

Cautionary Tales Pt. 2

Pastor James Foley – Sunday, November 13, 2022

COMMUNION

- 1) The Wafer Symbolizes the BODY of Christ – Broken for Us
- 2) The Juice Symbolizes the BLOOD of Christ – Shed for Us All

1 Corinthians 11:23–26 (NIV)

23 For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, 24 and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, “This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.” 25 In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.” 26 For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

Cautionary Tales Pt. 2

Pastor James Foley – Sunday, November 13, 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.

SETTING THE STAGE

Scripture abounds with cautionary tales meant to keep us from sin. Last week we noted the following...

1) Pharaoh (cf. Exodus)

In many ways Pharaoh epitomizes the sin of pride, being obstinate and “stiff-necked” against the rule of God. Of course, this figure experienced divine judgment for his rebellion, including the dismantling of his kingdom and the hardening of His heart before God. Be wary of pride and remember...

James 4:6b–7a (NIV)

6 . . . “God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.” 7 Submit yourselves, then, to God.

2) Lot’s Wife (cf. Genesis)

This nameless woman and wife of Lot was afforded mercy due to the intercession of her relative, Abraham. Yet, she simply could not leave Sodom without one last look, and she was turned into a pillar of salt in kind. She serves as a warning to those who are overly tethered to and in love with this sinful world...

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.

KEY 1 – Please feel free to review this sermon and its notes online at www.NewLifeBarre.org.

KEY 2 – This morning let us continue on with the following cautionary tales of Scripture...

#1 – THE HEBREWS OF THE EXODUS

NOTE 1 – Last Sunday we spoke of Pharaoh and the deliverance of the Hebrew people from bondage in Egypt. I wish I was able to say that, upon their release, they served God with passion and adoration! Sadly, the Israelites and their failings serve as a timeless cautionary tale...

Q. A cautionary tale against what, in particular?

A1. We could speak at length how they were guilty of the sin of Lot's wife. Namely, this was a people who looked back longingly upon slavery in Egypt. It is amazing how quickly people (i.e., individually and collectively) can fall into the sin of Lot's wife. For instance...

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."

A2. However, the ongoing sin of the Hebrews was murmur and complaint (i.e., against God, His emissaries, and their circumstances). Time will not permit me to read all of the accounts, but consider the following in the way of illustration...

- 1) Exodus 16 – Complaint re: Food
- 2) Exodus 17 – Complaint re: Water
- 3) Numbers 11a – Complaint re: Hardship
- 4) Numbers 11b – Complaint re: Food (Again)
- 5) Numbers 12 – Complaint re: Moses' Leadership
- 6) Numbers 14 – Complaint at the Spies Report
- 7) Numbers 20 – Complaint re: Water (Again)

NOTE 2 – Here is one brief exhibit of their behavior and corresponding judgment in kind...

Numbers 21:4–6

4 They traveled from Mount Hor along the route to the Red Sea, to go around Edom. But the people grew impatient on the way; 5 they spoke against God and against Moses, and said, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? There is no bread! There is no water! And we detest this miserable food!" 6 Then the Lord sent venomous snakes among them; they bit the people and many Israelites died.

NOTE 3 – Please note that their complaint, grumbling, murmuring, rebellion, faithlessness, etc., culminated with a forty-year walk around the wilderness! Of the upwards of two-to-three-million people delivered from slavery in Egypt, all but two died whining in the desert.

Q. How should such an account influence and impact life and living?

A. Let us consider the dangers of following in their sinful footsteps. Be wary...

Q1. How many find it easy to complain re: difficult and adverse circumstance(s)?

Q2. How many find it easy to complain re: leaders (e.g., elected, clergy, etc.)?

Q3. How many find it easy to complain against God (i.e., being faithless)?

KEY – Be wary and heed the wisdom offered by the apostle Paul...

1 Corinthians 10:1–11

1 For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers and sisters, that our ancestors were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. 2 They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. 3 They all ate the same spiritual food 4 and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ. 5 Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered in the wilderness.

6 Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did. 7 Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written: “The people sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in revelry.” 8 We should not commit sexual immorality, as some of them did—and in one day twenty-three thousand of them died. 9 We should not test Christ, as some of them did—and were killed by snakes. 10 And do not grumble, as some of them did—and were killed by the destroying angel. 11 These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the culmination of the ages has come.

#2 – NADAB & ABIHU

NOTE 1 – The next cautionary tale features two rather obscure OT figures: Nadab and Abihu...

Q. Who were Nadab and Abihu?

A1. Nadab and Abihu were the oldest sons of Aaron, the brother of Moses and first high priest of Israel. Their relation to Aaron is mentioned in Numbers 3:2–3 as two of Aaron’s four sons (Emphasis Mine): “The names of the sons of Aaron were Nadab the firstborn and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar. Those were the names of Aaron’s sons, the **anointed priests**, who were **ordained** to serve as **priests**.”

A2. Exodus 24 includes Nadab and Abihu as two of the leaders of Israel who came before the Lord at Mt. Sinai. They were granted the honor of seeing a vision of God (vs. 9–11): “Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and the seventy elders of Israel went up and saw the God of Israel. Under his feet was something like a pavement made of lapis lazuli, as bright blue as the sky. But God did not raise his hand against these leaders of the Israelites; they saw God, and they ate and drank.” Nadab and Abihu were truly privileged figures...

NOTE 2 – Yet they chose to spurn such privileges and faced dire results in kind. Please consider the following....

Leviticus 10:1–3a

1 Aaron’s sons Nadab and Abihu took their censers, put fire in them and added incense; and they offered unauthorized fire before the Lord, contrary to his command. 2 So fire came out from the presence of the Lord and consumed them, and they died before the Lord. 3 Moses then said to Aaron, “This is what the Lord spoke of when he said:

“Among those who approach me I will be proved holy;
in the sight of all the people I will be honored.”

Q. What was the sin of Nadab and Abihu?

A. Clues re: their sinfulness abound in the text...

Leviticus 10:1, 3 (Emphasis Mine)

1 Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu took their censers, put fire in them and added incense; and they offered **unauthorized** fire before the Lord, contrary to his command. . . . 3 Moses then said to Aaron, "This is what the Lord spoke of when he said:

"Among those who approach me **I will be proved holy**;
in the sight of all the people **I will be honored.**"

NOTE 3 – It is evident from a surface-level reading of the passage that these figures were disobedient in their priestly service before the Lord, apparently treating the sacred in an irreverent way. Yet let us go deeper still....

NOTE 4 – Let us remember that God had taken the time to establish and painstakingly detail the means through which the Israelites, via the priests, were to approach and access Him. Though we tire of reading the Levitical Law, the sacrifices and offerings prescribed within were graciously given by God as sacred tools for worship, the offering of thanks, the removal of sin and more. These were the means by which a sinful people could safely dwell in the presence of a holy God.

NOTE 5 – Yet Nadab and Abihu knowingly, purposefully, and defiantly chose to spurn the biblically-sanctioned way to God for their own way, seeking the Lord on their terms versus His. They supplanted the divinely-ordained path to life with a path of their own making. This was folly!

NOTE 6 – Their actions millennia ago touch upon an enduring tendency that yet exists within humanity: we are ongoingly inclined to craft our own way(s) to the Lord versus embracing the way He has provided. Like Nadab and Abihu, a great many want God on their own terms versus His. This remains folly!

HEAR ME...

KEY 1 – When we seek God in any way other than Christ, we replicate the sin of Nadab and Abihu...

NOTE 7 – God has prescribed but one way to approach, access and connect with Him for time and eternity...

Acts 4:12 (Emphasis Mine)

12 "Salvation is found in **no one else**, for there is **no other name** under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved."

1 Timothy 2:5–6a (Emphasis Mine)

5 For there is one God and **one mediator** between God and mankind, the man **Christ Jesus**, 6 who gave himself as a ransom for all people.

John 3:16 (Emphasis Mine)

16 For God so loved the world that he gave his **one and only Son**, that whoever believes **in him** shall not perish but have eternal life.

John 14:6 (Emphasis Mine)

6 Jesus answered, "I am **the way** and **the truth** and **the life**. **No one** comes to the Father **except through me**."

THEREFORE...

NOTE 8 – Every time we seek to save ourselves through religious works and deeds instead of trusting in Christ, we work to carve our own path and replicate the sin of these accursed priests. We are not saved by good works, but by grace through faith in Christ Jesus (cf. Eph. 2:8–9).

NOTE 9 – Every time we supplant faith in Christ as the means to God with faith in a person, a church, a denomination, a credal statement or a faith tradition, we replicate their error. Though fire may not instantly fall for each moment of waywardness, fire is in store for the rejecting (cf. Matt. 25:41).

KEY 2 – The Lord desires intimate connection with humanity. He wanted it with the OT Israelites, hence the giving of the Levitical Law. He wants it now in this era of the NT, hence the giving of Christ Jesus. But any connection must happen on His terms versus ours. Those who choose another way shall only find judgment.

#3 – GEHAZI

Let us close with the cautionary tale of Gehazi...

NOTE 1 – Gehazi was servant to the prophet Elisha. He is featured in a story about a Shunammite woman's dead child whom Elisha raised to life (2 Ki. 4:18–37) and later in a story about how the king of Israel restored that same woman's stolen property to her (2 Ki. 8:1–6). However, the most well-known story about this figure features a sin he committed, the cover-up he attempted, and the punishment that inevitably followed (i.e., as we shall note).

NOTE 2 – The tale in question is the direct outflow of the healing of an Aramean Commander named Naaman. In your own time, please review the healing of Naaman the leper (cf. 2 Ki. 5:1–19). For the sake of time, allow me to note the following...

- 1) Naaman the Commander Comes Down w/ Leprosy
- 2) Naaman is Notified that an Israelite Prophet Might Avail (Elisha)
- 3) Naaman Seeks Out Elisha and is Simply Instructed to Wash 7x in the Jordan
- 4) This Command Offends Naaman Yet He Relents and Follows the Call of the Prophet
- 5) Naaman is Miraculously Cleaned of His Leprosy and Moved to the Worship of God
- 6) Naaman Seeks to Reward Elisha for His Assistance – Which Elisha Refuses
- 7) Naaman and Elisha Part Ways and Naaman Begins His Return Trek

NOTE 3 – Here is where the plot thickens and the cautionary tale begins...

2 Kings 5:19b–27

19 . . . After Naaman had traveled some distance, 20 Gehazi, the servant of Elisha the man of God, said to himself, "My master was too easy on Naaman, this Aramean, by not accepting from him what he brought. As surely as the Lord lives, I will run after him and get something from him."

21 So Gehazi hurried after Naaman. When Naaman saw him running toward him, he got down from the chariot to meet him. "Is everything all right?" he asked. 22 "Everything is all right," Gehazi answered. "My master sent me to say, 'Two young men from the company of the prophets have just come to me from the hill country of Ephraim. Please give them a talent [75 lbs.] of silver and two sets of clothing.'"

23 “By all means, take two talents,” said Naaman. He urged Gehazi to accept them, and then tied up the two talents of silver in two bags, with two sets of clothing. He gave them to two of his servants, and they carried them ahead of Gehazi. 24 When Gehazi came to the hill, he took the things from the servants and put them away in the house. He sent the men away and they left.

25 When he went in and stood before his master, Elisha asked him, “Where have you been, Gehazi?”

“Your servant didn’t go anywhere,” Gehazi answered.

26 But Elisha said to him, “Was not my spirit with you when the man got down from his chariot to meet you? Is this the time to take money or to accept clothes—or olive groves and vineyards, or flocks and herds, or male and female slaves? 27 Naaman’s leprosy will cling to you and to your descendants forever.” Then Gehazi went from Elisha’s presence and his skin was leprous—it had become as white as snow.

Q. What was the sin of Gehazi herein?

A1. We could certainly speak to the deception Gehazi trafficked in. He lied to Naaman and illicitly received clothing and two talents of silver (vs. 22–24). He lied to Elisha the prophet as to his travels and exploits (v. 25). How foolish can you be to lie to a prophet of God like Elisha!

A2. We could certainly speak to his motivations in deceiving Naaman. As an Israelite who had to contend with the Arameans and men like this Commander, it is possible that Gehazi had no love for such a Gentile. Did he deceive Naaman out of some sense of racial animus or prejudice (v. 19b)?

A3. Yet ultimately, the sin of Gehazi was the “love” of money and material gain...

KEY 1 – Scripture speaks continually to those who “love” money in such a manner...

1 Timothy 6:6–10 (Emphasis Mine)

6 . . . godliness with contentment is great gain. 7 For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. 8 But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. 9 Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. 10 For the **love of money** is a **root** of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

KEY 2 – Consider similar musings from other biblical figures...

Ecclesiastes 5:10a

10 Whoever loves money never has enough;
whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with their income.

Hebrews 13:5

5 Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said,

“Never will I leave you;
never will I forsake you.”

KEY 3 – Consider the musings of Jesus Christ Himself...

Luke 12:15

“Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions.”

Luke 16:13

13 “No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.”

Matthew 6:19–21

19 “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. 20 But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

Q. What was the cost Gehazi experienced for this “love” of money?

2 Kings 5:27 (Elisha to Gehazi)

27 Naaman’s leprosy will cling to you and to your descendants forever.” Then Gehazi went from Elisha’s presence and his skin was leprous—it had become as white as snow.

KEY 4 – Let us be wary of the sin of greed, for the love of money brings forth ruin!

SUMMATIONS

Q. 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
- A3.** Complaint and Murmur v. God, Men & Circumstance(s)
- A4.** Seeking to Access God on Our Own Terms v. His
- A4.** The Love of Money (i.e., “Root” of All Evil)

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 – 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.