

Cautionary Tales Pt. 1

Pastor James Foley – Sunday, November 6, 2022

INTRODUCTION

Thank you for joining us! Whether you are here in person or joining via the livestream you are most welcome! Please have a Bible at the ready and be prepared to take notes as you like. We have much to cover in a short space of time.

OPENING REMARKS

NOTE 1 – In recent weeks we have identified a slate of scriptural reasons to reject or resist sin...

- 1) The End of Sin – Sin is Often Met with Unintended and Unforeseen Cost(s)
- 2) Sin Does Not Satisfy – It Will Not and Cannot Facilitate Long-Term Contentment
- 3) Sin Begets Sin – Sin Naturally Produces More and Worsening Degrees of Sinfulness
- 4) Sin Enslaves – Sin is a Binding Agent that Ever-Seeks to “Dominate” those it Ensnares
- 5) Sin Degrades & Humiliates. Sin Brings “Low” those Who Persist in Waywardness
- 6) Sin Steals Joy. Sin Will Not Produce Lasting Joy in the Lives of the Wayward
- 7) Sin Steals Time. Sin Will Only Work to Cost You Time and Opportunity
- 8) Sin Hurts. Sin Fosters Pain, Harm and Torment in Every Direction.

NOTE 2 – Let us now segue to a closely-related topic, identifying specific sins we are called to resist and reject. The Bible abounds with cautionary tales (e.g., David v. Bathsheba) that warn against particular sins by citing particularly-punishing judgments. Such accounts are meant to keep us from sin, that we might serve the Lord. We do well, therefore, to take note of the cautionary tales of Scripture—cautionary tales like the following...

#1 – PHARAOH

Pharaoh is the central villain and chief antagonist of the Exodus. His story can be found in the early-to-mid portions of the Book of Exodus, which you can read at your leisure. For the sake of our study today, I will simply note the following...

NOTE 1 – The Pharaoh of Moses’ adult ministry was a cruel and unyielding man. He ruled over Egypt and oppressed the Israelites via slavery. In many ways, he epitomizes the sin of pride, being obstinate and “stiff-necked” against the word of the Lord proclaimed by Moses. Consider the following selection which illustrates his rebellion...

Exodus 5:1a, 2, 6–8a, 9 (NIV)

1 . . . Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said, “This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: ‘Let my people go’” . . . 2 Pharaoh said, “Who is the Lord, that I should obey him and let Israel go? I do not know the Lord and I will not let Israel go.” . . . 6 That same day Pharaoh gave this order to the slave drivers and overseers in charge of the people: 7 “You are no longer to supply the people with straw for making bricks; let them go and gather their own straw. 8 But require them to make the same number of bricks as before; don’t reduce the quota.” . . . 9 “Make the work harder for the people so that they keep working and pay no attention to lies.”

Q1. What do we see herein?

A. The pride of Pharaoh which precipitated rebellion against God and cruelty to others.

Q2. What else did such pride ultimately precipitate?

A. Divine penalty and judgment(s) from the Lord, God.

Q3. What was the punishment for his spiritual pride?

A1. Divine penalty in the form of ten supernatural plagues...

NOTE 2 – The Book of Exodus records Ten Plagues that systematically devastated both Pharaoh and his kingdom: **a)** water to blood; **b)** frogs; **c)** gnats; **d)** flies; **e)** death of livestock; **f)** boils; **g)** hail; **h)** locusts; **i)** darkness; and **j)** death of the firstborn throughout Egypt. Each reveals the consequence of pride!

A2. However, a closer look at the Exodus accounts reveal a cost even more frightening...

NOTE 3 – Namely, as you read through the announcement of each plague, a pattern emerges. In the early-to-mid plagues, there are several passages that state that “Pharaoh hardened his own heart” (cf. Exod. 8:15, 32; 9:34). Over the course of time, however, as Pharaoh continued to resist the command of God, a shift appears, in that God began to harden the heart of Pharaoh (Exod. 9:12; 10:20, 27; 11:10).

NOTE 4 – We discern herein a principle re: how God may judge those who traffic in pride. Namely, reject Him long enough, harden your heart against Him and His commandments persistently enough, and He may well give you over to your desires. Those who WILL NOT come to Him may be moved to a condition wherein they CANNOT come! This is arguably the most frightening of all of God’s divine penalties...

FYI – This specific form of judgment manifests elsewhere in the biblical record...

John 12:37–40 (Emphasis Mine)

37 Even after Jesus had performed so many signs in their presence, they [Jewish rulers, etc.] still would not believe in him. 38 This was to fulfill the word of Isaiah the prophet:

“Lord, who has believed our message
and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?” [Isa. 53:1]

39 For this reason they **could not believe**, because, as Isaiah says elsewhere:

40 “He has blinded their eyes
and hardened their hearts,
so they can neither see with their eyes,
nor understand with their hearts,
nor turn—and I would heal them.” [Isa. 6:10]

Q1. What are we to do with such information in contemporary times?**Q2. How should such accounts both influence and impact life and living?**

A1. Let us recognize the particular peril of pride and steer clear accordingly. At a minimum, unrelenting pride may unleash unnecessary and painful penalty upon you and those within your sphere of influence. Moreover, pride does seem to carry the singular danger of being given over to hardness of your own heart. Beware!

A2. The reality is that we all traffic in pride at times, resisting His will and command(s). Though Pharaoh may be an extreme example with a correspondingly extreme set of judgements, the seed of such activity can be found in us all! It is best to let God root out such pride before the seed takes root and yields toxic fruit...

James 1:14b–15

14 . . . each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. 15 Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

#2 – LOT’S WIFE

NOTE 1 – The name of Lot’s wife is not mentioned in Scripture, though Jewish tradition identifies her as Idit. For those who may not know, this woman was married to Lot, nephew of Abraham (cf. Gen. 12:5). Being connected to a chief patriarch of God like Abraham was a good thing, affording certain benefit (as we shall note). However, she sadly lived in the wretched city of Sodom.

NOTE 2 – In the eighteenth chapter of Genesis, God appeared to Abraham, revealing His intention to examine the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah; judging them with destruction if necessary. Abraham, knowing that Lot and his family lived in Sodom, petitioned for God to show mercy if but ten righteous figures could be found (i.e., ten = Lot, his wife, four daughters, two sons-in-law, two betrothals).

NOTE 3 – Seeing that God ultimately determined to destroy the cities, ten righteous figures were NOT found. However, God showed mercy to Abraham by working to deliver Lot and his family...

Genesis 19:12–16

12 The two men [i.e., angelic figures] said to Lot, “Do you have anyone else here—sons-in-law, sons or daughters, or anyone else in the city who belongs to you? Get them out of here, 13 because we are going to destroy this place. The outcry to the Lord against its people is so great that he has sent us to destroy it.”

14 So Lot went out and spoke to his sons-in-law, who were pledged to marry his daughters. He said, “Hurry and get out of this place, because the Lord is about to destroy the city!” But his sons-in-law thought he was joking.

15 With the coming of dawn, the angels urged Lot, saying, “Hurry! Take your wife and your two daughters who are here, or you will be swept away when the city is punished.” 16 When he hesitated, the men grasped his hand and the hands of his wife and of his two daughters and led them safely out of the city, for the Lord was merciful to them.

NOTE 4 – Upon their deliverance, Lot and those few with him were given this simple set of commands...

Genesis 19:17 (Emphasis Mine)

17 As soon as they had brought them out, one of them said, “Flee for your lives! **Don’t look back**, and don’t stop anywhere in the plain! Flee to the mountains or you will be swept away!”

NOTE 5 – Subsequent to their rescue we read the following...

Genesis 19:24–26

24 Then the Lord rained down burning sulfur on Sodom and Gomorrah—from the Lord out of the heavens. 25 Thus he overthrew those cities and the entire plain, destroying all those living in the cities—and also the vegetation in the land. 26 But Lot’s wife looked back, and she became a pillar of salt.

WE MAY WELL ASK...

Q. What was the crime of Lot’s wife? What sin(s) was she guilty of?

A. Clearly she violated the explicit command of the angelic deliverer and emissary of God (cf. Gen. 19: 17, 26). Yet there is more to this idea of “looking back” than meets the eye. The Hebrew for “looked back” means more than a passing physical glance. It speaks to a “regard or affection for” an object. She was reluctant to leave the world of Sodom—though it was accursed—because her “heart” was both in and with that place...

Q. Though she was removed from Sodom to what degree was Sodom removed from her?

A. Not enough, apparently, as she was judged and turned into a pillar of salt (cf. Gen. 19:26b).

Q1. What are we to do with such information in contemporary times?

Q2. How should such accounts both influence and impact life and living?

A. Let us consider the peril of looking back longingly upon a sinful life that God has seen fit to judge...

NOTE 6 – How often we revel in and miss the “good old days,” remembering with affection the times we spent in the Sodom’s of our own making. Many times our regard for the past can almost cause us to go back to the places and times God has delivered us from! Christians long for the days before they knew of Christ and His requirements; days in which they were free to please their sinful desires, apathetic to God and others; days in which they were condemned and given to damnable attitudes, actions and behaviors. Be wary!

NOTE 7 – Christ Himself touches upon such principles in the New Testament (Gospel) record...

Luke 9:62 (Context – Discipleship & Service)

62 Jesus replied, “No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.”

Luke 17:32 (Context – Warning Against Being Overly Attached to this World)

32 “Remember Lot’s wife!”

KEY – We do well to follow Jesus’ admonition and heed the admonition of the apostle John...

1 John 2:15–17

15 Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. 16 For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world. 17 The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever.

SUMMATIONS

Q1. Why should we reject and resist the temptation to sin?

- A1. The End of Sin – Sin is Often Met with Unintended and Unforeseen Cost(s)
- A2. Sin Does Not Satisfy – It Will Not and Cannot Facilitate Long-Term Contentment
- A3. Sin Begets Sin – Sin Naturally Produces More and Worsening Degrees of Sinfulness
- A4. Sin Enslaves – Sin is a Binding Agent that Ever-Seeks to “Dominate” those it Ensnares
- A5. Sin Degrades & Humiliates. Sin Brings “Low” those Who Persist in Waywardness
- A6. Sin Steals Joy. Sin Will Not Produce Lasting Joy in the Lives of the Wayward
- A7. Sin Steals Time. Sin Will Only Work to Cost You Time and Opportunity
- A8. Sin Hurts. Sin Fosters Pain, Harm and Torment in Every Direction.

Q2. What types of sin should we particularly resist and reject?

- A1. Persistent Obstinacy and Pride
- A2. The Sin of Lot’s Wife – Affection for Sinful Life

CONCLUSION

NOTE 1 – Feel free to give either in person or online at www.NewLifeBarre.org

NOTE 2 – Feel free to participate in our “beyond-Sunday” ministries (MM, WM, CYC, B. Study)

NOTE 3 – Women’s Ministry taking place this Tuesday evening at 6:30pm (Patty Noel to announce)

NOTE 4 – Men’s Breakfast and a Church Work-Day slated for this Saturday (MM @ 9am; Wk. D @ 10am)

NOTE 5 – The deadline to bring in your packed O.C.C. shoeboxes is Sunday, November 20 (Ruth D.)

Numbers 6:24–26

- 24 The Lord bless you
and keep you;
- 25 the Lord make his face shine on you
and be gracious to you;
- 26 the Lord turn his face toward you
and give you peace.