

Cycles Pt. 3

Pastor James Foley – Shared Sunday, October 17, 2021

BABY DEDICATION

Before we dismiss the children and volunteers, today is a special day for this assembly—a day in which we will dedicate children unto the Lord! At this time, I want to call the **Dixson** family forward, with their children **Hadassah** and **Theodore**. I would also like to welcome the **Roth** family (i.e., **Natea** and **Zack**) with baby Josephine, along with godparents **Danielle** and **Austin**.

Psalm 127:3 states that children are a “heritage” and “reward” from the Lord. Thus, children are a gift from God to be both cherished and enjoyed! However, they are also a responsibility (i.e., a stewardship) of the highest order. Because children belong first and foremost to God, it is only proper that they be dedicated back to Him. We see this in the pages of Scripture. We are told in 1 Samuel 1 that Hannah presented her son, Samuel, to the Lord. Moreover, Luke 2 reveals that Joseph and Mary presented their son, Jesus, unto the Lord at the Temple in Jerusalem. In similar fashion, these parents seek to dedicate their children to the Lord.

John and **Belle**, **Natea** and **Zack**, I call your attention to the command of God recorded in Scripture (Deut. 6:4–7): “Hear O Israel: The Lord our God is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength. These commandments I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.” In light of this passage, I challenge you to love the Lord with the whole of your being, teaching young Haddy, Theodore and Josie to do the same. As you love God, one another and your fellow man, you will model before these children a life in Christ that they will one day embrace for themselves. By coming before God and this assembled people, do you declare your desire to dedicate yourselves and your children to the Lord? If so, please respond by saying, “**WE DO.**” Do you promise, with the help of God and the partnership of the local church, to provide them a Christian home of love and peace, raising them in the truth of the Lord’s instruction, and to encourage them one day to trust in Christ as Lord and Savior? If so, please respond by saying, “**WE DO.**”

Finally, **CHURCH**, let us make a commitment as well. Ultimately, it takes a village to raise a child! Parents have first responsibility, but they need the support of the broader community. Do you promise by God’s help to be faithful in your calling as members of the Body of Christ to help these men and women in their role as parents? Also, do you purpose to model a godly before these children, that they might come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ in due time? If so, please respond by saying, “**WE DO.**”

PRAYER OF DEDICATION

At this time, let us dismiss the children and workers for Children’s Church and Nursery....

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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

This morning we embark upon the third and final installment of our multi-segment series entitled CYCLES. Previous installments are available online for your review at www.NewLifeBarre.org. This series is founded upon the premise that life is highly CYCLICAL in nature...

NOTE 1 – Repeated and/or repeating patterns are embedded and apparent within this Creation of the Lord. We see this across all fields of inquiry (i.e., in the realms of planetary movement and astronomical phenomena, climate and weather, agriculture, biology, mathematics, business, music and the arts, culture and society, warfare and military conquest, international relations, etc.).

NOTE 2 – We also see this in the pages of Scripture. As was noted last Sunday, an apparent cycle appears within the Book of Judges—a cycle of spiritual rebellion that precipitated needless suffering and judgment from one generation to another. Time and again the people of Israel gave themselves to idols, and time and again they incurred penalty in kind. The cycle of the Book of Judges serves as a warning to all generations concerning the peril of persistent sinfulness! Remember...

Romans 15:4a (NIV)

4 . . . everything that was written in the past was written to teach us.”

KEY – Let us hear what the Spirit is saying to the church in this hour! Thus said...

SETTING THE STAGE PT. 2

This AM I would like to consider a cycle evident in the Book of Acts (i.e., from the missionary journeys of Paul).

NOTE 1 – In a spirit of full disclosure, this “Pauline” cycle is not as foundational as that of the Book of Judges. In other words, the whole of the Book of Acts is not founded upon this cycle and its iterations as is the Book of Judges. However, its presence is evident and deserves to be analyzed in kind.

NOTE 2 – Allow me to begin by outlining this repeating pattern evident from the missionary endeavors of Paul. For those who may not know, Paul was a premiere apostle and arguably the greatest missionary to ever serve the Risen Christ! Much of the NT was penned by him and/or centers upon his work to advance the cause of Christ in the earth. It is impossible to exaggerate his influence or overstate how indebted we all are to figures like him who have gone before us. Thus said, please note the following...

THE CYCLE OF THE B.O.A.

The repeating cycle follows this repeating five-part outline (**SLIDE**)...

1) Paul Enters An Area In Need Of The Gospel

Much of the Book of Acts centers upon the missionary journeys of the apostle Paul. During these journeys, Paul traveled the much of the Mediterranean world, sharing the Gospel with both Jews and Gentiles alike. His exploits in this season are both informing and impacting for the student of Scripture. Paul traveled from region to region, and from city to city, to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ! This cycle begins with the entrance of Paul into a community in need.

2) Paul Ministers In The Local Synagogue

It was the custom of Paul to begin his ministry in the local synagogue. This was a strategic approach for several reasons: a) his pedigree would have opened doors to proclaim Christ; b) it was sensible to begin promoting Christ with those who were informed in the Word and anticipating the coming of a Savior; c) the local synagogue would have been comprised of both Jews and God-fearing Gentiles, giving him access to varying people groups or ethnicities.

3) Paul Experiences Ministry Success

The initial ministry of Paul was typically well-received, as both Jews and Gentiles came to saving faith in Christ.

4) Paul Faces Opposition And Persecution

However, Paul would often be met with opposition from adversarial “earthly” forces (i.e., Jewish leaders, etc.).

5) Paul Moves On To Another Region In Need

Ultimately, Paul was often forced to move on to another locale (i.e., where the cycle tends to reset and repeat).

KEY – Let us take some time to consider several iterations of this cycle in operation...

ILLUSTRATIONS PT. 1

Acts 13:13–15 (Emphasis Mine)

13 From Paphos, Paul and his companions sailed to Perga in Pamphylia, where John left them to return to Jerusalem. 14 From Perga they went on to Pisidian Antioch [1]. On the Sabbath they entered the synagogue [2] and sat down. 15 After the reading from the Law and the Prophets, the leaders of the synagogue sent word to them, saying, “Brothers, if you have a word of exhortation for the people, please speak.”

FYI – vs. 16–41 record the message of Paul (calling those present to repentance and faith). Let us continue on...

Acts 13:42–51 (Emphasis Mine)

42 As Paul and Barnabas were leaving the synagogue, the people invited them to speak further about these things on the next Sabbath. 43 When the congregation was dismissed, many of the Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who talked with them and urged them to continue in the grace of God [3].

44 On the next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord. 45 When the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy. They began to contradict what Paul was saying and heaped abuse on him [4a].

46 Then Paul and Barnabas answered them boldly: “We had to speak the word of God to you first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles. 47 For this is what the Lord has commanded us:

“‘I have made you a light for the Gentiles,
that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth [Isa. 49:6].’”

48 When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed.

49 The word of the Lord spread through the whole region. 50 But the Jewish leaders incited the God-fearing women of high standing and the leading men of the city. They stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas [4b], and expelled them from their region. 51 So they shook the dust off their feet as a warning to them and went to Iconium [5].

ILLUSTRATIONS PT. 2

Acts 14:1–7 (Emphasis Mine)

1 At Iconium [1] Paul and Barnabas went as usual into the Jewish synagogue [2]. There they spoke so effectively that a great number of Jews and Greeks believed [3]. 2 But the Jews who refused to believe stirred up the other Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brothers [4a]. 3 So Paul and Barnabas spent considerable time there, speaking boldly for the Lord, who confirmed the message of his grace by enabling them to perform signs and wonders. 4 The people of the city were divided; some sided with the Jews, others with the apostles. 5 There was a plot afoot among both Gentiles and Jews, together with their leaders, to mistreat them and stone them [4b]. 6 But they found out about it and fled to the Lycaonian cities of Lystra and Derbe and to the surrounding country, 7 where they continued to preach the gospel [5].

ILLUSTRATIONS PT. 3

Acts 17:1–10 (Emphasis Mine)

1 When Paul and his companions had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica [1], where there was a Jewish synagogue. 2 As was his custom, Paul went into the synagogue [2], and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, 3 explaining and proving that the Messiah had to suffer and rise from the dead. “This Jesus I am proclaiming to you is the Messiah,” he said. 4 Some of the Jews were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a large number of God-fearing Greeks and quite a few prominent women [3].

5 But other Jews were jealous; so they rounded up some bad characters from the marketplace, formed a mob and started a riot in the city [4]. They rushed to Jason’s house in search of Paul and Silas in order to bring them out to the crowd. 6 But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some other believers before the city officials, shouting: “These men who have caused trouble all over the world have now come here, 7 and Jason has welcomed them into his house. They are all defying Caesar’s decrees, saying that there is another king, one called Jesus.” 8 When they heard this, the crowd and the city officials were thrown into turmoil. 9 Then they made Jason and the others post bond and let them go. 10 As soon as it was night, the believers sent Paul and Silas away to Berea [5].

ILLUSTRATIONS PT. 4

Acts 17:10–15 (Emphasis Mine)

10 As soon as it was night, the believers sent Paul and Silas away to Berea [1]. On arriving there, they went to the Jewish synagogue [2]. 11 Now the Berean Jews were of more noble character than those in Thessalonica, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true. 12 As a result, many of them believed, as did also a number of prominent Greek women and many Greek men [3].

13 But when the Jews in Thessalonica learned that Paul was preaching the word of God at Berea, some of them went there too, agitating the crowds and stirring them up [4]. 14 The believers immediately sent Paul to the coast [5], but Silas and Timothy stayed at Berea. 15 Those who escorted Paul brought him to Athens and then left with instructions for Silas and Timothy to join him as soon as possible.

PRINCIPLES & PRECEPTS

We have taken the time to identify and illustrate a cycle from Acts and from the life of the apostle Paul...

Q1. Why have I taken the time to explore and examine this Pauline cycle?

Q2. What impacting principles and precepts can we glean to shape our lives?

1) Breaking Cycles

NOTE 1 – I noted that one reason to study cycles is that understanding them is often the key to breaking them. This remains true for the various cycles we have examined (e.g., the Crazy Cycle, the Cycle of Addiction, the Eight Stages of Democracy, the Cycle of Judges, etc.). However, not every cycle needs to be broken...

NOTE 2 – Certain cycles should be embraced in Christ and allowed to operate per His good purpose and will. Whereas the Cycle of the Book Judges was clearly dysfunctional, this Cycle from the Book of Acts is clearly not. At no point does the author (i.e., Luke) indicate that this five-point pattern was the needless result of some failing of Paul. Also, at no point does he reveal that Paul was somehow amiss, astray and/or beyond the will of God. In fact, it is quite clear that Paul was in righteous relationship with God and serving in kind.

FYI – This is informative and provides insight in two critical arenas...

2) The Problem of Pain Pt. 1

Firstly, not all suffering is the direct result of sin. Sometimes the righteous suffer through no fault of their own. We would be hard-pressed to prove that figures like Joseph, Job, Daniel, Paul herein or even Christ Himself suffered for their own failings! Rather, even the righteous face adversity in this life...

Psalm 34:19

19 The righteous person may have many troubles,
but the Lord delivers him from them all.

Secondly, not all suffering is an indication that one is outside the will of God. Opposition and persecution may well fall within the boundaries of His purpose for our lives. We see in these Pauline accounts that Paul suffered much for the Gospel, but we would be dead-wrong to conclude he was amiss (Acts 9:15)? The Bible promises affliction for those who seek to serve the Lord and promote His ways...

2 Timothy 3:12

12 . . . everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

John 15:18–20

18 “If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. 19 If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. 20 Remember what I told you: ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also.”

THUS SAID...

2) The Problem of Pain Pt. 2

These principles have immense practical application! If you are suffering or facing opposition of any kind, it is wise to contemplate the following question: “Is this the result of personal sin or some waywardness that has led me beyond the will of God?” If so, have the faith and the humility to repent as necessary!

HOWEVER . . .

If you sense that some affliction or challenge is not tethered to your sinfulness, learn to suffer well! Consider...

NOTE 1 – God uses such moments for your benefit and cultivation...

James 1:2–4

2 Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, 3 because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. 4 Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

NOTE 2 – God can use the darkest moments of life for His good purpose...

Romans 8:28

28 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

NOTE 3 – Even moments of suffering and adversity “necessitate” true praise...

1 Peter 4:12–16

12 Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. 13 But rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. 14 If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. 15 If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler. 16 However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name.

3) A Gospel-Oriented Lesson

Lastly, we see from this Pauline cycle that Gospel preaching is often met with resistance and hostility...

Q. Why? Why is such “good news” often met with such poor reception and even opposition?

A1. Generally, the Gospel is founded upon the premise that we are flawed and in need of saving. Repentance and trust in Christ alone are the cornerstone of the Christian message, but who among us loves hearing that we are wrong and that we are powerless to “fix” ourselves? The humility necessary for salvation is antithetical to the fallen human condition! Many harden their hearts at such a message. For instance...

Acts 7:51–58, 60 (Stephen Before the Sanhedrin)

51 “You stiff-necked people! Your hearts and ears are still uncircumcised. You are just like your ancestors: You always resist the Holy Spirit! 52 Was there ever a prophet your ancestors did not persecute? They even killed those who predicted the coming of the Righteous One. And now you have betrayed and murdered him— 53 you who have received the law that was given through angels but have not obeyed it.”

54 When the members of the Sanhedrin heard this, they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him. 55 But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. 56 “Look,” he said, “I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.”

57 At this they covered their ears and, yelling at the top of their voices, they all rushed at him, 58 dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. . . . 59 While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” 60 Then he fell on his knees and cried out, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.” When he had said this, he fell asleep.

MOREOVER...

A2. Sinister spiritual forces are arrayed against us. Please do not think that Satan and his horde are going to celebrate the work of Christ in and through you. You may be excited about reaching the lost for Christ, but this is the last thing Satan wants to see happen! Thus, he promotes opposition...

Ephesians 6:12

12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

QUOTE – “The devil is a constant enemy to the Christian’s soul. That great, sleepless, and unwearied foe is always laboring to do us harm. It is his constant object to wound, hurt, vex, injure, or weaken—if he cannot kill and destroy.

He is an unseen enemy who is always near us, “about our path, and about our bed,” and spying out all our ways, prepared to suit his temptations to the special weak points of every man. He knows us far better than we know ourselves. He has been studying one book for 6000 years— the book of fallen human nature, and he is a spirit of almost boundless subtlety and cunning, and of boundless malice. The best of saints has little idea how many vile suggestions in their heart come from the devil, and what a restless adversary stands at their right hand.” —(J. C. Ryle)

A3. Many oppose the Gospel and its spread as it “threatens” things that matter to them deeply...

ILL. 1 – The Jewish leaders rejected Paul and his message as they threatened their status and position...

Acts 13:44–45 (Emphasis Mine)

44 On the next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord. 45 When the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy. They began to contradict what Paul was saying and heaped abuse on him.

ILL. 2 – Many rejected the Gospel of Christ when it threatened their wallets and earning capacity...

Acts 16:16–19

16 Once when we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a female slave who had a spirit by which she predicted the future. She earned a great deal of money for her owners by fortune-telling. 17 She followed Paul and the rest of us, shouting, “These men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved.” 18 She kept this up for many days. Finally Paul became so annoyed that he turned around and said to the spirit, “In the name of Jesus Christ I command you to come out of her!” At that moment the spirit left her. 19 When her owners realized that their hope of making money was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to face the authorities.

ILL. 3 – Many rejected the Gospel when it threatened their culture and/or tradition...

Acts 19:23–27

23 About that time there arose a great disturbance about the Way. 24 A silversmith named Demetrius, who made silver shrines of Artemis, brought in a lot of business for the craftsmen there. 25 He called them together, along with the workers in related trades, and said: “You know, my friends, that we receive a good income from this business. 26 And you see and hear how this fellow Paul has convinced and led astray large numbers of people here in Ephesus and in practically the whole province of Asia. He says that gods made by human hands are no gods at all. 27 There is danger not only that our trade will lose its good name, but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis will be discredited; and the goddess herself, who is worshiped throughout the province of Asia and the world, will be robbed of her divine majesty.”

ILL. 4 – Many rejected the Gospel when it violates deeply-held beliefs or worldviews...

Acts 17 (Paul in Athens, Emphasis Mine)

30 “In the past God overlooked . . . ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. 31 For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead.” 32 When they heard about the resurrection of the dead, some of them **sneered** . . .

KEY 1 – Ultimately, we are under obligation to preach the Gospel despite the opposition we may face...

Matthew 28:19–20

19 “. . . go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

KEY 2 – Let us heed this Commission of Christ and follow in the footsteps of figures like Paul...

Colossians 1:28–29

28 He [Christ] is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ. 29 To this end I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me.

CONCLUSIONS

NOTE 1 – Those who wish to give online may do so at www.NewLifeBarre.org. Those who wish to give in person can utilize the offering boxes located throughout the church facility. Thank you for your faithfulness in supporting the work of the Lord!

NOTE 2 – Regular Ministry Schedule...

Sunday Prayer – Sundays at 8:45am

Sunday School – Sundays at 9:15am

Bible Study – Thursday at 6:30–7:30pm

Women's Ministry – 2nd Tuesday at 6:30pm

Men's Breakfast – 2nd Saturday at 9am

Potluck – Final Sunday of the Month

NOTE 3 – Special Ministry Events...

OCC is nearly upon us! National Collection week is taking place November 15–22. We will host a special OCC Sunday Service on Sunday, November 21. Shoeboxes are available downstairs in the Community Room, along with information on how to pack your shoeboxes, etc. Please see me or Ruth D. if you have any questions.

NOTE 4 – Church Membership

Those interested in church membership should see the Pastor for a membership orientation packet.

NOTE 5 – Those who wish to linger in this sanctuary may feel free to do so. This is to be a house of prayer, so those who feel the need to pray may do so as they please. Moreover, I would be more than happy to pray with those who have need(s). Thus said...

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.