FOUR WAYS THE ENEMY EASES US INTO IDOLATRY

Bishop Samuel R. Blakes

Exodus 32:1–8
1 And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for *as for* this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him. 2 And Aaron said unto them, Break off the golden earrings, which *are* in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring *them* unto me. 3 And all the people brake off the golden earrings which *were* in their ears, and brought *them* unto Aaron. 4 And he received *them* at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf: and they said, These *be* thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. 5 And when Aaron saw *it*, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation, and said, To morrow *is* a feast to the LORD. 6And they rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.
7 And the LORD said unto Moses, Go, get thee down; for thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted *themselves:* 8 they have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them: they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed thereunto, and said, These *be* thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.

New Testament connection: 1 Corinthians 10:6–7, 14, 19–21
Central truth: Idolatry takes hold when we give something God made the trust, credit, or devotion that belongs to God.

Opening

Israel had already seen God bring them out of Egypt. They had heard His command against making and worshiping images. They had even said, “All that the LORD hath said will we do” (Exodus 24:7, KJV). Then Moses went up the mountain, stayed longer than they expected, and the same people who had promised obedience started asking Aaron to make them a god.

Pay attention to where the story begins. Before there was a calf at the altar, there was a crowd that didn’t know how to handle the wait. By the end of the passage, they had given the calf credit for their freedom and put the Lord’s name on the celebration.

Exodus 32 shows us the choices Israel made. Paul later uses this very incident to warn the church against idolatry (1 Corinthians 10:6–7). In that same chapter, he explains that an idol has no divine power of its own, yet participating in pagan sacrifices puts people in fellowship with demons (vv. 19–21). That gives us a biblical basis for talking about the enemy’s agenda while taking responsibility for our own choices.

1. HE RUSHES YOU WHEN GOD MAKES YOU WAIT

Exodus 32:1 KJV
And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.

Supporting Scripture: Exodus 24:12,18

God called Moses up the mountain to receive His instruction, and Moses remained there forty days and forty nights. While Israel was wondering what had happened to Moses, God was speaking to him. The people couldn’t see what was happening on the mountain, so they demanded something they could see that would go before them.

Listen to the urgency in their words: “Up, make us gods.” They wanted Aaron to do something now. The temptation was to solve the discomfort of waiting by manufacturing their own source of guidance. They knew what God had

already said about images in Exodus 20:3–5. Their uncertainty about Moses didn't change that instruction.

That's how the pressure can sound in your life. You've been waiting long enough. Call them back. Take the deal. Do whatever you have to do to get some relief. There may be a decision you need to make today. The question is whether you can make it faithfully while some details are still unclear.

Put it into practice: Name the decision you feel rushed to make. Ask yourself, "What has God already made clear in Scripture that still applies while I wait?" If the opportunity requires dishonesty, for example, you already have enough light to decide how to handle that part.

Power statement: I can wait for clarity and obey what God has already made clear.

2. HE GETS YOU TO INVEST IN WHAT YOU'LL EVENTUALLY SERVE

Exodus 32:2–3 KJV
And Aaron said unto them, Break off the golden earrings, which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them unto me. And all the people brake off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them unto Aaron.

Supporting Scripture: Matthew 6:19–24
The people brought their gold before they bowed at the altar. They had a hand in building what they would eventually worship. The earrings were ordinary possessions. What mattered was what the people chose to do with them. Aaron took what they gave him and fashioned the calf (Exodus 32:4).

Jesus connects treasure and the heart in Matthew 6:21: "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." He ends that teaching by saying, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (v. 24). Look at the connection between what you value, where your heart goes, and whom you end up serving.

Think about how approval can gain that kind of hold. At first, you enjoy

hearing somebody say, “I’m proud of you.” Then you start rearranging your time to keep them pleased. Eventually, you’re saying yes when your conscience tells you to say no. Look at what you’ve started giving away to keep that approval coming.

Put it into practice: Identify one thing you keep giving up to hold on to somebody’s approval, protect an image, or keep a sense of control. Make one concrete change this week. Keep the commitment you were about to break to impress somebody. Tell the truth you were tempted to hide.

Power statement: I can stop investing in what keeps asking me to disobey God.

3. HE CHANGES WHO GETS THE CREDIT

Exodus 32:4 KJV
And he received them at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf: and they said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.

Supporting Scripture: Exodus 20:2–3 and Psalm 106:19–22

The calf was made after the exodus, yet the people gave it credit for bringing them out. Set their words beside God’s own introduction to the Ten Commandments: “I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage” (Exodus 20:2). They took the Lord’s own testimony about what He had done and assigned His work to something they had made.

Psalm 106 tells us what happened in their hearts: “They forgat God their saviour, which had done great things in Egypt” (v. 21). Forgetting God opened the door for a false account of their own history.

That can happen after a breakthrough. You worked hard. Somebody opened a door for you. You can thank them and acknowledge the work you put in. Pay attention when your gratitude turns into dependence, when “God used this person to help me” turns into “I have to keep this person happy because my whole future is in their hands.” Once you give somebody that much credit

for your past, it becomes easier to hand them authority over your future.

Put it into practice: Tell the story of one thing God brought you through. Thank Him specifically for the people He used, the strength He gave you, and the ways He sustained you along the way.

Power statement: I can honor the people God used and give God the glory for bringing me through.

4. HE PUTS GOD'S NAME ON WHAT GOD FORBIDS

Exodus 32:5–6 KJV
And when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation, and said, To morrow is a feast to the LORD. And they rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.

Supporting Scripture: Exodus 20:4–5 and 1 Corinthians 10:14, 20–21

Aaron built an altar in front of the calf and called the gathering "a feast to the LORD." They had a proclamation, an altar, and offerings. God had already commanded them against making and bowing down to an image. In Exodus 32:8, God describes what they actually did: they worshiped the calf and sacrificed to it. Aaron's announcement and God's assessment tell two different stories about the same service.

Paul makes the same issue of divided allegiance plain to the Corinthians. He tells them to flee idolatry and says they cannot partake of the Lord's table and the table of demons. Who you claim to worship has to govern what you participate in.

We do something similar when we give a choice spiritual language so we can stop examining it. You can say, "God is opening a door for me," while agreeing to lie to get through it. You can say, "God knows my heart," when you already know what He said about your conduct. Before you call it a blessing, look at what you're being asked to do to keep it.

Put it into practice: Take one choice you've been defending with "I feel like God is in it." Describe the choice in plain language. Then ask, "What does Scripture say about what I'm actually doing?"

Power statement: I will let God's Word correct the choices I've been asking Him to bless.

Closing exhortation

The people said, "Make us gods."
Aaron said, "Bring me the gold."
The crowd said, "These be thy gods, which brought thee up."
Then Aaron said, "Tomorrow is a feast to the LORD."

By the time they got to the altar, they had already made several choices that led them there. So go back and look at the choice you're making right now. What are you about to do because you're tired of waiting? What are you giving away to keep somebody pleased? Who gets the credit when you tell the story of how you made it? Where have you put God's name on a decision His Word keeps correcting?

Paul tells the church that the people who left idols "turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God" (1 Thessalonians 1:9, KJV). Bring that specific choice before God. Confess where you've given away what belongs to Him. Then take the next step of obedience you already know to take.

Declaration

Lord, You brought me this far. Teach me to trust You while I wait. Show me where my loyalty has shifted, and give me the courage to obey You there. You get the credit for bringing me out, and You get my yes for where I go from here.