon, knows that it's true, and goes and finds Hyrum Smith, who baptizes him. And then he gets back on the boat and catches up with Thankful back in New York and teaches Orson. So all of this happens very quickly, and none of it would have happened except for his desire to preach the Gospel as he knew it and that leads him directly to the Book of Mormon, Hyrum, baptism, and then from there on his life is consumed by his love for the Gospel of Jesus Christ, his commitment to the Prophet Joseph Smith, and he bore his testimony throughout his life to the Restoration, and carried that message over the seas. He was the first one who was over the mission over the Pacific and its islands and its coasts and so on. And that all started with his inclinations that he got from his youth, his mother, his father, and then his reading of the scriptures and then being led by the Spirit to the Book of Mormon.

NATHAN WRIGHT: A really, in my view, a really nice account of his conversion is the Church movie called "How Rare a Possession" that you both are quite familiar with. But it's just so well done, how he just feels the Spirit and feels like he has to go preach, and that's when he finds the Book of Mormon in his life.

ROBERT GROW: You can imagine being Thankful Halsey, they're on the Erie Canal, they're on their trip, and he says, "I feel like I have to get off, Thankful." And she says, "I've learned to trust his impressions." You know, there was always this tremendous love in his life between Parley and Thankful, and her support for his desire to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ, that gave him the strength and the foundation of that first great love of his life. And she died right after Parley Jr. was born and after he was on his mission to Canada.

MATT GROW: And the thing that "How Rare a Possession" really gets right is how central the Book of Mormon is to Parley's life. I mean, he has this great knowledge of the Bible, but once he converts to the Church, he just really immerses himself in the Book of Mormon, and he really preached from the Book of Mormon. He really knew the Book of Mormon. And

it's really exemplified by the named he ends up giving his sons, they're all Book of Mormon names except for Parley Jr.; Abinidi, Teancum, Nephi, Lehi, Helaman, Moroni, and so on and so forth. There is this real love of the Book of Mormon that comes through in his life.

ROBERT GROW: I think part of that was because Parley had read and studied the Old Testament. He'd understand the covenants made with ancient Israel and so when he found the Book of Mormon, with its restoration of the doctrine of the gathering of Israel in the last days and that the covenants were still in force, he saw the Book of Mormon as the answer to the promises of the Old Testament, as well as being the restorer of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And so I think he saw it in both those contexts, restoring the ancient covenant as well as restoring the fullness of the Gospel of Christ and the plain and precious things that had been lost. And so he taught very powerfully I think, because he had both of those doctrinal aspects clear in his mind about the restoration of Israel as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

NATHAN WRIGHT: So these Pratt brothers very quickly prove themselves as valuable members of the Church and are called into the Twelve. What do they do after that? I mean, did the missions continue, were their preaching styles any different having become Apostles? How did that work?

MATT GROW: I think one of the things that happens with the call to being an Apostle for both of them is after that time they both really begin to write. And Parley reaches tremendous numbers of people, as does Orson, through personal preaching. But it's really through his writing, both brothers, that they leave their imprint on the early Church. In 1837, two years after the call to be an Apostle, Parley writes "A Voice of Warning" which is a short little book, a missionary tract that explains the doctrines of the Restoration. And it's the most read book among the early Church, besides the Book of Mormon itself. It just has this tremendous reach, and Orson follows and begins writing pamphlets as well, and they both write dozens of pamphlets during their life and they both edit newspapers and they both write dozens and dozens of newspaper articles, so it's that turn to writing to reach a much broader audience than they could through personal preaching that really distinguishes them.

NATHAN WRIGHT: But being brothers and being different people, their writing styles apparently were quite different.

MATT GROW: Well, they're very differently. I mean, Parley wrote in every conceivable genre. He wrote short stories, he wrote poetry, he wrote hymns. There is one point on the mission to England where they're writing the hymnal, and Parley writes Brigham Young and says, "I'm writing several new hymns a day." I mean, there was just this kind of outpouring. He writes doctrinal treatises, he writes all sorts of pamphlets. And he's kind of a romantic. He likes to play with ideas. He likes to tease out their implications. Whereas Orson has a mathematical mind, and in fact he writes mathematical treatises. But he's very logical, he wants to nail everything down. And he's not like Parley, in that he doesn't write poetry or short stories or anything like that. It's these doctrinal treatises that really consumes Orson's writing.

ROBERT GROW: Parley, before he became an Apostle, he went through the testing ground of Zion's Camp, as did many of those who became early apostles. And through the experiences he continued to have his faith grow stronger. He talked about, on the way to Zion's Camp, he was a recruiting officer and supposed to go find supplies and new people to join. So as the camp moved forward to Missouri from Ohio, he would go out with the buckboard every day and he'd go out to small branches of the Church and others and he'd try to find new people to join them as well as supplies. And so he'd leave very early in the morning, come back late at night, he was exhausted day after day, and he tells the story one day of going out with the buckboard, he's very, very tired, just so exhausted he can't even sit on the buckboard. And he finally pulls the buckboard off into a field and he lays down in the grass, and he goes to sleep and the horse starts to graze. And he hadn't been sleeping for very long and the horse had just finished eating, when he heard a voice and the voice very clearly speaks to him and it thrills him throughout his whole being and says, "Parley, it's time to be up and on your journey." And Parley leaps to his feet, gets on the buckboard as fully revived and feeling energized, and when he gets back to the camp that night, he tells Joseph of the experience, and Joseph said, "It was the Angel of the Lord that goes before the Camp of Israel who spoke to you." And Parley's life was just full of daily experiences with the Spirit and with the Lord, and so when he became an Apostle, he took that growing testimony and just continued to preach to people and teach them the Gospel. And I think he spoke in a very powerful, personal way. If you read the beginning of the autobiography, it is the story of his life set in the context of the Gospel. How he learned the Gospel as a child, how he gradually came to find the truth, and then came to find the authority, and I think he used that as his stump speech telling his own conversion just as Alma the younger told his conversion story. So I think Parley had a warm, outgoing, friendly way of teaching that always said to people, "There is more for you to know. Look at my life and how I found the rest of the story of Christianity. You join us and come with us." He never put people down, it was always "I can lift you that one more step with both more of the truth and with the authority of God." And so I think he became very much the voice of the message of the Church and that's why I think his writing was so powerful, is it's not just dry doctrine. It is filled with stories about how the Spirit moves people forward, telling his own story and then other people's stories.

NATHAN WRIGHT: And so we have these two very becoming, very prominent in the Church, brothers. They were very integrally in what was happening locally and abroad with all their missionary work. One would think, with that kind of influence, they would have been rather well off. What was the real case?

MATT GROW: The real case is that they are in almost perpetual poverty. And it's because of their missionary work. I mean, they're constantly leaving, serving missions, and they're never able to get traction financially in their life. In fact, Parley is almost continually in debt, struggling financially. There are a couple of times in his life where he's on the verge of striking it rich. The first is he has a store in Nauvoo when Nauvoo is just exploding in population and he's just got this great position, this central store in town, he partners with Erastus Snow.

NATHAN WRIGHT: You think he has good business judgment.

MATT GROW: [Laughing] And about ten months into it, he and Erastus are called on a mission. So they shut up their store and they leave. The second time he almost strikes it rich is when they move into the Salt Lake Valley and the original pioneer route into the valley was a difficult one. It kind of winds around, goes over streams lots of times, so Parley had the idea of creating another road into the valley through what is now Parley's Canyon. He builds a toll road and the first season that it is open here is \$1500 which is a substantial amount in those days. Because, you not only have the Mormon immigrants passing down the toll road, you have the California 49ers heading toward the gold rush. And again, he's called on a mission. He sells his interest in the toll road and he goes. So on the brink of financial success a couple of times and he leaves on missions. And it's basically the same with Orson. Orson struggles financially, serves abroad particularly on a lot of missions. He spends a lot of time in England.

ROBERT GROW: Parley went to England several times and his focus was not on money. He's focused on the Gospel, and so when he comes home from England, having presided over the Church in Europe, he commissions almost ten ships. He goes and finds ten full ships and fills them with new converts and brings them back across the ocean with him. His life was focused on the saving of souls, not the making of money. And so every time he was called, he went. And he was called later, then, to preside over the missions of the Pacific and all of the islands and coasts of the Pacific. He's the first LDS Apostle, the first LDS leader to go to Chile, to South America and that's part of his mission. He's there learning Spanish, trying to learn a language on his own. He came up with the idea that every member of the Quorum of the Twelve should learn a different language so they could all preach around the world, which I don't think that ever occurred, but he was always enthusiastic about his missionary work. And so he, more than probably anybody else in the early Church, was on missions constantly, and he could spellbind a crowd as well as write tracts that brought the Spirit into people's lives. One of the interesting stories about his missionary work is, he actually is arrested for preaching, and he's with a group of other missionaries. They are arrested; they are taken to a trial in the evening, goes on late into the night. Parley was not good at sort of making peace in that kind of circumstance, and so he asked one of the brethren to sing "Oh How Happy Are We" to the court and then suggested they should all repent for having arrested them. And they say you've got to pay money or we're going to lock you up and take you to jail. Well, Parley has no money, and so they arrest him and take him to a local, it's what would have been a motel back in those days, but a local way house, and he's locked in his room overnight with the sheriff, and in the morning they get up and the sheriff feeds him breakfast and they're going to be on their way to jail, and Parley turns to the guy at the end of breakfast and says "I thank you for breakfast. You've put me up overnight. You've been good company." And he turns to the sheriff and says "Are you good at a race?" And the sheriff is sort of stunned by this, and he says, "No, I'm really not very fast, but my dog, Stu Boy, my big bulldog is really good at a race. He can take down any man and I've trained him for years." And Parley then says, "OK." And Parley jumps from the table, runs for the door, and heads out across the field, sprinting. And he says he's approaching about the speed of a deer, but the sheriff, after catching what's going on, starts hollering at the dog, "Take him down, take him down, Stu Boy." And the dog is barreling down after Parley, and just as he's leaping at him to take him, Parley has this flash. He stops dead in his tracks and decides to help the sheriff. So he starts clapping his hands and pointing at the woods for the dog, and going

“Stu Boy, go get him. Go get him.” And the dog just catches on to this and goes right by him on into the woods, and Parley then runs off in another direction and joins the missionaries. But he didn’t have enough money to pay to get out of jail, so he was on his way to jail. He was destitute most of his life, but he made do with what he had. When he died, he had 23 living children. The oldest was 20, Parley Jr. The next oldest was Olivia was 15. All the rest of the 21 of them were 12 or younger and the family was destitute. And so it took years for them to recover financially and to survive. And so his missions had took a real toll and were at a real cost to his family. There is one account of a man coming to Utah to find Parley P. Pratt and listen to him. And he finally finds him at home with several of his wives, a very poor setting, Parley is barefoot and wearing a straw hat, but he sits there on the fence with him for three hours and teaches him from the Old Testament and about the future of Israel, and the man is spellbound by it. He was shocked by the circumstances he found him in, but when he listened to him preach and felt the Spirit, he was so moved that it changed his life. And so Parley had a gift to be a missionary.

MATT GROW: And if you remember, I mentioned earlier this blessing that Heber C. Kimball gives him, that Thankful will conceive and bear a son, that the way to England will be open through his Canadian mission, and that he will one day have riches.

NATHAN WRIGHT: So how did Parley reconcile that?

MATT GROW: You know, not all blessings are fulfilled the way you want them to be. Parley Jr. is born and Thankful dies, right? I think Parley, and he speaks about this very clearly towards the end of his life, the riches he has are his family, alright? His children, his wives, and those sorts of things. And so he comes to see, I think, his family as his riches.

ROBERT GROW: His autobiography really does not have in it the story of his family, and in that sense it’s a great missionary story, it’s a powerful book. But the new biography that’s being written will include both an analysis of the doctrine as he taught it as well as the story and history of his family. So that’s what Matt and Terrell Givens are writing is that book which will tell the rest of the story of Parley’s life and the challenges and difficulties and how he struggled and how he overcame those struggles, how he at times was concerned about what to do and how the Lord led him. We need to make certain that we tell his true story, because the true story is one that is inspiring about his life.

MATT GROW: Yeah, I mean, I think that’s true. Sometimes we see the early leaders of the Church as always these heroic figures, right, I mean, heroic missionaries, heroic crossing of the plains and things like that but they come to see them as real people who struggled as we struggle, who got down, who felt resentment at times, who were angry at times, within the context of their love of the Gospel and their devotion to it, I think, is a very powerful story.

NATHAN WRIGHT: So his untiring efforts, he just threw himself into the Gospel and the Church in his short life. Do you think he had an inkling at any point that he would not live a good, long life, so to speak?

MATT GROW: Well, it's unusual to write an autobiography in your late 40s. And there are some indications towards the end of his life when he's in his late 40s and then he serves his final mission at the age of 50, and during that mission he writes several times that he feels that death is close, that he feels like the end of his life story is about to be written. And so he does seem to have this foreboding that perhaps he will not live too much longer.

ROBERT GROW: And he went, when he was called on this last mission, to see Aunt Agatha, one of his wives, and as she recounted, "He came to my house one day about the middle of August and he said 'I have bad news for you,' and he said 'I've been called on a mission'." And she said "You've gone on many missions. Why is that bad news?" and he said "Because I feel as if I shall never come back." And as he's working on the autobiography on this mission, rather than continuing to carry it with him, he gave it to John Taylor, I believe, in New York, for safe keeping, or we might not have the autobiography. And so John Taylor then protected and brought it home from the mission field. So Parley had several premonitions. A premonition is not a warning, it's just a premonition that his life, his time of service on this earth, might be coming to a close. His death was a shocking event to the Church. Brigham Young said it was perhaps the most difficult thing he had ever tried to reconcile, and he said Parley had gone on to his great reward, and another wonderful man has gone to help Joseph and Hyrum in the missionary work in the Spirit World. But Parley's death, which seemed so untimely to all of us, it seems like he had a sense that things could change on this mission.

NATHAN WRIGHT: So which one of you would like to recount what happened, how Parley P. Pratt died?

MATT GROW: Well, the story begins on a mission to San Francisco. Parley serves two missions to gold rush, San Francisco. On one of those missions he meets a recent convert to the Church named Eleanor McClean, and Eleanor and her husband, Hector, were Southerners who had moved to San Francisco during the year of the gold rush. And according to Eleanor, Hector was abusive, he was alcoholic, and he was very opposed to her joining the Church. One time he caught her singing a Mormon hymn and he throws her in the street, he's abusive to her, he locks the door, and then in his mind, to protect his children from Mormonism, he, without Eleanor's permission, puts them on a boat alone. The boat goes from San Francisco through Panama to New Orleans where her family lives, and so her children are taken to New Orleans. And so Eleanor then follows the children, tries to retrieve them, her parents will not let her take the children because they see her as a convert to this strange religious sect, and so then she travels to Salt Lake City, where she now sees her marriage to Hector as over, and she is sealed to Parley by Brigham Young as Parley's last plural wife. When Parley is called on his last mission, she says, "I want to come along and get my children back." So as they travel to the East, they split off and she goes to New Orleans where she retrieves her children and she has made plans to meet up with a Mormon wagon train that is going from Texas to cross the plains back to Utah. She sends letters to Parley informing him what's going on and he then goes to what is now Oklahoma, which was an Indian territory, to help her on her way back to Utah. At that point, Eleanor's father, who is very opposed to her joining the Church, writes a letter to Hector McClean, and Hector McClean actually has tried to hunt Parley down in several of the cities that Parley visits in the East. In St. Louis, Parley barely escapes from him, but Hector McClean enlists the help of local law enforcement officials who are also

opposed to Mormonism, and they find Eleanor and arrest her for stealing the clothes on the children's backs. And then they find Parley and arrest him as an accomplice in this. They then march Parley and Eleanor to Arkansas which was the nearest state.

ROBERT GROW: Chained together with his missionary companion who was still with him.

MATT GROW: Right. And who was also sort of under arrest. And they understand that the legal charges won't hold, and the hope that Hector and others have is that they can get Parley to Missouri where there is still such hatred of the Mormons and still legal charges pending from the Missouri persecutions 20 years earlier. There is a trial held in Arkansas. Eleanor is released. Parley is held overnight in jail by the judge, and the judge comes to Parley and says, "I find nothing against you. I have no reason to keep you. I do not want to see vigilante justice happen in my town. So I am going to give you a horse, I'm going to give you a gun, and I'm going to allow you to escape early the next morning." And the judge actually then tries to talk Hector McClean out of trying to harm Parley, and Parley tells the judge, "I'll take the horse but not the gun. I'm a minister of the Gospel. I'm going to travel unarmed." So early the next morning he slips out of jail, rides about ten miles away, but the jail is being watched. Hector McClean is notified, and about 10 miles away from the jail he catches up to Parley, he shoots him several times. Parley doesn't die, he comes back and stabs him and shoots him a final time, and then Parley lives for about an hour after that and a group of the local neighbors gathers around Parley and he tells them a number of things. He tells them to take his valuables and send them to his family in Salt Lake, and that actually doesn't happen, the valuables are taken by the state to pay the cost of the funeral. Then he tells them that he wishes his body to be taken to Salt Lake as well, and then he gives a dying testimony. He says, "I die a firm believer in the Gospel of Jesus Christ as revealed through the Prophet Joseph Smith, and wish you to carry this, my dying testimony. I know that the Gospel is true and that Joseph Smith was a Prophet of the living God. I am dying a martyr to the faith." Parley is then buried by a group of the sympathetic townsfolk and Hector McClean is never charged with the crime and is never brought to justice for the murder of Parley. And after Parley dies, Eleanor is not free from trouble. She actually has to escape herself, because her family has received a legal judgment that they can commit her to an insane asylum.

NATHAN WRIGHT: To save her from . . .

MATT GROW: To save her from the Mormons, right. And this is something that happened in the 19th century. Religious frenzy can get you committed. And so she is actually having to evade law enforcement herself and then she meets some Latter-day Saints who help her across the plains.

ROBERT GROW: You are probably aware that we made an effort in the last year or so to recover Parley's body.

NATHAN WRIGHT: I was going to ask about that.

ROBERT GROW: Because it plays into sort of what is the rest of the story. Parley, as he was dying in Arkansas, he was able to crawl off the path, probably afraid that others would come who might do him further injury. It appears that he took some paper he had and wadded it up

and stuck it in the wounds, hoping he wouldn't bleed to death. A friendly farmer came with some others, found him still alive, gave him some water and some other things. And so Parley has crawled, he's propped himself up against a tree, and he asks that they send to the wagon train that they were going to join, the Mormon train that was headed to Utah, and have them come get his body.

And so it was part of his dying wish that he not be left there. And in particular that story came down through the family that he not be left among his enemies, that he be brought home among the Saints. So the family has felt this obligation to try and move Parley's remains. Now, because of the events that occurred in Utah with respect to Arkansas later in 1857, literally Latter-day Saints were not safe to go to Arkansas during the last half of that century. So the family's first effort to move him was by Eleanor, sending to Erastus Snow saying that he's been killed, will you send for his body. And that was the first effort in 1857, the year he died. But the family then sent representatives there in 1890s, the 1900s, the 1910s, the 1930s and the 1950s, trying to find his body. Well, he was buried in, a sympathetic farmer in the area, a blacksmith whose last name was Wynn, Zeeley Wynn, had allowed him to be buried in a family plot that they had, but probably not next to the family, but in that plot. And that same place became a Civil War campground for soldiers, and so the place had changed substantially. People who had family buried there came back and weren't sure where the graves were. And so the real position or location of the grave had probably been obscured as early as the Civil War, just a few years later.

And so the family continued to make these efforts. In the early 1900s effort, Samuel Russell, a grandson, actually went to the First Presidency and they received a letter of support and it was suggested that he talk or write to the mission president and the mission president would send people and so on. And so these efforts were big efforts. Harold Pratt, a great-grandson went there himself and took pictures in the 1930s that we have, trying to locate the grave.

By the 1950s it was not possible, probably, to locate the exact gravesite, and so the family bought the land by about the mid 1950s and erected a granite monument with the words from "The Morning Breaks, the Shadows Flee, Lo Zion's banner is unfurled" part of Parley's hymns is on that granite monument. And so the family put up the monument, thinking they probably knew where the gravesite was, but still not being completely sure.

Because of modern technology now, by the way, when I became president of the family organization 25 years ago, old members of the family would teeter up to me at reunions and say "We have to fulfill Parley's dying wish" and I would say things like "There's not much there, we probably couldn't find him. If we could, there wouldn't be anything to move, let's just let this go." [Laughter] And the pressure continued to go on in the family and the family has always felt they should make the effort. And so with new technology, both of electromagnetic resonance and ground penetrating radar, we hired one of the top companies in the United States a couple of years ago, to go look at that site and find his body if they could. There weren't very many graves in this family graveyard.

So we did the ground penetrating radar study. The grave that appeared most likely to be Parley's because it was offset from the others and fit a number of geographical

descriptions that had been picked up by the family over the years, was within six inches, just onto the property, and so that opened the way for us to go make this effort. We had to get court approval because he died before the time of death certificates, we hired lawyers in Arkansas who brought actions before a very stern Arkansas judge, silver-haired man, whose courtroom clearly was his and we were on his turf. And I went to testify about why the family wanted to do this.

The judge, after hearing all of the evidence, made a very unusual personal remark. He said that in his college days, when he was thinking about going to law school, he had written a paper on the death of Parley P. Pratt in Arkansas and about the legal implications of that, and he said, "This was certainly not our most heroic moment, and we hope by allowing you to do this will allow you to close a chapter in your family's history and allow us to close a chapter in our history as well."

Within a week after we got that order, we were prepared with archaeologists, other kinds of scientists, soil scientists and others; we mounted an effort and moved all the equipment necessary in for a week, did an archeological dig at the site. We had been warned in advance that the Arkansas soils were red and acidic, and that very often when they had had to move graves in Arkansas, not much would be found, if anything. In fact, nobody had found anything, one coroner told me, in a grave older than 90 years.

As we excavated, it was clear to the scientists we were excavating a grave. It was a shallow grave, and one of the reasons the judge allowed us to do this was because it was so shallow. As we excavated the grave, we finally concluded with the scientists that the acidic Arkansas clay had essentially claimed all that could have been found earlier of Parley's remains. And so Parley remains buried in Arkansas, but the family has now done all that it could have ever tried to do to find his body and bring him back to Utah.

But something amazing happened from that experience. In studying the history there, we found that there were these tremendous stories of personal courage where people there in the community had stood up for Parley and Eleanor and protected them. Judge John Ogden, who faced with a mob of 500 in his courtroom, released Parley and tried to actually arm him and gave him a horse so he could escape: A tremendous story of a man's faith in the law and his responsibility to the law in the face of tremendous public pressure and a mob.

A hotel keeper, who when they were talking about actually lynching Eleanor, basically came to her defense and protected her life and then gave her the long linen cloth so she could bury Parley in the manner of his faith as she went to prepare the body for burial. People who drove her, a minister who drove her, whose wife accompanied her out to where Parley had been killed, and who protected her. A man named Zeeley Wynn, who allowed him to be buried in his graveyard and the inquest to be held in his home. Another man who had known the Pratt family who lived not far away gave his own personal coffin, and he was a great woodworker that he had prepared for himself to be buried in, he gave it for Parley's burial. An inquest was held, local people dug the grave, and so in the midst of this tragic story in Arkansas, we were reminded of all of these stories of compassion and service and bravery that occurred.

And so when we went as a family, those are the stories we told. So this became front page news on every newspaper in the area. It was on the evening news as we told the stories of our family and what we were trying to do and the stories of their people. And we learned that Parley was not buried among his enemies. We learned that he was actually buried among his friends, and as we found the wards who had kept this site and mowed the grass and took care of it over the years, we found hundreds of neighbors who came to watch the excavation, who brought the stories of their families and how they were involved in all of this. And so in a sense this was a tremendous healing moment for our family and I think for that part of Arkansas, which was really our ultimate goal, was to protect and preserve his legacy and also to do what we could to soften the feelings between Arkansas and the Latter-day Saints.

NATHAN WRIGHT: Very good. What can each of us, as followers of the Savior, take from the lives of the Pratt brothers?

ROBERT GROW: When I was a mission president a few years ago, we had our missionaries memorize scriptures. I took the opportunity to have them memorize one thing that was not a scripture, and it is from Chapter 26 of the autobiography of Parley P. Pratt. He was arrested with Joseph Smith and about 50 other brethren and taken to Richmond Jail. He was in an unfinished courthouse in the middle of the winter. It is at that point that Sidney Rigdon, who was an Elder in the Church, took sick. Others were desperately sick. They were chained in a dungeon to each other in the worst of circumstances. And the stories of that dungeon experience most of us heard growing up.

There were guards there and they were noisy and foul-mouthed and vulgar. They were what Parley called “a disgraceful rabble” and as the night went on one evening, he lay quietly chained to Joseph Smith who lay next to him. Hour after hour the guards spoke of the terrible things they had done to the Saints. He lay there indignant and wanted to rise and rebuke the guards. But knowing that Joseph was awake next to him, he didn’t. He waited. And finally he was so disgusted, that he felt like he had to rise, and just before he was going to do so, Joseph stood on his feet, and Parley wrote, “On a sudden he arose to his feet, and spoke in a voice of thunder, or as the roaring lion, uttering, as near as I can recollect, the following words: ‘Silence, ye fiends of the infernal pit. In the name of Jesus Christ, I rebuke you and command you to be still; I will not live another minute and bear such language. Cease such talk, or you or I die this instant.’ He ceased to speak. He stood erect in terrible majesty. Chained, and without a weapon; calm, unruffled and dignified as an angel. And the guards quailed before him and quietly shrunk and withdrew and said nothing else until the change of the guards.” And then Parley wrote of his friend in whom he had tremendous faith, even though he knew he was a human being, had lived with him for years, had seen his failings as well as his great strength. He wrote of Joseph, “I have seen the magistrates of justice clothed in majesterial robes, and I’ve seen criminals arraigned before them, while life was suspended on a breath in the courts of England; I have witnessed a Congress in solemn session to give laws to nations; I have tried to conceive of kings, of royal courts, of thrones and of crowns; and of emperors assembled to decide the fate of kingdoms; but dignity and majesty have I seen but once, as it stood in chains at midnight, in a dungeon in an obscure village of Missouri.” I think the message of Parley, the legacy of Parley, was through all the things he experienced, his

dying testimony was about Joseph and the Restoration of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and his testimony of Joseph in this prison is the only account of this event, and it describes the Joseph Smith I like to think about, as the great leader of the Restoration of the Gospel. So, you know, what would Parley say if you ask him what his message was? Joseph Smith was a Prophet, the Restoration of the Gospel is true, and his writings and a testimony of his life tell us that he firmly believed that and held that belief to his last dying breath.

NATHAN WRIGHT: He wrote earlier about himself, “and should the author be called to sacrifice his life for the cause of truth, he will have the consolation that it will be said of him as it was said of Abel, he being dead yet speaketh.” And those words ring really true and remind us of who he was and what he believed in. As a reminder, these are some of the hymn texts that he wrote that are very familiar to all members of the Church; *An Angel From on High; Come, O thou King of Kings; The Morning Breaks, the Shadows Flee* as you mentioned before, *Jesus Once of Humble Birth*. These are the words that even though Parley is dead, we hear from him every time we sing. Any parting words? Matt?

MATT GROW: I think one of the messages of Parley’s life, too, is his devotion, right? I mean, he is described as someone who is always doing something, always thinking, always working, always preaching. And this message of the Restoration, which in his autobiography and in his writings is so exciting, right.

[BACKGROUND MUSHC]

The excitement of the early Restoration, I think, is what really comes through in his writings and to remember and be able to feel of that excitement I think is one of his real legacies.

NATHAN WRIGHT: Very good. We’ve been talking today with Robert and Matthew Grow, both descendants of Parley P. Pratt. Thank you very, very much for being here.

MATT GROW: Thanks for having us. Great to be here.

NATHAN WRIGHT: Thank you.