

Section 24

Joseph had a rough month between the Church's Spirit-filled June conference in Fayette, New York, and this July 1830 revelation. He returned to his home in Pennsylvania and then visited the Saints in nearby Colesville, New York. Reverend John Sherer, who was losing some of his Presbyterian followers to the restored gospel, stirred prejudice against Joseph. Sherer's followers interrupted baptismal services, and he finally kidnapped Emily Coburn in an attempt to prevent her baptism.

When several people who had been baptized, including Emma Smith, were to be confirmed, a constable arrested Joseph “on charge of being a disorderly person; of setting the country in an uproar by preaching the Book of Mormon.” The charges didn't stick, but as soon as the court acquitted Joseph, a constable from the neighboring county arrested him again and hauled him over the county line. All the antagonistic witnesses could offer was hearsay. Newel Knight embarrassed the prosecution with his testimony. Public opinion began to turn in Joseph's favor. The court again acquitted him as his persecutors threatened to tar and feather him. The formerly hostile constable helped Joseph escape to Emma's sister's house, where Emma anxiously waited.

She and Joseph finally returned to their Harmony, Pennsylvania, home the next day. He returned to Colesville a few days later with Oliver Cowdery to confirm the new converts, only to be chased all night by the same enemies. “Shortly after we

returned home,” Joseph wrote, referring to sections 24 and 25, “we received the following commandments.”¹

Section 24 is one of several revelations in which the Lord meets Joseph where he is. Though he has become larger than life to many, Joseph, like Nephi, thought of himself as a sinner who needed redemption through the Atonement of Jesus Christ. In Section 24 the Lord acknowledges both Joseph's accomplishments and his sins, commanding him to sin no more.

Section 24 addresses Joseph's concern about finances and how to provide for his family. It does not promise wealth, only that Joseph will have sufficient if he attends to his calling: “thou shalt devote all thy service in Zion.” Because Joseph devotes all his service to the Saints, the Saints are responsible to see that his family's needs are met.

Oliver, too, is encouraged to give his all to the kingdom. Perhaps hoping to escape further persecution, both of the Church's presiding elders are promised plenty of afflictions to endure. The Lord does, however, promise to smite anyone who uses violence against them. Those who use the law to persecute the prophet will find themselves cursed by the law. In sum, the two young apostles are now in the full-time service of the Lord. He promises to look after them as they trust him and take up his cross and follow him, devoting their lives wholly to his service.

¹ “[History, 1838–1856, volume A-1 \[23 December 1805–30 August 1834\]](#),” p. 48, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed July 23, 2020.