

Ever since the prophet died as a martyr in Carthage, Ill. , some have been disappointed with Emma because she did not go with the Saints West. It seems as if we are quick to judge her by her actions after Joseph was killed, rather than the woman she was as she stood by Josephs side. Supporting him and never complaining of all of hardships she had to endure because she was the prophets wife. Josephs mother Lucy Mack Smith said this of Emma.

"I have never seen a woman in my life, who would endure every species of fatigue and hardship, from month to month, and from year to year, with that unflinching courage, zeal, and patience, which she has done; for I know that which she has had to endure -she has been tossed upon the ocean of uncertainty-she has breasted the storms of persecution, and buffeted the rage of men and devils, which would have borne down almost any other women."

As I have studied and read about Emma I have gained much respect for this women. There are few women who could go through as much hardache and have as many tragedies happen to them as Emma did and still beable to sustain Joseph as she did through one tragic experience after another.

On June 28, 1830 Emma was baptized by Oliver Cowdrey in Colesville, NY. Within weeks of her baptism, Joseph received a revelation from the Lord directed to Emma. She had been very depressed. A number of things probably contributed to her depression. The loss of her first born, plus the constant poverty and persecution wore away at her heart. The Lord told here that all would be well for her, that she would be blessed, and that her sins were forgiven and that she was called to be and elect lady. She was admonished to beware of pride and the things of this world, and not to murmur, but to trust in the Lord. She was told that her calling was to comfort Joseph with consoling words, in the spirit of meekness, and to go with him at the time of going." She was promised that she would be a teacher among the Saints and that the power of the Holy Ghost would be with her. She was s also commissioned to make a selection of sacred hymns to be sung by the Saints to bless their lives. The revelation was just what Emma needed, and was very encouraging, it filled many of the empty places and strengthened her.

Joseph and Emma were living with her parents in Harmony. People had begun to persecute the saints and Joseph had been arrested twice on false charges. Emmas parents did not like Joseph and tried to get her to leave Joseph. Her father made it perfectly clear to her that if she stayed with Joseph, she would not be welcome in their home. She prayed and wept, but in the end she chose to go with her husband in spite of all her family's pleadings and protests. She was determined to stand by Joseph forever. This was a very hard decision. It meant a permanent separation from her parents. Emma never saw them again in mortality.

Emma and Joseph moved to Kirtland Ohio where most of the Saints were. Emma was now pregnant again and very excited about the thought of having another baby. They didn't have much money. They moved from place to place as not to impose too much on others. It was hard for Emma to be so dependent but she was very appreciated. As the time for delivery neared Emma could not forget the loss of her first child. She was haunted by the fear that this child would also die. Her worst fears were confirmed when, she delivered twins, Thadeus and Louisa, both of whom died within a few hours. The next day in a neighboring town twins were born to newly baptized converts John and Julia Murdock. Within six hours of their birth sister Murdock died, leaving five motherless orphans. When Emma and Joseph learned of this, they asked Bro. Murdock if they could adopt the twins and raise them as their own. They were thrilled when Bro. Murdock said that he would be willing to do this.

Many of us can understand the heartache Emma must have felt after losing her babies. But after having the opportunity to adopt these twins Emma finally enjoyed the kind of heaven that comes with having children.

When the twins were a few months old, Joseph received some information regarding the degrees of glory and life after death. This gave Emma a lot of comfort knowing that the three children she lost were being cared for by our Heavenly Father.

When the twins were 11 months old they both had a severe case of the measles. Julia was almost recovered, but little Joseph was still very sick. This particular night Joseph had insisted on sleeping with little Joseph so Emma could get some much needed sleep. Near midnight some mobbers broke in to the house and dragged Joseph from his bed where he was sleeping with little Joseph. They beat him severely and then dragged him into the field where they poured hot tar on him and rolled his body in feathers. One of the mobbers clawed his bare back with his finger nails until he bled. Emma had run out of the house begging and pleading with these men to quit. Because of the terrible excitement Emma had forgotten about the babies. The covers had been torn off from little Joseph leaving him exposed to the cold. He soon developed a severe cough and died a few days later. He was the fourth baby that Emma had seen taken from her.

Emma had little time to mourn. Within a week of the mobbing, Joseph left on a three-month mission to Independence, Missouri. With Julia in her arms, Emma took little Joseph's body in a small coffin to Kirtland where she buried him next to her own little twins in the small cemetery north of where the house of the Lord would one day stand.

I am sure because they did not have a place of their own, and were constantly relying on church members to live with must have been very difficult for Emma. But she never complained and supported Joseph in all that he did.

Joseph Smith Sr. gave Emma a patriarchal blessing, which brought much comfort to her. In it the Lord said, "If thou wilt believe...thou shalt bring forth other children, to the joy and satisfaction of thy soul." Emma's faith was rewarded. She gave birth to another son,

Frederick. Soon after the birth of Frederick, Emma found herself alone with the children again. Joseph had gone to Salem Mass. with his brother Hyrum and Sidney Rigdon and Oliver Cowdery hoping to obtain some much needed money to help pay the costs for the Kirtland temple.

Emma and Joseph had finally been able to move into a house of their own. Yet, they enjoyed little privacy. Many well-meaning, interested people called at the Smith residence day and night. There was little peace for Emma and less privacy for her family. Emmas was often abliged to share the family's food and beds to accommodate overnight visitors.

Because of the persecution that the saints received, Joseph decided to move his family to Far West Missouri. It was very difficult for Emma to leave. Emmas attached to Kirtland was both physical and emotional. Here she buried three of their seven children. Here they had built a home and a temple to their God. Here would always be the memory of their first years as a family. Yet it was at last with some relief that they left a city waning in spirituality and consumed by the fires of apostasy.

Emma left many memories behind. memories of service and love, of kindness and the glory of the beautiful temple --memories of loneliness, injured feelings, disappointed hopes and terror and abuse and death and three infant graves. Westward lay the unknown, but she still had Joseph she would follow him anywhere and be with him always.

Emma never knew a lasting contentment in her marriage or in her life. Demands on her for the Church's sake deprived her of the traditional joy, privacy, respect, trust of neighbors, freedom of worship and protection by the law.

Joseph being the prophet and leader of the church, was singled out for harassment, persecution and arrest. In Nov. he was taken from his home and falsely imprisoned for five and a half months in different jails throughout Missouri. Emma found this lasted arrest and imprisonment particularly long and painful. But there is not indication of self-pity, distrust, or blaming. She was very anxious to hear anything of her husband.

The half year of terror and loneliness brought them closer together, but it was hard, It was the longest and most desperate trial she and Joseph had yet experienced.

The Saints were forced to leave Far West. In the dead of winter, Emmas fled through tragedy. She and her children joined other Mormons, moving sadly east, back towards the Mississippi. She crossed it on foot with the others across the rough ice of the frozen river. Under her dress, in tightly sewn cotton bags tied close to her body, Emma carried Joseph's private papers, including the valued manuscript of his inspired translation of the Bible. In her arms she carried her two smaller children Ales and Freddy, while her tow older children Julia and Joseph, clung to her skirt. It was bitter cold and she was very tired.

Emma gave birth to their sixth son. They named him Don Carlos, in honor of Joseph's youngest brother. He lived only fourteen months, dying just one week after Joseph's

youngest brother Don Carlos.

Death came as no stranger to Joseph and Emma. While living in Nauvoo, Emmas parents died in Pennsylvania and death took members of each of Joseph's bothers families, as well as his own beloved father. But even before little Don Carlos was laid to rest in the family cemetery near the Old Homestead, Emmas was expecting another child. But the little boy was stillborn. Life was so unsure-any happiness Emma felt was fragile at best and tragedy was not something one ever got used to. regardless, Emma's faith in God did not waver. There is no evidence that she ever blamed the Lord for any of her misfortune.

Alittle over a month after Emma gave birth to her stillborn son, Joseph organized the Nauvoo Relief Society. On March 17th 1842 Emmas was chosen to preside over the society of the sister of Saints. Emma's care for the untold numbers of ill and homeless Saints as well as her care for Joseph's extended family - is a legend.

Emma'a calling in the Relief Society was her only official administrative responsibility in the Church and the high water mark of her church career. She immediately applied herself to the task, of gathering food, clothing, and furniture for the suffering poor of Nauvoo. Reports of her addresses to the regular meetings of the society show that she encouraged the sisters to be united in spirit and purpose and to purge out iniquity among the Saints. Emma set an example of strong g leadership as pres. of the relief society. Her instructions on compassionate service set the tone for generations of Relief Society members under the theme she promoted: "Charity Never Faileth."

Joseph's death occurred on the 27th of June 1844. Four months after the death of Joseph Emma gave birth to David Hrymn. The saints left Nauvoo a year and a half later, leaving Emma, a 41-year-old widow, with her aged mother-in-law, Lucy Mack smith, and five children, ranging from fourteen years to fifteen months old to care for. She had little means to provide for her family.

Although Emma's life was filled with much persecution and sorrow, even bitterness on occasion, it appears that Emma endured her tribulations with dignity and maintained her faith in God. Writing to her son in 1869, she said, "I have seen many, yes very many trying scenes in my life which I could not see... where any good could come of them. But I feel a divine trust in God, that all things shall work for good."

In a interview with her sons a few months before she died, Emma bore testimony: "MY belief is that the Book of Mormon is a divine authenticity. I have not the slightest doubt of it... Though I was an active participant in the scenes that transpired, and was present during the translation of the plates and of things as they transpired, it is marvelous to me, a marvel and a wonder, as much as to anyone else." Describing her experience, she said. "The plates often lay on the table without any attempt at concealment, wrapped in a small linen tablecloth which I had given Joseph to fold them in. I once felt the plates as they lay on the table, tracing their outline and shape. She also testified, I know Mormonism to be the truth; and believe the church to have been established by divine direction."

With such glowing testimony of her commitment to the Prophet Joseph and the restored gospel, why did Emma not take her children and go west with the Church. Many have debated the issue and have assumed that Emma lost her faith, others doubted her integrity.

It is documented that Emma quarreled with some Church leaders over various aspects of settling Joseph's estate and that hurt feelings resulted, which were not resolved at the time. When asked years later why she didn't go west, she replied, "I had a home here, I didn't know what lay out there."

Emma lived almost 35 years after Joseph was killed. In her last hours, according to her son Alexander as Emma seemed to sink away, she raised up and stretched out her hand, calling "Joseph, Joseph," Emma's nurse, explained that a few days earlier Emma had told her that Joseph came to her in a vision and said, "Emma come with me, it is time for you to come with me." As Emma related it, she said 'I put on my bonnet and my shawl and went with him, I did not think that it was anything unusual. I went with him into a mansion, and he showed me through the different apartments of that beautiful mansion. And on room was the nursery. In that nursery was a babe in a cradle. She said, 'I knew my babe, my Don Carlos that was taken from me.' She sprang forward, caught the child up in her arms, and wept with joy over the child. When Emma recovered herself sufficient she turned to Joseph and said, 'Joseph where are the rest of my children.' He said to her, 'Emma, be patient and you shall have all of your children.' Then she saw standing by his side a personage of light even the Lord Jesus Christ.

After reading this testimony of Emma's it was a nice reminder of how each of us is precious in the sight of our Savior. We all make mistakes at one time or another and are in need of repentance. Whether our reasons are real or imagined injury to our feelings or pride. Sometimes we tend to lose our way and become subject to misunderstandings. We are not to judge, and I feel Emma will be right along side Joseph on the morning of the first resurrection.

I have learned so much from reading about Emma and have gained a real respect for this woman. I appreciated the testimony she bore of the divine authenticity of the Book of Mormon and for her precious vision of Joseph and her baby. Her legacy to us in her final witness is that she and all of us, through the ordinances restored by the Prophet Joseph Smith, have the opportunity to be with our families in eternity.'