

Exodus 32

After spending several chapters with Moses on the mountain, we will now return to see Israel's behavior in the camp below. We read a tragic scene of idolatry and immorality that had disastrous affects upon the nation.

I. Two very important principles are found within this text

1. Idolatry leads to immorality

Without moral absolutes man will always do what is right in his own eyes.

Israel cast aside God and his commands. In this scene alone they broke the 1st, 2nd and 7th commandments

- No other gods – they fashioned a god that suited them and allowed them to behave however they wanted. Although the golden cow was given the name YHWH it was the Lord in name only
- No graven images – They fashioned their god to look like the gods of the Egyptians. They worshipped an idol in the form of a golden bull. Israel made a god that allowed them to behave like the world they had been called out of
- No adultery - After the worship service came to an end the people rose up to play and corrupted themselves in drunken sexual activity

We are seeing the disastrous consequences of removing moral absolutes in our own nation.

We have raised 2 generations on the teaching that there are no moral absolutes and that right and wrong are determined by the individual and the circumstances. Then we scratch our heads and wonder why people are behaving as if there is no right or wrong

We did not invent this way of thinking. It has been going on since the dawn of time and always has the same consequences.

Despite the age of enlightenment and all the advances in medicine, and science the 20th century proved to be the bloodiest century in human history. More people were killed than in the previous 19 centuries combined. Without a moral

code there is nothing to say that the behaviors of Hitler, Stalin and Mao Zedong were wrong.

2. Moses records that the driving force behind their sin was that “Moses Delayed.”

Exodus 32:1

*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.”*

It was their inability to wait on the Lord that led to their sinful behaviors. The world is laden with bad decisions that were driven by a person's inability to trust in and wait upon the Lord.

Patience is a term used 31 times in the New Testament. It is often reduced to the concept of not getting upset when we are stuck in a long line or behind a slow driver. Patience is actually the ability to wait upon the timing of the Lord instead of jumping out ahead of Him.

Impatience is a killer that has led many to enter into unholy and unhealthy relationships while driving others to make bad business or family decisions. We ask God to help but we are unwilling to wait upon Him for an answer

II. Exposition of the Text

Exodus 32:1-6

The first scene takes place down the mountain and within the camp of Israel

After 40 days of waiting in silence Israel rebelled against God and His word and sought to make a god of their own liking. After acquiring gold from the people, Aaron and others fashioned it into the image of a cow, offered sacrifices to it, celebrated a feast and began a worship service. It did not take long before their idolatry led to immorality.

- 32:6- they arose to play
- 32:7- they corrupted themselves
- 32:25- the people were unrestrained in their shame
- 32:31- committed great sin in addition to the idolatry

It is worth noting that their idolatry mimicked true worship; they had a god, a sacrifice, a feast and a time of worship. They even took that which should have been dedicated to the Lord for the building of the Tabernacle (gold earrings) and gave it to their idol. False worship always steals that which should be given to God. This is just as true today when a Christian who is bound to some vice gives their time, finances and thought life over to the sin rather than devoting those things to the Lord.

Exodus 32:7-14

The scene switches back to the top of the mountain as God informs Moses regarding what the people are doing

32:8 is God's summary of the behavior of the people

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!"

- They turned aside quickly
- Made a calf
- Worshipped and sacrificed

32:9 – God assesses the condition of the people as “stiff necked”

Stiff necked is a figurative way of saying someone is in rebellion. Other terms that would have the same connotation include “hard hearted” or in the case of Israel at the time of Ezekiel “Bronze browed”

There rebellion was demonstrated by their unwillingness to obey the Word of God.

They were happy

They were involved in worship – in fact their worship could be heard 1//2 way up the mountain

They were generous – they gave willingly to the calf

But it is obedience to the Word of God that is the real indicator of your relationship with God. It is much more important to obey the teachings of the Bible than to sing loudly or give generously.

1 Samuel 15:22

“Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices,

As in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, And to heed than the fat of rams.

32:10

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."

This is one of the more difficult parts of the passage. After explaining what is happening in the camp, God tells Moses to "Leave Him Alone." Rather than seeing this as Moses being forbidden to pray it might better be understood as God saying "This is what will happen if you do not stand in the gap for the people."

Man lies under the judgment of God

John 3:17-18

17 For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

18 "He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

We have sinned against the Holy standard of God and as a result we all sit under sins penalty. (Romans 3:23 & 6:23)

It is the cross that provides atonement for us.

Colossians 1:20

and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross.

Now that we have been reconciled to God we have been given the ministry of reconciliation

2 Corinthians 5:18

*Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of **reconciliation**,*

2 Corinthians 5:20

*Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be **reconciled** to God.*

This ministry includes both **preaching** and **praying**

We pray for open doors and soft hearts so the message of the Gospel will be received.

We see some beautiful examples of intercession in Scripture

- The priest bore the names of the people on their shoulders and over their hearts when they approached the Lord
- Daniel interceded daily on behalf of the nation
- Paul prayed for Israel to be saved

Intercession is a ministry we all can and should be involved in

***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? **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. **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.'"*

Moses prayer was a petition for God to save Israel and was based upon the promises of the Word

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

Prayer is in some ways a mystery. We know that we cannot change the will of God through prayer, but that we can be involved in what He desires to do through prayer.

Exodus 32:15-29

Moses heads down the mountain to encounter the people in their idolatry. Half way down he met up with Joshua who had heard the noise and prepared for battle. Joshua is half right, a battle has occurred but it was at the top of the mountain in prayer not at the bottom

As they approached, Moses threw down the tablets containing the 10 commandments, a symbolic gesture as the people have broken the law of God. Once they entered the camp, Moses destroyed the calf, burned it to powder, mixed it with water and made the people drink. No explanation is given. It may have simply been a symbolic act to show the people that they were culpable.

Before addressing the people, Moses speaks to Aaron his assistant pastor. He asks what great threat the people put him under that caused him to allow such heinous sin. His response is laughable

One part of his response is worth our attention; he sated that he did this because the people were evil. Carnality among the people of God has led ministers down through the ages to make really bad decisions

25 Now when Moses saw that the people were unrestrained (for Aaron had not restrained them, to their shame among their enemies),

Even after breaking the tablets, burning the cow and rebuking the people, some remained unrestrained in their sin. Moses called on those who were willing to stand by him in the ministry to save the people.

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.

Levi responds to the call and joins with Moses in the ministry of reconciliation. Some suggest that this is the reason Levi was chosen to assist in the priesthood instead of the 1st born of every family

Levi drew their swords and went to battle against those who continued in unrestrained sin.

3,000 people died that day, but it is important to realize that no one had to die.

No one ever has to face the judgment of God for in the cross His wrath has been removed.

- **Rom 1:18** *For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,*
- **Rom 2:5** *But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God,*
- **Rom 5:9** *Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.*
- **1Thes 1:10** *and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.*
- **1Thes 5:9** *For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,*

Exodus 32:30-35

Moses returns to the Lord and continues to intercede on behalf of the people. He even offers himself as a sacrifice for the sin of the nation

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

God responds that it is the one who sins against Him that will face His judgment.

Biblically speaking there is only one sufficient sacrifice for sin. It is not our own personal devotion, goodness, hard work, or charitable deeds. It is the finished work of Christ on the cross. He alone is the savior. There is no need to wait for another.

Acts 4:12

***Nor** is there salvation in any **other**, for there is **no other name** under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."*

One man put it this way; "Christ alone is the savior, if you pass Him up you will not find another."