Lesson 25
Doctrine and Covenants 84:33–44; 107; 121:34–46

Webster’s 1828 Dictionary

Here are definitions from the American Dictionary of the English Language (this dictionary is available on the Internet), compiled and edited by Noah Webster in 1828. They may help you understand the reading better, especially the verses from D&C 121.

Though Webster’s dictionary was not made according to the standards of contemporary lexicographers, and in spite of the dictionary’s title, the usage references show that it often looks to British more than to American usage to understand the meanings of words. Nevertheless, it gives us a reasonable idea of word meanings in the United States in the early nineteenth century.

Use these definitions to think about what the verses from section 121 tell us. Do you see anything that you hadn’t seen before?

BETIMES, adv. [be and time, that is, by the time]

1. Seasonably; in good season or time; before it is too late
2. Soon; in a short time
CALLED, *pp.* Invited; summoned; addressed; named; appointed; invoked; assembled by order; recited.

CHosen, *pp. cho’zn.* Selected from a number; picked out; taken in preference; elected; predestinated; designated to office.

2. Select; distinguished by preference; eminent.

COMPULSION, *n.* [Low L. *compulsio.* See *Compel.*]

1. The act of driving or urging by force, physical or moral; force applied; constraint of the will; the application of a force that is irresistible.

2. The state of being compelled or urged by violence.

CONFIDENCE, *n.* [L. *confidentia*; It. *confidenza*; Sp. *confianza*; Fr. *confiance, confidence.* See *Confide.*]

1. A trusting, or reliance; an assurance of mind or firm belief in the integrity, stability or veracity of another, or in the truth and reality of a fact.

2. Trust; reliance; *applied to one’s own abilities, or fortune*; belief in one’s own competency.

3. That in which trust is placed; ground of trust; he or that which supports.

4. Safety, or assurance of safety; security.

5. Boldness; courage.

6. Excessive boldness; assurance, proceeding from vanity or a false opinion of one’s own abilities, or excellencies.
CONTROL, CONTROLL, n. [Fr. contrôle, a counter-register; contre and rolle, a roll, list or catalogue; Arm. counter roll.]

1. Primarily, a book, register or account, kept to correct or check another account or register; a counter-register. Hence, check; restraint; as, to speak, or to act without control.
2. Power; authority; government; command.
3. He or that which restrains.

DISPOSITION, n. [L. dispositio.] The act of disposing, or state of being disposed.

2. Manner in which things or the parts of a complex body are placed or arranged; order; method; distribution; arrangement.
3. Natural fitness or tendency.
4. Temper or natural constitution of the mind; as an amiable or an irritable disposition.
5. Inclination; propensity; the temper or frame of mind, as directed to particular objects.
6. Disposal; alienation; distribution; a giving away or giving over to another.

DOMINION, n. [L. dominium. See Dominant.]

1. Sovereign or supreme authority; the power of governing and controlling.
2. Power to direct, control, use and dispose of at pleasure; right of possession and use without being accountable.

3. Territory under a government; region; country; district governed, or within the limits of the authority of a prince or state; as the British dominions.

4. Government; right of governing.

5. Predominance; ascendant.

6. An order of angels.

7. Persons governed.

GARNISH, v.t. [Fr. garnir; Arm. goarniça, Sp. guarnece; It. guarnire, guernire; Norm. garner, garnisher, to warn, to summon. The latter sense is still used in law language, and it would seem that warn and garnish are from the same root, for warn, written in the Celtic manner, would be guarn.]

1. To adorn; to decorate with appendages; to set off.

2. To fit with fetters; a cant term.

3. To furnish; to supply; as a fort garnished with troops.

4. In law, to warn; to give notice. [See Garnishee.]

KNOWLEDGE, n. nol’lej. [Chaucer, knowleching, from knowleche, to acknowledge. Qu. the sense of lech.]

1. A clear and certain perception of that which exists, or of truth and fact; the perception of the connection
and agreement, or disagreement and repugnancy of our ideas.

2. Learning; illumination of mind.

3. Skill; as a knowledge of seamanship.

4. Acquaintance with any fact or person. I have no knowledge of the man or thing.

5. Cognizance; notice.

6. Information; power of knowing.

7. Sexual intercourse. But it is usual to prefix carnal; as carnal knowledge.

NATURE, n. [Fr. id.; L. Sp. It. natura; from natus, born, produced, from nascor.]

1. In a general sense, whatever is made or produced.

2. By a metonymy of the effect for the cause, nature is used for the agent, creator, author, producer of things, or for the powers that produce them.

3. The essence, essential qualities or attributes of a thing, which constitute it what it is; as the nature of the soul; the nature of blood; the nature of a fluid; the nature of plants, or of a metal; the nature of a circle or an angle.

4. The established or regular course of things; as when we say, an event is not according to nature, or it is out of the order of nature.

5. A law or principle of action or motion in a natural body. A stone by nature falls, or inclines to fall.
6. Constitution; aggregate powers of a body, especially a living one.

7. The constitution and appearances of things.

8. Natural affection or reverence.


10. Sort; species; kind; particular character.

11. Sentiments or images conformed to nature, or to truth and reality.

12. Birth. No man is noble by nature.

REPROVING, ppr. Blaming; censuring.

SHARPNESS, n. Keenness of an edge or point; as the sharpness of a razor or a dart.

2. Not obtuseness.

3. Pungency; acidity; as the sharpness of vinegar.

4. Pungency of pain; keenness; severity of pain or affliction; as the sharpness of pain, grief or anguish.

5. Painfulness; afflictiveness; as the sharpness of death or calamity.

6. Severity of language; pungency; satirical sarcasm; as the sharpness of satire or rebuke.

7. Acuteness of intellect; the power of nice discernment; quickness of understanding; ingenuity; as sharpness of wit or understanding.

8. Quickness of sense or perception; as the sharpness of sight.
9. Keenness; severity; as the *sharpness* of the air or weather.

VAIN, *a.* [Fr. *vain*; It. *vano*; L. *vanus*; Gaelic, *fann*, weak; *faon*; void; W. *gwan*; Sans. *vana*; probably allied to *wan*, *wane*, *want*.]

1. Empty; worthless; having no substance, value or importance. 1 Peter 1.

2. Fruitless; ineffectual. All attempts, all efforts were *vain*.

VIRTUE, *n.* *vur’tu.* [Fr. *vertu*; It. *virtu*; Sp. *vertud*; L. *virtus*, from *vireo*, or its root. See Worth. The radical sense is strength, from straining, stretching, extending. This is the primary sense of Latin *vir*, a man. Class Br.]

1. Strength; that substance or quality of physical bodies, by which they act and produce effects on other bodies. In this literal and proper sense, we speak of the *virtue* or *virtues* of plants in medicine, and the *virtues* of drugs. In decoctions, the *virtues* of plants are extracted.

2. Bravery; valor. This was the predominant signification of *virtus* among the Romans.

3. Moral goodness; the practice of moral duties and the abstaining from vice, or a conformity of life and conversation to the moral law. In this sense, *virtue* may be, and in many instances must be, distinguished from religion.
4. A particular moral excellence; as the *virtue* of temperance, of chastity, of charity.

5. Acting power; something efficacious.

6. Secret agency; efficacy without visible or material action.

7. Excellence; or that which constitutes value and merit.

8. One of the orders of the celestial hierarchy.

9. Efficacy; power.

10. Legal efficacy or power; authority. A man administers the laws by *virtue* of a commission.

*In virtue*, in consequence; by the efficacy or authority.

**Doctrine and Covenants 84**

**Verses 33–40:** Here we see “the oath and covenant of the priesthood.” What makes it an oath? What makes it a covenant? Are the words *oath* and *covenant* used as synonyms here?

What is required of us by this oath? What is promised us? What does it mean to receive the priesthood? To receive the Father? To receive his servants?

Why can’t the Father break this covenant? What does it mean that the covenant cannot be moved?

How do these verses apply to sisters? Are the blessings described unavailable to women? Does verse 48 bear on this question?
Verse 43: What are “the words of eternal life?” How is giving heed to them the same as to beware concerning ourselves?

Doctrine and Covenants 121

Verses 34–36: We often quote these verses, but we less often refer to the first part of section 121, Joseph Smith’s prayer for deliverance (verses 1–6) and the Lord’s rebuke of him for that prayer (verses 7–33), a rebuke that also contains a prophesy of blessing for Joseph and destruction for the enemies of the Church. What do the verses for this lesson have to do with the first part of the section?

In the letter from which this section was taken, the two parts are not related, but they’ve been put in conjunction here. Does that conjunction as one revelation mean that we should read the two as having to do with one another?

(This section, with sections 122 and 123, is extracted from a long letter written to the Saints from Liberty Jail, Missouri, where the Prophet and other early leaders were incarcerated at the time. In the original letter, there is no break between the last verse of section 121 and the first verse of section 122.)

Verse 34: Compare Matthew 20:16. Does the context of that verse help us understand what the Lord is saying here? (Compare also D&C 95:5.) What is the difference between being called and being chosen?

Verse 35: What does this verse suggest is the cause of the unrighteous use of power?
In specific terms, how do we set our hearts on the things of this world? Is verse 39 relevant for deciding whether this problem is common among us?

**Verse 36:** What are the rights of the priesthood? Do they differ from other rights? If so, how? What does it mean to say that the rights of the priesthood are inseparably connected to the powers of heaven? How does having one’s heart set on the things of the world and aspiring for honor cause one to miss this lesson?

**Verse 37:** To what does they refer in the phrase “that they may be conferred upon us”?

If covering our sins is wrong, does that mean we should uncover them, that we should announce them? What does it mean to cover one’s sins? How does what is forbidden here compare with what is required in scriptures such as James 1:20 and 1 Peter 4:8? How could one use authority to cover his sins?

How could we use authority to gratify our pride? How could we use it to gratify our vain ambition? What is vain ambition? Is there such a thing as ambition that is not vain?

Does “control or dominion or compulsion” refer to three different though related things, or does that phrase repeat the same thing in three ways for emphasis? Is all control, dominion, or compulsion unrighteous? What makes control, dominion, or compulsion unrighteous?

Why is the Spirit necessary to authority? What does it mean to say that a person no longer has priesthood authority when he uses his authority unrighteously? The ordinances
he performs are still valid until his priesthood is removed formally, whether or not he is acting unrighteously. So what does his unrighteous dominion cause him to lose? What might that understanding of losing the priesthood tell us about what priesthood is?

**Verse 38:** The phrase “kick against the pricks” (from Acts 9:5 and 26:14) refers to sharp goads used to guide oxen. What might it mean in this context? Are these three things—kicking against the pricks, persecuting the Saints, and fighting against God—always the results of being left to oneself by the Spirit? How do they differ from one another, or do they?

**Verse 39:** Whose voice is speaking in this verse, the Lord’s or Joseph’s? If this is Joseph’s voice, what sad experiences might he be referring to?

What does the phrase “as they suppose” do in this verse? If it is true that almost everyone exercises unrighteous dominion when given what they presume to be authority, what should our reaction to our authority in our callings be? To our authority as parents? In the workplace?

**Verse 40:** Verse 34 begins with the same sentence that we find here, suggesting that the discussion of verses 34–40 is about the fact that many are called but few are chosen. How does the discussion that occurs between the first part of verse 34 and this verse explain that many are called but few chosen? Does it shed any light on what it means to be called? To be chosen?

**Verses 41–43:** Does the phrase “power or influence,” as used here, perhaps indicate that we should think of power
in terms of influence rather than in terms of control? Does the wording suggest that we should use these principles of righteousness to maintain power and influence?

What is persuasion? Long-suffering? Is there a difference between gentleness and meekness?

What does “unfeigned” tell us about the love required?

What is kindness?

What is pure knowledge? (What would impure knowledge be?)

What is hypocrisy? Guile? What does it mean for a soul to be without them?

In the phrase “which shall greatly enlarge,” to what does “which” refer? To pure knowledge? To the series of things that began in verse 41?

The last part of D&C 42:52 says we should bear the infirmities of those who have not faith insofar as they do not break the commandments. What might that have to do with what is said here?

**Verse 43:** What does reprove mean? What does betimes mean? (Compare Genesis 26:31 for a clue.) Of the several possible meanings of sharpness in Webster’s 1828 dictionary, which do you think most applicable to this verse?

If we are to show an increase of love after giving reproof, what must we have shown before and during that reproof? How might someone reproved take the reprover to be an enemy?
Verse 44: What does it mean for someone to know that your faithfulness is stronger than the cords of death? Faithfulness to whom? To that person? What are the cords of death? In this verse, to what might faithfulness refer?

Verse 45: What does it mean for one’s bowels to be full of charity? The metaphor is very strange to us, though variations of it occur with some regularity in scripture. (See, for example, Genesis 43:30; 1 Kings 3:26; Jeremiah 31:20; Philippians 2:1; 1 John 3:17; Mosiah 15:9; Alma 7:12; 34:15; 3 Nephi 17:7; and D&C 101:9.) Can you think of a way to help us understand the metaphor?

What does the word virtue mean in this context? Do the definitions from Webster’s dictionary throw any light on new meanings?

One older meaning of garnish is “to outfit” or “to supply.” What might it mean for virtue to garnish our thoughts?

What are the conditions for confidence given here? If we want confidence, what must we do first? What is “the doctrine of the priesthood”? What does the last phrase of this verse mean?

Verse 46: According to this and the previous verse, what will bring about the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost and the other blessings listed here?

What is a scepter? Why might a scepter be mentioned here? What is a scepter of righteousness and truth?

What does it mean to have an everlasting dominion? What does it mean for a dominion to come “without compulsory means”?