

AUGUST 20th
SINFUL PEOPLE DO SINFUL THINGS

"When the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people gathered themselves together to Aaron and said to him, "Up, make us gods who shall go before us. As for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him." So Aaron said to them, "Take off the rings of gold that are in the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me." So all the people took off the rings of gold that were in their ears and brought them to Aaron. He received the gold from their hand and fashioned it with a graving tool and made a golden calf. And they said, "These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!"

EXODUS 32:1-4

Bill Watterson once wrote, "You can take the tiger out of the jungle, but you can't take the jungle out of the tiger." It's a statement that make sense to us because we've thought or said the same idea. Sure, we may take out "tiger" and "jungle", but we follow the same line of reasoning. For instance, you can take me out of Michigan, but you can't take the Michigan out of me. It's why you'll always see me rooting for Michigan Football against Penn State Football. I've resided in PA almost as long as I lived in Michigan, but the roots run deep. It's no different here with Israel: you can take them out of Egypt, but you can't take the Egypt out of them. What does God teach us here?

God's people broke the first two commandments. The people broke the first commandment by rejecting God as the only god. They commanded Aaron to "make us gods." Egypt was rearing its ugly head. They first wanted to go back to Egypt because they had plenty of food. Now they wanted to go back to the gods of Egypt because they believed that their God who delivered them was gone. But that's not the only problem. Did you notice they broke the second commandment of worshiping the right God in the right way? What do they say about the golden calf? Phil Ryken is wise to point out in his commentary on Exodus that Aaron calls the calf the LORD in 32:5, not "Apis" or "Isis", known gods of Egypt. Still not convinced? Read the rest of the account and you'll discover that they offer burnt offerings, bring peace offerings, and perform a huge sexual orgy...all before the LORD. Wow, this is twisted and messed up!

This sin is despicable...and if we're not careful we will find the same sin lurking in our hearts. Why else would God describe these actions in the New Testament as being written down as an example to us? I Corinthians 10:12 should make us pause before we cast judgement: "Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall." Here's what we need to see...the Israelites give us a mirror to see ourselves. While we struggle with different objects/people that cause us to sin, the disease runs much deeper...in our hearts. Ephrem the Syrian stated this: "the absence of Moses simply gave the Israelites the opportunity to 'worship openly what they had been worshiping in their hearts.'" We aren't sinners because we sin, we sin because we were sinners. But God. God has rescued us out of our sin and sent His Son Jesus to pay for our sin. We were once sinners, now we are called saints and sons. The question for us is fighting from a place of victory. We no longer are wrapped in the chains of our sin, but are free from the old master and must serve another Master. It all begins with us being honest with ourselves and asking the Lord to continue to rescue us from ourselves (and from the evil one). That's exactly how He ended His instruction to the disciples on prayer: "And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil."

Spend some time thinking about the idols of your heart. Ask the Lord to forgive you for your idolatry and give you an undivided heart that fears your God.

Further Reading: I Corinthians 10:1-14

