

The title of this series is, “Examples of Worldly Sorrow,” and this is Part I.”

I’ve told you before when God wants to make a point, He doesn’t use capitalization, italics, underlining, or bold, but He does use repetition. So you can look for situations that are repeated in Scripture to learn some of the important lessons God has for us.

And one situation that’s repeated in Scripture is people confess their sins – they say the words, “I have sinned” – but they don’t repent!

There are a number of people who said these exact words – “I have sinned” – but they weren’t repentant.

These people looked sorry – or sounded repentant – but their words weren’t accompanied by repentance.

So we’re going to move through Scripture looking at these people one-at-a-time to see what we can learn from them.

PHARAOH

This morning we’re going to begin by looking at Pharaoh in **Exo 9**.

The context is the seventh plague – hail – was just unleashed on Egypt, and it was terrible. Look at **Exo 9:25**...

25 And the hail struck throughout the whole land of Egypt, all that *was* in the field, both man and beast; and the hail struck every herb of the field and broke every tree of the field. 26 Only in the land of Goshen, where the children of Israel *were*, there was no hail.

27 And Pharaoh sent and called for Moses and Aaron, and said to them (and notice these words...), “I HAVE SINNED this time. The LORD *is* righteous, and my people and I *are* wicked.

There’s something truly spectacular about Pharaoh’s words that I want to make sure we don’t miss...

Understand for most of Pharaoh’s life he was worshiped like a god:

- He doesn’t say sorry to anyone...
- He doesn’t acknowledge mistakes...
- He doesn’t humble himself before people...

And that’s why it’s stunning to see a confession like this from such a prideful man.

And the confession itself was pretty wonderful:

- He said, “I have sinned.”
- He said he and his people were **wicked**.
- He gave glory to God saying, “**The LORD is righteous**” and he even used the covenant name of God. He showed that he knew the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, was responsible for the plague...
- He knew He could stop it...
- Which means he also knew his gods couldn't stop it!

So Pharaoh has come a long way from **Exo 5:2** when he said, “Who *is* the LORD, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I do not know the LORD, nor will I let Israel go.” Pharaoh looks like a different man now!

But there is one little window into the weakness of his confession, and it's found in the words **this time**. He said, “**I have sinned THIS TIME**”, implying he hadn't sinned previously.

The truth is Pharaoh has been sinning his whole life, but the words **this time** are Pharaoh's way of minimizing his sin. He reveals how hard it is to confess our sin completely.

Even when we confess, we still try to decrease the seriousness of our sin by saying things like...

- It just happened this one time.
- I have never done this before.
- This is not characteristic of me.
- I never do things like this.

That's what Pharaoh was doing, and we can do this too.

So we already start to see that...

- His confession isn't sincere.
- His repentance won't be genuine.

Look at **verse 28** to see why Pharaoh made any confession at all...

28 Entreat the LORD, that there may be no *more* mighty thundering and hail, for *it is* enough. I will let you go, and you shall stay no longer.”

This is all Pharaoh really wanted:

- He wanted the terrible hailstorm to stop.
- He wanted the consequences of his sin to come to an end.

Moses knew Pharaoh wasn't sincere. Look at **verse 29**...

29 So Moses said to him, "As soon as I have gone out of the city, I will spread out my hands to the LORD; the thunder will cease, and there will be no more hail, that you may know that the earth is the LORD's. 30 But as for you and your servants (notice this...), I know that you will not yet fear the LORD God."

Moses knew Pharaoh's repentance wouldn't last, and sure enough it didn't. Look at **verse 33**...

33 So Moses went out of the city from Pharaoh and spread out his hands to the LORD; then the thunder and the hail ceased, and the rain was not poured on the earth. 34 And when Pharaoh saw that the rain, the hail, and the thunder had ceased, he sinned yet more; and he hardened his heart, he and his servants. 35 So the heart of Pharaoh was hard; neither would he let the children of Israel go, as the LORD had spoken by Moses.

This is some short repentance! After Pharaoh's confession, he went right back to sinning.

Now we're going to skip to the next chapter to see how Pharaoh responds after the next plague: locusts. Look at **Exo 10:15**...

15 For they (the locusts) covered the face of the whole earth, so that the land was darkened; and they ate every herb of the land and all the fruit of the trees which the hail had left. So there remained nothing green on the trees or on the plants of the field throughout all the land of Egypt.

There wasn't much left after the hailstorm, but whatever was left was now devoured by locusts. Imagine a land where there is absolutely no vegetation whatsoever!

And Pharaoh knows there's only one way to bring this plague to an end. Look at **verse 16**...

16 Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron in haste, and said (here it is again...), "I HAVE SINNED against the LORD your God and against you.

Notice the words **in haste**. Pharaoh realized the urgency of the situation. If he didn't get the locusts to stop very soon, they would destroy everything. So quickly **[he] called for Moses and Aaron** to once again tell them he **sinned**.

And then here's his request, in **verse 17**...

17 Now therefore, please forgive my sin only this once, and entreat the LORD your God, that He may take away from me this death only."

You can see how terrible Pharaoh thought the plague was:

- He refers to it as **death**...
- Or some translations say, "**this deadly plague**."

He knew the plague was killing his land and therefore killing his people.

And I want you to notice something about this confession compared to the last one...

He makes sure this confession is even more dramatic: notice the words **please forgive my sin**. He actually asked to be forgiven!

When people repeatedly confess their sin w/o repenting, they have to step up the intensity of each confession so others will keep believing them. They say things like:

- *This time I'm REALLY sorry!*
- *I feel REALLY bad this time!*
- *Now I'll NEVER do this again!*

So please forgive me this time!

Also notice the words, "**only this once**", which means, "*Just this one time.*"

When I used to teach elementary school, students would talk like this. They would say...

- *Please don't give me detention...*
- *Please don't send me to the principal's office...*
- *Please don't suspend me...*
- *Please don't call my parents...*

JUST THIS ONCE!

Maybe you've had children who say, *"Just this one time, please don't spank me."*

Pharaoh is like these students or these children:

- He'll say anything to avoid being punished.
- He'll say anything to get the plagues – or the consequences of his sin – to stop.

Look at **verse 18**...

18 So he (Moses) went out from Pharaoh and entreated the LORD. 19 And the LORD turned a very strong west wind, which took the locusts away and blew them into the Red Sea. There remained not one locust in all the territory of Egypt.

God very graciously removed every single **locust!** Considering most places have at least some locusts, this would've been a really unprecedented and supernatural event.

20 But the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he did not let the children of Israel go.

Once again Pharaoh went right back to opposing God.

Now I suspect you might have noticed in this verse that it says **the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart**. So understandably you might be saying, *"Well, it says God hardened his heart, so how can God hold him responsible?"*

When Paul discussed Pharaoh, this is exactly what he says we will say in **Rom 9:9** **You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will?"**

This is one of the parts of my sermon that I took out, but I'll simply say this...

There are 14 verses about Pharaoh's heart being hardened, and this is number 11:

- The first six times Pharaoh hardened his own heart before God ever hardened it (**7:13, 22, 8:15, 19, 32, 9:7**).
- Then there are three times where God and Pharaoh went back-and-forth hardening it.

- The last five times God hardened Pharaoh's heart w/o him hardening it at all (10:1, 20, 27, 11:10, 14:8).

I think the simple – and hopefully sobering lesson we can learn – from Pharaoh is if you want to be like him...

- If you want to resist God...
- If you want to play games w/ God...
- If you want to confess your sin, but not genuinely repent...
- If you want to make promises to God that you don't keep...
- If you want to harden your heart by being stubborn, prideful, and rebellious, like Pharaoh...

Then you might have to worry about God hardening your heart at a later time too.

Looking at Pharaoh should make all of us want to have soft, teachable, humble, hearts toward the Lord.

Now the real lesson I want to discuss relates to way Pharaoh twice confessed, "I have sinned," but then didn't repent. And this brings us to the first part of Lesson 1...

LESSON 1: WE SEE CONFESSION WITHOUT REPENTANCE WITH: (PART I) PHARAOH, WHO ONLY WANTED THE CONSEQUENCES TO STOP.

When I think of Pharaoh, I think of a man who frequently repented of his repenting:

- He would confess his sin and commit to letting the people go.
- But then he would repent of his repentance, and commit to keeping the people.

Pharaoh is an example of people who...

- Experience the consequences of their sin...
- Confess their sin to get the consequences to stop...
- But as soon as the consequences wear off, they repent of their repentance.
- They're right back to sinning again.

Picture these scenarios:

Imagine a man struggles w/ drunkenness. His wife threatens to take the children and leave him. He doesn't want that so...

He confesses his sin and swears he'll never drink again.
But as soon as he's sure she won't leave he goes right back to drinking.

Imagine a woman struggles with gossip. She starts losing friendships:
So she confesses her sin and says she won't gossip anymore.
But as soon as she feels like her friendships are restored, she goes right back to gossiping.

Imagine children who lie to their parents. They get caught:
So they swear they'll never do it again.
Their parents punish them, but as soon as the punishment is over, they go right back to lying.

We don't want to be like this! We don't want to be like Pharaoh!
We don't want to have a worldly sorrow that's only sorry b/c of the consequences of our sin.
If that's the case then as soon as the consequences are over, we'll be right back to sinning again.

Instead – like 2 Cor 7:10 says – we want to have a godly sorrow that produces repentance!