

Remnant Life Church
July 28, 2019
Lessons of the Golden Calf
Ex 32:1-14

The account of the golden calf is told through 3 chapters of Exodus

- The worship of the calf and the consequence - chapter 32
- Moses' interaction with God - chapter 33
- The renewal of the covenant - chapter 34

The same patterns the Israelites followed in their sin are the same ones still operating today – nothing new when it comes to sin

- Satan is not creative only clever
- Takes what God has done and twists and perverts it

I want us to examine several elements of what happened in this story to recognize what we need to continue to guard against in our own lives today

- Don't shut down since this is such a familiar story
- Desire to learn something new
- Open your heart to the leading of the Holy Spirit

READ – Ex 32:1-14

Context:

- Israel has been freed from the captivity of the Egyptians through the power of God's Hand
- 10 plagues culminating with the death angel and the exodus after the first night of Passover (Ex 8-12)
- They have gone through the wilderness, crossed the Red Sea, seen the Egyptian army wiped out (Ex 13-14)
- They have been traveling approximately 44 days, and they have reached the base of Mt. Sinai
 - God calls Moses to come up the mountain to receive His law for the people
 - Joshua goes with him
 - When he begins to make his way down, Joshua says there is the sound of war in the camp – Moses knows that is not true

Look at 5 parts of this story that provide 5 lessons

1. The people pressure Aaron to make the idol (32:1)
 - a. Recognize again the setting - Moses has gone up onto Mt. Sinai to meet face-to-face with God
 - b. God designated this place as holy

- i. *Moses said to the LORD, "The people cannot come up Mount Sinai, because you yourself warned us, 'Put limits around the mountain and set it apart as holy.'"* – Ex 19:23
- ii. They can see His presence by the thunder, lightning, and billowing smoke – Ex 19:16
- c. *32:1b – Come, make us gods who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses, who brought us up out of Egypt, we don't know what has happened to him.*
 - i. How easily and quickly we forget the things of God or what He has done
 - ii. Using our timeline in our lives instead of God's leads us to foolish and often sinful decisions
 - iii. Impatience often leads to sin

Lesson #1 – Never forget who God is, and what He has done in your life

- Our culture has lost the fear of God
- Also, perpetual weariness comes when we do in our own strength what we should be relying on God for
- *...but those who wait on (hope in) the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar (mount up) on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.* – Isa 40:31

- 2. Aaron tells the people to bring their gold jewelry (32:2)
 - a. The first question is, where did the Israelites (a slave nation) get gold of any kind, let alone fine jewelry?
 - i. They asked their Egyptian neighbors for theirs before they left and they gave it to them – Ex 12:35-36
 - ii. But why would God allow this to happen knowing what it would be used for?
 - b. God will never tempt us but He will test us
 - i. God has and will permit temptation to come into our lives
 - ii. Job – God allowed satan to do what he did (Job 1:12)
 - 1. satan was only in God's presence because God allowed it
 - 2. He does not have direct access whenever he wants it – satan is under God's authority
 - c. The people received a blessing when leaving Egypt (many probably thought it was only right – they "deserved" it)
 - i. But anything, even a blessing, can become a stumbling block
 - ii. Only by keeping our eyes on Jesus and our hearts humble before God can we avoid that

Lesson #2 - Dependence on God is what keeps our lives in the right place; independence allows sin to enter in

- Just like in the Garden when Adam and Eve rebelled by wanting to be independent of God's authority
- Just like the people and the golden calf – they wanted to be independent of what God was doing

3. The calf is made, an altar is built, and a feast turns into something much more
 - a. **32:6** - *So the next day, the people rose early and sacrificed burnt offerings and presented fellowship offerings. Afterward, they sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in revelry.*
 - b. “Got up” – a sign of honor, respect, also direct intent
 - c. “Revelry” – (Hebrew: sawk-keck) to play (not innocently), laugh derisively, mock
 - i. They are mocking God
 - ii. They are embracing what they knew was associated with pagan worship
 - d. Notice the progression of sin
 - i. Begins with doubt, grumbling, and impatience
 - ii. Moves to action of defying God
 1. the idol is made
 2. an altar is built
 3. they offer sacrifices to it
 4. they then mock God
 - iii. This account is the perfect example of the tentacles and clutches of sin from small to large
 - e. The Israelites are entering into a pattern that will be with them all throughout their history in the OT
 - f. God called them a stiff-necked people (**Ex 32:9; 33:3,5**)
 - i. **Ex 20:3-5** - *“You shall have no other gods before me. “You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me,*
 - ii. They have broken the first 2 commandments before they even receive them!
 - iii. This is how we are often “caught” up in sin saying we don’t how this happened or how we got there
 - iv. Sin always takes you places you did not want to go, cost you more than you wanted to pay, and keeps you longer than you wanted to stay

Lesson #3 – Allowing a small sin to enter and remain in your life will become something much more that will cost you a great deal. Refuse to compromise!

4. God immediately begins purifying His people (**READ - 32:19-20**)
 - a. Why did Moses ground the idol to dust and make the people drink it?
 - i. The people were just drinking to their false god
 - ii. Now they are actually drinking their false god
 - b. But everything God does has a purpose beyond what we can immediately see and understand
 - i. Not only was the idol a symbol to the people but so was the gold
 - ii. Had Moses not done what he did, the gold would have remained a stumbling block to the people – a representation of evil in their camp
 - iii. By drinking the gold (would not be digested by the body) when it was expelled it would now be defiled and the people could not touch it

- c. This was an object lesson for the people and would then be supported and reinforced by the 2nd commandment (Ex 20:4)
- d. This was not the only punishment
 - i. The Levites were instructed to go throughout the people with the sword (32:27-28)
 - ii. 3000 people were killed that day – those who had participated or whose hearts had been turned away from God
 - iii. See the restorative love of God
 - 1. Acts 2 at the time of Pentecost and the coming of the Holy Spirit on God’s people
 - 2. Peter preaches and 3000 give their lives to God

Lesson #4 – there is ALWAYS consequence to sin

- 5. Aaron’s response to Moses (32:21-24)
 - a. Aaron has been put in place as the priest of the people (Ex 28:1)
 - b. Notice how easily he is persuaded by the people
 - c. This scenario is exactly what the church of our time has digressed to
 - i. We are in a horrible season when the culture of the day (sinful) is dictating what the church is
 - ii. Rather than the church dictating what the culture is
 - iii. Aaron, as the representative of the “church”, compromised all that he knew was right and wrong in order to appease the people
 - iv. Many churches and even denominations today are compromising the truth of God’s word in order to be “relevant” to today’s society – it is the embracing of sin!
 - d. Aaron also showed a tremendous lack of personal integrity by immediately blame-shifting his responsibility in what took place
 - i. *“Do not be angry, my lord,” Aaron answered. “You know how prone these people are to evil. (32:22)*
 - ii. *32:24 - So I told them, ‘Whoever has any gold jewelry, take it off.’ Then they gave me the gold, and I threw it into the fire, and out came this calf!”*
 - iii. So this calf just popped out of the fire fully formed?
 - e. How quick we are to deflect blame and responsibility when what we should do is own what we did and ask forgiveness
 - f. King David’s family life was like one long Jerry Springer show
 - i. But David knew how to do one 2 things very well
 - ii. Accept responsibility for what he had done and repent
 - iii. **Psalm 51**
 - 1. David has been confronted by the prophet Nathan for his sin of adultery (which also included murder)
 - 2. David writes these words from the depths of his heart
 - 3. **READ** – **Psalm 51:1-6; 10-11**

Lesson #5 – Do not allow your pride to keep you from admitting your sin, your wrong thinking or actions. Confess before God your need for Him to forgive you, cleanse your heart and mind, AND THEN go a different way so as not to do the same things again.

Lesson 1 – Never forget who God is or what He has done for you

Lesson 2 – Our lives should be lived with a dependence on God

Lesson 3 – If the small sins of life are allowed to enter and remain in your life they will grow to greater sins – refuse to compromise!

Lesson 4 – There is always consequence to sin

Lesson 5 – Never allow pride to keep you from admitting and confessing your sin before God

The lessons of God are timeless

Final Question - What are you doing - notice I said doing, not just learning - to live your life in a way that brings glory to God and allows others to see Him in you every day?