

Under Pressure Pt. 2

Pastor James Foley – Shared Sunday, October 4, 2020

INTRODUCTION

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

SETTING THE STAGE PT. 1

FYI 1 – Last Sunday we began by noting that character is “forged on the anvil of adversity.” i.e., The Lord utilizes seasons of trial, testing and affliction to fashion our moral quality—that we might be conformed to the image of His Son (cf. Rom. 5:1–4; 8:29). It would seem that both the shaping of metal and the shaping of the human heart require heat and pressure.

FYI 2 – However, we also noted that character is “exposed by adversity.” i.e., There is something about trial, testing and affliction that brings exposure to that which is present within us. It would appear that our inner moral quality is revealed when placed under pressure. If you want to know what is inside of a jelly donut, all you have to do is squeeze!

SETTING THE STAGE PT. 2

KEY – Last week we considered this latter principle, examining biblical figures whose godly character was expressed in moments of difficulty (i.e., figures who manifested and/or displayed Christian virtues in the midst of extreme duress)...

ILL 1 – We cited the account wherein Abraham was called to offer his beloved son, Isaac, as a sacrifice unto the Lord (cf. Gen. 22). Though the story did end well for Isaac (i.e., God provided a substitute), this moment of testing evidenced Abraham’s sense of a) faith; b) reverence; c) readied obedience; and d) love for God...

ILL 2 – We also cited an account from the missionary exploits of Paul and Silas (cf. Acts 16). Bound, beaten and imprisoned on ludicrous charges (i.e., in the midst of extreme pressure), this moment of affliction evidenced their commitment to a) prayer; b) praise; c) set forth a Christian example; and d) proclaim Christ...

KEY – Let us aspire to such examples by the grace of God at work in us! Moving along...

SETTING THE STAGE PT. 3

FYI 1 – This morning I want to offer material that functions as the inverse to that which was provided last week. Whereas last Sunday spotlighted figures whose godly character was revealed under pressure, today will feature those whose moral quality was found to be flawed, lacking and “less than desirable.”

FYI 2 – Specifically, I want to examine the OT people of God in the days of the Exodus...

HEBREWS QUAIL & MANNA (CONTEXT)

FYI – I suppose it is necessary to establish some historical context...

NOTE 1 – For approximately four-hundred years the people of God (i.e., the offspring of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob) languished in bondage in Egypt. Through many generations, the Hebrew people called upon the Lord for divine deliverance, which He graciously provided through His servant, Moses.

Q. How many have heard of Moses before?

NOTE 2 – Moses was supernaturally used of God to deliver the Hebrews from slavery in the epic story recorded in the Book of Exodus. Having been rescued from slavery, it was the purpose of the Lord to train this people (app. 600k–3m) re: how to worship Him, serve Him and function as a God-honoring society (i.e., as they made their way to the Promised Land).

KEY – However, this trek did not go smoothly, being littered with accounts like the following...

HEBREWS QUAIL & MANNA (TO THE WORD)

Exodus 16:1 (NIV)

1 The whole Israelite community set out from Elim and came to the Desert of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after they had come out of Egypt [FYI – Having recently experienced the Ten Plagues visited upon Egypt and the parting of the Red Sea, etc.]

Q. What takes place next after such marvelous events and miraculous works?

Exodus 16:2–35

2 In the desert the whole community grumbled against Moses and Aaron. 3 The Israelites said to them, “If only we had died by the Lord’s hand in Egypt! There we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death.”

4 Then the Lord said to Moses, “I will rain down bread from heaven for you. The people are to go out each day and gather enough for that day. In this way I will test them and see whether they will follow my instructions. 5 On the sixth day they are to prepare what they bring in, and that is to be twice as much as they gather on the other days.”

6 So Moses and Aaron said to all the Israelites, “In the evening you will know that it was the Lord who brought you out of Egypt, 7 and in the morning you will see the glory of the Lord, because he has heard your grumbling against him. Who are we, that you should grumble against us?” 8 Moses also said, “You will know that it was the Lord when he gives you meat to eat in the evening and all the bread you want in the morning, because he has heard your grumbling against him. Who are we? You are not grumbling against us, but against the Lord.”

9 Then Moses told Aaron, “Say to the entire Israelite community, ‘Come before the Lord, for he has heard your grumbling.’”

10 While Aaron was speaking to the whole Israelite community, they looked toward the desert, and there was the glory of the Lord appearing in the cloud.

11 The Lord said to Moses, 12 “I have heard the grumbling of the Israelites. Tell them, ‘At twilight you will eat meat, and in the morning you will be filled with bread. Then you will know that I am the Lord your God.’”

13 That evening quail came and covered the camp, and in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp. 14 When the dew was gone, thin flakes like frost on the ground appeared on the desert floor. 15 When the Israelites saw it, they said to each other, “What is it?” For they did not know what it was.

Moses said to them, “It is the bread the Lord has given you to eat. 16 This is what the Lord has commanded: ‘Everyone is to gather as much as they need. Take an omer [i.e., app. 3-lbs] for each person you have in your tent.’”

17 The Israelites did as they were told; some gathered much, some little. 18 And when they measured it by the omer, the one who gathered much did not have too much, and the one who gathered little did not have too little. Everyone had gathered just as much as they needed.

19 Then Moses said to them, “No one is to keep any of it until morning.”

20 However, some of them paid no attention to Moses; they kept part of it until morning, but it was full of maggots and began to smell. So Moses was angry with them.

21 Each morning everyone gathered as much as they needed, and when the sun grew hot, it melted away. 22 On the sixth day, they gathered twice as much—two omers for each person—and the leaders of the community came and reported this to Moses. 23 He said to them, “This is what the Lord commanded: ‘Tomorrow is to be a day of sabbath rest, a holy sabbath to the Lord. So bake what you want to bake and boil what you want to boil. Save whatever is left and keep it until morning.’”

24 So they saved it until morning, as Moses commanded, and it did not stink or get maggots in it. 25 “Eat it today,” Moses said, “because today is a sabbath to the Lord. You will not find any of it on the ground today. 26 Six days you are to gather it, but on the seventh day, the Sabbath, there will not be any.”

27 Nevertheless, some of the people went out on the seventh day to gather it, but they found none. 28 Then the Lord said to Moses, “How long will you refuse to keep my commands and my instructions? 29 Bear in mind that the Lord has given you the Sabbath; that is why on the sixth day he gives you bread for two days. Everyone is to stay where they are on the seventh day; no one is to go out.” 30 So the people rested on the seventh day.

31 The people of Israel called the bread manna [FYI – “manna” sounds like the Hebrew word for “what is it?"]. It was white like coriander seed and tasted like wafers made with honey. 32 Moses said, “This is what the Lord has commanded: ‘Take an omer of manna and keep it for the generations to come, so they can see the bread I gave you to eat in the wilderness when I brought you out of Egypt.’”

33 So Moses said to Aaron, “Take a jar and put an omer of manna in it. Then place it before the Lord to be kept for the generations to come.”

34 As the Lord commanded Moses, Aaron put the manna with the tablets of the covenant law, so that it might be preserved. 35 The Israelites ate manna forty years, until they came to a land that was settled; they ate manna until they reached the border of Canaan.

HEBREWS QUAIL & MANNA (TRANSITIONS)

FYI – Having read this lengthy account, we must note that the people of God were experiencing a season of pressure. Newly delivered from a condition slavery, which they had been accustomed to for centuries, they found themselves in the wilderness without essential provisions (e.g., food, etc.).

Q. How many of you would like to be in the wilderness without essential provision(s)?

Q. How many understand that this would be a genuinely challenging scenario to experience?

KEY 1 – What we see herein is the heat and pressure of life being applied to the people of God...

KEY 2 – What we see in Ex. 16 is the Hebrew nation experiencing a season of appointed testing...

Q. What did this season of testing reveal concerning the character/moral quality of this people?

HEBREWS QUAIL & MANNA (ANALYSIS PT. 1)

A1. It Exposed their Lack of Faith

NOTE 1 – When Abraham was called by God to sacrifice his own son, Isaac, Abraham operated in faith (i.e., reasoning that God could raise the dead – cf. Heb. 11). When Paul and Silas were beaten and imprisoned for their missionary efforts, they operated in faith (i.e., knowing that God was present and at work even in the midst of momentary affliction).

NOTE 2 – Yet the Hebrews of Exodus 16 did not display any kind of God-honoring faith at all. They acted as though God had already forsaken and abandoned them (i.e., despite the fact that they had seen the unleashing of Plagues upon Egypt, experienced the parting of the Red Sea, and witnessed the fulfillment to their centuries-long prayer for freedom).

KEY – But the moment things get challenging or discomfoting, the true condition of their faith is exposed.

Q. Wouldn't it be wonderful if the story read the following way...

Exodus 16:1–4 (PJV)

1 The whole Israelite community set out from Elim and came to the Desert of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after they had come out of Egypt. 2 In the desert the whole community came to comprehend their lack of provision. 3 Recognizing the hand of God that had been at work on their behalf, they trusted that He would work all things together for their good—having been called according to His good purposes. 4 Then the Lord said to Moses, “I will rain down bread from heaven for you.”

NOTE – But that is not how the story goes...

Exodus 16:2–3

2 In the desert the whole community grumbled against Moses and Aaron. 3 The Israelites said to them, “If only we had died by the Lord’s hand in Egypt! There we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death.”

Q. Where was their faith?

HEBREWS QUAIL & MANNA (ANALYSIS PT. 2)

A2. It Exposed their Lack of Reverence

NOTE 1 – When Abraham was called by God to sacrifice Isaac, his actions revealed a sense of reverence for God (i.e., fear, awe and esteem). Abraham treated the Lord like He was worthy of admiration, respect and worshipful obedience—even in such a challenging circumstance.

NOTE 2 – When Paul and Silas were beaten and imprisoned in the city of Philippi, their actions revealed a sense of reverential fear, awe and esteem as well. These men treated the Lord like He was worthy of their admiration, respect and worship—even in duress.

KEY – Not so with the Hebrew people. There is no sense of reverential fear, awe or esteem. Rather, they cast aspersions upon the Lord and insulted His character, treating Him like a deadbeat father who had forsaken and abandoned His children in their moment of need.

Q. How could they so treat a God who had just leveled an unyielding Egypt on their behalf?

FYI – If I was the Lord—i.e., the One who had just delivered them in so miraculous a way—I would be personally insulted by their flippant, petulant, disrespectful and ungrateful attitude that is on full display in the following text...

Exodus 16:2–3

2 In the desert the whole community grumbled against Moses and Aaron. 3 The Israelites said to them, “If only we had died by the Lord’s hand in Egypt! There we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death.”

Q. Where was their sense of regard and esteem for the Lord?

Q. Why did they move to insult His character v. revere Him in faith?

HEBREWS QUAIL & MANNA (ANALYSIS PT. 3)

A3. It Exposed their Lack of Obedience

NOTE 1 – As was noted last Sunday, Abraham obeyed the Lord dutifully and readily when called upon to sacrifice his son, Isaac. Though the command seemed unthinkable, he realized it was the duty of the creation to obey the Creator. Not so—once again—with the people of God in Exodus 16...

NOTE 2 – Notice that the Lord—i.e., the Lord who so graciously met their needs with quail and manna—set forth some parameters on the collection of food (i.e., for the purpose of testing their obedience). Once again, consider the following...

Exodus 16:4–5

4 Then the Lord said to Moses, “I will rain down bread from heaven for you. The people are to go out each day and gather enough for that day. In this way I will test them and see whether they will follow my instructions. 5 On the sixth day they are to prepare what they bring in, and that is to be twice as much as they gather on the other days.”

Q. Did the people obey?

A. Not very well indeed...

Exodus 16:13–27

13 That evening quail came and covered the camp, and in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp. 14 When the dew was gone, thin flakes like frost on the ground appeared on the desert floor. 15 When the Israelites saw it, they said to each other, “What is it?” For they did not know what it was.

Moses said to them, “It is the bread the Lord has given you to eat. 16 This is what the Lord has commanded: ‘Everyone is to gather as much as they need. Take an omer for each person you have in your tent.’”

17 The Israelites did as they were told; some gathered much, some little. 18 And when they measured it by the omer, the one who gathered much did not have too much, and the one who gathered little did not have too little. Everyone had gathered just as much as they needed.

19 Then Moses said to them, “No one is to keep any of it until morning.”

20 However, some of them paid no attention to Moses; they kept part of it until morning, but it was full of maggots and began to smell. So Moses was angry with them.

....

21 Each morning everyone gathered as much as they needed, and when the sun grew hot, it melted away. 22 On the sixth day, they gathered twice as much—two omers for each person—and the leaders of the community came and reported this to Moses. 23 He said to them, “This is what the Lord commanded: ‘Tomorrow is to be a day of sabbath rest, a holy sabbath to the Lord. So bake what you want to bake and boil what you want to boil. Save whatever is left and keep it until morning.’”

24 So they saved it until morning, as Moses commanded, and it did not stink or get maggots in it. 25 “Eat it today,” Moses said, “because today is a sabbath to the Lord. You will not find any of it on the ground today. 26 Six days you are to gather it, but on the seventh day, the Sabbath, there will not be any.”

27 Nevertheless, some of the people went out on the seventh day to gather it, but they found none. 28 Then the Lord said to Moses, “How long will you refuse to keep my commands and my instructions?”

Q. Where was their sense of readied commitment and obedience before God?

HEBREWS QUAIL & MANNA (ANALYSIS PT. 4)

A4. It Exposed their Lack of Prayer and Praise

NOTE – When Paul and Silas were beaten and imprisoned in the city of Philippi, they were moved to a place of prayer and praise (cf. Acts 16). The text is clear that about midnight these men began to pray and sing unto the Lord. There is something admirable about their response in difficulty!

KEY – This is not the case with the people of God in Exodus 16...

Q. Wouldn't it be wonderful if the text read the following way?

Exodus 16:1–4 (PJV)

1 The whole Israelite community set out from Elim and came to the Desert of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after they had come out of Egypt. 2 In the desert the whole community came to comprehend their lack of provision. 3 Recognizing the hand of God that had been at work on their behalf, they trusted that He would work all things together for their good—having been called according to His good purposes. Rather than give in to a spirit of murmur and complaint, the people sought the Lord and worshipped Him fervently!" 4 Then the Lord said to Moses, "I will rain down bread from heaven for you."

NOTE – But that is not how the story goes...

Exodus 16:2–3

2 In the desert the whole community grumbled against Moses and Aaron. 3 The Israelites said to them, "If only we had died by the Lord's hand in Egypt! There we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death."

Q. What came out of them under pressure?

A. Complaint, grumbling, murmur, doubt, ingratitude, etc., exposing what was present within their hearts...

cf. Luke 6:45

45 A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of.

Q. Why were they so careless with their words?

Q. Where was their spirit of prayerfulness and praise?

HEBREWS QUAIL & MANNA (ANALYSIS PT. 5)

A5. It Exposed their Lack of Loving Affection for the Lord

NOTE – Why did Abraham obey the Lord when called upon to sacrifice his beloved son? Simply put, he loved the Lord more than the gift God had given. Moreover, why did Paul and Silas offer words of prayer and praise unto God in so dire a condition? They loved the Lord more than they hated their circumstance!

KEY – But not so with the ancient Hebrew people of Exodus 16. Their words and deeds give no evidence to any kind of meaningful faith, reverence, commitment OR love. Despite all that He had done for them, this people had not been moved to a place of affection for their Savior, Deliverer, and Redeemer.

Q. Where was their sense of loving adoration and affection?

Q. How could they not love the One who had done so much for them?

TRANSITIONS

FYI 1 – In the end, we have studied one scene in the journey of the Hebrew people—a scene that exposed the character as flawed, lacking and “less than desirable.” I would love to tell you that this experience led them to a place of repentance and transformation, but it did not...

FYI 2 – Though we will not cover in any meaningful detail, look at the very next account...

Exodus 17:1–7

1 The whole Israelite community set out from the Desert of Sin, traveling from place to place as the Lord commanded. They camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. 2 So they quarreled with Moses and said, “Give us water to drink.”

Moses replied, “Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you put the Lord to the test?”

3 But the people were thirsty for water there, and they grumbled against Moses. They said, “Why did you bring us up out of Egypt to make us and our children and livestock die of thirst?”

4 Then Moses cried out to the Lord, “What am I to do with these people? They are almost ready to stone me.”

5 The Lord answered Moses, “Go out in front of the people. Take with you some of the elders of Israel and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. 6 I will stand there before you by the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it for the people to drink.” So Moses did this in the sight of the elders of Israel. 7 And he called the place Massah and Meribah because the Israelites quarreled and because they tested the Lord saying, “Is the Lord among us or not?”

Q. What do we see?

A. Their character was unchanged...

KEY – In fact, they would never change. Their constant faithlessness, irreverence, disobedience, grumbling, complaint, and spurning of God led to many laps around the wilderness until that entire generation of spiritual misfits perished. It is tragic that an eleven-day journey took forty-years...

APPLICATIONS PT. 1

NOTE – You may be saying to yourself, “Pastor, thanks for sharing these stories and touching upon the principle that adversity reveals character, but what does this have to do with me? What are you getting at that I can take home with me today and into the remainder of 2020?”

Great question—I am so glad that you asked. Once again...

KEY 1 – 2020 has not been an easy year for anyone. Do I really have to spell out why 2020 has been particularly afflicting (e.g., pandemic, death, governmental regulation, political divides, racial tensions, economic collapse and uncertainty, etc.)! We have all been under pressure...

Q. What has 2020 revealed about your character?
 Q. What has 2020 exposed re: your moral quality?
 Q. What has come out of you in this spiritual vice?

Q. What has 2020 revealed about the condition of your FAITH?
 Q. What has 2020 revealed about the condition of your REVERENCE?
 Q. What has 2020 revealed about the condition of your COMMITMENT?
 Q. What has this year revealed concerning your WORSHIPFUL devotion?
 Q. What has 2020 revealed about the depths of your LOVE for the Lord?

Q. What (precisely) has come out of you under pressure?

APPLICATIONS PT. 2

NOTE 1 – I began this sermon by positing two adages and/or principles...

- 1) Character is forged in Adversity
- 2) Character is exposed by Adversity

NOTE 2 – I end by noting that these statements are not contradictory (i.e., they are closely related). In fact, it is only as your character is revealed (i.e., as you come face-to-face with your true condition) that you can move forward unto transformation and renewal (by the power of Christ).

NOTE 3 – If you see that 2020 has revealed character that is flawed, lacking and/or “less than desirable,” I call you once again to hearken to the themes shared in recent Sunday messages: i.e., repent. Allow the Lord to forgive you, transform you and conform you unto the image of Christ.

NOTE 4 – Failure to do so will lead to disastrous result(s) in this life and the next!

CONCLUSION

KEY – Thank you for taking the time to join us today. Should those of you who have joined us online wish to give, please do so through the giving portal of our church WEBSITE (www.NewLifeBarre.org). For those who are present, you may place your donation in the OFFERING BOXES in this Sanctuary.

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.