

Pioneers, O Pioneers!
Joseph Herrin (05-05-09)



I have been blessed to see many sights along the path of this cross country trek the Lord has sent me forth upon. While I was in Wyoming I began to hear of a historic site that drew my attention, and I hoped I would get to see it.

Independence Rock was so named by William Sublette who held an Independence Day (July 4th) celebration there in 1830 as he led the first wagon train of some 80 pioneers on the epic journey across America. The Oregon Trail, California Trail and Mormon Trail all passed by this giant landmark that arose from the high plains of Wyoming.

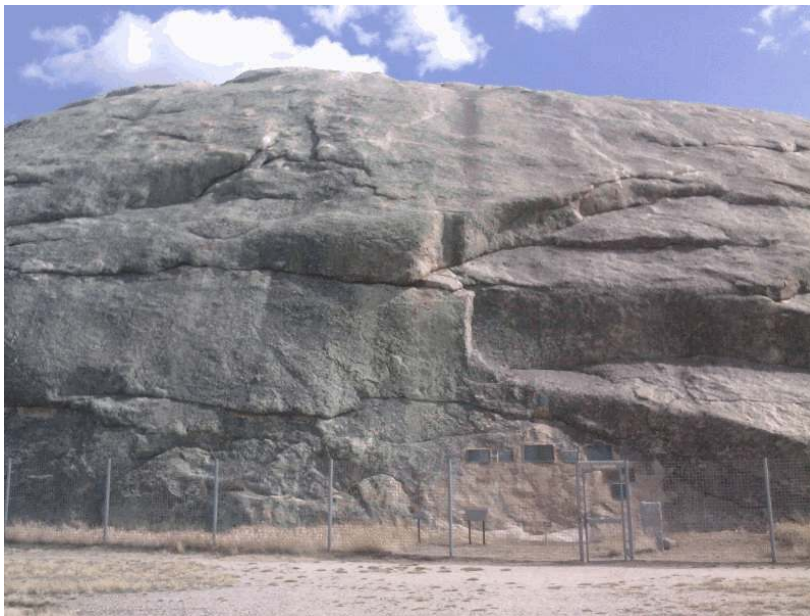
The Oregon Trail began at the Missouri River and ended at the Willamette River, a distance of 2,170 miles. Wagon trains of pioneers would try to reach this landmark by the 4th of July in order to assure that they could make it through the distant mountain passes before the snows began. Over 500,000 pioneers camped in the shadow of Independence Rock sometime along their journey.

It was Father Peter DeSmet who gave it the nickname "The Register of the Desert" in 1840. Many pioneers carved their names into the rock surface, and others painted their names on the rock with axle grease. Some of the carved names are still visible. Among them are "M.K. Hugh, 1824," "Hanna Snow,

1844," "Milo Ayer, age 29, 1849," and "V.D. Moody, July 24, 1849."

The Lord marvelously ordered my steps where I passed right by this monument. I had been wrestling with my GPS unit that day, and was not satisfied with the path it had chosen for me. I made some route changes on the fly without consulting a map, simply choosing to head in the general direction that I knew must take me to my destination in Arizona, and I ended up driving down Hwy. 220 where I was very blessed to see a roadside park that told me I had arrived at the site I was hoping to visit.

I took the picture above, as well as many others at this site. I sensed that the Lord had directed me to this monument to speak something to me. Below is a picture of the rock face of the monument where numerous pioneer names can still be read. It is fenced off to protect it against vandalism.



Turning around, one can see the following scene of the high plains of Wyoming.



As I stood looking over the grassy plains I could imagine a scene of covered wagons, livestock, and men, women and children. I wondered at the spirit of a people who would venture forth on a trek of thousands of miles to go to a land that they knew little about. They faced many perils along the way, having to cross rivers and mountains. They left behind all the conveniences and security of civilization. They left homes and families, and whatever their motive in doing so, they must have had some courage.

As I looked over this plain and envisioned the nearly half a million who made the trek I was reminded of Abraham and the journey he made.

Genesis 12:1-4

Now Yahweh said to Abram, "Go forth from your country, and from your relatives and from your father's house, to the land which I will show you; And I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing..." So Abram went forth as Yahweh had spoken to him...

The Scriptures speak of Abraham as the Father of faith. In this we can see that there must be a pioneering spirit present in all who would be found pleasing to the Father. We must all be willing to step out into the unknown at the

direction of Yahweh. We cannot refuse due to fear, or love of the world and the things in it. We must be willing to face the unknown and to entrust our lives into the hands of the God who has commanded us to venture forth.

Sometimes we picture the saints of renown as being cut from a different material than ourselves. We think that they must have been exceedingly bold and courageous individuals, fearless and raring for a fight. Yet this is far from the truth and such thoughts actually tend to discourage men and women today from walking in similar paths.

One need only read of Abraham's actions in asking Sarah to tell foreigners that she was his sister, to understand the fears that were resident within him. He even allowed his wife to be taken into the household of another man on two occasions because he was fearful of confessing that she was his wife, for she was beautiful. Abraham was no man with nerves of steel. He had to overcome his fears in order to obey Yahweh, even as we must do today.

We can examine the lives of other men such as Joshua, David, Moses and Elijah, and it is evident that they too had feet of clay. Yahweh told Joshua over and over to "Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid. Do not be dismayed." Such words would be unnecessary if there was no fear present in him.

David lamented over and over in the psalms that he was being crushed in soul and beset by enemies. He cried out for Yahweh to rescue him, and to not delay lest his soul should be overwhelmed. Elijah after calling down fire from heaven and slaying the priests of Baal, was then put to flight by the threats of Jezebel and despaired of his life. The Scriptures declare:

James 5:17

Elijah was a man with a nature like ours...

Each of these men in his own way was a pioneer. They all did exploits in the name of Yahweh. They were not supermen. They were all beset with weaknesses. Moses was afraid to go and speak to Pharaoh. He protested greatly that no one would listen to him and that he had no skill in speech. It is such people that Yahweh will call forth in this hour to set forth on paths that the majority of mankind would eschew.

Christ has promised all of His disciples that they would face difficulties, rejection, persecution, and many enemies. You would think that with such a

calling ahead of them that He would choose the mighty of the earth. Yet He has done nothing of the sort.

I Corinthians 1:26-29

For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, and the base things of the world and the despised, God has chosen, the things that are not, that He might nullify the things that are, that no man should boast before God.

God chooses weak things that He might show Himself strong in us. What a marvelous truth this is! We need not be wise, strong, or noble. We need only trust in the One who is in us who excels in all things. God has all wisdom, all strength and all virtue. He will powerfully reveal Himself in all who will answer His call to go where He sends, and to do as He commands.

This is a marvelous truth. We need not look to our abilities, for where we are weak, He is strong.

II Corinthians 12:9-10

Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

Do you want to see the power of Christ manifested in your life? Simply follow Him into impossible places. He has obligated Himself to manifest Himself in and through us when we do so.

Yahweh will call forth many pioneers in the days just ahead. Many will hear the call to leave father and mother, brothers and sisters, spouse and children. Many will hear the Spirit directing them to entrust their entire lives into His hands. They will be called to look to the Lord for their daily food, for their shelter, for their protection. As they obey the Lord they will find that He is present with them. They will be able to say with David;

Psalms 23:4-6

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil; for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. You prepare

a table before me in the presence of my enemies... Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of Yahweh forever.

God has not called the great of the earth. He wants to show Himself strong through vessels of weakness. All He asks of His sons and daughters is that they follow wherever He leads. If we refuse to go forth then He takes no delight in us.

Hebrews 10:38-39

My righteous one shall live by faith; and if he shrinks back, My soul has no pleasure in him. But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul.

Faith is what is required of all of God's pioneers. We need only trust the One who has called us, believing that He is faithful. We must believe that if He directs us to a certain path that He will walk it with us. He will never leave us or forsake us. Nothing can ever separate us from His love.

Will not His eye be steadily upon such weak vessels that follow Him out of a desire to be pleasing to Him. I tell you, He will move heaven and earth on behalf of such ones. Oh, to dwell in the secret place of the Most High! We enter in by faith, and we remain by obedience.

Walt Whitman once wrote a poem about pioneers. I have included a portion of it below.

Pioneers, O Pioneers

Come my tan-faced children,

Follow well in order, get your weapons ready,

Have you your pistols? Have you your sharp-edged axes?

Pioneers! O pioneers!

For we cannot tarry here,

We must march my darlings, we must bear the brunt of danger,

We the youthful sinewy races, all the rest on us depend,

Pioneers! O pioneers!...

Have the elder races halted?

Do they droop and end their lesson, wearied over there beyond the seas?

We take up the task eternal, and the burden and the lesson,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

All the past we leave behind,
We debouch upon a newer mightier world, varied world,
Fresh and strong the world we seize, world of labor and the march,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

We detachments steady throwing,
Down the edges, through the passes, up the mountains steep,
Conquering, holding, daring, venturing as we go the unknown ways,
Pioneers! O pioneers!...

On and on the compact ranks,
With accessions ever waiting, with the places of the dead quickly fill'd,
Through the battle, through defeat, moving yet and never stopping,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

O to die advancing on!
Are there some of us to droop and die? Has the hour come?
Then upon the march we fittest die, soon and sure the gap is fill'd.
Pioneers! O pioneers!...

Not for delectations sweet,
Not the cushion and the slipper, not the peaceful and the studious,
Not the riches safe and palling, not for us the tame enjoyment,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

Do the feasters gluttonous feast?
Do the corpulent sleepers sleep? Have they lock'd and bolted doors?
Still be ours the diet hard, and the blanket on the ground,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

The New Testament is filled with admonitions to don a pioneering spirit.

Hebrews 11:8-40

By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise;

for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God. By faith even Sarah herself received ability to conceive, even beyond the proper time of life, since she considered Him faithful who had promised... All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own. And indeed if they had been thinking of that country from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them...

And what more shall I say? For time will fail me if I tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets, who by faith conquered kingdoms, performed acts of righteousness, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. Women received back their dead by resurrection; and others were tortured, not accepting their release, in order that they might obtain a better resurrection; and others experienced mockings and scourgings, yes, also chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated (men of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground. And all these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised, because God had provided something better for us, so that apart from us they should not be made perfect.

Yes, there are pioneers of faith all throughout the Scriptures. Yet, God is not finished. He has something even better in store for those of this present hour. It is this generation that will fill up the sum and make complete the extraordinary works of all who have come before.

Yahweh does not need great souls to accomplish the greater works than Christ performed. He only needs people of faith and obedience. He will supply the power, and the wisdom, and the grace that all creation might know that it is He who has showed Himself strong in and through such weak vessels.

Pioneers, O Pioneers, hear the call of the Spirit in this hour. Yahweh will surely go before you.