Week 43 is scheduled for study Oct. 18-24, 2021. With the powers of heaven active and working in our life, the Lord can help us overcome and endure well any and all adversities.

Day 1

Your experience studying the scriptures will be richer if your goal is to uncover truth. Begin with a prayer, listen to the Spirit, and record your impressions.

Doctrine and Covenants 121:1-10, 23-33; 122 - Adversity can "be for [my] good."

We just talked about this subject within the last month, so I will keep this short and to the point.

After reading today's recommended verses, do you get the idea that the Lord is in control of what happens during our time on earth? He has been sending angels to the prophets since the days of Adam telling them what their posterity has to look forward to. He makes it very clear to the Prophet Joseph Smith that the fate of all flesh is in His hands, and those who hurt God's "little ones" and friends will pay dearly for their hurt. He also promises rich blessings to those who are made to suffer because of the wicked ways of others.

All of these verses tell me that the Lord is keenly aware of what is happening in our daily lives, just as He is aware of the behavior of the wicked. Nothing escapes His attention. His desire is, and always has been, to bless those who serve Him with knowledge from on high, with perspective that reaches into the eternities, and comfort that goes beyond what the world can offer. What we suffer in this life is but a drop in the bottomless well of possibilities for blessings He has to offer us, for most of our greatest blessings come at the hands of adversity of some sort.

According to section 121, the greatest knowledge God wants to bestow on us won't happen until the millennium, but by then we will no longer be in "time" as we now know it. The mortal journey will no longer be as it is now, and wickedness will not be rampant as it is in this final dispensation of time. So for now, our greatest blessings will come amidst adversity, and we, like all the prophets and Saints of yesteryear will continue to look forward to that great day when Christ comes to personally rule and reign in our midst.

Day 2

Your experience studying the scriptures will be richer if your goal is to uncover truth. Begin with a prayer, listen to the Spirit, and record your impressions.

Doctrine and Covenants 121:34-46 - We can access the "powers of heaven."

As the manual points out, Joseph and the Saints were in the middle of a graphic demonstration of how the power of earthly justice worked. Their rights were trampled on, and justice was difficult to find, if at all. In the verses for today's lesson the Lord gives us a lesson in how godly power works. He teaches us what creates heavenly power, and what allows that power to flow, without force to the wielder of that power for all eternity.

I recommend you read the article *Breaking Down Doctrine and Covenants 121*. I split the section into six parts and discuss them one by one. Today's verses are found in parts 5 and 6. This should give you lots of food for thought.

Day 3

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Doctrine and Covenants 122 - Jesus Christ has descended below all things.

Verses 5-7 create a picture that is difficult to imagine, let alone best or top. How much worse can you have it than to have the very jaws of hell open wide to engulf you? Yet the Savior of the world experienced worse than all of these experiences listed in these verses.

If we step back from this verse and look at the message of this section, we see that the Lord has numbered each of our days, has prepared a way through our trials for us, and is intimately knowledgeable of all the ways in which others could betray us and make us suffer in this world. He knows all these things, because He has experienced all these things. It doesn't matter what we are made to face in our days in mortality, Jesus knows that each and every experience can bring us growth spiritually, if we are seeking to learn from our experiences. Yes, for those who aren't looking for growth, suffering is just suffering. Only when we hurt and seek out the Lord can He teach us how to learn godly virtues from what we have just gone through.

The key here is that, because Christ has descended below all things while he was in mortality, he can teach us the lessons we each need to learn as we go through our own times of trial and suffering. His perfect knowledge and understanding can be used by each of us to learn how to become like him, if only we are committed to sticking by him and staying close to his Spirit. For it is the Spirit's duty to be our teacher and guide in this process.

To me, these verses aren't about looking at Christ and feeling sorry for him, and for what he suffered, for he did it willingly, and out of love, because if he didn't, all of us would be lost to our Father forever. Our gratitude for his willingness to suffer for us should have no bounds, and our desire to become like him is only possible because he descended below all things for the express purpose of reclaiming our souls for God.

Day 4

Your experience studying the scriptures will be richer if your goal is to uncover truth. Begin with a prayer, listen to the Spirit, and record your impressions.

Doctrine and Covenants 123 - Let us cheerfully do all things that lie in our power.

I find it interesting that Joseph Smith spends 16 verses outlining the persecutions of the Saints, and all their sufferings, only to say in the 17th verse that we should cheerfully do all in our power to follow the Lord's directions. Why? So when they had followed the Lord's directions in full, they could "stand still, with the utmost assurance, to see the salvation of God, and for his arm to be revealed."

> 17 Therefore, dearly beloved brethren, let us cheerfully do all things that lie in our power; and then may we stand still, with the utmost assurance, to see the salvation of God, and for his arm to be revealed.

In verse 17, the Prophet is referring to the promises the Lord made to him that if they would document everything that happened to them, and seek for redress through all legal means, He would personally punish the wicked, if they did not redress His Saints themselves. In other words, 'You do such and such to seek for reparations for the wrongs done to you, and then, if you still don't receive any satisfactory response from the government, I will take upon me your cause. I will fight your battles, and woe be to those who have offended my friends.'

What does this have to do with us today? The Lord's love is consistent with those whom He loves for their obedient behavior. We have examples of the Lord stepping in and fighting Israel's fights as far back as the Old Testament. God has always required that His people do all they can to be peacemakers, and when their efforts are not enough to quell the wrath of those who would do His people harm, He steps in and fights their battles for them.

Is not the notion of God fighting our battles for us enough of a reason for us to be happy and cheerfully be obedient? True, the wicked will always be wicked. They will continue to hurt the Saints however they can, but the Lord has always promised His personal protection for those who keep His commandments. And He has always promised special rewards in heaven for those who left this world because of the wickedness of others, or the righteousness of the Saints who died in their duty to God.

We have no reason to be sad, cast off, or despondent. The Lord is with us. He has always protected His friends. Unlike Satan, God always supports His own, and eventually vindicates them. Always.

FHE/Personal Study

Liberty Jail

If you have read the manual, or have seen any of the videos about Liberty jail, you have probably gotten the image in your head as to how small and close that room was. The only door is in the ceiling. The floor was covered with dirty straw, upon which they had to relieve themselves, and sleep. It was the coldest winter on record, and they had no ability to build a fire, nor was there any form of outside heating to warm their cell. They ate rotten food that was often deliberately poisoned. They often vomited what they ate, when they could bring themselves to eat the horrible food. The guards spoke crudely and irreverently about the horrors they participated in perpetrating on the Saints, and once Joseph had to use the priesthood and rebuke them for their foul speech.

This was their every day life in Liberty jail. Wouldn't these conditions be enough for anyone to ask the Lord where He was hiding? For while they had been spending almost half a year under these conditions, in the middle of winter, they were receiving letters from their family members and fellow Saints describing the most horrific of persecutions and treatment by the wicked.

Despite how everything obviously looked to their physical senses, these brethren continued faithful to the Lord. As Joseph Smith put it, "I bear with fortitude all my oppression, so do these that are with me; not one of us have flinched yet."

A crucible is a small vessel that is used to heat up metals in order to melt them and cause them to be purified of all their impurities. Liberty jail was a crucible to those brethren, and they passed the test. Some have referred to it as a temple prison, for they drew closer to the Lord within its walls, because of what they suffered. This is a wonderful demonstration how our sufferings can either turn us bitter or ennoble our souls. The choice is ours when the trials come, and they always come. Heartache is a natural part of this mortal world. What we do with it is up to us.

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O God Where Art Thou

Week 43