

The Lord Provides

By Christine Graham

(Based on an early mission of Wilford Woodruff)

In Parts 1 and 2, Wilford Woodruff and his companion were eager to get to Tennessee to preach the gospel. To get there, they had to walk—sometimes 60 miles in a day—across Missouri and Arkansas. They encountered hostile people and wild animals. Traveling by river would be easier, but with no boat it seemed impossible.

You could use a canoe,” Brother Wright Akeman said. “You can paddle down the Arkansas River to its mouth and walk from there to Memphis.” Brother Akeman was one of the few Church members in Arkansas.

“It’s a fine idea,” Wilford said.

“Except we don’t have a canoe,” Henry said.

“See that big cottonwood tree?” Brother Akeman said.

“I’ll fetch my tools, and in two days we will have a canoe.”

The men cut down the tree and sawed a log about 12 feet long. Then they chipped out the inside of the log and shaped the ends.

After two days they had a sturdy dugout canoe.

They shook hands with Brother Akeman and picked up the oars they had made. “It’s not a Jaredite boat,” Wilford said, “but it will get us where the Lord wants us to go.”

When Wilford and his companion reached the mouth of the river, they had to walk through a swamp. The mud and water were knee deep, and every step was hard. Wilford was worried because his knee hurt a lot.

In the middle of the swamp, Wilford sat down on a log. “I can’t walk anymore,” he said.

“I can’t wait,” Henry said. “The sooner I get through this swamp, the sooner I can get to Memphis and take a steamboat home.”

“Aren’t you going to preach the gospel in Tennessee?” Wilford asked.

“No,” Henry said. “I miss my family, and I am worried about them.”



Henry walked away. Wilford sat on the log and watched his companion disappear into the trees. He was alone in the middle of an alligator-infested swamp, and he could not walk. So he prayed.

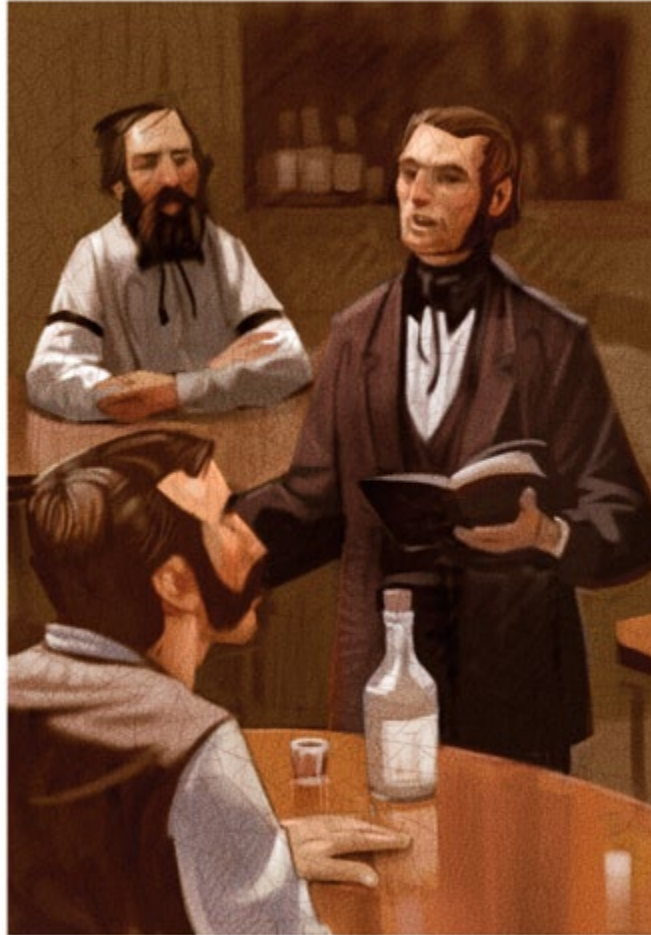
Wilford asked the Lord to heal his knee. Then he stood up and began to walk. His knee felt fine. With every step, he rejoiced and thanked Heavenly Father for healing his knee.

Finally Wilford arrived in Memphis. Tired and dirty, he went to an inn.

"I am a minister, traveling without purse or scrip," he told the innkeeper. "I would be happy to preach in exchange for food and a bed."

"You don't look like a minister," the innkeeper said. "This man says he's a preacher!" he called out to the men nearby. The men laughed and gathered around. Wilford looked at them. He had never preached to so many people. They looked more frightening than a bear or a pack of wolves.

Wilford said a silent prayer. The Lord had protected and provided for him and



healed his knee. Surely he could teach these men. "Do you want to hear what the Lord has to tell you?" he asked.

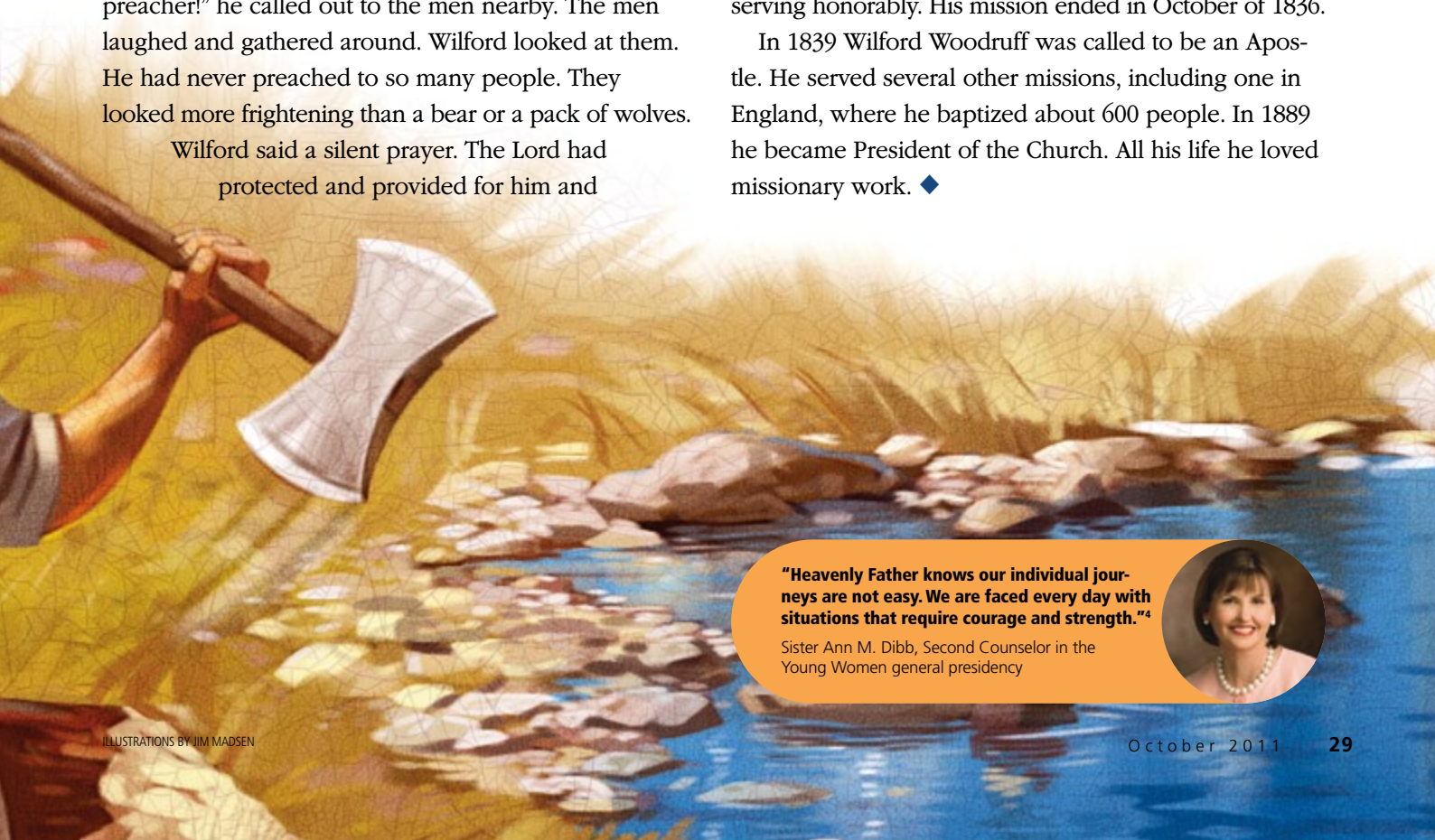
"Bring it on, preacher!" they jeered. Wilford knelt and prayed aloud. He asked the Lord to tell him what those men needed to hear. Then he gave a talk and told the men to repent. When he finished speaking, the room was quiet.

"You've earned a bath, a meal, and a bed, preacher," the innkeeper said. "Anytime you're in Memphis, you can stay here, but that's enough preaching."

Wilford knew he had taught with the Spirit. He had arrived in his mission field prepared.

Wilford received a new companion and continued serving honorably. His mission ended in October of 1836.

In 1839 Wilford Woodruff was called to be an Apostle. He served several other missions, including one in England, where he baptized about 600 people. In 1889 he became President of the Church. All his life he loved missionary work. ♦



"Heavenly Father knows our individual journeys are not easy. We are faced every day with situations that require courage and strength."⁴

Sister Ann M. Dibb, Second Counselor in the Young Women general presidency

