
My Servant Brigham

D&C 126:1–3

In spring of 1838 Brigham Young and his family were living in Mill Creek about eight miles east of Far West, Missouri. At that time the Prophet Joseph Smith received a revelation relieving Brigham of responsibilities in Far West and admonishing him to provide for his family:

Revelation given to Brigham Young at Far West April 17th 1838. Verrily [sic] thus Saith the Lord, Let my Servant Brigham Young go unto the place which he has bought on Mill Creek and there provide for his family until an effectual door is op[e]ned for the support of his family until I shall command [him] to go hence, and not to leave his family until they are amply provided for Amen.¹

This revelation put Brigham out of the thick of profound matters. Brigham was not at the Battle of Crooked River when David W. Patten was wounded. He was not at Haun's Mill when the Saints were massacred and dead bodies were thrown down a well. He was not standing by Joseph Smith when George Hinkle betrayed him. Yet from his home on Mill Creek, he observed the approaching militia and wrote,

At the time that the exterminating army of Governor Boggs, commanded by Generals Lucas and Clark, came in sight of Far West, I observed their approach, and thought that it might be the militia of the State which had come to the relief of the citizens; but to my great surprise I found that they were come to strengthen the hands of the mobs that were around us, and which immediately joined the army.²

¹ Journal, March–September 1838, Revelation for Brigham Young, 17 April 1838. Joseph Smith Papers.

² S. Dilworth Young, “*Here is Brigham ...*”: *Brigham Young—the Years to 1844* (Salt Lake City, UT: Bookcraft, 1964), 208.

When Brigham discovered that the militia had not come to relieve the Latter-day Saints, he rushed to Far West to help. He heard the governor's proclamation read by General John B. Clark: "The Mormons must be treated as enemies, and must be exterminated or driven from the State, if necessary, for the public good, their outrages are beyond all description"³ Brigham also heard General Clark say to an assembly of Saints, "I would advise you to scatter abroad, and never again organize yourselves with Bishops, Priests, &c., lest you excite the jealousies of the people and subject yourselves to the same calamities that have now come upon you."⁴

Although stirred up with utter contempt, the Spirit whispered to Brigham to remain calm. Latter-day Saints needed him to be a beacon of strength to help them leave Missouri without further harm.

In July 1841 the Prophet Joseph Smith received another revelation for Brigham Young. On July 9, 1841, Joseph visited Brigham in his log cabin in Nauvoo to deliver to him the word of the Lord:

Dear and well-beloved brother, Brigham Young, verily thus saith the Lord unto you: My servant Brigham, it is no more required at your hand to leave your family as in times past, for your offering is acceptable to me.

I have seen your labor and toil in journeyings for my name. I therefore command you to send my word abroad, and take especial care of your family from this time, henceforth and forever. Amen. (D&C 126:1–3)

This was the second time the Prophet Joseph had received a revelation calling Brigham to stay home and care for his family. The first was when he arrived in Far West in 1838 and now three years later, he was given the same message. The first kept Brigham from jumping into the fray of the Mormon War. The reason for the second revelation was not known to Brigham until August 10, 1841.

On that August date, Joseph announced a change in the responsibilities of the Twelve: "The burthen of the business of the church in Nauvoo, and especially as pertaining to the church lands, settling of the Saints after their arrival, and selling church lands" were now

³ Correspondence from Governor Lilburn W. Boggs to Headquarters Militia, City of Jefferson, October 27, 1838, in History, 1838–1856, volume B-1 [1 September 1834–2 November 1838], 842.

⁴ Correspondence from Governor Lilburn W. Boggs, 842.

the responsibility of the Twelve.⁵ The change meant that the Twelve would administer in Nauvoo just as they had among the branches abroad in Great Britain.

On August 16, 1841, the Prophet Joseph called a special Church conference. At the afternoon session of the conference, Joseph said, “The time has come when the Twelve should be called upon to stand in their place next to the First Presidency, and attend to the settling of emigrants and the business of the Church at the stakes, and assist to bear off the kingdom victoriously to the nations.”⁶ From that conference forward, Latter-day Saints became accustomed to not only being led by the Prophet Joseph and the First Presidency but also the Twelve.

⁵ Elden J. Watson, *Manuscript History of Brigham Young, 1846–1847* (Salt Lake City, UT: Elden J. Watson, 1971), 106.

⁶ “An Epistle to the Twelve, to the Saints Scattered Abroad among the Nations,” *Times and Seasons* 2 (September 1, 1841), 521–22.