

EPISODE 32 • PART I



Dr. Kenneth L. Alford

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- Hank Smith: 00:00:01 Welcome to followHIM, a weekly podcast dedicated to helping individuals and families with their Come Follow Me study. I'm Hank Smith.
- John Bytheway: 00:00:09 And I'm John Bytheway.
- Hank Smith: 00:00:10 We love to learn.
- John Bytheway: 00:00:11 We love to laugh.
- Hank Smith: 00:00:13 We want to learn and laugh with you.
- John Bytheway: 00:00:15 As together, we followHIM.
- Hank Smith: 00:00:18 Hello, my friends. Welcome to followHIM. I am your host, Hank Smith. I am here with my illustrious co-host, John Bytheway. Hello, John. Welcome.
- John Bytheway: 00:00:30 Hank has a different adjective for me each time. I gave Hank at the Saurus once. So not only was it terrible, it was terrible.
- Hank Smith: 00:00:38 Yes. I had to go get a new one. Hey, we want to remind everybody to come find us on Facebook and Instagram. We've got some extras on there John and I are doing. We also, for those of you who are listening, there is a YouTube version. If you'd rather watch us, you can also get show notes and transcripts at followhim.co, followhim.co. And of course, we'd love for you to rate and review the podcast. That really helps us out. So John, another week and another expert in church history. So tell us who we have here.
- John Bytheway: 00:01:16 It's great. I'm so delighted to be here. This thing has changed my doctrine and covenants. I thought I'd read it before, but it's just a blessing for us to be here and to have Dr. Kenneth L. Alford here. Let me read what I've got here. After serving almost 30 years on active duty in the United States Army, brother Alford retired as a colonel in 2008. While on active military duty, Ken served in numerous

assignments, including the Pentagon, eight years teaching computer science and information systems engineering at the US Military Academy at West Point, and four years as a professor of behavioral science and department chair at the National Defense University in Washington, DC.

- John Bytheway: 00:02:03 After serving in the England Bristol Mission with my sister-in-law, he earned a bachelor of arts degree in political science from Brigham Young University, a master of arts in international relations from the University of Southern California, a master of computer science from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and a PhD in computer science from George Mason University. He has published and presented on a wide variety of subjects during his career. And Ken and his wife, Sherilee, have four children and 18 grandchildren. And we're so happy to welcome you today. Thanks for being with us today.
- Dr. Ken Alford: 00:02:39 Thanks. I should probably clarify that your sister-in-law and I were in the same mission, but we're not companions. That was-
- John Bytheway: 00:02:48 Yeah, that sounded kind of funny.
- Dr. Ken Alford: 00:02:49 Just want to be really clear on that.
- John Bytheway: 00:02:52 And Linda was not my sister-in-law at the time either. Happily, she came home, married my brother. So we found we had that connection, which is great. So now is this accurate four children, 18 grandchildren. That number seems to change with almost everybody we bring on.
- Dr. Ken Alford: 00:03:09 That's the accurate number. You can see the group behind me, got a family photo. They are from a family reunion and heading for another family reunion this summer.
- Hank Smith: 00:03:20 John, I've known Ken for, oh, golly, it's been 10 years now, ever since I came on to campus at BYU. And he has been honestly, always so kind to newcomers. I don't know why that is, Ken. Maybe it's just a natural thing or maybe someone did it to you a long time ago, but you were, well, I stepped foot on campus and you came over to say hi and meet me and find out who I was. And then we found out that we had mutual family with my sister-in-law, Lisa, I think is your cousin. And we just connected there. Is that just something you've always done?

Dr. Ken Alford: 00:03:55 When you're in the army, you're always the new guy. My wife and I moved our family, I don't know, 15 or more times in a 30 year career. And so you're always showing up as the new guy. Our BYU faculty is actually the fifth faculty that I've been a part of. So even academically, you're always the new guy. So I have an empathy, I think, for being the new guy, because I've been the new guy so many times.

Hank Smith: 00:04:22 Nice. Yeah. I remember first day, I was like, "Oh, I have a friend. I have a friend." It makes a difference. You feel like us as adults, we don't worry about that sort of thing, but no, we do. And it feels good. So before I let this happen, I just want to make our listeners aware that Ken is not only a church history and doctrine expert, he's also a war history expert and we have a war history lover in our co-host, John Bytheway. So they may go off on some tangents at times talking about World War II. John, we haven't talked about your dad very much. Where did he serve?

John Bytheway: 00:05:05 My dad enlisted in the Navy two days before his 18th birthday in 1944. He went to camp Farragut in Idaho to learn how to march in straight lines and other important stuff. And then he got on a train to San Francisco, a bus to San Francisco Bay and boarded the USS Saratoga (CV-3), the largest carrier in the fleet at the time. And saw action at Iwo Jima. Their ship was attacked by kamikazes. He stated his post. He was on a quad 40 anti-aircraft gun and a 123 killed, 196 wounded that day, February 23rd, 1945, was not a member of the church, but had some buddies that dragged him off his bunk and said, "You're coming to church with us." And when he got home, he thought I should date some, as he put it, some LDS girls. And one of those ended up being my mom.

John Bytheway: 00:06:01 So it's a really interesting story how even in those kinds of times, the Lord can intervene and make wonderful things happen even in difficult, very difficult times. So I could go on all day, but that's the one paragraph nutshell. So World War II from '44 to '46 in the Pacific on the Saratoga. Well, I wanted to ask maybe brother Alford about his, was the military something you always wanted to do? Was it something that helped you get to college? How did that all come about?

Dr. Ken Alford: 00:06:37 My father was a reserve officer. I was born when just before dad graduated from BYU. And then when I was just a couple of weeks old, we moved to Harlingen, Texas. He went to navigator school training down there. I learned to walk while he was at nav school training. And then we got stationed in Alaska when I was little, it was a territory then. So I'll betray my age. My sister's birth certificate says Territory of Alaska. That's when he was on active duty. Dad used to fly with a B-50 along the Bering Strait, taking in air samples from the Soviet Union proving that they were doing nuclear tests. And then we moved back and we moved to, dad got out of the service, went into the reserves. We moved to Ogden, but my whole growing up, dad was in the reserves. So he would disappear summers and Christmases going over to Vietnam and various places.

Dr. Ken Alford: 00:07:35 And so military was just kind of a thing. And then I went to high school at Ben Lomond High School in Ogden, Utah. And Ogden, Utah, was one of two cities in the entire nation. The other was Walla Walla, Washington. And if you went to high school in Walla Walla, Washington, or Ogden, Utah, you took ROTC as a sophomore. It wasn't optional. If you were a male, you took ROTC. And so I took ROTC and I liked it and had basic military familiarization from my dad. So I've continued through high school, ROTC was the battalion commander there and then applied for a scholarship for ROTC at college. And got the scholarship, went to BYU on Army ROTC Scholarship and then graduated into the army. And just every single time we asked for something, the army just said, "Okay." It was just amazing.

Dr. Ken Alford: 00:08:34 And so anything you could do in the civilian world, you can do in the army. And so I wanted to be a professor and they let me be a professor a couple of times and sent me to school and did all kinds of things. And I turned around, 30 years almost had passed and then we got out, the army was very good to my family. The saying within the army is the Lord knows where he wants your family to be. And then he whispers to the army to send you there. And that seemed to be the case with our family as we moved just all over the place. And it was a great experience. Although if you ask our children where they're from, they just look at you, not quite sure how to answer that. Although most of them, I think would say probably Virginia, because we had three tours in Virginia.

- Hank Smith: 00:09:26 All right. Well, let's jump into our lesson this week, Ken. We're studying sections 85, 86 and 87, which seemed to me, because of your help, which seems to me to be standalone sections, they don't really run together like some of the others we've seen right in a row. Let's back up as far as you want and tell our listeners what they probably should know before heading into section 85.
- Dr. Ken Alford: 00:09:57 With section 85, you have to remember at this time that, boy, poor Joseph Smith, he's trying to run the church with two church centers, if you like, for lack of a better description. And the internet is still down in 1831, '32. It's going to be down for another 150 years. And so it's really tough. I mean, can you imagine trying to communicate and organize and on top of this, you're trying to organize and run the law of consecration in the land of Zion in Missouri. And so he's deputized basically some folks and given them authority, David Whitmer and others, who's the president of the church in Missouri. And he's, Joseph has traveled out to Missouri and they're just trying to build the church in Ohio, they're trying to build the church in Missouri and they're having challenges in both places, to be quite frank. And boy, it's got to be frustrating to be Joseph because he's only got at this stage in church history, he's got two bishops, but fortunately, he has two bishops now. He started with none.
- Dr. Ken Alford: 00:11:16 And in Missouri, what's happened is when Joseph went out, they take W. W. Phelps, William Wine Phelps, and just a little bit about W. W. Phelps. He's one of those guys you hear his name a lot. He's from New Jersey. He actually wanted to run for Lieutenant Governor of New York at one point. It's kind of fun his connection to the church. He buys a Book of Mormon. Talk about interesting timing, he buys his copy of the Book of Mormon. On the 9th of April, as I recall, like three days after the church has organized. So the church is three days old, he buys a copy of the Book of Mormon. He's reading it. He doesn't meet Joseph though, as I recall until, oh goodness, it's almost Christmas in 1830. And then he waits six more months before he's baptized. And he's baptized as I recall in June of 1831. And then he is called to go out to Missouri.
- Dr. Ken Alford: 00:12:16 And he goes out to Missouri. To make a long story short, they buy a press. And it's set up in independence. And then Joseph is told by the Lord to send Oliver Cowdery and

John Whitmer with the copy of what's called the Book of Commandments and Revelations. And this is a record kind of a master copy of the revelations Joseph has been receiving. They take that out to Missouri and W. W. Phelps very painstakingly began setting that type in a little teeny book. It's only about this big and it's called the Book of Commandments because if we go clear back to section one at the beginning of the Come, Follow Me year, the Lord in those initial verses says, this is my preface. And he names it the Book of Commandments. So W. W. Phelps is working on that and he's publishing that.

Dr. Ken Alford: 00:13:09 And so he's out there in Missouri. Joseph is back in Kirtland. Now section 85 is written down. It's actually a letter. It's an excerpt of a letter from Joseph Smith to W. W. Phelps. Now we're presuming that W. W. Phelps must've written a letter first. And what's happened is right before this, this is the end of November, 1832, and Joseph has just come back from a mission up into Southern Canada and up into Upstate New York. And while he's gone, his mail is stacking up. That happens when you don't have email. And so he's waiting through all of his mail and he must've come across a letter from W. W. Phelps. Now that letter has been long lost. Hopefully they'll find it someday, but currently, that letter is lost. We can presume what the letter says based on Joseph's response.

Dr. Ken Alford: 00:14:05 And he writes back to W. W. Phelps and gives him some counsel and advice on church members in Missouri and also how the law of consecration is to be run and what records are to be kept and those kinds of things. And in this letter, Joseph says this, he says, while I dictate this letter, I fancy to myself that you are saying or thinking something similar to these words. So he puts a question into W. W. Phelps' mouth, and it says, what shall become of those who are saying to come up on the Zion, so those people that are coming to Missouri in order to keep the commandments of God and yet receive not their inheritance by consecration, by order of deed from the Bishop agreeably to law? And then he says, so I've assumed you've asked that question W. W. and now I will proceed to answer your question.

Dr. Ken Alford: 00:14:59 And so the letter, and by the way, you can find the text of the entire letter if any listeners are interested, just go to the Joseph Smith Papers website, it's josephsmithpapers.org. And you can actually find under the Revelations the full

text, the original letter of Joseph. And you can see the parts that were cut out that actually become section 85.

- Dr. Ken Alford: 00:15:21 And so in there then, there's a fun reference in verse six, where Joseph talks about, he says, "Yea, thus saith the still small voice, which whispereth through and pierceth all things." I just think that's a great description. Just a fun description of the Holy Ghost, because when the Holy Ghost speaks to you, it just kind of pierces you. It's still and small, but the Holy Ghost has this great ability to just get your attention. And then Joseph goes on and says in the letters, "And oftentimes, it makes my bones to quake while it maketh manifest." So that when I feel the spirit, it just kind of makes me shake all over. It's just so exciting that it's happening.
- Dr. Ken Alford: 00:16:13 And at this time, the law of consecration in Missouri is being organized, if you like, by the first bishop in the church, that's Edward Partridge, who was a hatter by the way. And he made hats for a living prior to becoming a bishop. And so he's out there. And Edward Partridge, for a while, he's the only bishop in the church. And now he's been charged with running the law of consecration. If you go back and remember section 51, he gets instructions from the Lord on how to do that. And there's various sections that you've talked about in previous episodes that talk about the law of consecration and things, but Edward Partridge, this is a good man. The Lord says, "This is a man in whom there is no guile." He just doesn't have a deceitful bone in his body. And the Lord compares him to Nathaniel, one of his ancient apostles.
- Dr. Ken Alford: 00:17:14 And so, but Edward Partridge isn't perfect, he's like the rest of us. And Edward Partridge, quite frankly, comes in and out of favor, if you like, with Joseph, because the Lord says earlier, I'm going to paraphrase here, but basically, the Lord says, "When it comes to the law of consecration, it's my way or the highway, you have to do it my way or the law just won't work." And as they're trying to work through some of the problems in Missouri, Edward Partridge is maybe being just a little creative and trying to figure some of these things out, and plus they have people that won't join the law, and there's just lots of challenges, they're receiving persecution.

Dr. Ken Alford: 00:17:53 But at this time in November of 1832, Joseph considers from what he knows that Edward Partridge needs to probably toe the line a little bit more when it comes to the law of consecration. And he does, by the way, there's several things in later revelations and also other writings of Joseph where Edward Partridge, he's just such a great guy. But he needs a little course correction right here. And so Joseph offers that course correction in this letter that is excerpt in section 85. And what he says is, in verse seven, the letter says, and it shall come to pass that I, the Lord, God, will send one mighty and strong.

Dr. Ken Alford: 00:18:39 And basically, what he's telling me Bishop Partridge is, Bishop, I've called you to do this, you need to do it, you need to rely on the spirit, but you need to follow the guidelines and exercise and execute the law of consecration as it's been laid out. And if you don't do that, I will send someone mighty and strong who will help you out. And then he goes on and says, while that man who was called of God and appointed, so Bishop Partridge, that put forth his hand to steady the Ark of God.

Dr. Ken Alford: 00:19:11 And that, of course, is a reference to poor Uzzah back in 1 Chronicles, what? Chapter 13, verses nine and 10. This is a guy that's following the Ark of the Covenant, Israel's on the move. And the ark, it's on a wagon that's apparently a little bit rickety and I don't know, they hit a bump or something happens and the ark shifts. And so Uzzah puts out his hand to steady the ark and keep it on the wagon. Well, that's verboten, you're not allowed to touch the ark unless you're the proper cast of Levites and in the right order and all those other rules that are found in the Old Testament. But Uzzah takes it upon himself. And basically what Uzzah says is, God isn't capable of protecting the Ark of the Covenant, I'm going to have to do it for him. And so I'm going to override the rule and I'm going to put my hand out and steady the Ark. Uzzah touches the ark and he's killed. And so you don't steady the ark. And that's kind of a, we've got that metaphor in the church of not steadying the ark.

Hank Smith: 00:20:17 I was going to say, Ken, that's become kind of, I've heard of that at least in my church experience, don't steady the ark.

Dr. Ken Alford: 00:20:27 And that's where it comes. It's from that 1 Chronicles story. In fact, David McKay made this statement. I like this. He said, "It's a little dangerous for us to go out of our own

sphere and try to unauthoritatively, and that's the key, to unauthoritatively direct the efforts of a brother, or I would add a sister, see how quickly those who attempt unauthoritatively to steady the ark die spiritually." Now, when I was growing, I think each generation, they play favorites just maybe a little bit. And one of our favorites was Neal A. Maxwell. And elder Maxwell said it this way, he just said, "Prophets need tutoring as we all do." Okay. But then I love this line. He says, "However, this is something the Lord seems perfectly quite able to manage without requiring a host of helpers." And isn't that a great line? None of us are perfect, not even the prophets and apostles, but it's not our position to steady the ark.

Dr. Ken Alford: 00:21:34 And so the statement in that section, today, we look at it, we go, okay, Bishop Partridge got that counsel, he repented of whatever he was not quite doing right and absolutely did a great job. But I've got to tell you, in the first 75 years of the church's history, and especially around the period of the Manifesto into the period of Utah's early statehood, that phrase from verse seven, one mighty and strong, really became kind of a touchstone as different groups left the church for various reasons, often it was because of plural marriage. When the keys to plural marriage were turned off, there were some groups that didn't agree with that and they left the church and some of them used that phrase, one mighty and strong, to say that that was their leader of their break-off group and so much so that interestingly, this isn't known much today, but the Deseret News, which is owned by the church in the 11 November issue in 1905.

Dr. Ken Alford: 00:22:52 So the church is just 75 years old, but in November of 1905, the First Presidency published a very long for a newspaper, a very long explanation about that phrase, one mighty and strong. And they felt so strongly about it that they republishes it almost two years later in the October issue of the Improvement Era in 1907. And here's what the First Presidency had to say about that phrase, one mighty and strong, "Perhaps no other passage in the revelations of the Lord in this dispensation has given rise to so much speculation as this one."

Dr. Ken Alford: 00:23:34 Well, I mean, in the 115 years that have passed since then, that's calmed down a little bit, but that phrase, one mighty and strong, was a major concern and cause of speculation because people were saying, "Well, who is that?" And then

various groups were saying, "Well, it's our guy." But in that publication that the church put out, they very painstakingly, and again, it's available, you can find it on the internet if you're looking for it, but very painstakingly, they just lay out and say, this is talking about Bishop Partridge, he repented, one mighty and strong wasn't needed. The Lord didn't have to execute that second part of that clause.

- Dr. Ken Alford: 00:24:24 But I just find it interesting that twice this was of such a concern at the time as they're trying to turn that key off for plural marriage with the Manifesto and then what some call the Second Manifesto just after the turn of the century that it's a cause of concern, and just an interesting note from section 85 just something that we don't, as we read it today, we don't have that same visceral reaction to that phrase in verse seven.
- Hank Smith: 00:24:57 Yeah, I would. That's not one I would have said, oh, I remember that phrase coming up in 1905.
- Dr. Ken Alford: 00:25:03 You don't remember that phrase.
- Hank Smith: 00:25:07 We don't want to offend any of our listeners, but we do want to help people understand what steady the ark might look like in 2021, where we go to, sometimes we want to go offer the bishop our unsolicited counsel, is that?
- Dr. Ken Alford: 00:25:22 Or I had a dream.
- Hank Smith: 00:25:24 Yeah. Yeah. The Lord told me to tell you this. And I remember responding, if the Lord can't get through to me, he usually tells my wife.
- John Bytheway: 00:25:36 I have learned great respect for the keys. And as a bishop, I had a former area authority teaching Gospel Doctrine in our ward. And whenever I happened to have the chance to go to Gospel Doctrine, he was so respectful of the keys he always asked me, bishop, I want you to have the last word today in Gospel Doctrine. And I also have learned when I'm going to do a fireside, I find the person with the keys. And I say, this is exactly what I'm planning to talk about. Is that okay? And if you like to make any closing comments, of course, I'd welcome, because I understand that idea and I've learned that maybe things don't happen the way we think, but I have respect for the keys. And I think I showed that when I was given a chance to give them my sustaining

vote. So I always try to be careful of that. I don't know, that's my two cents.

Hank Smith: 00:26:36

I like it.

Dr. Ken Alford: 00:26:38

Yeah. Priesthood keys are so important. And if you look at it, there's very few actual key holders in the church. It's a very small number of key holders. And we share, I teach Religion 225 at Brigham Young University, it's foundations of the restoration. And in one of our early lessons, we share some basic principles with the students regarding revelation and just how the process works because the Lord is so organized and so orderly and things function so well if you do it according to, section 52 talks about his pattern, but one of the principles we teach them is what we call the law of stewardship or the principle of stewardship. And basically, it's that we can each receive an individual revelation and absolutely should as president Nelson continually challenges us to do and to prepare and to recognize how we hear him, but at the same time, that revelation that we receive has boundaries.

Dr. Ken Alford: 00:27:50

And our stewardship, if we are receiving revelation for those who are outside of our stewardship, especially those who hold priesthood keys, then you can take it to the bank that that revelation probably isn't coming from the source where you hope it is coming from. It's kind of like what happened in the early days of the church.

Dr. Ken Alford: 00:28:10

I know you discussed this in an earlier episode about Hiram Page and his seer stone, because Hiram Page, I think, was trying to do the right thing. He'd been told we can all receive revelation, the heavens are open. And so he goes out, takes a seer stone, which is a common thing to have at the time and asked for revelation. And he receives it. He just unfortunately receives it from the wrong source because it's early and they're still learning as well. But I don't see that Hiram Page was trying to mislead the church. He was just misled and deceived himself. But if he had understood that stewardship principle, and if you look in the early sections, especially of the doctrine and covenants, boy, it's over and over and over. In section one, it's just multiple times.

Dr. Ken Alford: 00:29:03

And section 21, right while the church is being organized and basically just to paraphrase, it says, Joseph is the guy.

That's rule one. And rule two is, see rule one, Joseph is the guy. And so as long as we keep that in mind and today, it's President Russell M. Nelson. And if we keep that in mind, we'll recognize that the Lord is never going to tell brother Alford what President Nelson needs to tell the church. That's just not going to happen. It's just not going happen.

- Dr. Ken Alford: 00:29:41 I remember I taught early morning seminary for several years in several states as we moved around. And in one of my classes in Virginia, one of my really, really great seminary students came up to me after class, he hung around and he was about to miss the bus to go to high school, but he said, "Brother Alford, I need to tell you, how do I get in touch with the prophet?" It was President Hinckley at the time. He said, "How do I get in touch with the prophet because I have a message from God for him? I received it last night while I was dreaming. And I know it's a message. I need to tell him that he needs to change something." And so I didn't call it the principle of stewardship at the time, but I sat down and explained how things worked and that actually, no, that's not the way it works.
- Dr. Ken Alford: 00:30:31 The other thing I tell my students is if you find yourself on the steps of the church office building with people with protests placards and they're shouting down the prophets in Quorum of the Twelve, you're in the wrong crowd, you need to leave. And it's just the way this works. Stewardship and revelation and keys, it's such a wonderful thing, but it can absolutely be misused or abused if we don't understand the Lord's process.
- Hank Smith: 00:31:00 And he's organized it for that specific reason, so we can know where this comes from. And I've seen it happen for me, Ken, I don't know if you've seen this, but I've seen it happen where men who hold the priesthood think that somehow because they hold the priesthood, they can direct the women of the church and no matter what position they're in. And that, again, is a matter of priesthood keys. You may hold the priesthood, but that doesn't give you any stewardship at all over the Young Women's president or the Relief Society president. You holding the priesthood, you're not the key holder, the bishop is.
- Dr. Ken Alford: 00:31:34 Section 121 defines that. It's two words, unrighteous dominion.

Hank Smith: 00:31:40 Yeah. I'm glad that steady the ark, that's such an interesting phrase that-

Dr. Ken Alford: 00:31:48 But interestingly, if you look at the Old Testament, does anybody else ever touch the ark recorded in the scriptures?

Hank Smith: 00:31:57 Not that, no.

Dr. Ken Alford: 00:31:59 Uzzah becomes the role model on what to do, but I think the message gets out, at least on that point, Israel has other problems as we still do today, but touching the ark doesn't ever seem to be a problem again. The Lord said X, Uzzah did Y, and he paid the consequences. So it's a great concept, steadying the ark, we just need to make sure we're supportive of church leaders and not trying to supplant them.

Hank Smith: 00:32:32 What do you call that, John, a sermon in a sentence that what you've called it before?

John Bytheway: 00:32:38 Yeah. I've noticed when I mark my scriptures, I usually mark phrases, not entire verses, and sometimes you'll see a sermon in a sentence. And that's one of those.

Hank Smith: 00:32:49 I'm going to look up a quote real quick. Do you guys remember who it's from? Somebody in conference, I think it was Elder Andersen said, "Don't be more interested in changing the church than changing yourself."

John Bytheway: 00:32:58 Well, it reminds me while you're looking that up of Alma to Corianton, you're worried about this, you marvel about this, you think this is unjust. And then at the end of his four chapters, he says, let not these things trouble you. Only let your sins trouble you. You're worried about the wrong things, son. Sometimes when I've read that steady ark, I've thought, just between us, gosh, that seems kind of harsh. He was just trying to help. But I guess that that was the commandment not to do that was well-known, right?

Dr. Ken Alford: 00:33:34 Uzzah had to know that they, the way they did rules back then and teaching back then, I mean, things were pretty clear cut with the Law of Moses. And so Uzzah must have known what he was doing, or I don't think the Lord would have exacted that penalty. Well, revelation is an interesting thing. It's a bit of a balancing act, isn't it?

Hank Smith: 00:33:58 Yeah.

Dr. Ken Alford: 00:34:00 You don't want to let it swing too far to the left or too far to the right. President Oaks tells a wonderful story. I may get some of the details wrong, but as I recall the story, a young lady comes up to him and is just so excited. And she says, "I'm dating or I've married this most wonderful person. And he's so spiritual. He prays about, when we go to the supermarket, he even prays about what kind of beans we should buy." And President Oaks said, "Oh, sister, basically, the Lord doesn't care what kind of beans you eat. Del Monte and Green Giant are both okay." And that there's a line of things you pray over.

Dr. Ken Alford: 00:34:49 I remember having one missionary acquaintance in my mission field that prayed over what tie he should wear every day. And quite frankly, it's, "Elder, you got a blue one and a black one, and they're both going to be okay." At the same time, sometimes I think we don't bring the Lord in on decisions that, oh, I think he's just waiting to help us out. And we have to, I think, sometimes initiate that conversation by asking, I've had students tell me that they didn't feel the need to pray about who they were marrying. And in my mind, if that's not when you pray over, I don't know what rises to the level of requiring assistance from the Holy Ghost. So, and each person is different. And I think about the things I prayed over when I was five and six and the things I pray over now. And to be real honest with you, they're very different lists. And so I think as we go through life, that that list changes and Heavenly Father understands that. And as we mature in the gospel, our prayers change.

Dr. Ken Alford: 00:36:12 But just a couple of, I guess, concluding thoughts on that is first how wonderful that it's available. Oh my gosh, how wonderful that it's available, the gift of the Holy Ghost, the Lord calls it an unspeakable gift. And that's just the best definition, I think, it's just an unspeakable gift. It can tell you all things. And it's our responsibility, I think, to figure out how the Holy Ghost can best help us and when we trouble him and when we don't, and there is some things that definitely no and some things definitely yes, and some things that are in the gray area. And if you're concerned about it, my advice is pray and ask the Lord for assistance on what's concerning you because the Lord has our best interest always at heart and he knows what our needs are,

as it says, before we even ask in the scriptures. And so revelation is just an interesting thing. It's easy to go off the rails over revelation questions. And so again, I think the Holy Ghost is the one that keeps us on the rails in this and just absolutely everything else.

- Hank Smith: 00:37:35 I think Joseph Smith in my mind is just a prime example of a key holder in that he would tell people what the revelation he was receiving by priesthood keys, but he always directed people, go to the Lord, ask him yourself if this is correct, if this is right, have your own experience. So as a priesthood, if I'm a priesthood holder that holds the keys to stewardship, the keys of the priesthood, I should have no fear of people going to the Lord themselves and getting a second witness of what I'm directing them to do. There shouldn't be any fear there or being offended that someone wants to go to the Lord for themselves because I already told them what to do. I love what you said. There's a delicate balance there. Well, I think, was that the same talk Elder Oaks said, you have two lines of revelation, you have your personal line to the Lord and you have your priesthood line to the Lord and you have access to both?
- John Bytheway: 00:38:35 So Edward Partridge was faithful to the end after this. And does that idea negate the idea of one mighty and strong coming along, making this prophecy kind of a conditional thing if Edward Partridge didn't do what he was supposed to?
- Dr. Ken Alford: 00:38:54 Well, that First Presidency publication twice from 1905 and 1907 addresses Edward Partridge in detail, it addresses his situation. And the First Presidency said this, they said, the man who was called and appointed of God to divide into the saints their inheritance, Edward Partridge, was at the time Joseph wrote. So this is in November 27th of 1832, at the time was out of order. That's the phrase the First Presidency used, neglecting his own duty and putting forth his hand to steady the ark, hence he was warned of the judgment of God. And the prediction was made about another one mighty and strong. Okay.
- Dr. Ken Alford: 00:39:37 But then it goes on to say that in the midst of these times, Edward Partridge acted a most noble and self-sacrificing part and bore many indignities with the greatest patience, he was taken to the public square of Independence, partly stripped of his clothing and that dobed with tar and

feathers amid the jeers of the mob. He neither complained nor murmured at this treatment, but bore it well with meekness and dignity. He was one of five others to offer himself as a ransom for the church. And he told the mob, he was willing to be scourged or killed if they would let the rest of the saints go. This is after the letter. I mean, he comes back.

Dr. Ken Alford: 00:40:21 And then the First Presidency, he continues further in that letter and says, who shall say that his repentance, his, Edward Partridge, his sacrifices, his sufferings and faithfulness did not procure for him a mitigation of the severe judgment decreed against him in the revelation contained in the 85th section of the Doctrine and Covenants? At any rate, the Lord said some three years later that he was well-pleased with Edward Partridge. And so Edward Partridge, in fact, after he is just brutalized by the mob there in front of the courthouse in Independence, which is just down the street from W. W. Phelps press, Edward Partridge never really completely recovers. And he dies. He dies, I believe about seven years later, as the church is entering into Nauvoo, he just never fully recovers, but he was willing to do that.

Dr. Ken Alford: 00:41:21 And so that statement about the one mighty and strong, the First Presidency, the gist of what they were saying is it became null and void. In the 1830s, that became null and void, we are not looking for one mighty and strong to come forward today to grab the scepter and save the church that Edward Partridge rose to the occasion, repented and the Lord accepted his repentance. And Edward Partridge was one of the truly good guys in this dispensation.

Hank Smith: 00:41:53 Yeah. Ken, you're doing something I love here, which is protecting the saints of the past, protecting their name, protecting their reputation. There's so many who want to focus on their weaknesses. If you wanted to, you could write a book on Edward Partridge and all the things he did wrong. And the book might be factually correct, but you would not be judging him, you would not be judging him correctly. He's a great.

Dr. Ken Alford: 00:42:22 You would miss the man. Just a quick story I love about Edward Partridge is the Lord reveals the law of consecration in section 42. There's those verses starting about verse 30 and then some later verses, but it's not a lot

of detail. And then Edward Partridge as bishop is given the instruction, comes from the Lord through Joseph to go up to Thompson, Ohio, when the Colesville Saints arrive and basically put the law into practice. He's a hatter, he can make those Colesville Saints hats, and they'll look really stylish, but he's not a lawyer, he's not a real estate agent.

Dr. Ken Alford: 00:43:04 And so I'd love it that he's willing to tell Joseph, Joseph, I need some instructions, how am I supposed to do this? What does it mean? And the Lord, I just love section 51, in the Book of Commandments, somebody wrote on it, don't publish or not to be published or something like that across the top of the page. And I'm so glad that they did publish it, the W. W. Phelps typecast that and put it into the Book of Commandments because the instructions that Edward Partridge receives enables him to begin executing the law. And he's... Yeah, I think Edward Partridge is just one of the real heroes from the early years of the church, I mean the first bishop called in almost two millennia. What a staggering responsibility.

Hank Smith: 00:44:02 And we can do the same thing with our leaders and our bishops. I mean, when our bishop is up there and we see, oh, he may be doing something we wouldn't say, or he's doing something we wouldn't do, we'd say, well, he wasn't seeking this position. He wasn't. Hopefully, I can run the ward soon. I have a wonderful bishop. He's in human resources. That's his employment. And he's doing things that he did not probably want or ever thought he would do, but he's doing them and it's not my place to correct him. I just think he's got a great soul and I'm amazed at all the sacrifice he offers.

John Bytheway: 00:44:48 One of the things I learned when I was bishop about steadying the ark was I learned that bishops know a lot of things that nobody else knows. And I just thought, like a couple of months, I was like, "I am never going to question again, because there's just other things that nobody else knows about what's going on that you're trying to navigate." And I just thought, I'm just going to support the keys because I know that there's things that I don't know. And I think I love that we can trust the Lord to communicate with his leaders.

Dr. Ken Alford: 00:45:29 I guess just one parting shot and the thought on section 85 is, yay for them writing these things down, yay for them

saving them. Today, I think we don't commit enough. Our conversations are on email and they disappear or our conversations are over the phone and they disappear, our conversations are like been on Zoom in the last year or so and they disappear and there's something to be said for permanence.

Dr. Ken Alford: 00:46:06 And if you look at the words of prophets and apostles and their counsel, there's frequent and repetitive counsel to keep journals, to keep, whether it's a gratitude journal or a daily journal or whatever it might be, but to record some of these things. And quite frankly, there have been times in my life when I'm really great at journal keeping. And there've been times in my life when I'm not really great at journal keeping. And being good at journal keeping, it's better. At this stage in life, it's so much fun to be able to go back and check something and go, "Oh, I had remembered that a little bit wrong in the years, but there it is recorded on the day it happened. And that's the way it was because I recorded it then."

Dr. Ken Alford: 00:46:50 And so I think maybe the fact this is not Joseph's only letter in the Doctrine and Covenants, there are actually letters. I mean, section 127, 128, there are letters, section 122, 121, 122, 123, there's lots of letters. And so I think there's something to be said for us, just remembering that we need to record much of our lives so that our children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren can benefit from that.

Dr. Ken Alford: 00:47:20 I just had the opportunity over the past year during the pandemic, one of the projects I took on was taking my mother and father's journals. Mom is turning 90 this year and dad just turned 91, and they've got 7,000 pages of journals that we've turned into PDF pages for all of their posterity. And it's so much fun to be able to just have that record. And I will confess it has spurred me to be more diligent in my record keeping. And so I would just give that as a, that's not one of the direct messages out of section 85, but I think it's an ancillary one that's just useful to remember.

John Bytheway: 00:48:01 Yeah. Let me mention a paragraph from the Come, Follow Me manual before we go forward. It says, the history described in verse one recorded the names of those who had received inheritances legally in Zion. However, this

history was more than just administrative. It was also a valuable record of the saints "manner of life, their faith, and works." That's in verse two. And then the Come, Follow Me manual says, "Are you keeping a personal history or journal? What could you record about your manner of life, faith and works that might be a blessing to future generations? How might this history be a blessing for you?" So I think that's exactly what you were saying, Ken. Thank you.

- Dr. Ken Alford: 00:48:42 Yeah.
- John Bytheway: 00:48:43 Let's go now to section 86. Can you give us some backstory and background of what's happening before we dive into the verses here?
- Dr. Ken Alford: 00:48:51 You bet. Section 86 actually follows section 85 that just by little more than a week, it's the 6th of December, 1832. And we don't know absolutely for certain, but there's enough little breadcrumbs and clues that lead folks to conclude that this section looks like it clearly comes out of Joseph's work on what we call today the Joseph Smith Translation, which the Doctrine and Covenants calls the New Translation, or simply the Translation. So just very briefly then, Joseph has Oliver Cowdery purchase a Phinney Cooperstown Bible as it's called today in 1828 Edition. And then there are various scribes and Joseph uses that. He calls it the main branch of his calling for a period. And it's the way that the Lord does a couple of things. First, he teaches Joseph additional things about the gospel. Joseph learns a great deal about gospel principles during that translation, he also receives numerous revelations. Oh my goodness. There are dozens of revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants that tie either directly, like section 76, or indirectly, like section 91 to the translation of the Joseph Smith Translation. This is one of those sections.
- Dr. Ken Alford: 00:50:15 And so what happens is they, they start doing the Old Testament. And then in section 45, Joseph's told, "Hey, you're asking great questions on some things, go do the New Testament." So they leave the Old Testament alone, go do the New Testament. Then when they finish that, they go back, pick up the Old Testament and then reach the Apocrypha in section 91. And that's another story for another day. But they have done. They have gone through the New Testament for the first time about a year before

this revelation is recorded. Now, interestingly, it looks like from the record that we have of Joseph's work on the Joseph Smith Translation that Joseph made no changes to Matthew 13 regarding the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares. The first time Joseph went through it, they just didn't make any changes.

Dr. Ken Alford: 00:51:04 And so what it looks like was happening here in December, 1832 is that Sidney Rigdon is once again with Joseph as scribe. By then this point, as they're reviewing the material, Sidney Rigdon is the main scribe, he's assigned that responsibility in section 35, but by this point, Frederick G. Williams is serving as Joseph's primary scribe as he's touching up and working on final edits of the Joseph Smith Translation. But for whatever reason, Sidney Rigdon comes in and is helping Joseph at this point. And we know that because it's in Sidney Rigdon's handwriting.

Dr. Ken Alford: 00:51:46 And what happens is it looks like Joseph just received additional guidance and inspiration about those verses in Matthew 13 in the King James Version. And Joseph receives this information. And what he learns from section 86 is that this is very much a parable of the last days. It has an application for the early apostles. And when the savior gives that parable, if you turn to Matthew 13, the apostles ask, because it's also after the Parable of the Sower, those two parables, Parable of the Sower and Parable of the Wheat and the Tares go together. They're in almost neighboring verses in Matthew 13. But the apostles don't understand either one. And they asked the Lord, please help us out, tell us what they mean. And so Jesus explains both of them to them.

Dr. Ken Alford: 00:52:42 But what we learn in section 86 is that through the years, there's been a major error creep in to the Bible as we have it today regarding the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares, because in the Bible, it says that the wheat and the tares are there and that what will happen is, in Matthew 13:30, it says, gather ye together. So go out and do the harvest, gather ye together. And in Matthew in the Bible, it says, first, the tares. Well, the Joseph Smith Translation and Doctrine Covenants 86 now absolutely turn that around. And what it says in Joseph Smith-Matthew is, first the wheat into my barn, or as it says in section 86, let the wheat and the tares grow together until the harvest is fully ripe, then you shall first gather out the wheat.

- Dr. Ken Alford: 00:53:45 Now think about the way the gospel is being shared with the world in these the latter days, are we going out and gathering wicked people, people that are trying to tear down the church? No. We're gathering those that are seeking Christ. And our invitation is to invite all to come into Christ. And that doesn't mean that someone that was doing something wrong can't repent and straighten up and join the church, but those that are actively working against the cause of God, the way the Matthew account is, is they're supposed to be gathered first. And that's just not the way it works.
- Dr. Ken Alford: 00:54:22 And so I think it's helpful to remember with section 86, there was a statement from Elder Bruce R. McConkie in the Doctrinal New Testament Commentary. He talks about parables because I think sometimes we think that parables are designed to enlighten us and make things crystal clear. And the Elder McConkie points out very clearly, he says, "Parables seldom clarify a truth, rather they obscured and hide the doctrine involved so that none, but only those that are already enlightened and informed are able to grasp the full meaning." And then Elder McConkie said, "Nowhere is this better illustrated than the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares. When Jesus first gave the parables, even the disciples didn't understand it. They asked for an interpretation and he gave it partially. The Lord still had to give a special revelation in that section 86 in the latter days so the full meaning of this marvelous parable might sink into the hearts of men."
- Dr. Ken Alford: 00:55:24 So as you look at section 86, the question I guess is what new things do we learn in section 86? And I think the big thing we learn is that it's the wheat that's gathered first. We're looking for people that want to come under Christ. That's the key. Gospel will be offered to everyone, but we're seeking those who want to come unto Christ. But section 86 also teaches who the sower is because the parable talks about a man going and sowing. And section 86 clearly says that's the apostles. They have that reason responsibility. And if you think of what an apostle is, it's a special representative of Christ whose mission is to help us come unto the savior. It also clearly defines in section 86 who the enemy is, and it says very clearly, it's saying it's Babylon, it's the world. That's who the tares are.

- Dr. Ken Alford: 00:56:16 It also defined, see, and this wouldn't have made a lot of sense to the apostles back in the meridian of time, because there had been no apostacy, but he talks about in section 86 the apostles falling asleep because the apostles were killed and an apostasy occurred. And it talks about the church in the wilderness, which wouldn't have made a great deal of sense probably to those early apostles. That's the apostasy. It helps us better understand what it means to be tender wheat. Section 86 defines it as weakness or newness in the gospel, people whose testimonies are still maybe a little shaky and developing. It also helps us, I think, see a little bit clearer that tares are not just those that fight against the church, but also probably also evil doctrines that they're espousing. And then it talks about the harvest and the burning. And now in this dispensation, that's the millennium, which is going to be a key point in this dispensation and it points that the angels are anxious to reap and Wilford Woodruff and others have had comments about that.
- Dr. Ken Alford: 00:57:25 And so section 86, it's a wonderful, wonderful section that the Lord takes, it's the Doctrine and Covenants is sometimes a wonderful commentary on other scripture. And this is a classic example of the Doctrine and Covenants being commentary on in this case, the Bible Matthew Chapter 13. One other thing we get from Joseph's work with the Joseph Smith Translation that figures into this, because it talks in section 86 about the end of the world. And in Joseph Smith-Matthew, or you can go to the Joseph Smith Translation both because Joseph Smith-Matthew, of course, is just excerpt from the JST, but it says there in Joseph Smith-Matthew 1:4 that as he Christ sat upon the Mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately saying, "Tell us when shall these things be which thou hast said concerning the destruction of the temple and the Jews? And what is the sign of thy coming, or the end of the world?" And then Joseph adds this wonderful phrase in the Joseph Smith Translation, or the destruction of the wicked, which is the end of the world.
- Dr. Ken Alford: 00:58:41 And so that's also, I think, alluded to in section 86, that it's talking about the end of the world, there've been lots of people, we always have that image of the guy with the long beard and the sign, walking around the end is near. Well, the end of the world is a destruction of the wicked as preparing us for the millennial, the millennial reign of the

savior when you're not going to have to lock your car, you're not going to have to lock your front door. Okay. And people that were in the military like me are going to be out of a job. There's not going to be a need for. They won't make war anymore.

Hank Smith: 00:59:16

Oh, I love man.

Dr. Ken Alford: 00:59:17

So section 86, it's just fun. I just really love it when the Lord takes Joseph and he puts his arm around him and just says, "Hey, I'm going to pull the curtain back for you. So let me pull it back." These scriptures have been there, people have been reading for thousands of years, let me pull the curtain back. Here's what it means. And I just love that when that happens. And section 86 is a classic case.

Hank Smith: 00:59:40

Elder Maxwell called that like exploring a new room in the scriptures right in your own house where you find a new fireplace to be warmed by. I wrote a book on parables. It sold dozens of copies mostly to my mother, but I learned something very important in verse three that has impacted me. He even he throws in, Ken, the Lord throws in verse three a little bit of the Parable of the Sower when he says the tares are the weeds choke the wheat in verse three.

Hank Smith: 01:00:15

And if you go to Matthew 13:22, this is how that happens, how do tares choke the wheat or saints? He says, these are people who received the seed, but the care of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word and he becometh unfruitful. And that's a place where I stopped with my students and say, what are the cares of this world and what are the deceitfulness of riches that can spoil our faith, that can choke out our faith? There is so much to learn there because as I become more and more worldly, as I get caught up in whatever is happening in the world and I just don't have time for the Lord. It's not that the soil's bad, I've just got so many other weeds in my life that the testimony doesn't get any time, it doesn't get any sunlight, it doesn't get any resources because, hey, I've got a lot going on, I've got seasons on Netflix I need to watch, I've got professional basketball games recorded.

Hank Smith: 01:01:21

I don't think this is bad people, this is when I allow the, what did you call it? The doctrine of the world, I think you call that, Ken, to just choke my life, it takes all the resources, takes all my time, takes all my energy. And that,

oh, it both has scared me into, I think the parables of Jesus, Elder McConkie was right, he veils meaning and then when you see it unveiled, it should scare you because then you find out you've got a lot of changing to do.

Dr. Ken Alford: 01:01:55 Well. And once you understand it, then you're responsible for it.

John Bytheway: 01:01:59 Yep. Yeah. I think Elder McConkie also said, he made a comment about the Parable of the Sower and talked about that type of soil, he called it the four kinds of soil because really, it's more about the soil than it is about the sower. But he said that the place where it fell among thorns with the weeds is good soil as evidenced by the growth of the undesirable plants. But he used the phrase, but the tares ended up choking them. Maybe he got that from section 86. Instead of be overcoming them, they get choked by the terrace.

John Bytheway: 01:02:38 And I just wanted to add that I came across a book years ago called Money for Nothing. And it was about people who had won the lottery in Michigan. And there were a couple of chapters, a few chapters in this book where people who won the lottery said, "This is the worst thing that has ever happened to me." And one guy said, "I made some investments and I spend my life now with lawyers and lawsuits every day." Another person said, "We used to shop at this mom and pop grocery store and they were so nice, they'd always put a couple extra oranges or extra apples in our bag. And now that they know we've won the lottery, nobody does that anymore. This is the worst thing that's ever happened to me."

John Bytheway: 01:03:18 And whenever I talk about those weeds, the deceitfulness of riches that you mentioned there you go is like, say, how are riches deceitful? And if you think, if I just had that, then everything would be fine. Well, no, it gives you a new set of problems maybe in some ways. And that's how they can be deceitful as people are saying. And I know, Hank, you've got lots of jokes about money can't buy happiness, but I thought these people are saying, yeah, I want a million dollars. This is the worst thing that's ever happened. I'm like, "What?"

Hank Smith: 01:03:52 Yeah. And it seems that the Lord knows. What did Paul say? The love of money is the root of all evil. Not money.

It's the love of money that is the root of all evil. Man, Ken, I really love this section now.

Dr. Ken Alford: 01:04:08 It's a fun section. And the Joseph Smith Translation is just filled with nuggets. And when you get something in the Doctrine and Covenants that expands what's in the Joseph Smith Translation, it's a double win. It's just very cool.

John Bytheway: 01:04:23 It's one thing to have a commentary about the parables. I tried that to Hank, but to have the savior comment on his own parable, it's like having a bit of a comment on Isaiah, oh, thank you. A prophet can comment on this prophet. That's hard to understand. That's so helpful.

Hank Smith: 01:04:43 Ken, I've really liked when you talked about verse four, the blade is yet tender. Says it again in verse six, the blade is yet tender. Verily your faith is weak. Yeah, this is a brand new little church. And the Lord is sheltering it. You can say he's trying to protect it from those tares. And we can do the same thing for new members, for children and youth, protect those tender testimonies from the great persecutor of the church, right? Verse three.

Dr. Ken Alford: 01:05:22 There's a great phrase from Elder Holland. And I would have to look up which talk it was in, but I remember the phrase and he says, "It's always 1830 somewhere." And I love that phrase, that somewhere in the world, it's always 1830. There's just a little band of saints, the gospel has just barely been introduced there and the blade is yet tender and young. And so I just think wherever you are listening to this, that probably not too far away that there's either a branch of the church where it's like 1830, or there are individual members of the church where in their family and their home, it's like 1830, they've just received the Book of Mormon, they're just learning these doctrines, and the wheat is still tender and green.

Hank Smith: 01:06:21 I love it. And we can do a lot to protect those tender blades. Please join us for part two of this podcast.