

D&C#35 "A Mission Of Saving"

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I. Introduction

Thanks to filmmaker, T.C. Christensen, and his films, "17 Miracles," (2011), and "Ephraim's Rescue" (2013), the familiarity of the Latter-day Saints community has greatly increased regarding handcarts in general, and the experiences of the Willie and Martin Handcart companies, and their rescue specifically. This knowledge was further expanded when, in 2015, the local leaders of the youth of the Latter-Day Saints Church were encouraged to plan a Handcart Trek Reenactment. Through the hands-on experience, the purpose of the Trek was stated as: "Strengthen testimonies; Build unity; Do family history; Learn and appreciate Church history; Feel gratitude for the sacrifices of the pioneers and the heritage they provided; Appreciate their blessings more fully; Seek and find guidance to overcome challenges; Focus on serving and rescuing others; and Learn core gospel principles." (*Handcart Trek Reenactments: Guidelines for Leaders*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2015, [2017], 1).

A. Why Handcart Companies?

Lyndia Carter states,

"Handcarts. As a means of overland transportation, handcarts were unique to the Latter-day Saint migration to Zion. A handcart consisted of shallow wooden box mounted on an axle supported by two carriage-type wheels. The pioneers propelled the cart forward by pushing against a crossbar attached to shafts in the front. Others pushed from the rear when needed. Usually one family or five people were assigned to a cart. Because the load had to be kept light, each emigrant was allowed on average only 17 pounds of baggage. A few wagons accompanied each handcart train to carry the heavy provisions and tents. Children age four and under, and occasionally the sick or elderly, rode, all others walked.

"The handcarts primary advantage was its affordability, but there were some disadvantages. To maintain a strict budget, agents and handcart captains carefully rationed food, giving each adult only a pint of flour a day, sometimes with a little bacon and dried apples. With the small food allowance and arduous work of pulling carts and walking, the handcart pioneers were often hungry, tired, and footsore.

"Brigham Young, as president of the Perpetual Emigrating Fund (PEF) Company, instituted the handcart plan...as early as 1852. [However],... Church emigration agents found other means and did not implement the plan that year. [Three conditions occurred between]...1854 to 1856, [that affected the handcart program.] [They were:]severe economic conditions in Utah, including grasshopper infestations and draught [that] reduced donations and repayments [to fund];... an extremely large emigration from Europe drastically depleted funds available for emigration, ...[combined with] the urgent desire to gather Church membership to Zion, particularly the long-faithful poor Saints...President Young [then] directed Church agents to set the handcart experiment in motion.

"The system proved financially successful, allowing the gathering of many Saints at minimum expense. [The program continued through 1860 when], Church-sponsored wagon trains replaced the handcart system.

"A relatively small number of Saints journeyed to Zion by handcart compared to the vast majority who came by wagon. Of the 70,000 immigrants to Utah from 1847 to 1869, only 3,000 (4.3%) traveled by handcart.

"Though the number of handcart pioneers was small, the handcart experience has come to symbolize the faith, determination, and sacrifice of all the pioneers."
(**Handcarts**. *Encyclopedia of Latter-day Saint History*. Edited by Arnold K. Garr, Donald Q. Cannon, and Richard O. Cowan. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 2000, 461-463).

B. Problems of Willie and Martin Companies

The Willie and Martin Companies were two separate companies. The Willie Company was headed by James G. Willie, and the Martin Company was directed by Edward Martin. The Willie Company departed from Florence, Nebraska (Winter Quarters) on August 18, 1856.

Lynne Slater Turner states,

"At Florence, the Edward Martin and Jesse Haven handcart companies consolidated under the direction of Edward Martin, who was then assisted by Daniel Tyler. Jesse Haven joined the Hodgett wagon train, to continue his journey."
(*Emigrating Journals of The Willie and Martin Handcart Companies and The Hunt and Hodgett Wagon Trains*. Private Compilation, August, 1996, 105).

The Edward Martin Company departed from Florence, Nebraska, on August 25, 1856.

LeRoy R. Hafen and Ann W. Hafen state,

"Willie Company: 500 persons, 120 Handcarts, 6 wagons, Arrived in Salt Lake City, November 9, 1856, deaths enroute: 67; Martin Company: 576 persons, 146 Handcarts, 7 wagons, Arrived in Salt Lake City, November 30, 1856, and deaths enroute: 135-150." (*Handcarts to Zion*. Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1960, 193).

The deaths enroute of the other eight companies ranged from 1 to 13. All other companies left Florence, the earliest June 6th and the latest by July 20th. The latest arrived in Salt Lake on October 2nd." (see *Handcarts to Zion*, 193).

This information confirms that one of the major problems for the two companies was their late departure from Florence, Nebraska.

Levi Savage states,

"I related to the Saints, the hardships that we should have to endure. I said that we were liable to have to wade in snow up to our knees, and shall at night, wrap ourselves in a thin blanket, and lie on the frozen ground without a bed, that is, not having a wagon that they could go into. We are without wagons, destitute of clothing, and could not carry it if we had it. So, we must go as we are. I do not condemn the handcart system... The lateness of the season was my only objection, of leaving this point for the mountains at this time. I spoke warmly upon the subject, but spoke truth...and yet, most of them determined to go forward if the authorities say so. (Levi Savage Journal, Vol. 7, 1856. August 13, 1886).

John Chislett recalled Levi Savage concluding,

"Brethren and sisters, what I have said I know to be true, but seeing you are to go forward, I will go with you, will help you all I can, will work with you, will rest with you, will suffer with you, and, if necessary, I will die with you. May God in his mercy bless and preserve us." ("Mr. Chislett's Narrative," in T.B. H. Stenhouse, *The Rocky Mountain Saints: A Full and Complete History of the Mormons*. New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1873, 317; also Andrew D. Olsen. *The Price We Paid: The Extraordinary Story of the Willie & Martin Handcart Pioneers*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 2006, 84).

Deseret News, April 3, 2003 states,

"The tragedy was caused by a series of missteps, none of which would likely have been fatal alone, but together proved insurmountable: Delays in England and poor weather on the crossing meant a late arrival in Iowa City, the western terminus of the railroad. No one expected the companies that late. Handcarts were not ready, and construction materials were not available. That meant more delays. Many carts were built with inferior materials, so

frequent repairs along the way further slowed down the companies.

"Sept. 30. Willie's Company reached Fort Laramie, with 500 miles still to go. No one was expecting them, however, and anticipated provisions were not there.

"Oct. 20. Both companies woke to find 18 inches of snow on the ground and sub-zero temperatures. Because a lot of the clothing and bedding had been left behind to lighten the load, they were unprepared for the cold." (deseretnews.com. Willie and Martin handcart timeline. April 03, 2003).

There is no question that the late departure from Florence, Nebraska, was a major contributor to the loss of life in the company. Captain Martin argument to Levi Savage was that the company had no money and if they remained in Florence, how were they going to survive the winter? Many of the members were anxious to get to Zion. They had left their native homes, crossed an ocean and wanted to proceed on to their destination.

In the following quotation, it would appear that if the decision was to stay in Florence, it was going to be difficult for the company to survive.

Don H. Smith states,

"...the handcart Saints had little opportunity to stay in Florence--and probably would have been worse of it had they tried to do so. The Church's campsite contained only eight acres of deeded land, and expansion would have been difficult because most of the property in the region was claimed by the Florence Land Company. A second problem was employment. The entire population of the country was only about 3,000 at the time; it is questionable whether employment could have been found for a sudden influx of 1,000 to 1,500 emigrants. Most employment that could have been found would have been seasonable, but agriculture was still limited in the area. A third problem was fuel. Despite the arrangements William Kimball made for wood, ...the Saints would have had difficulty in getting permission to harvest enough timber for the winter. Another problem was food. The Church stores of food in Florence would not have been sufficient for the winter, and obtaining additional food would have been difficult because of a poor

harvest in the area. Yet another problem was that the winter of 1856-57 was unusually cold, causing many deaths. [Conclusion:] Given the circumstances found in Nebraska in 1856, the emigrant had the choice to go on or face a greater tragedy by staying." (Footnote #16, Chapter 9. "Rest of the Story," in Andrew D. Olsen. *The Price We Paid: The Extraordinary Story of the Willie & Martin Handcart Pioneers*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 2006, 489).

The company did make the decision to proceed. To go or to stay may be debated, but we will conclude with the statement made by Francis Webster, recorded by William R. Palmer. Francis Webster was a surviving member of the Martin Handcart Company.

William Palmer states,

"[I was in attendance]...in an adult Sunday School class of over fifty men and women. Nathan T. Porter, then Principal of the Branch Normal School, was the teacher and the subject under discussion was the ill-fated handcart company that suffered so terribly in the snow in 1856.

"Some sharp criticism of the Church and its leaders was being indulged in for permitting a company of converts to venture across the plains with no more supplies or protection than a handcart caravan afforded.

"An old man in the corner sat silent and listened as long as he could stand it then he arose and said things that few of those who heard him will ever forget. His face was white with emotion, yet he spoke slowly, deliberately, but with great earnestness and sincerity.

"He said in substance, 'I ask you to stop this criticism for you are discussing a matter you know nothing about. Cold historic facts mean nothing here for they give no proper interpretation of the questions involved. Mistake to send the handcart company out so late in the season? Yes. But I was in that company and my wife was in it and so was Sister Nellie Unthank whom you have cited. We suffered beyond anything you can imagine and many died of exposure and starvation. But did you ever here a survivor of that company utter a word of criticism? No one of that company ever apostatized or left the Church because everyone of us

came through with the absolute knowledge that God lives for we became acquainted with him in our extremities.

"I have pulled my handcart when I was so weak and weary from illness and lack of food that I could hardly put one foot ahead of another. I have looked ahead and seen a patch of sand or a hill slope and I said I can go only that far and there I must give up for I cannot pull the load through it. I have gone on to that sand and when I reached it, the cart began pushing me. I have looked back many times to see who was pushing my cart but my eyes saw no one. I knew then that the angels of God were there.

"Was I sorry that I chose to come by handcart? No. Neither then or one moment in my life since. The price we paid to become acquainted with God was a privilege to pay and I am thankful that I was privileged to come in the Martin Handcart Company.

"The speaker was Francis Webster, and when he sat down there was not a dry eye in the room. We were a subdued and chastened lot. Charles R. Mabey who later became governor of Utah arose and voiced the sentiment of all when he said, 'I would gladly pay the same price for the same assurance of the eternal verities that Brother Webster has.'" (William R. Palmer, "Pioneers of Southern Utah", in *The Instructor*, May 1944, 217-218; see also *Relief Society Magazine*, January 1948, 8, in David T. Kenison. *Chronicles of Faith: Stories Of The Mormon Pioneers*. Orem, Utah: LDS-Gems Press, 1977, 198-199).

C. Miracles

David T. Kenison states,

"Peter Howard McBride was born in 1850 in Ireland. His parents, Robert and Margaret Howard McBride, had 5 children, including a girl three years younger than Peter. They had joined the Church in Ireland, Robert being baptized by Orson Pratt in 1837, and Margaret a few months later by Heber C. Kimball. Their extended family was not pleased with their decision [to emigrate to America]. He states: '*My grandfather said, 'I never want to see nor hear from you again. If you should write, your letters will be burned before we read them...You bring disgrace to the family name by joining such a church.'*'

"They were assigned to the Martin Handcart company of 1856... The first part of the journey was uneventful; eventually they were joined by the Daniel Tyler company, and their numbers grew large... As the journey progressed, the weather and conditions got colder and provisions began to run low. The children suffered along with their parents from lack of adequate nutrition. He states: *I remember some men passed us one day, stopped to talk. They gave my baby sister, Margaret, (Maggy we called her) something like cookies. She carried them in her little pocket and I was always with her and would tease her for a bite. She would give me a taste once in a while and it was so good. No cake I ever tasted since was so good... The exposure of cold, rain, sleet, and snow and ice, pushing and pulling handcarts all day, the scarcity of wood and food, caused many of the strongest men to perish.*

"[He continues:] *That night the wind was blowing very cold and the carts were all sheltered behind a big cliff, but the snow drifted in the tents being covered up. My father died that night in our tent. He had worked all day pulling, pushing, wading through the icy river, and he made about twenty-five trips across the river helping to get all the people and carts across. My mother was sick all the way and my sister Jenetta Ann had all the worry of taking care of us children. She carried water from the river for cooking purposes, her shoes gave out and she walked through the snow barefoot, actually leaving bloody tracks in the snow...*

"[He writes:] *Later we had a cold spell. The wind drifted snow into our tent till we thought we would freeze. I shivered so much I knew I would die. I heard freezing was an easy death. The wind blew the tent down, they all crawled out but me. I began to feel warm and the tent closed down around me, the snow fell on it, I went to sleep and slept warm all night. In the morning I heard someone say, 'How many are dead in this tent?' My sister said, 'Well there are five children—Robert, Ether, Maggy and myself. My little brother Peter must be frozen to death in that tent.' So they jerked the tent loose, sent it scurrying over the snow, my hair was frozen to the tent. I picked myself up and came out quite to their surprise.*

"That day we got word that some teams were coming to meet us from the valley. That night three teams came and

reported more on the road and no one but a person having gone through that experience can imagine what a happy moment it was for this belated handcart company. Men, women, and children knelt down and thanked the Almighty God for our delivery from certain death..." (Words of Peter Howard McBride, age 6, italicized. In David T. Kenison. *Chronicles of Faith: Stories Of The Mormon Pioneers*. Orem, Utah: LDS-Gems Press, 1977, 181-183).

The lack of sufficient food, the cold, the river crossing, as described by a boy who, at the time, was only six years old. The miracle was that he survived the trip when he was initially considered to have frozen through the night. Can you imagine the surprise and shock of seeing him come out from under the tent when they believed he had died. Followed by the joy that he was alive.

Ann Jewell Rowley of the Willie Handcart Company records,

"My name is Ann Jewell Rowley...I married William Rowley 22 Aug. 1836...I was 29 years old at the time...had a beautiful home...in the Parish of Buckley, Worchestershire, England. We were members of a religious body called the 'United Brethren.

[She and her husband, William were converted by the teachings of Wilford Woodruff].

"We had only to hear once and William and I knew with all our hearts that he was offering us a priceless treasure. We accepted his offer and were baptized into the 'Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

"We dreamed of going to Zion, where we could be with the main body of the Saints, but money was the problem here too. William was never to see Zion...he died [Feb 14, 1848] when Jane was 6 months old.

"I was left a widow with 7 children under 12 years of age and the step children of William's first marriage...I knew our parting was only temporary and that viewed from the eternities, this was but a fleeting moment. I also knew that no matter how fleeting a moment it was, I have to make the best of it. I had a very real job to do. The children had to be fed and clothed, and the big task and the one I must accomplish, is to get us all to Zion. I must be among

the people of my faith and I must get the Temple work done for us.

"There came a time, [during her journey to Zion], when there seemed to be no food at all. Some of the men left to hunt buffalo. Night was coming and there was no food for the evening meal. I asked God's help as I always did. I got on my knees, remembering two hard sea biscuits that were still in my trunk. They had been left over from the sea voyage, they were not large, and were so hard, they couldn't be broken. Surely there was not enough to feed 8 people, but 5 loaves and 2 fishes were not enough to feed 5000 people either, but through a miracle, Jesus had done it. So with God's help, nothing is impossible. I found the biscuits and put them in a Dutch oven and covered them with water and asked for God's blessing, then I put a lid on the pan and set it on the coals. When I took off the lid a little later, I found the pan filled with food. I kneeled with my family and thanked God for his goodness. That night my family had sufficient. The men returned with buffalo meat, and what wasn't eaten right away by the Saints, was dried into jerky.

"In traveling at night, in the frost of that altitude, Thomas' right hand had froze while he was pushing on the back of the cart and when we stopped at night and his hand got warm, it swelled up, as Samuel said, 'like a toad.' John [the oldest boy (who) bore the brunt of the hard work] could finally go no further and I felt my heart would break as I saw him laying beside the trail, waiting for the sick wagon. By the time he was picked up, his body was frozen in two places. That night, 12 people died and the next morning, 3 people joined them. I always thought, I shall be the happiest person, if I could reach Zion, with all my children alive." (Autobiography of Ann Jewell Rowley as quoted in *Remember: The Willie and Martin Handcart Companies and their Rescuers--Past and Present*. Compiled and Written by members of the Riverton Wyoming Stake. Provo, Utah: Centaur Print Partners, 1997, [Eighth Printing, May 2006], 135-136).

The miracle of the multiplication of the two biscuits brought this event to my attention, but the greatest miracle is that of the nine members of Sister Rowley's family, who was also a single mother, only one [Eliza] died during the journey.

D. Where Were They And What Was Their Condition?

Rebecca Bartholomew and Leonard J. Arrington state,

"On 4 October [1856], Elder Franklin D. Richards and his party of missionaries returned to the Great Salt Lake City after absences of from two to four years. They had traveled by horse and carriage from Florence in about six weeks, checking on the welfare of the handcart companies as they overtook them. Until Richard's report, it was assumed in Salt Lake that the third handcart company which had arrived two days earlier was the last of the 1856 immigration.

"Richards was not a worrier. He had 'this faith and confidence towards God...that [the immigrants] path may be freed from suffering more than they can bear.

"...Brigham Young's concern was immediate and more pronounced. He did not delegate the fact-finding to his Presiding Bishopric but himself called a meeting, the very evening of Richard's arrival, to ascertain the location and condition of the handcart companies." (*Rescue of the 1856 Handcart Companies*. Provo, Utah: Charles Redd Monographs in Western History No. 11. Brigham Young University, 1981, [Revised edition, 1993], 5).

The question of where they were was primary for the rescuers. How would they be able to locate them considering the terrible winter conditions. Some even considered they may have stopped somewhere for the winter. No one was prepared for the dire condition of the companies.

II. Brigham Young Guided the Rescue Of the Willie and Martin Handcart Companies

Brigham Young was surprised to learn from Franklin D. Richards "that two full handcart companies (whose numbers exceeded the total of the first three companies combined) plus a wagon company carrying luggage for the year's immigration were still on the trail--over twelve hundred souls." (Rebecca Bartholomew and Leonard J. Arrington. *Rescue of the 1856 Handcart Companies*. Provo, Utah: Charles Redd Monographs in Western History No. 11. Brigham Young University, 1981, [Revised edition, 1993], 5).

A. Rescuers and Supplies Needed

Gordon B. Hinckley states,

"I take you back to the general conference of October 1856. On Saturday of that conference, Franklin D. Richards and a handful of associates arrived in the valley. They had traveled from Winter Quarters with strong teams and light wagons and had been able to make good time. Brother Richards immediately sought out President Young. He reported that there were hundreds of men, women, and children scattered over along the trail...They were in desperate trouble. Winter had come early. Snow-laden winds were howling across the highlands...Our people were hungry, their carts and their wagons were breaking down; their oxen dying. The people themselves were dying. All of them would perish unless they were rescued.

"I think President Young did not sleep that night. I think visions of those destitute, freezing, dying people paraded through his mind. The next morning he came to the old Tabernacle which stood on this square [to convene General Conference]. He said to the people:

"I will now give this people the subject and the text for the Elders who may speak...It is this...Many of our brethren and sisters are on the plains with handcarts, and probably many are now several hundred miles from this place, and they must be brought here, we must send assistance to them. The text will be, 'to get them here...

"That is my religion; that is the dictation of the Holy Ghost that I possess. It is to save the people...

"I shall call upon the Bishops this day. I shall not wait until tomorrow, nor until the next day, for 60 good mule teams and 12 or 15 wagons. I do not want to send oxen. I want good horses and mules. They are in this Territory, and we must have them. Also 12 tons of flour and 40 good teamsters, besides those that drive the teams...

"I will tell you all that your faith, religion, and profession of religion will never save one soul of you in the Celestial Kingdom of our God, unless you carry out just such principles as I am now teaching you. *Go and bring in*

those people now on the plains." (In LeRoy R. Hafen and Ann W. Hafen, *Handcarts to Zion* [1960], 120-121).

"That afternoon, food, bedding, and clothing in great quantities were assembled by the women. The next morning, horses were shod and wagons repaired and loaded. The following morning...16 mule teams pulled out and headed eastward. By the end of October there were 250 teams on the road to give relief." ("Reach With A Rescuing Hand," in *Ensign*, November 1996, 85-86).

The names of 206 rescuers are listed with the note that 'all of the names of the rescuers were not recorded.' These individuals left their homes and families in October to rescue those who were on the trail. They included, among others: George D. Grant, who was the Captain of the rescue company and his son [George W.]. Thomas Alexander, Reddick N. Allred, [Robert Bain-left on his own], Thomas Bullock, Anson Call, Harvey H. Cluff, Charles Franklin Decker, John Ekins, Able Garr and his two sons, David and John, George D. Grant, Ben Hampton, Ephraim K. Hanks, Arza Hinckley, Daniel W. Jones, David Patton Kimball, William Henry Kimball, John Parker, Stephen Wells Taylor, Chauncey Webb, Cyrus Hubbard Wheelock, and Joseph A. Young." (*Remember: The Willie and Martin Handcart Companies and their Rescuers--Past and Present*. Compiled and Written by members of the Riverton Wyoming Stake. Provo, Utah: Centaur Print Partners, 1997, [Eighth Printing, May 2006], E-34-E-38).

Rebecca Bartholomew and Leonard J. Arrington state,

"Among the first to come [after the meeting] to the pulpit [at the Tabernacle] were the missionaries who had just returned: Joseph A. Young, Chauncey Webb, George D. Grant, William H. Kimball, and Cyrus Wheelock. Some men were 'volunteered,' such as Daniel W. Jones, who owned a saddle horse and was an experienced scout. (After the meeting Daniel Wells took Jones by the arm and announced, 'You are a good hand for the trip; get ready.' Minutes later Presiding Bishop Edward Hunter told him the same thing. Later President Young's counselor Jedediah Grant told Jones, 'I want you on this trip.' According to Jones, 'I began to think it time to decide.') Little did Jones know what he would later be asked to do. Others to respond were unattached young men like Harvey H. Cluff, whose brother was with one of the handcart companies. 'Being in Salt Lake

City and of an ambitious turn of mind, I volunteered to go.'

"Then there was Ephraim K. Hanks, attached, but in a frontier sort of way which left him free to spend 'considerable of my time fishing in Utah Lake.' On the way back from one fishing trip, 'an ordinary sized man' appeared to him in the night and revealed that the handcart people were in trouble, would he go and help them? Yes, he would go if he were called. Two days later, when a general call was made at conference, Hanks went forward at once. The following morning 'I was wending my way eastward over the mountains with a light wagon all alone.

"But the cores of the rescue parties were drawn from the local militias. Each valley and community kept a band of soldiers armed and trained to ride against the Indians whenever necessary--which since 1850, had been frequently." (*Rescue of the 1856 Handcart Companies*. Provo, Utah: Charles Redd Monographs in Western History No. 11. Brigham Young University, 1981, [Revised edition, 1993], 7-8).

B. Problem With Rescue

Rebecca Bartholomew and Leonard J. Arrington state,

"By Franklin Richards estimate, Captain Willie would be found in the vicinity of Green River, two days beyond Fort Bridger or about 130 miles east of the Salt Lake Valley. Grant's party reached the fort on October 12th. Here they purchased some beef and left feed and flour for the return trip, but they were unable to learn anything about the handcart companies. The next day they came upon some of the front-running teams who had 'got tired of waiting' and were returning, having decided that the immigrants must have wintered somewhere." *Rescue of the 1856 Handcart Companies*. Provo, Utah: Charles Redd Monographs in Western History No. 11. Brigham Young University, 1981, [Revised edition, 1993], 10).

These were not the only ones who decided to return to the Valley.

Henry B. Eyring states,

"There are few comforts so sweet as to know that we have been an instrument in the hands of God in leading someone else to safety. That blessing generally requires the faith to follow counsel when it is hard to do. An example from Church History is that of Reddick Newton Allred. He was one of the rescue parties sent out by Brigham Young to bring in the Willie and Martin Handcart Companies. When a terrible storm hit, Captain Grant, captain of the rescue party, decided to leave some of the wagons by the Sweetwater River as he pressed forward to find the handcart companies. With the blizzards howling and the weather becoming threatening, two of the men left behind at the Sweetwater decided that it was foolish to stay. They thought that either the handcart companies had wintered over somewhere or had perished. They decided to return to the Salt Lake Valley and tried to persuade everyone else to do the same.

"Reddick Allred refused to budge. Brigham had sent them out and his priesthood leader had told him to wait there. The others took several wagons, all filled with needed supplies, and started back. Even more tragic, each wagon they met coming out from Salt Lake they turned back as well. They turned back 77 wagons, returning all the way to Little Mountain, where President Young learned what was happening and turned them around again. When the Willie Company was finally found, and had made the heartrending pull up and over Rocky Ridge, it was Reddick Allred and his wagons that waited for them. (See Rebecca Bartholomew and Leonard J. Arrington. *Rescue of the 1856 Handcart Companies* [1992], 29, 33-34).

"In this conference you will hear inspired counsel, for instance to reach out to the new members of the Church. Those with the faith of Reddick Newton Allred will keep offering friendship even when it seems not to be needed or to have no effect...While the record does not prove it, I am confident that Brother Allred prayed while he waited. I am confident that his prayers were answered. He then knew that the counsel to stand fast was from God. We must pray to know that. I promise you answers to such prayers of faith." ("Finding Safety in Counsel," in *Ensign*, May 1997, 26).

May we all be like Reddick Newton Allred steadfast in our obedience to our leaders even when we get discouraged or

disheartened. If we will do so, we too, will receive the blessings promised the faithful by the Lord.

Another who was faithful was Harvey Cluff. Unbeknownst to the rescue party, due to the severity of the storm, they had determined to set up their camp. Captain Willie and Joseph Elder determined to leave the handcart company and seek for help. In the meantime, Captain George D. Grant had moved the rescue party into a hollow some distance off the road among trees near the river. Young Harvey Cluff had volunteered to post a sign on the main road marking their detour. [According to his record, "This was designed to direct the express party who were expected to return about this time. So they would not miss us.] Had it not been for Cluff's willingness to face the cold and wind, Captain Willie and Elder would have passed by the rescue camp. [Cluff's record states, "Had Captain Willie and his fellow traveler], from his company, continued on the road they certainly would have perished as they would have reached the Sweetwater where the storm first struck us. The handcart company was then 25 miles from our camp...and as they had traveled that distance without food for themselves or horses and no bedding, they must have perished."] The rescue of the Willie Handcart Company would then be further delayed with the accompanying loss of life. As it was, Cluff had just returned to the camp, when the two icicled men rode into the hollow. (See Rebecca Bartholomew and Leonard J. Arrington, *Rescue of the 1856 Handcart Companies*. [1992], 16; also *Journal of the Trail*. Compiled and Edited by Stewart E. Glazier and Robert S. Clark. Salt Lake City: Smart Design, Inc., Second Edition, 1997, 85).

Unlike Harvey Cluff, we often do not see the immediate effects our efforts to serve have upon the lives of others. Nevertheless, we steadfastly continue, for the most part, to keep the commandments and to do our small part to build the kingdom.

C. More Miracles

John Jaques records in his journal [November 1856],

"And [at] evening, just before sunset, a strange quiver like a thrill of hopefulness was communicated down the wavering line. Coming toward the train was a lone man

leading two horses with great pieces of buffalo hung on each side of the animals.

"It was Brother Ephraim Hanks and he had brought fresh buffalo meat that everyone [in the Martin Handcart Company] set to cooking at his own fire. But more than meat, he brought them hope, the advance scouts of the rescue party were just a day away, and behind them a day or two further down the road were food and clothing and a chance to rest.

"It was like this, he would say, his large hands spread out to the fire. 'No matter what I did or where I went I couldn't forget you folks. I kept wondering how you were getting on, what with the early snows and everything.

"[Brother Hanks continued], 'Yes, the Lord does some strange things, but I noticed he always counts on human folks to help Him out. Now, I've travelled this road time and time again and at this time of year I wouldn't ever have expected to meet a buffalo. But you folks needed meat and he was put in my way. Now, if I hadn't been there, or if I couldn't have brought him down--well, the way I figure it, the Lord wouldn't have bothered to have him there, that's all.'" (*Remember: The Willie and Martin Handcart Companies and their Rescuers--Past and Present*. Compiled and Written by members of the Riverton Wyoming Stake. Provo, Utah: Centaur Print Partners, 1997, [Eighth Printing, May 2006], 141-142).

It is true, the Lord did send a buffalo that late in the season, but without willing individuals, little on earth would be accomplished. In many instances, rather than send an angel, the Lord works through his children who are obedient to His call to step forward and serve. Ephraim Hanks is numbered among those who answered the call to serve. Will we also?

Andrew D. Olsen and Jolene S. Allphin state,

"On October 30 the Willie company reached the Green River crossing, still 169 miles from the Salt Lake Valley. As she [Elizabeth "Betsey" Smith] had done from Iowa City, that day Betsey led [her younger brother,] Alexander by the hand and encouraged him forward with stories about their future. With the innocence and impatience of a six-year-old, Alex said, 'When we get to that creek, I wish we could see our

brother Rob'—the brother [who had previously gone to the Salt Lake Valley and] had encouraged them to emigrate and had promised to pray for them.

"Betsey knew how unlikely that was. Nevertheless, she said, 'Come along, maybe we will, when we get to the top of the bank.' At the top they looked down and saw a wagon with just one yoke of oxen. 'We had never seen the like before,' Betsy said since most wagons had two or three yokes of oxen. They waited at the summit, watching the wagon advance until it came beside them. The driver stared at them briefly and then yelled for his oxen to stop. 'It was then we knew him,' Betsey wrote, 'He jumped off the wagon and caught his sisters in his arms as they came up with the cart. How we all wept with joy...Little Alex climbed in to the wagon as happy as a prince, instead of a poor, tired child.

"This joyful, improbable reunion was not yet complete. Robert asked where his mother and sister Mary were. 'They are behind somewhere, Robby,' Betsey answered. Margery [mother] was still sick, and during her stops to rest, she was so weak that she had to lie down. Having seen others go to sleep this way and never awaken, Mary stayed with her mother to help her keep going. When Mary saw the wagon coming, she told her mother to get up and look.

"Never mind, Mary; don't bother me, I am so tired, Margery said.

"Well, mother, the man is running this way,' Mary replied. 'It surely is Robert.'

"Oh, no, Mary; that would be too good to be true!' Margery answered.

"But it was indeed true."

Describing the reunion with his mother, Robert Bain wrote:

"I...drove on to find Mother laying in the sagebrush nearly gone. I gathered her up in my arms and got her in the wagon. My heart overflowed with love and gratitude to God. My mother said to me, 'I couldn't be more happy and thankful to see you than if I were to be in the highest kingdom in heaven.' [God] had preserved them...in the midst of death, and I had been able to find them. The bread and

butter [in my wagon] was a sweet morsel to them. Mother gained in health every day.

"Robert Bain had prayed for his family as promised. And he had worked for them, coming to their rescue. But the work was not easy or convenient. While his family was traveling across the plains, Robert was suffering from mountain fever in Lehi. For four weeks he had to be waited on. Brigham Young's call for rescuers came when Robert was just beginning to recover. He borrowed a yoke of oxen and a wagon from Lorenzo Hatch, who filled the wagon with supplies, and set out to find his family. 'I was so weak they had to lift me into the wagon [and] put the whip in my hand,' Robert recalled. He gradually got strong as he made his way east. Perhaps in part due to Robert's efforts, everyone in Margery Smith's family survived as did their friend Euphemia Mitchell, who soon married Robert." (*Follow Me To Zion*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 2013, 28-30).

It is often not easy for an individual to serve. There are many who do not because of obstacles that stand in the way. Those who are committed, proceed, despite adversity. Robert Bain is yet another example of those who put others before self, and answered the call. By his actions, he literally saved his family, especially his mother, from certain death. He also received a wife as an additional bonus.

The Willie Company, under the direction of James G. Willie, arrived in Salt Lake City on November 9, 1856. The Martin Company, led by Edward Martin, did not arrive until November 30, 1856. It was this company that experienced the greatest loss of life.

D. Daniel W. Jones and Others Spend the Winter at Martin Cove

An important event occurred that is not widely known among the members of the Church. It concerned twenty men who remained at Martin's Cove during the winter of 1886-1887. The miracle they experienced is that they survived for approximately five months in the middle of winter with little or no supplies or food. They responded to the call to stay behind and were obedient.

We learn that after the companies had been rescued, it was determined to leave the remaining luggage of the two companies at Martin's Cove for the remainder of the winter.

Daniel W. Jones states,

"Leaving these goods meant to abandon all that many poor families had upon the earth. So it was different from common merchandise. Captain Grant said, 'There are no provisions to leave and it would be asking too much of anyone to stay here and starve for the sake of these goods; besides, where is there a man who would stay if called upon.' Daniel W. Jones answered, 'Any of us would.' He states, 'I had no idea I would be selected.

"[He continues], there was not money enough on earth to have hired me to stay. I had left home for only a few days and was not prepared to remain so long away; but I remembered my assertion that any of us would stay if called upon. I could not back out, so [after having been selected as the leader], I selected Thomas Alexander and Ben Hampton. I am satisfied that two more faithful men to stand under all hardships could not have been found. [In total there were 20 men who were left. Three from the rescue camp and seventeen from the wagon trains.

"On taking stock of provisions, we found about twenty day's rations. No salt or bread except a few crackers. There was at least five months of winter before us and nothing much to eat but a few perishing cattle and what game we might chance to kill. The game was not for certain, as the severe storms had driven everything away. The first move was to fix up the fort." (*Journal of the Trail*. Compiled and Edited by Stewart E. Glazier and Robert S. Clark. Salt Lake City: Smart Design, Inc., Second Edition, 1997, 109-110).

Before winter was over, due to the lack of food, they resorted to eating cowhides, including an old buffalo hide. In order to keep themselves occupied, the men repaired the fort, straightened the stored items, built a stone wall, and tried to hunt. They also made friends with some Indians who provided them with assistance. In response to fault-finding amongst the group members over the limited amount of food, Ben Hampton made a prophesy regarding receiving food. It was fulfilled within a few days, when some men brought them nearly a ton of flour and other provisions. Throughout their months of terrible privation, each of the men remained faithful to the trust placed in them to guard the goods at the fort. (See Daniel W. Jones autobiography,

Forty Years Among the Indians. Los Angeles, California: Westernlore Press, 1960, 68-110).

To be found faithful to their word is one of the greatest character traits a man or woman can exemplify. These men risked their lives to guard the goods of those who had lost so much. During their ordeal, they also suffered, but did not falter in their obedience to the trust they had been given.

III. The Savior Rescues Us Through His Atoning Sacrifice

The gospel of Jesus Christ is a message of rescue. Each of us are on a journey to reach the promised land. On our own, given the temptations and evils that exist in the world, we would likely lose our way. Because of the atonement of Jesus Christ and through His gospel, we will be rescued from physical death and through our obedience, find protection from spiritual death.

Gordon B. Hinckley states,

"It is because of the sacrificial redemption wrought by the Savior of the world that the great plan of the eternal gospel is made available to us, under which those who die in the Lord shall not taste death but shall have the opportunity of going on to a celestial and eternal glory.

"In our own helplessness, He becomes our rescuer, saving us from damnation and bringing us to eternal life.

"In times of despair, in seasons of loneliness and fear, He is there on the horizon to bring succor and comfort and assurance and faith. He is our King, our Savior, our Deliverer, our Lord and our God." ("Our Mission Of Saving," in *Ensign*, November 1991, 54).

*In what ways do we need to be rescued by the Savior?

B/M, 2 Nephi 9:6-9

6 ...and the fall came by reason of transgression; and because man became fallen they were cut off from the presence of the Lord.

7 Wherefore, it must needs be an infinite atonement-- save it should be an infinite atonement this

corruption could not put on incorruption. Wherefore, the first judgment which came upon man must needs have remained to an endless duration. And if so, this flesh must have laid down to rot and to crumble to its mother earth, to rise no more.

8 ...For behold, if the flesh should rise no more our spirits must become subject to that angel who fell from before the presence of the Eternal God, and became the devil, to rise no more.

9 And our spirits must have become like unto him, and we become devils, angels to a devil, to be shut out from the presence of our God, and to remain with the father of lies, in misery, like unto himself;...

We need Christ for, as a result of the transgression of Adam and Eve, upon our death, our physical bodies would have decayed in the ground. Our spirits would have become subject to the devil. We would have been shut out from the presence of God, and to remain "with the father of lies, in misery, like unto himself." (B/M, 2 Nephi 9:9).

*Why is the Savior able to rescue us?

B/M, Alma 7:12-13

12 And he [Jesus Christ through his suffering] will take upon him death, that he may loose the bands of death which bind his people; and he will take upon him their infirmities,...

13...the Son of God suffereth according to the flesh that he might take upon him the sins of his people, that he might blot out their transgressions according to the power of his deliverance;...

B/M, 2 Nephi 2:26

26 And the Messiah cometh in the fulness of time, that he may redeem the children of men from the fall. And because that they are redeemed from the fall they have become free forever, knowing good from evil; to act for themselves and not to be acted upon, save it be by the punishment of the law at the great and last day, according to the commandments, which God hath given.

**11 For, behold, the Lord your Redeemer suffered death in the flesh; wherefore he suffered the pain of all men, that all men might repent and come unto him.
12 And he hath risen again from the dead, that he might bring all men unto him, on conditions of repentance.**

Because of Christ's suffering in the garden and on the cross, He paid the price of the transgression of Adam and Eve. Because of Christ, all will live again. He also paid the price of our individual sins, thereby providing the way, that through our acceptance of His offering, and our repentance, we may be able to return to live with Him and His Father again.

*What must we do to fully receive His offer of rescue?

We must accept His invitation to come unto Him. To repent of our sins, be baptized and receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, and live our life in obedience to His commandments for the remainder of our lives. As we do so, we will strive to become like Him in word and deed.

IV. As Latter-day Saints, We Are To Rescue Those in Need

Thomas S. Monson shared the following incident from the handcart rescue,

"Let us for a moment join Captain Edward Martin and the handcart company he led. While we will not feel the pangs of hunger which they felt or experience the bitter cold that penetrated their weary bodies, we will emerge from our visit with a better appreciation of hardship borne, courage demonstrated, and faith fulfilled. We will witness with tear-filled eyes a dramatic answer to the question 'Am I my brother's keeper?'

"The handcarts moved on November 3 [1856], and reached the [Sweetwater] river, filled with floating ice. To cross would require more courage and fortitude, it seemed, than human nature could muster. Women shrank back and men wept. Some pushed through, but others were unequal to the ordeal.

"Three eighteen-year-old boys belonging to the relief party came to the rescue; and to the astonishment of all who saw, carried nearly every member of that ill-fated handcart company across the snow-bound stream. The strain was so terrible, and the exposure so great, that in later years all the boys died from the effects of it. When Brigham Young heard of this heroic act, he wept like a child, and later declared publicly, 'That act alone will ensure C. Allen Huntington, George W. Grant, and David P. Kimball an everlasting salvation in the Celestial Kingdom of God, worlds without end.'" (LeRoy R. Hafen and Ann W. Hafen. *Handcarts to Zion* [Glendale, California: the Arthur H. Clark Company, 1960, [1992], 132-133). It was learned that Stephen Wells Taylor was also one of those who carried those of the Martin Company over Sweetwater. (see *Remember: The Willie and Martin Handcart Companies and their Rescue-- Past and Present*. Provo, Utah: Centaur Print Partners, 1997, [Eighth Printing, May 2006], E-37).

"Our service to others may not be so dramatic, but we can bolster human spirits, clothe cold bodies, feed hungry people, comfort grieving hearts, and lift to new heights precious souls." ("My Brother's Keeper," in *Ensign*, May 1991, 46-47).

Gordon B. Hinckley states,

"Our mission in life, as followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, must be a mission of saving. There are the homeless, the hungry, the destitute. Their condition is obvious. We have done much. We can do more to help those who live on the edge of survival." ("Our Mission of Saving," in *Ensign*, November 1991, 59).

*What are some specific things we can do to rescue those in need?

We can increase our donations to fast offerings. We can offer money, even if it is only a dollar or two, to those we see in need. We can refrain from passing judgment on those in need, and instead share with them. We can pray for those in need and ask the Lord to direct our efforts to bless their lives.

Gordon B. Hinckley states,

"[Referring to the suffering of the Martin and Willie Handcart companies], I am grateful that those days of pioneering are behind us. I am thankful that we do not have brethren and sisters stranded in the snow, freezing and dying, while trying to get to this, their Zion in the mountains. But there are people, not a few, whose circumstances are desperate and who cry out for help and relief.

"There are so many who are hungry and destitute across this world who need help...Ours is a great and solemn duty to reach out and help them, to lift them, to feed them if they are hungry, to nurture their spirits if they thirst for truth and righteousness.

"There are so many young people who wander aimlessly and walk the tragic trail of drugs, gangs, immorality, and the whole brood of ills that accompany these things. There are widows who long for friendly voices and that spirit of anxious concern that speaks of love. There are those who were once warm to the faith, but whose faith has grown cold. Many of them wish to come back but do not know quite how to do it. They need friendly hands reaching out to them. With a little effort, many of them can be brought back to feast again at the table of the Lord.

"My brethren and sisters, I would hope, I would pray that each of us...would resolve to seek those who need help, who are in desperate and difficult circumstances, and lift them in the spirit of love into the embrace of the Church, where strong hands and loving hearts will warm them, comfort them, sustain them and put them on the way of happy and productive lives." ("Reach With A Rescuing Hand," in *Ensign*, November 1996, 86).

As you read the following scriptures, look for counsel on what we can do to rescue those in need:

"a. Qualities to help us to rescue those in need.

Doctrine and Covenants 4:3-7 [underline added]

3 Therefore, if ye have desire to serve God ye are called to the work;

4 For behold the field is white already to harvest; and lo, he that thrusteth in his sickle with his

might, the same layeth up in store that he perisheth not, but bringeth salvation to his soul;
5 And faith, hope, charity and love, with an eye single to the glory of God, qualify him for the work.
6 Remember faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, brotherly kindness, godliness, charity, humility, diligence.
7 Ask, and ye shall receive; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. Amen.

B/M, Moroni 7:45-48 [underline added]

45 And charity suffereth long, and is kind, and envieth not, and is not puffed up, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, and rejoiceth not in iniquity but rejoiceth in the truth, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.
46 Wherefore, my beloved brethren, if ye have not charity, ye are nothing, for charity never faileth. Wherefore, cleave unto charity, which is the greatest of all, for all things must fail--
47 But charity is the pure love of Christ, and it endureth forever; and whoso is found possessed of it at the last day, it shall be well with him.
48 Wherefore, my beloved brethren, pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with this love, which he hath bestowed upon all who are true followers of his Son, Jesus Christ; that ye may become the sons of God; that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is; that we may have this hope; that we may be purified even as he is pure. Amen.

The underlined qualities as found in these two scriptures will enable us to be successful as we seek to rescue those in need.

"b. Opportunities to teach the gospel and lead others to repentance."

Doctrine and Covenants 18:10-16 [underline added]

10 Remember the worth of souls is great in the sight of God;

11 For, behold, the Lord your Redeemer suffered death in the flesh; wherefore he suffered the pain of all men, that all men might repent and come unto him.

12 And he hath risen again from the dead, that he might bring all men unto him, on conditions of repentance.

13 And how great is his joy in the soul that repenteth!

14 Wherefore, ye are called to cry repentance unto this people.

15 And if it so be that you should labor all your days in crying repentance unto this people, and bring, save it be one soul unto me, how great shall be your joy with him in the kingdom of my Father!

16 And now, if your joy will be great with one soul that you have brought unto me into the kingdom of my Father, how great will be your joy if you should bring many souls unto me!

Many have suggested that if you should labor and bring one soul, and that soul is yourself, that alone would bring you great joy. Imagine how great your joy will be if you also brought your family as well as others into God's kingdom?

"c. Consequences if we neglect "the poor and needy, the sick and afflicted."

Doctrine and Covenants 52:40 [underline added]

40 And remember in all things the poor and the needy, the sick and the afflicted, for he that doeth not these things, the same is not my disciple.

It is important to understand that if we do not administer to "the poor and the needy, the sick and the afflicted," it will eliminate us from being numbered among the disciples of Christ. If we do not learn to be generous with our temporal means, it will adversely affect our spiritual well-being.

"d. Hands that hang down, and knees that need strengthening."

Doctrine and Covenants 81:5-6 [underline added]

5 Wherefore, be faithful; stand in the office which I have appointed unto you; succor the weak, lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees.

6 And if thou art faithful unto the end thou shalt have a crown of immortality, and eternal life in the mansions which I have prepared in the house of my Father.

During the battle with Amalek, when Moses held up his hands, the children of Israel prevailed in battle. When he let down his hands, Amalek's men prevailed. Aaron and Hur seeing that Moses hands were tiring, each stood beside him and bore up his arms and hands. As a result, the Israelites won the battle. (see Exodus 17:10-13). When Harold B. Lee served as a counselor with Nathan Eldon Tanner, to President Joseph Fielding Smith, he drew upon these verses from Exodus and then added the following.

Harold B. Lee states,

"I think that is the role that President Tanner and I have to fulfil. The hands of President Smith may grow weary. They may tend to droop at times because of his heavy responsibilities; but as we uphold his hands, and as we lead under his direction, by his side, the gates of hell will not prevail against you and against Israel...Let's keep our eye on the President of the Church and uphold his hands as President Tanner and I will continue to do." ("Uphold the Hands of the President of the Church," *Conference Report*, October 1970, 153).

Whether we lift others physically or we lift them spiritually, we may be a servant in the Lord's hands, in administering to His children and leaders.

"e. Rescuing through temple work."

Doctrine and Covenants 138:58

58 The dead who repent will be redeemed, through obedience to the ordinances of the house of God,

Each of us must receive the ordinances offered in the House of the Lord. If we do not receive these ordinances during our mortal life, we will then be dependent upon others living upon the earth to do the work for us. We understand that until that work is done, the individual's eternal progression cannot proceed. As we go to the temple, and perform the sacred ordinances for the dead, we become spiritual rescuers as our efforts, based upon their acceptance, enable them to continue their journey back to Heavenly Father.

It is important to note that by direct inspiration given to Robert Scott Lorimer, then the Stake President of the Riverton Wyoming Stake and his counselors, President Kitchen and President McKinnon, it was learned that the temple work had not been done for the members of the Willie and Martin Handcart companies, and needed to be done. As a result of this inspiration, the members of the Riverton stake worked together to search out and then participated in doing the temple work for these individuals. It also led to the purchase by the Church of the sacred land where many of the important events occurred. A bridge was rebuilt across the Sweetwater River, named "Veil Crossing," in remembrance of the companies crossing. Plaques and monuments were also prepared marking the sacredness of Martin's Cove, Rock Creek Hollow, and Devil's Gate. This extraordinary event, both spiritual and physical is documented in the book, *Remember: The Willie and Martin Handcart Companies and their Rescue--Past and Present*. Compiled and written by members of the Riverton Wyoming Stake. Provo, Utah: Centaur Print Partners, 1997, [Eighth Printing, May 2006]). This project has also been referred to as the "Second Rescue" of the Willie and Martin Handcart companies.

"f. Rescuing those who have become less active."

B/M, 3 Nephi 18:31-32 [underline added]

31 But if he repent not he shall not be numbered among my people, that he may not destroy my people, for behold I know my sheep, and they are numbered.

32 Nevertheless, ye shall not cast him out of your synagogues, or your places of worship, for unto such shall ye continue to minister; for ye know not but what they will return and repent, and come unto me

with full purpose of heart, and I shall heal them; and ye shall be the means of bringing salvation unto them.

(a-f. *Doctrine and Covenants and Church History Gospel Doctrine Teacher's Manual*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1999, 206-207).

The words of the resurrected Lord to his twelve disciples whom he had chosen, also have application to each of us. When we go in search of those who are lost from the fold, we are also on a rescue mission. It is likely that it will not be easy, it usually isn't, and we may experience discouragement and rejection, but it is important that we do not give up. If we persist in our efforts to locate and then to kindly encourage the individual or family to again return, we will have done as the Lord has directed us. He knows His children, and though some may wander and stray, He will not give up on them.

Gordon B. Hinckley states,

"Stories of the beleaguered Saints and of their suffering and death will be repeated again and again...Stories of their rescue need to be repeated again and again. They speak of the very essence of the gospel of Jesus Christ." ("Reach With A Rescuing Hand," in *Ensign*, November 1996, 86).

V. Conclusions

Before we could truly understand the mission of saving, it was necessary that we have a better understanding of the example we were using to illustrate this important principle. It was necessary we become familiar with some of the events surrounding the rescue and their importance. Certain questions came to our mind. Who were the Willie and Martin Handcart companies? What is a handcart, and why was it being use instead of oxen pulling a wagon? Why did they need saving?

We came to understand that a handcart is a cart that contains an area where items can be transported. It rests on two wheels. There is a bar in the front that allows one or two individuals to pull, with others behind to push. It was chosen as a means of transportation due to being less expensive than a wagon and oxen. For those who were lacking in funds, and many were, it was an inexpensive manner to

use to cross the plains. The Perpetual Emigrating Fund (PEF), established by Brigham Young, was low on funds, and this means allowed many to be able to make the trip to Zion that would not be able to do so otherwise. For the most part, the program was extremely successful. The major problem for the Martin and Willie Handcart companies, among others, was their delayed ocean voyage and their late start from Florence, Nebraska. Previous companies had departed by June, they left in mid and late August. The early snow and freezing temperatures, and the lack of food only added to their hardship.

During their journey, many miracles occurred, of which two examples are given. As one member stated, "[we] came through with the absolute knowledge that God lives for we became acquainted with him in our extremities." (Francis Webster, in David T. Kenison, *Chronicles of Faith: Stories of the Mormon Pioneers*. Orem, Utah: LDS-Gems Press, 1977, 198-199).

Brigham Young Guided the Rescue of the Willie and Martin Handcart Companies: When Brigham Young learned that there were still over twelve hundred immigrants on the trail, just prior to October 1856 General Conference, his response was immediate. He did not know exactly where they were on the trail, or their condition, but they needed to be rescued. His message to the Saints, "to get them here." The Saints responded with wagons loaded with supplies, and individuals who accepted the call to go rescue the companies. 206 names of the volunteers were identified, but likely there were even more that answered the call.

In the middle of winter, they left their families and risked their own lives to bring the companies to the valley. There were challenges to be overcome. Some wagons even turned around, but miracles occurred. They did finally locate the companies and brought them to the valley. Had they not found them when they did, many more lives would have been lost. In the process of the rescue, many miracles occurred. Two of these miracles are documented.

As the rescue wagons were loaded with survivors and the journey to the valley commenced, twenty young men accepted the call to remain another five months at Martin's Cove. It was their responsibility to protect the remaining possessions of the handcart companies that had to be left

behind. This responsibility put great strain upon those men as there were only minimum supplies left for them. They would also suffer during the next five months, even resorting to eating an old buffalo hide and rawhide strips off the handcarts in order to survive. In the end, they were diligent in fulfilling their commitment and are among the unsung heroes of the rescue.

The Savior Rescues Us Through His Atoning Sacrifice: We too are on a mortal journey back to our Heavenly Father. None of us would survive this journey alone. Were it not for the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, we too would perish. We could not survive without His intervention and only He was qualified to perform our rescue.

As Latter-day Saints We Are To Rescue Those In Need: As we come upon those who are in need, we, too, are responsible to offer assistance. As we reach out to others who are less fortunate, our deeds will be recorded in heaven, to our blessing. The Lord said, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (New Testament, Matthew 25:40).

There are six areas for us to consider as we seek to rescue others. These include: (a) First, gaining the qualities to help us rescue those in need; (b) Seek opportunities to teach the gospel and lead others to repentance; (c) Do not neglect caring for the poor and needy; the sick and afflicted; (d) Seek to lift up hands that hang down, and knees that need strengthening; (e) Rescue through doing temple work; and, (f) Rescue those who have become less active. As we apply the concept illustrated by the experiences of the Willie and Martin Handcart companies, and the example of those who rescued them, we will be blessed for our efforts.

Our next lesson [D&C#36] addresses the challenges of the Saints as they finally reached the Valley of the Salt Lake. The initial years involved continued sacrifices and challenges, but they were also received heavens blessings as they continued to be faithful and obedient.