

*Story of Lydia Alexander, Warren Smith, and Amanda Barnes
(Persecutions of our dear family members)*

Why did the Lord say, Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake? Let's see if we can learn from this story.

In 1838, Amanda Smith and her family were camped at Haun's Mill near Farr West, Missouri in search of a new home free from the persecutions that had driven them out of Ohio. Suddenly around 4 o'clock in the afternoon of October 30th, a mob of about 240 men swept down on the unsuspecting villagers. When the massacre was over 18 men and boys lay dead, including Amanda's husband and son Sardius. Another of her sons, Alma, had been shot at point blank range, blowing away his hip joint and leaving him horribly wounded.

Amid the horrible cries of the grieving, the wounded and the dying, Amanda endured a long night of terror as she ministered to her wounded son. The whole time she expected the mob to return and finish their ghastly deed. Amanda cried, "Oh, Heavenly Father, direct me what to do!" Then her prayers were answered for she was directed by a voice speaking to her. She was instructed to take ashes from the smoldering fire and make a lye, then to soak a cloth in that lye, and place the cloth in the wound that Alma had. Doing as she was directed, she again prayed to the Lord. Nearby was a slippery elm tree. She was instructed to make a poultice from the slippery elm tree and fill the wound with it. She then covered the wound with a quarter yard of linen to properly dress it. Alma laid on his face for five weeks until he was fully recovered.

The next morning in hurried desperation, the survivors gathered their beloved dead and dropped them in a dry well to keep them from the mutilations of the mob. Though most of those who were left fled the state, Amanda couldn't leave. Little Alma's wounds made it impossible for her to move him. In the days and weeks that followed, the mob continued to harass Amanda and the other women who were left behind. This filled them with fear. "Prayer," Amanda said, "was our only source of comfort. Heavenly Father, our only helper, only He could save and deliver us. The mob came and announced that if they didn't stop praying, every one of them would be killed. The mob would return with their evil warning again. Our prayers were hushed in terror." To Amanda this became unbearable, this Godless silence. She said it had been more intolerable than the night of the massacre. Finally, when she could endure it no longer, she stole down to a corn field and raised her voice to Heaven. As she concluded and

emerged from the corn field, a voice as audible and plain as she had ever heard spoke to her, the last verse of the hymn, *How Firm a Foundation*:

*The soul that on Jesus hath leaned for repose
I will not, I cannot, desert to his foes;
That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake,
I'll never, no never, no never forsake!*

From that moment on Amanda said, "I had no fear, I felt that nothing could hurt me." The mob came again with an ultimatum: if she wasn't out of the state by a certain date she would be killed.

On that appointed day, the mob returned and demanded to know why she had not left the state. She faced them and she demanded that they come in and see what they had done to her son. The mob came in and gathered themselves around Alma's bedside and witnessed their grizzly deeds. They left without doing her any harm.

Once Alma was healed, she wanted to leave the state but couldn't. Courageously she went to the captain of the mob and demanded her horses. He told her she could have them for five dollars. Amanda told him she had no money and couldn't pay. "I did not fear," Amanda said, "for I had the Lord's promise." She walked out in the yard and retrieved her horse, then she retrieved her other horse. No one stopped her and she was soon back at Haun's Mill with her friends and son. They were soon on their way to Nauvoo.

Why does the Lord call the persecuted blessed and happy? Amanda concludes her account with this testimony:

"The Lord had kept his word: The soul that on Jesus who hath leaned for succor, had not been forgotten even in the hour of the massacre.

In this same year of 1838, my great great grandfather Warren Smith and his dear sweet wife, Lydia Alexander with their two children (one who became my great grandfather, Benjamin Mark Smith) settled in Farr West Missouri along with many other saints to escape the persecutions from the mobs in Ohio.

A mob of 150 men stormed on the unsuspecting villagers the same way they had done at Haun's Mill. They massacred many of the saints there, looting and burning their homes, and torturing their women and children. A horrible fear had swept over the whole community. This went on as their beloved Prophet Joseph Smith was locked away at Richmond jail. George Lucas had come earlier

and had taken away all their guns and ammunition so they had no way to defend themselves. This massacre happened in the cold winter, and the saints had to leave their homes and cross Missouri as they headed for Illinois.

They were told to leave the state because Governor Boggs of Missouri gave an extermination notice to exterminate the Saints. On they trudged across the state of Missouri in the cold snow and freezing weather. They had very little of clothes and shoes to keep them warm.

Through all of these terrible persecutions, they raised their voices to God in prayer for help. The Lord did strengthen them and help them to know that better things were ahead. They spent many days and nights trudging in the cold and snowy weather and many of them got sick from exposure to the cold and the dreaded disease malaria. This happened to our beloved Grandmother Lydia. She died as they reached the Mississippi river of exposure to the cold.

Lydia and the six hundred other Saints who died were all buried in an open grave by the Mississippi river. Lydia said these words before she died, "I am so thankful I had the Gospel of Jesus Christ, so I could hand it down to my posterity." She surely did for her 5 year old son, Benjamin Mark Smith, our great grandfather testified of its truth. His daughter Lydia testified of its truth to me. And now I testify to all of you who read this story, if you will embrace this glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ. We can all be together in heaven and Jesus Christ will be our King!

The Saints crossed the river to Quincy Illinois along with 5 year old motherless Benjamin and his father, Warren Smith. It was here the Saints were welcomed with open arms. The kind people there gave them food and clothes and kept them warm. When the Saints were able and in better conditions, they traveled on to Nauvoo, thanking the wonderful people for giving them their hearts and their love. When they arrived in Nauvoo, they found a place overgrown with weeds. But as they put their shoulder to the wheel it was soon "Nauvoo the Beautiful". Soon a glorious temple would be built. Some of your ancestors helped build it, and it was glorious.

It was at Nauvoo where our grandfather Warren met and fell in love with sweet Amanda Barnes Smith, who had so much trouble at Haun's Mill. They were married and sealed in the red brick store house. Now little 5 year old Benjamin and his sister had a new mother, lovely Amanda and also a brother, Alma.

For several years the Saints were happy in Nauvoo but the mobs killed their Prophet Joseph in the Carthage Jail and persecuted the saints again. The saints were driven out of their homes again and crossed many miles to come to the Salt Lake valley. Many of them came in the Warren Smith Company. (Amanda's two husbands were both named Warren Smith)

In later years when Benjamin grew up, he married a lovely lady, Elizabeth Agnes Wood. (sister to Dallin H. Oaks' great great grandmother Sarah Ann Wood.) One of his daughters he named Amanda after his stepmother, and another after his real mother, Lydia. (My sweet angel grandmother.)

So my dear loved ones who read this story: Don't run from the crosses you are called to bear for His sake. For as you carry them valiantly, He will run to you and to your aid, and thereby you will come to know Him- Our Savior Jesus Christ.

by Connie Jill Rigby