

## JOSEPH F. SMITH

It's my great privilege to share some memories of Joseph F. Smith, the first son of Hyrum and Mary Fielding Smith, who was born in Far West, Missouri on November 13, 1838. He was born two weeks following the imprisonment of Joseph and Hyrum in Liberty Jail.

Mary at that time had a severe cold and in fact was ill for four months following Joseph F.'s birth. She had an opportunity 11 weeks after Joseph F. was born to go to Liberty Jail along with Emma and her sister Mercy. Because Mary was so ill, they made a makeshift bed for her in a makeshift covered wagon and covered the distance to Liberty Jail. You can imagine the horror that Mary felt as she took her young 11-week old son with her to those horrible conditions at Liberty Jail to see Joseph and Hyrum there incarcerated wrongly.

That was Hyrum's first opportunity to see his little son. He took the opportunity to bless him, give him a father's blessing, and brothers and sisters, can you imagine the prayer that was uttered that night, one of great humility and one of great faith, to bless and protect his posterity. He also took the opportunity to give Mary a blessing and her health improved dramatically thereafter. Hyrum's heart melted as he saw his sick wife and his tiny son and knew that he could not minister to their needs.

However, through faith and prayers and through those deep feelings of love and faith in the Lord he was eventually released from prison. Their lives were surrounded by threats of violence and even death. Their property was stolen from them numerous times. They had a mockery of the legal system that threatened their liberty and freedoms and yet they persisted in their faith in the Lord.

Once they reached Nauvoo, Illinois, they had a time of relative peace and tranquility and security that in Nauvoo they were free from the mobs for a time. Joseph F.'s childhood was abbreviated because he was only five years of age at the time Joseph and Hyrum headed to Carthage.

He was raised in the strict teachings of a Christ-like life of morality and faith. The virtues of integrity, loyalty and love were inculcated into his mind and into his life.

In 1906, while serving as prophet of the church, Joseph F. returned to Nauvoo. As he reached a corner of that city of great destiny, he remembered distinctly, he said, "This is the exact spot where I stood when the brethren came riding up on their way to Carthage. Without getting off his horse, Father leaned over in his saddle and picked me up off the ground. He kissed me good-bye and put me down again and I saw him ride away."

Can you imagine, brothers and sisters, the feelings of that tender five-year-old's heart as he saw his father alive for the last time? "I can remember the night of the murder when one of the brethren came from Carthage and knocked on the window after dark and said to my mother, 'Sister Smith, your husband has been killed.'"

He remembered the pain and the crying and the agony that his mother suffered that fateful evening. He did learn, however, the blessings of sacrifice, the privilege of a testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ.

He remembered distinctly the bodies of the martyrs as they lay in their coffins after they had been brought from Carthage and had been dressed for burial. He said, "I remember Mother lifting me up to look upon the faces of my father and the prophet for the last time."

Brothers and sisters, with deep feelings of honor and respect and gratitude and love, we celebrate this wonderful prophet's birth and his legacy of faith and testimony, of loyalty, of dedication to this great work. May we all appreciate the testimony of our grandfather and the life that he so freely gave and the life that he lived in honor of his testimony and of this great work.

I testify he was a prophet at God. I testify that this is the work of the Lord, that Jesus lives and that this was the legacy that he left us and may we be true to it and move this great work forward with all the energy of our souls, I humbly pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.