An Impressive Letter from the Pen of Joseph Smith

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An Impressive Letter from the Pen of Joseph Smith

LAMAR C. BERRETT*

Because of rivalry and jealousy among the Missouri Saints, the Prophet Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, and Newel K. Whitney were appointed to sit in council with them in April 1832. (D & C 78: 9-10.) This was the second visit by Joseph Smith to the Missouri area.

After grievances were amicably settled, the three brethren returned to Kirtland by stage via St. Louis and Vincennes, Indiana. At a point between Vincennes, Indiana, and New Albany (near Greenville) they had a run-away when the horses became frightened. Joseph and Sidney jumped out of the coach unhurt; but when Bishop Whitney attempted to jump, his coat caught and threw him into the wheel. His leg and foot were broken in several places. Joseph and Newel stayed at Mr. Porter’s Public House at Greenville for four weeks, and Elder Rigdon returned to Kirtland. While attending Brother Whitney as he recuperated from his injuries, Joseph Smith was poisoned. He vomited so profusely that he dislocated his jaw. He replaced it himself and then made his way to the bedside of Newel K. Whitney where Newel administered to him and he was healed instantly. The Prophet Joseph Smith indicated that the effect of the poison was so powerful it caused much of the hair of his head to be loosened. He was grateful to be alive, however, and said, “thanks be to my Heavenly Father for his interference.”

Sometime in the four weeks while Newel K. Whitney was bedfast, Joseph Smith wrote an intimate letter to his wife, Emma.1 His impressive account of his struggle for repentance and his assurance of his own forgiveness is touching; it is one of the most authentic glimpses of the Prophet’s repentance and effort for worthiness.

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1This letter was discovered by James R. Harris in 1960 in the possession of the Chicago Historical Society, who graciously supplied us with a copy of the letter. See DHC 1:271-2 for the instance of writing.
[Indiana]

June 6th Greenville Floid  

1832

Dear Wife

I would inform you that Brother Martin has arrived here and brought the pleasing news that our Familys were well when he left them which Greately Cheared our hearts and [re]vived our Spirits we thank our hevenly Father for his goodness [ ] unto all of you us and [yes]. Martin arrived on Satterday the Same week he left Chagrin haveing a properous time we are all in good heath Brother Whitneys leg is gaining and he thinks he Shall be able to to perform his about Jorny so as to get home \ as soon as the 20th. my Situation is a very unpleasent one although I will endeaver to be Contented the Lord asisting me I have visited a grove which is Just back of the town almost every day where I can be Secluded from the eyes of any mortal and there give vent to all the feeling[s] of my heart in meaditation and prayr I have Called to mind all the past and moments of my life and am left to morn [ ] Shed tears of sorrow for my folly in Sufering the adversary of my Soul to have so much had in times past ul power over me as he has \ but God is mercif \
LETTER FROM JOSEPH SMITH

June 6th, Scrooge's 5th, 1832

Dear Hope

I would inform you that Brother Martin has arrived here and brought the pleasing news that our families are well when he left them, which greatly pleased your heart and comforted our spirits. We thank you and request friendship for this good news.

I also informed you that Brother Martin arrived on Saturday, the same week that Brother Chuggin and myself a professional time we are all in good health. Brother Martin says as far as can be learned and in that he shall be able to reply to yours, this is our situation. It is a very unpleasant one, although I will endeavor to be contented. Although I am forced to go on my own, which is part of the town almost every day when it can be done, from all, if I can, and those give vent to all the feelings of my heart in meditation. The feelings of my heart in meditation are the feeling of my heart in meditation.

Sincerely yours,

[Signature]

[Address]

[Additional handwritten notes and signatures]
and has forgiven my sins and I rejoice that he 
Sendeth forth the Comforter unto as many as 
believe and humbleth themselves before him 
lost
I was grieved to hear that Hiram had lost his 
little Child I think we Can in Some degree 
Sympathise with him but we all must be 
reconciled to our lots and say the will be done 
of the Lord her husband
[ ] Sister Whitney wrote a letter to [ ] which 
which was very cheering [ ] and being unwell 
at that time and filled with much anxiety 

it would have been very Consoling to me to 
have received a few lines from you but as you 
did not take the trouble I will try to be contented with my lot knowing that God is my 
friend in him I shall find comfort I have 
given my life into his hands I am prepared 
to go at his Call I desire to be with Christ 
I Count not my life dear to me only to do his 
will I am not pleased to hear that William 
Mclelin has come back and disobayed the voice 
of him who is altogether Lovely for a woman 
I am astonished at Sister Emaline yet I cannot 
belive she is not a worthy sister I hope She 
find
[ ] will him true and kind to her but have 
no reason to [ ] expect it his Conduct merits the 
disapprobation of every true follower of Christ
LETTER FROM JOSEPH SMITH

no has forgiven my sins and I agree that he
instructed the Comforter unto as many as
believe and humble themselves before him
I was pleased to hear that Hariny had his
little child I think she was in some degree
sympathetic with him but we all must be
awarded to our state and say the mighty
name of the mighty piest wrote a letter to him
which was very pleasing and very full of
sympathy it would have been very consoling to me to
have received a your letter from you but as you
did not take the trouble I will try to be content
still with my lot knowing that God is my
friend in him I shall find comfort I have
given my life into his hands I am prepared
to go at his call I desire to be with him
of course not my life dear to me only to do his
will I am not pleased to hear that William
McLain has come back and disposed of the voice
of him who is altogether lovely for a woman
I am astonished at sister Tomlin yet I cannot
believe she is not a worthy sister I hope she
will live true faith and lead her part with
no reason to expect it this conduct must be the
disapprobation of every true follower of Christ.
but this is a painful subject I hope you will excuse my warmth of feeling in mentioning this [ ] Subject and also my inability in conveying my ideas in writing I am happy to find that you are still in the faith of Christ and at Father Smiths I hope you will Comfort Father and Mother in their trials and Hiram and Jerusha and the rest of the Family tell Sophronia I remember her and Kalvin in my prayers my respects to the rest I Should like See little Julia and once more take her on my knee and converse with you on [ ] all the Subjects which concerns us things I Cannot is not prudent for me to write I omit all the important [ ] things which could I See you I could make you acquainted with tell Brother Will[ ] that I and Brother Whitney will arrange the[ ] business of that farm when we come give my respects to all the Brothers Br— Whitney Family [ ] tell them he is Cheerful and patient and a true Brother to me I Subscribe myself your Husband the Lord bless you peace be with so Farewell untill I return

Joseph Smith Jr.
LETTER FROM JOSEPH SMITH

But this is a painful subject. I hope you will receive my respects also my inability in conveying my ideas in writing I am happy to find that you are still in the faith of Christ and at Father Smith I hope you will comfort. Sisters and Mothers in their trials and how I have my remembrance of the family last December I am praying to see all the subjects who concern us things I cannot express all the important things which could I see you I could make you acquainted with all. Brother Will you take care Brother Whitney will arrange the business of that farm when we come there. My respects to the whole brothers. Brother Whitney is cheerful and the family tell them he is cheerful and a true Brother to me. I hope you will write to me and be myself your husband the Lord bless you please be with to Thursday until fellow.