



doctrine and covenants 10

table of contents

dc 10. ¹⁻⁴ — meditation	2
dc 10. ⁵⁻⁹ — meditation	4
dc 10. ¹⁸⁻¹⁹ — meditation.....	6

dc 10.¹⁻⁴— meditation

¹Now, behold, I say unto you, that because you delivered up those writings which you had power given unto you to translate by the means of the Urim and Thummim, into the hands of a wicked man, you have lost them. ²And you also lost your gift at the same time, and your mind became darkened. ³Nevertheless, it is now restored unto you again; therefore see that you are faithful and continue on unto the finishing of the remainder of the work of translation as you have begun. ⁴Do not run faster or labor more than you have strength and means provided to enable you to translate; but be diligent unto the end.

It was mid-June, 1828, when Joseph allowed Martin Harris to take the 116 manuscript pages of the Book of Mormon. At the same time, Moroni took the Urim and Thummim from Joseph. Weeks later, after learning of the manuscript's loss, Moroni returned the Urim and Thummim to Joseph so that he could receive the revelation that is today Section 3 of the Doctrine and Covenants. In this section, Joseph is severely rebuked for his reckless disobedience, but promised that if he repented, he would be allowed to continue the work. After receiving this revelation, the Urim and Thummim were once more taken from him.

Several more weeks passed before Moroni returned the Urim and Thummim so that Joseph could receive the revelation found in today's Section 10. After receiving this revelation, Moroni once more took the Urim and Thummim. The Urim and Thummim would not be returned to Joseph along with the plates until September 22, when he was able to begin the work of translation once more.

Joseph, of course, felt horrible about the loss of the manuscript. His mother reports Joseph's reaction to the loss.

“‘Oh, my God!’ said Joseph, clinching his hands. ‘All is lost! All is lost! What shall I do? I have sinned—it is I who tempted the wrath of God. I should have been satisfied with the first answer which I received from the Lord; for he told me that it was not safe to let the writing go out of my possession.’ He wept and groaned, and walked the floor continually...

“‘Then must I,’ said Joseph, ‘return with such a tale as this? I dare not do it. And how shall I appear before the Lord? Of what rebuke am I not worthy from the angel of the Most High?’”¹

Even though Joseph was promised that he was still called to the work, one can imagine the turbulent feelings that swirled in Joseph heart and mind. Because of him, the translation of the Book of Mormon was delayed for some three months. Time was a wastin'. One can imagine the desire to get back at it. One can imagine Joseph's desire to dive in headfirst and translate as fast and furious as possible to make up for lost time and to demonstrate to the Lord that he had learned his lesson, had repented of his impetuosity, and that the Lord could depend on him.

However, this very ferocity in repentance can be, in itself, a sign of impetuosity. This, it seems to me, is the message of this warning delivered to Joseph at the beginning of Section 10.

“Do not run faster or labor more than you have strength and means provided to enable you to translate; but be diligent unto the end.”

¹ *History of Joseph Smith*, Lucy Mack Smith, pp. 133-134

“Take it easy Joseph. I am not bound by time limits or wasted minutes, days, months. I live in eternity. Just get back to it in a reasonable and wise manner. Be steady. You have much to do. Don’t wear yourself running as if you are involved in a forty-yard dash, because you are running an ultra-marathon.”

Many times, I have watched others become overzealous and unwise as they recognized error in themselves or acquired new and seminal information and truth. In their desire to repent, turn from past error and misinformation, and prove their steadfastness to new recognitions, I have observed many of them grow impatient and censorious with themselves and others as they found themselves and others progressing more slowly than hoped. They became zealots, often possessing more zeal than commonsense. I often felt and said that it was just best to avoid those who were in this obnoxious stage of their repentance and wait for them to come back down to earth.

God, Himself, is fully aware of this human tendency. He is unimpressed with wild swings in spiritual development. Certainly, he does not want to see spiritual lows. But neither is he enamored with spiritual highs. What he seeks is steadiness, even if it is plodding development. Neither, really, do we have anything to prove to him. He knows the end from the beginning. Our overzealousness is often little more than a vanity trip.

Yes, the Lord’s warning that one “not run faster or labor more than [they] have strength and means provided... but be diligent unto the end” is one that we should all heed. Steadiness, not speed, wins the prize. At least, that’s what I believe.

Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

(edition: October 24, 2024)

⁵Pray always, that you may come off conqueror; yea, that you may conquer Satan, and that you may escape the hands of the servants of Satan that do uphold his work. ⁶Behold, they have sought to destroy you; yea, even the man in whom you have trusted has sought to destroy you. ⁷And for this cause I said that he is a wicked man, for he has sought to take away the things wherewith you have been entrusted; and he has also sought to destroy your gift. ⁸And because you have delivered the writings into his hands, behold, wicked men have taken them from you. ⁹Therefore, you have delivered them up, yea, that which was sacred, unto wickedness.

Like Section 3, Section 10 addressed the loss of the 116 manuscript pages of the Book of Mormon. While Section 3 focused primarily on the role Joseph and his personal flaws played in the manuscript's loss, Section 10 focused on the intentions and sins of those who took possession of the manuscript, the source of their "inspiration," and the Lord's solution to the loss of the manuscript.

If we were going to entitle the first third of DC 10, we might entitle it, "Destruction." In today's reading alone, we encounter the word "destroy" three times. We encounter the word again in verses 12, 19, 23, 25 (twice), and 27. In addition, we encounter the word "destruction" in verse 22. These observations are not mathematical but literary in nature. Repetition is a frequently used literary device to assist the reader in determining principal themes.

Destruction has its perpetrators and its targets. When it comes to targets, we find Joseph Smith himself as a target in verses 3 and 19. We find Joseph's gift targeted for destruction in verse 7. We find "this work," meaning the translation of the Book of Mormon, targeted for destruction in verse 12. We find "the work of God" targeted for destruction in verse 23. Finally, we find "the souls of men" targeted for destruction in verses 22 and 27. The perpetrators of destruction are "the servants of Satan (vss. 5-6), Martin Harris (vs. 6), the devil (vs. 12), those who possessed the manuscript (vss. 19, 25), and Satan (vss. 22, 23, 27).

It seems that we would be justified in concluding that the primary perpetrator of destruction is Satan and that "the souls of men" are his primary target. Others are but tools Satan uses to assist his work of destruction. The destruction of Joseph, or his gift, or the Book of Mormon are means to an end. If he can undermine Joseph, or his gift, or the book of Mormon, he will have undermined access to scripture. This undermining of scripture can then serve toward the destruction of "the souls of men."

Scripture informs us that God's "work" and "glory" is to "bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man" (Moses 1.³⁹). Section 10 permits us to see what Satan works toward and what he glories in: destruction. There is in the cosmos a contest of wills. It is a battleground. God hopes that we do more than survive the onslaught of evil. He wishes us to "conquer" and "come off conqueror." He wants us to "escape" the destruction planned for us by evil forces. In this contest of wills, in this war, against this threat of destruction prayer is one of our principal weapons.

We can, as Paul admonishes, take up "the whole armour of God."¹ We can wield sword and shield. But, really, our only hope of avoiding destruction, escaping Satan's attacks, and not only escaping but conquering is to have the universe's greatest warrior fight at our side—indeed, fight our battles. Prayer is a key to inviting him into the battle.

¹ See Ephesians 6.¹³⁻¹⁸

“I will sing unto the Lord,
for he hath triumphed gloriously:
the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.
The Lord is my strength and song,
and he is become my salvation:
he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation;
my father’s God, and I will exalt him.
The Lord is a man of war:
the Lord is his name.”²

Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

(edition: October 24, 2024)

² Exodus 15.¹⁻³

¹⁸Which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit—and would that I might not drink the bitter cup, and shrink—¹⁹nevertheless, glory be to the Father, and I partook and finished my preparations unto the children of men.

I have never been a big fan of calling Jesus my “elder brother”—and, no, “Elder Brother” does not strike me as better. In this passage Jesus refers to himself as “God.” And, for good measure, “the greatest of all.” There are no caveats here. No hedging. No “God, the Son.” No “the God second in command.” He is “God, the greatest of all.” Period. We would do well to think more often and more seriously on this truth.

And, while we’re at it, we might think on this. What sort and amount of suffering could cause “God, the greatest of all” to shrink from the pain of that suffering? We simply cannot fathom the suffering any more than we can fathom him. But we should know, and do know, that no one else could have or can experience such suffering and survive. This is the angel’s witness to King Benjamin. He described Jesus’ suffering as “even more than man can suffer, except it be unto death” (Mos. 3.⁷). And I don’t think we are talking about physical death only. No one else can endure what Jesus suffered and remain a viable living entity, physical or spiritual. Jesus’ ordeal would result in the complete and total physical and spiritual annihilation of anyone else. Moses... obliterated from existence. Joseph Smith... annihilated. Russell M. Nelson... exterminated. You and me, vanished.

So, no, Jesus isn’t just a little older, a little taller, a little stronger, and a little more experienced version of us. He is “God, the greatest of all.” If I had my way, we would put an end to this “elder brother” stuff once and for all. If I had my way, we would even change this “God, the greatest of all.” In my version it would read, “God, the Greatest of All.”

The season of Lent and Easter is a good time to consider the greatness of Jesus, and to grow in our appreciation for the breadth, the depths, and lengths to which he will go to prove his commitment to the human race; to me and to you.

Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

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