

Exodus 32

Love God by Loving People

I. Golden Calf: Impatient Ingratitude

Moses on the mountain now 40 days interceding for the people
God has something special for His people. Place to meet with Him

1 Now when the people saw that Moses delayed coming down from the mountain, the people gathered together to Aaron, and said to him, "Come, make us gods that shall go before us; for 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."

- **40 in OT:**

1. Flood: Rained 40 days/forty nights
2. Moses fled 40 years after killing Egyptian
3. Moses on Mt. Sinai 40 days/40 nights
4. OT Law requires 40 lashes for crime
5. 40 Days period to spy out the land: Num. 13
6. Israel will wander in wilderness for 40 years
7. Israel will serve their enemies the Philistines for 40 years
8. Goliath will provoke Israel for 40 days before getting stoned
9. Elijah will run from Jezebel for 40 days/40 nights

- **40 in NT:**

1. Jesus was tempted 40 days/40 nights
2. Period of 40 days between Jesus Resurrection/Ascension

- **40:** Emphasis on Spiritual Truth/Time of judgment/ Period of Testing. Here the latter

Waiting: A test of Israel's [our] true obedience to God

How we handle God's ordained delays is a good measure of our spiritual maturity. If we allow such delays to make us drift off into sin or lapse into resignation to fate, then we react poorly to His ordained delays. If we allow such times to deepen our perseverance in following God, then they are of good use. **[Guzic]**

- **Impatient:** People petition High Priest of God Aaron

"Come, **make us gods** that shall go before us; for 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."

Danger: Pastors catering to people's wants/feelings ultimately leads to **death of a church**

- **Let us make gods?** Create our Creator?
- Fall back to what the gods of Egypt

1. Fail to wait on God
2. Go back to their old ways
3. Miss blessing God had for them

- Aaron response to sinful request?

2 And Aaron said to them, "Break off the golden earrings which are in the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me." 3 So all the people broke off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them to Aaron. 4 And he received the gold from their hand, and he fashioned it with an engraving tool, and made a molded calf.

- Earrings God forced Egyptians give them when left Egypt?

Earrings God gave them as back-pay for years of slavery now given work of the devil?

- Ingratitude for God's deliverance is dangerous:

2 Peter 2:20 For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. 21 For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. 22 But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: "A dog returns to his own vomit," and, "a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire."

- Impatience and Ingratitude lead to backsliding
 1. Back to old ways
 2. Back to old friends
 3. Back to old gods...sex, drugs, rock and roll
- High Priest not leading but following: Sad

4b...Then [the people] said, "This is your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt!"

This gold calf we just made delivered us from slavery/bondage?

- **Misplaced glory steals from God**
 1. Luck
 2. Fortune
 3. Knock on wood
 4. Karma

5 So when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it. And Aaron made a proclamation and said, "Tomorrow is a feast to the Lord."

- Priest building altars and making proclamations

1. Altar to worship the cow
2. Proclamation of a feast day to YHWH [in original]

They wanted something to look at, — something visible that they could adore. It was not that they meant to cease to worship Jehovah, but they intended to worship him under some tangible symbol. That is the great fault of Ritualists and Romanists, they aim at worshipping God, but they must do so through some sign, some symbol, some cross, some crucifix, or something or other that they can see. [Spurgeon]

6 Then they rose early on the next day, offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.

- **Rose early to worship:** Eat, Drink and Play
 1. Offered burnt offerings meant to speak of Jesus work on cross
 2. Offered peace offering meant to speak of Fellowship with Jesus
 3. Rose up to play

Thought they were worshiping but in reality they were playing

- **Playing:** Sexual Immorality; i.e. Drunken orgies

Only 2 Months earlier Israel heard the very voice of the Living God and feared

7 And the Lord said to Moses, **"Go, get down!** For your people whom you brought out of the land of Egypt have corrupted themselves.

- **Seemingly mid-conversation:** "Go down from the mountain!"
 "Your" people whom "you" led out of Egypt..."*have corrupted themselves*"
- **Corrupted:** heb. *shachath* to destroy, mar, waste, spoil, decay

8 They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them. They have made themselves a molded calf, and worshiped it and sacrificed to it, and said, 'This is your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt!'"

- **Turned aside quickly from the way making a molded calf**
- **Omnipresence:** God sees all describing the scene below

9 And the Lord said to Moses, "I have seen this people, and indeed it is a stiff-necked people! 10 Now therefore, let Me alone, that My wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them. And I will make of you a great nation."

- **God eliciting a response:**
 "Let Me alone...I'm going to wipe them all out and start over with you"
 God is testing Moses devotion to the people even when things go sideways

- **Moses passes the test...**

11 Then Moses pleaded with the Lord his God, and said: "Lord, why does Your wrath burn hot against Your people whom You have brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand?"

- **Moses intercedes/pleads God's Grace/Mercy:**

1. Why are you so angry?
2. You knew they were a mess
3. You are the one who needed to save them

Moses gives the people back to God: "**Your**" people who "**you**" led
...with great power and mighty hand

- Did you deliver them to "consume them"?

Philippians 1:6 [I am confident...] of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ

- What will people think of You? That You can't save?

12 Why should the Egyptians speak, and say, 'He brought them out to harm them, to kill them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth'? Turn from Your fierce wrath, and relent from this harm to Your people.

- Your enemies will say you are cruel to your people

Moses leans into God's promise to make Israel a great nation

13 Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants, to whom You swore by Your own self, and said to them, 'I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven; and all this land that I have spoken of I give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it forever.'"

- Reminding/Leaning into God's promises:

Psalm 119:49 Remember the word to Your servant, Upon which You have caused me to hope. 50 This is my comfort in my affliction, For Your word has given me life.

2 Peter 1:2 Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, 3 as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, 4 by which have been given to us exceedingly **great and precious promises**, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature

- Great and Precious Promises secured by God's Glory and God's Virtue
 1. **Glory:** Honor due Him for righteous actions
 2. **Virtue:** Moral Goodness

- Salvation
- Sanctification
- Glorification

Romans 8:29 For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. 30 Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.

Philippians 1:6 [I am..] confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ

Great and Precious Promises based on God's Glory and Virtue

God's promises are based on God's character perfect track record

- You said you would multiply Israel...

...You don't want to start over do You?

14 So the Lord relented from the harm which He said He would do to His people.

- **Got the right response from Moses:**

1. God already knew Moses Heart and what his response would be
2. God wanted Moses to know Moses heart

"We are not to think of Moses as altering God's purpose towards Israel by this prayer, but as carrying it out: Moses was never more like God than in such moments, for he shared God's mind and loving purpose." [Cole]

- Lord would not wipe out the people...

15 And Moses turned and went down from the mountain, and the two tablets of the Testimony were in his hand. The tablets were written on both sides; on the one side and on the other they were written. 16 Now the tablets were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God engraved on the tablets.

- **Two tablets double sided:** Law of God

Wouldn't it be nice to carry around the Work of God/Writing of God?

2 Timothy 3:16 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

17 And when Joshua heard the noise of the people as they shouted, he said to Moses, "There is a noise of war in the camp."

- Moses down mountain. Joshua/Elders waiting part way down Ch. 24

We've been hearing what sounds like war down in the camp

18 But [Moses] said: "It is not the noise of the shout of victory, Nor the noise of the cry of defeat, But the sound of singing I hear." 19 So it was, as soon as he came near the camp, that he saw the calf and the dancing.

- **Law meets lawbreakers:** Moses gets a taste of what God saw/felt
 1. Impatience
 2. Ingratitude
 3. Idolatry
 4. **Insult:** Behold the "LORD" who delivered us

- **Moses the Prophet representing the Lord...**

19b...So Moses' anger became hot, and he cast the tablets out of his hands and broke them at the foot of the mountain. 20 Then he took the calf which they had made, burned it in the fire, and ground it to powder; and he scattered it on the water and made the children of Israel drink it.

- **Anger became hot?** Lit. Kindled, incensed, furious
 - **V 11**"Lord, why does Your wrath burn hot against Your people...
 1. Their god ground to powder
 2. Forced to drink burnt gold powder/water

- **Moses anger?**
 1. Killed the Egyptian
 2. Striking the Rock God said to speak to [keeping him from Promised Land]
 3. **Breaking the Tablets:** Righteous anger?

In righteous indignation, preserving those sacred tablets from the profane touch of the polluted people, by dashing them to fragments in his **holy anger**. [Spurgeon]

Ephesians 4:26 "Be angry, and do not sin": do not let the sun go down on your wrath, 27 nor give place to the devil.

See the power of this one man who has God at his back, and God in him. While the people are dancing around their idol, he tears it down, grinds it to powder, and says, "You shall drink it every one of you." ... millions to one; but what cares he about their millions? God is with him, and he is God's servant; and, therefore, they all tremble before him. [Spurgeon]

21 And Moses said to Aaron, "What did this people do to you that you have brought so great a sin upon them?"

- I'm giving you an out here brother...**what say you? What did they do to you?**

22 So Aaron said, "Do not let the anger of my lord become hot. You know the people, that they are set on evil. 23 For they said to me, 'Make us gods

that shall go before us; as for this Moses, the man who brought us out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.' 24 And I said to them, 'Whoever has any gold, let them break it off.' So they gave it to me, and I cast it into the fire, and this calf came out."

- **Let me explain...**

1. People are set on evil
2. They convinced me to me make us gods by saying "Moses/shmoses"

I said "Give me your gold, I threw it in the fire and holy cow... look what popped out!"

That's it. I just "fell into sin" No big deal.

- **Planned and calculated rebellion:**

1. He thought it through
2. Collected the gold
3. Heated the pot and melted the gold
4. Molded the image
5. Carefully decorated it with an engraving tool

- **Planned and calculated rebellion:**

1. He went to the dating website
2. He put in his information
3. He carefully sought out a partner other than his wife
4. He met her in Starbucks
5. He lost his wife and family

That's it. I just "fell into sin" No big deal.

- Aaron describes the peoples sin accurately
- Aaron paints a different picture of his sin

Moses intercedes for Aaron's life

Deuteronomy 9:19 [Read] For I was afraid of the anger and hot displeasure with which the Lord was angry with you, to destroy you. But the Lord listened to me at that time also. 20 And the **Lord was very angry with Aaron and would have destroyed him; so I prayed for Aaron** also at the same time. 21 Then I took your sin, the calf which you had made, and burned it with fire and crushed it and ground it very small, until it was as fine as dust; and I threw its dust into the brook that descended from the mountain.

25 Now when Moses saw that the people were unrestrained (for Aaron had not restrained them, to their shame among their enemies), 26 then Moses stood in the entrance of the camp, and said, "Whoever is on the Lord's side—come to me!" And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together to him.

- **Unrestrained:**

1. heb. *para* `Lit. He saw they were naked

2. Unrestrained: No shame

Jeremiah 6:15 Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? No! They were not at all ashamed; Nor did they know how to blush. Therefore they shall fall among those who fall; At the time I punish them, They shall be cast down," says the Lord.

- **Later in Judges:** Israel had no king...everyone did what was right in his own eyes

Proverbs 14:12 There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.

- **NOTE:** Aaron had not restrained them
- Moses stood at the Gate: Place of judgment

Ultimatum: With God or not? Who is on the Lord's side?

- Levites; sons of Levi quickly move toward Moses

27 And he said to them, "Thus says the Lord God of Israel: 'Let every man put his sword on his side, and go in and out from entrance to entrance throughout the camp, and let every man kill his brother, every man his companion, and every man his neighbor.'" 28 So the sons of Levi did according to the word of Moses. And about three thousand men of the people fell that day.

- Levi commanded to execute judgment on their own people

In this case, siding with the LORD meant siding against some people. Those who were more interested in siding with all people could never do what these Levites did. [Guzic]

- **3000** dead as the law meets lawbreakers

2 Corinthians 3:6 ...the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

- 3000 died at the bringing of the Law
- 3000 lived at proclamation of Grace

Acts 2:38 ...Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call." 40 And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation." 41 Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about **three thousand souls were added** to them.

- 3000 dead at the foot of the Mountain. Cruelty of Mercy?
- Joshua told to wipe out Canaanites after given 400 years to repent...

Such a colossal crime as that must be expiated before the Lord could again bless the chosen race. [Spurgeon]

- Unrepentant sin is like cancer and must be cut out

29 Then Moses said, "Consecrate yourselves today to the Lord, that He may

bestow on you a blessing this day, for every man has opposed his son and his brother.”

- Set yourselves apart unto the Lord
- **Moses takes the night to regroup...**

30 Now it came to pass on the next day that Moses said to the people, “You have committed a great sin. So now I will go up to the Lord; perhaps I can make atonement for your sin.”

- **Great sin** has separated yourself from the Living God

Sometimes God’s silence is not a test but a warning that we are in sin

Isaiah 59:1 Behold, the Lord’s hand is not shortened, That it cannot save; Nor His ear heavy, That it cannot hear. 2 But **your iniquities have separated you from your God**; And your sins have hidden His face from you, So that He will not hear. 3 For your hands are defiled with blood, And your fingers with iniquity; Your lips have spoken lies, Your tongue has muttered perversity.

- **Need for Atonement:** At-one-ment with God
- Moses knew their **sin was great**

Exodus 20:3 [1st and 2nd] “You shall have no other gods before Me. 4 “You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; 5 you shall not bow down to them nor serve them.

31 Then Moses returned to the Lord and said, “Oh, these people have committed a great sin, and have made for themselves a god of gold!

- Moses knew their **sin was deserving of death**

Exodus 22:20 “He who sacrifices to any god, except to the Lord only, he shall be utterly destroyed.

- Multiculturalism/diversity out the window when people are in trouble

Isaiah 2:26 “As the thief is ashamed when he is found out, So is the house of Israel ashamed; They and their kings and their princes, and their priests and their prophets, 27 Saying to a tree, ‘You are my father,’ And to a stone, ‘You gave birth to me.’ For they have turned their back to Me, and not their face. **But in the time of their trouble** They will say, ‘Arise and save us.’ 28 But where are your gods that you have made for yourselves? Let them arise, If they can save you in the time of your trouble; For according to the number of your cities are your gods, O Judah.

- Moses pleads with God on behalf of the people...

32 Yet now, if You will forgive their sin—but if not, I pray, blot me out of Your book which You have written.”

- I don’t blame you now if you judge them but...
- If you don’t forgive them then kill me too

Is Moses identifying with the people or trying to manipulate God?

- God's response may shed some light...

33 And the Lord said to Moses, "Whoever has sinned against Me, I will blot him out of My book."

- Whoever sins without repentance will die in their sin. Period.

We are not in a place to give God an ultimatum to do our will
E.g. **"If you don't do such and such I will do such and such."** No

- I am Judge Moses. I call the shots Moses. I am God and you Moses are not.
- **Agreement:** You do your job Moses and I'll do mine...

34 Now therefore, go, lead the people to the place of which I have spoken to you. Behold, My Angel shall go before you.

- Go lead the people as you are led by Me. That's your job
- Follow "the Angel of the Lord". Follow Jesus.
- I will bless you with my guidance and presence...

34b...Nevertheless, in the day when I visit for punishment, I will visit punishment upon them for their sin."

God is just. Sin must be dealt with.

- People left alive chose to "be on God's side" ; i.e. repent after great sin
- God forgives the sin but the physical/emotional consequences don't disappear

35 So the Lord plagued the people because of what they did with the calf which Aaron made.

- **Plagued:** Not killed? ... but lasting memory of what sin does