

Pharaoh is a HARDENED SINNER, who, when under terror, said, "I have sinned."

What prompted this confession from the lips of the haughty tyrant? He was not in the habit of humbling himself before the God of the Hebrews. Why now?

Setting the scene

Remember the circumstances.

When Moses stretched out his staff towards the sky, the LORD sent thunder and hail, and lightning flashed down to the ground. So the LORD rained hail on the land of Egypt; hail fell and lightning flashed back and forth. It was the worst storm in all the land of Egypt since it had become a nation.

Ex 9:23-24

"Now," says Pharaoh, while the thunder is rolling through the sky, while the lightning-flashes are setting the very ground on fire, and while the hail is descending in big lumps of ice, now, he says, "I have sinned."

Pharaoh is normal

Imagine that you are on a sailing ship when the timbers are strained and creaking, when the mast is broken, and the ship is drifting before the gale, the hungry waves are opening their mouths to swallow the ship up and everyone on it.

Even a hardened sailor might then bow the knee, with tears in his eyes, and cry, "I have sinned!" But what value is such a confession? The repentance that was born in a storm may die in the calm. Repentance that began amidst the thunder and the lightning, may quickly be forgotten when all is quiet or at least when he walks off the ship onto the dockside.

Of such people Rev. Clovis G. Chappell writes (Sermons on Biblical Characters)

Not even in his moments of most abject terror does he want to be truly saved. He simply wants to escape the results of his sin. He does not want to pay the penalty for wrong doing. He wants to defeat the ends of justice. He is not interested in being good and pure and true. He is simply interested in keeping out of hell.

John Newton

In case you think I am just being cynical it's not always the case. Consider the story of John Newton who went to sea at the age of eleven. One ship he was on encountered a severe storm off the coast of Donegal and almost sank. Newton awoke in the middle of the night and finally called out to God as the ship filled with water. It was this experience which he later marked as the beginnings of his conversion to Christianity. As the ship sailed home, Newton began to read the Bible and other religious literature.

From that point on, he avoided profanity, gambling, and drinking. Although he continued to work in the slave trade, he had a considerable amount of sympathy for the slaves.

During a later voyage, while he was sick with a fever, he professed his full belief in Christ and asked God to take control of his destiny. He later said that this experience was his true conversion and the turning point in his spiritual life. He claimed it was the first time he felt totally at peace with the Almighty God.

But it was some years after that before he gave up the sea, wrote the hymn Amazing Grace and became a clergyman

But John Newton is the exception in my experience.

How often, in the thunder and lightening of the storms of life people cry out, even with tears "O God, I have sinned!"

And then when the sun again shines, when the black clouds are withdrawn, sin comes again, and he becomes worse than before. A hardened sinner.

How many make promises to God in a time of crisis only to conveniently forget them when the crisis has passed.

Ecc 5:2-6 **Do not be quick with your mouth, do not be hasty in your heart to utter anything before God. God is in heaven and you are on earth, so let your words be few. As a dream comes when there are many cares, so the speech of a fool when there are many words. When you make a vow to God, do not delay in fulfilling it. He has no pleasure in fools; fulfil your vow. It is better not to vow than to make a vow and not fulfil it. Do not let your mouth lead you into sin.**

How many in our prisons make promises to be good and are allowed out early on parole; only to repeat the offence they had vowed to avoid. Hard facts are hard to come by but it seems that we are looking at least 50 to 60%.

Back to Pharaoh - Hail

Moses had come to warn Pharaoh of the 7th plague and give an opportunity for the people to **bring their livestock and everything you have in the field to a place of shelter.**

But hardened Pharaoh does nothing.

As a result the flax used to make the linen cloth and the barley to feed the cattle was ruined. But nothing in the Goshen area where the Hebrews lived nor the main crop of wheat and spelt (poor man's wheat). This makes it about January or February in Egypt. God is patient as the plagues are spread over a significant period of time. God did not want to ruin Egypt.

Pharaoh is becoming more and more frightened. While each plague is on he promises again and again that he will obey the Lord unconditionally.

This time hail stones fell like wave after wave of mortar rounds, and terrifying lightening flashed to and fro across the land.

During the plague of hail, terror gripped Pharaoh's heart and he sends for Moses and said, "I have sinned . . . the Lord is in the right, and I and my people are wrong. Pray to the Lord, for we have had enough thunder and hail."

Pharaoh said I have sinned but this is clearly repentance without fruit. (Matthew 3:8)
He can admit for a moment his sin, but still refuses the only remedy for that sin!

There is no change of heart; it is simply an attempt at manipulation to get what he wants

Moses didn't hesitate to petition God on his behalf even though he knew the insincerity of the Pharaoh's heart and calls off the hail in God's name.

Moses never hesitated to intercede even for his enemies.

He knew that all Pharaoh wanted was a change of circumstances, but Moses interceded anyway.

But when the storm ceases and the sun shines Pharaoh is quite ashamed of his weakness. He is so ashamed that he forgets altogether the promise that he made when the fear of death was upon him. Pharaoh sins again.

Pharaoh was to discover it is of no use for one to say, "I have sinned," merely under the influence of terror, and then to forget it afterwards. It's a style of penitence that is utterly worthless. Repentance that flows merely from misery is not enough and it never lasts!

Two days after Ken Starr sent his report to Congress on the Monica Lewinsky affair (September 9, 1998) President Bill Clinton told a room full of clerics at the White House during a famous prayer breakfast: "I have sinned". But in the same ten minute talk he reportedly also said "I will instruct my lawyers to mount a vigorous defence, using all available appropriate arguments".

<http://www.nytimes.com/1998/09/12/us/testing-president-president-tearful-clinton-tells-group-clerics-have-sinned.html>

Plague 8 Locusts

Nothing changes so Moses goes back with the same request, "Let my people go," and warns of the next plague, a Plague of Locusts. Many of Pharaoh's advisers are convinced and want Pharaoh to give in, but he does not, so on come the locusts.

Then it's a case of déjà vu

Pharaoh quickly summoned Moses and Aaron and said, I have sinned against the LORD your God and against you. Now forgive my sin once more and pray to the LORD your God to take this deadly plague away from me. Ex 10:16-17

How encouraged we would be if a hardened sinner said "I have sinned" and "pray for me." But there are those who use such a technique to hoodwink people. People can even take leadership positions after such a stand, and they continue in sin and hypocrisy. Pharaoh prayed the sinners prayer and he wasn't even led though it with a say after me.

Moses then left Pharaoh and prayed to the LORD. And the LORD changed the wind to a very strong west wind, which caught up the locusts and carried them into the Red Sea. Not a locust was left anywhere in Egypt. Exodus 10:18-19

Then Pharaoh would not let the Israelites go

How patient God was with Pharaoh.

How infinitely patient God is with me too.

By adversity after adversity, God was doing His best to turn Pharaoh away from committing suicide in body and soul. But Pharaoh, as many are, seemed absolutely greedy for damnation. He seemed completely bent on working out his own utter destruction.

Pride is the deepest bondage to sin in our lives.

Here is a highly intelligent man capable of ruling all of Egypt, having been trained from his youth in all the wisdom of the Egyptians. He is not a fool. He has been given evidence, after evidence, after evidence of who God is, so what is the problem? What does Pharaoh have to do in order to save the livestock, his horses, sheep, oxen, cattle, goats, in short all of Egypt? He has to humble himself. Obey Jehovah God, the God of His slaves. He has to admit that every one of Egypt's gods including the Pharaoh himself can do nothing.

And finally as they say on News at Ten

This Monday a robber in Indianapolis stormed into a cash advance store, jumped over the counter and pointed a gun at Angela Montez's head, demanding money from her.

Surveillance cameras recorded it all.

Instead of running in fear or keeping her silence, Angela decided to talk to the gunman.

Seeing how much he was scaring her, the robber apologized and tried to explain himself. He started crying, and said, 'We're going to be homeless. I haven't had a job in months. I've tried everything.' He told her that he was an ex-serviceman and had a young baby. He said he didn't know where his mother was at the time and had never known his father.

At one point, the robber reached for the gun again, which scared Montez but he took out the only bullet in the gun and gave it to her. The unlikely pair talked for nearly 40 without being interrupted by anyone else entering the store or any phone calls -- a sign, Montez said, that God wanted them to talk.

The robber became so overwhelmed with guilt he started crying, and then spent ten minutes on his knees praying with the woman and gave her a hug before stealing her mobile phone and only \$20 from the till.

The robber later handed himself into the police. He has been charged with robbery, pointing a firearm and having a handgun without a licence.

"To everybody who I've affected with this, I just want to say I'm sorry for putting you all through this," he said.

Store clerk Angela Montez said it was divine intervention that led Smith to give up his heist and talk and pray with her for nearly 40 minutes

Only time will tell the genuineness of his repentance. And one other positive outcome is that as a result of the publicity he is back in touch with his mother.

<http://www.abcnews.go.com/GMA/alleged-robber-turned-prayer-apologizes/story?id=8897521>

Conclusion

We have all at sometime said to God or one another "I have sinned"
But may we learn from Pharaoh the need to keep our word, or can prove rather expensive!

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