

“Are You a Mormon?”

The year was 1857 near San Bernadino, California, a young man, recently released from missionary service, was returning home to Utah. He had taken passage with a mail carrier and another man. They journeyed through the night and in the morning stopped for breakfast near a ranch. While the other two men began cooking breakfast, the young missionary went to tend to the horses.

Just then a wagon load of drunken men came into view. They were cursing and swearing, shouting and shooting, boasting they would kill the “Mormons.”

Their behavior was “almost indescribable and unendurable.” They were a lawless mob such as only the West could see. One of them caught sight of the camp and made his way toward it.



The mail carrier and his companion hid in the brush, but the young man, unaware, strode into view. “The ruffian was swinging his weapon and uttering the most blood-curdling oaths and threats ever heard against the “Mormons.” The young man said, “I dared not run, though I trembled for fear which I dared not show. I therefore walked right up to the campfire and arrived there just a minute or two before

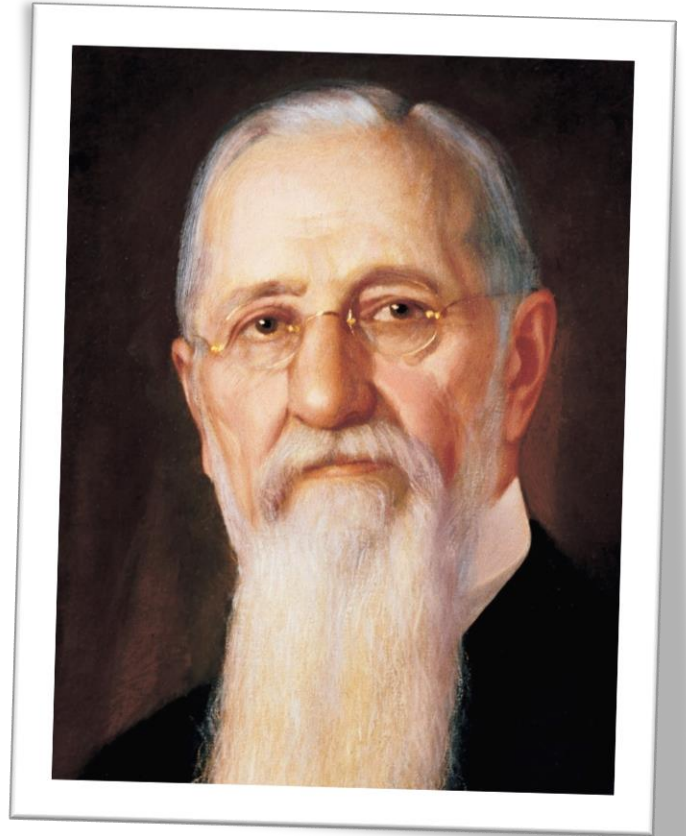
the drunken desperado, who came directly toward me, and swinging his revolver in my face, with an oath cried out:

“Are you _____ ‘Mormon.’”

The 19 year-old lad “looked him straight in the eyes, and answered with emphasis: ‘Yes siree; dyed in the wool; true blue, through and through.’”

The man's arms dropped to his side as if paralyzed—his pistol in one hand. The tone of his voice softened into “a subdued and maudlin” tone and he said, “Well, you are the _____ pleasantest man I ever met! Shake,” he said, and stuck out his hand. “I am glad to see a fellow stand for his convictions.” Then he turned and walked away to join his companions.

That young man was Joseph F. Smith, who later became the sixth president of the Church. Where did he learn such courage? From a father who faced a mob at Carthage and died for his testimony—Hyrum Smith, and from a mother who defied all odds, opposition, and adversity to keep her family together, bring them west, follow the prophets, and build her own mountain homestead of faith—Mary Fielding Smith. Courage is that quality that drives us to stand up, face our fears and press forward.



Source: Gospel Doctrine: The Sermons and Writings of Joseph F. Smith, Deseret Book, 1909 p. 531-32

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