

Exodus 32 - The Deadly Danger of Idolatry

To read:

1. Judges 17
2. Matthew 25

I. Introduction

A. Idolatry is and has been a hot topic for much of church history

1. We are clearly told to keep away from idolatry, to fight against it, to remove any trace of it from the church, as John says in I John 5:21 - *Little children, keep yourselves from idols.*
2. Paul warns that idolaters are not part of God's kingdom, Ephesians 5:5 - *For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a man is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.*
3. So we know that idolatry is dangerous and we know it must be a danger for the New Testament church, but often we have a problem defining what idolatry is - what makes something an idol? What should a Christian's attitude toward idolatry be? And when we identify idolatry, what are we supposed to do about it?
4. This morning, we are starting a new story with the golden calf, so we have the opportunity to think through these things - what does idolatry among the people of God look like and what are we supposed to do about it?

B. This week we are starting the seventh story cycle in Exodus

1. We started by in Exodus 1-6 seeing that God's people are slaves but God promises, by the power of His great name, that He will deliver His people
2. Then, in Exodus 7-10, we saw the story of the plagues and that God will win, He will defeat every enemy before Him in order to free His people
3. In Exodus 11-15 we looked at the story of Exodus and saw that God was redeeming His people, buying them back from slavery to Himself so that they can come and worship Him
4. In Exodus 16-18 we looked at the people's march to Mount Sinai and saw that God was providing for His people, He gave them everything they needed to bring them to Himself
5. In Exodus 19-24 we looked at the covenant and saw that God was joining Himself to His people and calls His people to represent Him - in many ways a marriage covenant joining God to His people
6. In Exodus 25-31 we looked at the tabernacle and saw that God was going to dwell in the midst of His people
7. But now, in Exodus 32-34, we come to a new story, the story of the golden calf, and we must wonder, can God dwell in the midst of his people? Is there any way for God's people to be good enough to dwell with Him?

C. So the theme of God's presence in the midst of His people is still at the center of this story

1. God has promised that His presence will go with His people in the covenant of Exodus 19-24
2. He has provided a place for His presence to dwell with His people in the tabernacle instructions of Exodus 25-31
3. But, God's people don't keep the covenant, they quickly turn aside, they forget their whole-hearted devotion to YHWH and replace Him with lesser images and lesser gods
4. If God, who has revealed Himself as a holy God each time He has appeared in Exodus, is in fact holy, how can an unholy, an un-devoted people dwell with Him without being destroyed?
5. This story appears here between the tabernacle instructions and the building of the tabernacle (which will happen in Exodus 35-40) because the golden calf incident imperils everything that the tabernacle represents
6. But God, in His great glory and mercy, provides so that His people can dwell with Him which calls us, over the next few weeks, to see a greater provision that God has made so that His people can dwell with Him

D. We will cover this story cycle in three weeks, one week for each chapter

1. This week we will study Exodus 32 and see the Deadly Danger of Idolatry for the covenant people of God
2. Next week we will study Exodus 33 and see that God's presence leads to Disaster or Distinction after Idolatry
3. And in two weeks we will study Exodus 34 and see the Glorious Antidote to Idolatry in God's glory

E. So, this morning, let's turn and read Exodus 32

F. Proposition and Outline:

1. Proposition: Idolatry is a continuing danger for the people of God and must be identified, destroyed, and covered by the intercession of the mediator.
 - a. Idolatry is a Continuing Danger for the Covenant People of God
 - b. There is a Better Mediator of a New Covenant Who Lives to Make Intercession for Us
 - c. All Too Often We are the Idolaters, Exchanging the Glory of God for Created Things

II. Idolatry is a continuing danger for the covenant people of God

- A. As we look at the story of the golden calf, I want to start by seeing that Idolatry in God's people is marked by: (5 thgs)**
1. Not waiting on the Lord (that is not earnestly desiring the things of God) and trusting your own wisdom instead
 - a. Consider verse 1 - *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."*
 - b. The people's main impetus for seeking out a new representation of God was their failure to wait on the Lord, their failure to believe that He would enact His promises, their failure to desire the things of God
 - c. They thought they knew better, they figured that they could serve God according to their own desires instead of waiting for His revelation, they figured that they could worship God however they wanted
 - d. Trusting in your own wisdom is one of the first marks of idolatry in the people of God, this is why Proverbs so sternly warns us, Proverbs 3:7 - *Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and turn away from evil*
 - e. When we believe we are serving God in an activity, but rest more in our own desires, our own wisdom and our own understanding instead of the Word of God, there is a strong possibility that it is an idol
 - f. Claiming that you know that you are serving God is not enough, your wisdom often leads directly to idolatry
 2. Desiring and imitating the things of the world
 - a. Notice what the people do in verses 2-3 - *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.*
 - i. They took off the gold rings that they had obtained in Egypt, the things they had plundered from Egypt, to make gods out of them - instead of desiring the things of God, they turned to the things of the world
 - ii. And in verse 4, they used the things of the world in imitation of the world - *And he received the gold from their hand and fashioned it with a graving tool and made a golden calf.*
 - iii. The golden calf was an imitation of the gods they had served in Egypt - the calf was revered in Egypt, so they didn't go back to Egypt, but they took the things, the idea of Egypt and made them their own
 - iv. Stephen makes this very clear in Acts 7:39-40 - *Our fathers refused to obey him, but thrust him aside, and in their hearts they turned to Egypt, saying to Aaron, 'Make for us gods who will go before us.*
 - b. Idolatry was marked by bringing the things of the world into the people of God
 - i. When our activities look very similar to the world's activities, when we find that we are wanting the same things that the world wants, there is a strong possibility that an idol is involved
 - ii. Claiming that everyone does it is not enough, the wisdom of the world often leads directly to idolatry
 3. Taking the name of the Lord in vain
 - a. Consider verses 4-5 - *And they said, "These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!" When Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it. And Aaron made proclamation and said, "Tomorrow shall be a feast to the LORD."*
 - i. Notice the two names that are given to the golden calf - the people call it 'gods' and Aaron calls it LORD
 - ii. These are the two names of God that were so important in Genesis and Exodus - 'gods' is the title Elohim and LORD is the name YHWH - they call the calf "YHWH Elohim", "the LORD God", the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God who brought them out of the land of Egypt
 - iii. The people were not inventing new gods, per se, they were worshipping God how they saw fit, they were putting God's name on something on which God did not, they were misusing God's name
 - b. So, Idolatry is not only marked by violating the 1st and the 2nd commandments, but also the 3rd - taking the Lord's name in vain, appropriating His name for something to which He does not belong
 - i. When we put the name of God on activities that He has not called us to pursue, when we misuse Scripture to vindicate and support the things we want to do, when we claim we are doing something in God's name which has little or no basis in Scripture, there is a strong possibility that idolatry is there
 - ii. We can look at the story of the Levite who made an idol and subverted his family and eventually the entire tribe of Dan and see that he did exactly the same thing, Judges 17:3 - *And he restored the 1,100 pieces of silver to his mother. And his mother said, "I dedicate the silver to the LORD from my hand for my son, to make a carved image and a metal image. Now therefore I will restore it to you."*
 - iii. The idol making was vindicated by placing the LORD's name on it, by taking His name in vain - this is a huge danger for the people of God and calls us to think carefully about what we place God's name on
 - iv. Claiming that you are doing something in order to worship God is not enough, placing God's name on something often leads directly to idolatry

4. Seeking pleasure in entertainment instead of being satisfied in God

- a. It is interesting to note what the people did in verse 6 - *And they rose up early the next day and offered burnt offerings and brought peace offerings. And the people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play.*
 - i. The people offered the same two sacrifices that they offered to God in chapter 24, they ate the fellowship meal that they had eaten with God, but then they rose up to play
 - ii. This word 'play' literally means laugh, it is the same root as the name Isaac, and it often has the connotation of making sport; in fact, when this is quoted in I Corinthians 10:7, the word used to translate it is the word for sports - the people rose up and laughed and played games
 - iii. Probably the best way to understand this word is to see that the people were entertaining themselves - they had devoted themselves to pleasure and entertainment instead of the worship of God
 - iv. This spirit of entertainment is emphasized again in verses 17-19 - *When Joshua heard the noise of the people as they shouted, he said to Moses, "There is a noise of war in the camp." But he said, "It is not the sound of shouting for victory, or the sound of the cry of defeat, but the sound of singing that I hear." And as soon as he came near the camp and saw the calf and the dancing, Moses' anger burned hot,*
 - v. The people were playing, the people were chanting together, they were having great fun together in front of their idol, they found something from which they derived more pleasure than from God
- b. When our activities are marked by seeking pleasure, when our goal is to amuse ourselves, especially when we join together to distract ourselves with entertainment, there is a strong possibility that an idol is there
 - i. If we were serving God we would desire the things of God and nothing else, the desire to be entertained and amused, the desire to join ourselves together around something other than Christ is evidence that we are truly desiring something else
 - ii. Now, there is a fine line here - this doesn't mean we can't enjoy things - we see positive examples of that throughout Scripture, but why are we enjoying something? Are we enjoying it as something which God gave us and which we can use to further His kingdom, or are we enjoying it as a form of entertainment that ultimately distracts us from Him?
 - iii. Claiming that we are just having fun is not enough, entertainment often leads directly to idolatry

5. Self-deception

- a. One of the things that stuck out to me the most as I studied this passage was Aaron's answer to Moses in Exodus 32:22-24 - *And Aaron said, "Let not the anger of my lord burn hot. You know the people, that they are set on evil. For they said to me, '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 I said to them, 'Let any who have gold take it off.' So they gave it to me, and I threw it into the fire, and out came this calf."*
 - i. What Aaron says is technically true - the people were set on evil, they did ask Aaron to make them gods, and Aaron did throw the gold into the fire and when it came out it was a calf
 - ii. But, we listen to Aaron's answer and we know that, in reality, it isn't true - Aaron didn't just throw the gold in the fire and it magically became a calf, verse 4 specifically tells us that Aaron fashioned it
 - iii. Aaron was working hard to deceive himself - he didn't want to face up to the fact that he had involved himself in idolatry, so he made excuses, he presented arguments, he made up reasons why what he didn't wasn't wrong - and maybe he even started believing his argument himself
- b. Idolatry is always marked by self-deception, no wise and knowing person would ever worship an idol
 - i. Isaiah 44:19-20 - *No one considers, nor is there knowledge or discernment to say, "Half of it I burned in the fire; I also baked bread on its coals; I roasted meat and have eaten. And shall I make the rest of it an abomination? Shall I fall down before a block of wood?" 20 He feeds on ashes; a deluded heart has led him astray, and he cannot deliver himself or say, "Is there not a lie in my right hand?"*
 - ii. Only a blind fool, a willingly blind fool would ever worship a block of wood, yet it has marked sinful humanity throughout time - idolatry is marked by intense self-deception
- c. So, in a way, it comes full circle - idolatry was marked by trusting your own wisdom instead of waiting on God
 - i. And it ends by being self-deceived, believing in your own wisdom, being unable to see the foolishness of your worship, being unable to be confronted with the sinfulness of your desires and passions
 - ii. When we are so sure that we are right that we are unwilling to listen to the loving and gentle admonitions and warnings of our brothers and sisters in Christ, when we are so sure that we are right that we won't even consider the possibility that we are worshiping an idol, when we are so sure that we are right that we would reject the teaching of the church and the authority of the elders to continue on our path, there is a strong possibility that there is an idol there
 - iii. Claiming that you are right is not enough, self-deception often leads directly to idolatry

B. Idolatry should cause holy indignation (righteous anger) in the people of God, not passive indifference

1. Exodus 32 helps us understand what idolatry is and what it looks like, but it also helps us understand how God's people should react to idolatry - notice that the godly reaction is always the same in chapter 32
2. God is wrathful at idolatry in the midst of His people
 - a. Exodus 32:9-10 - *And the LORD said to Moses, "I have seen this people, and behold, it is a stiff-necked people. Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them, in order that I may make a great nation of you."*
 - b. God was boiling mad that His people had denied Him and sought after something else, idolatry made God angry, it filled Him with wrath to the point of consuming and destroying His people
3. God's mediator is angry at idolatry in the midst of His people
 - a. Exodus 32:19-20 - *And as soon as he came near the camp and saw the calf and the dancing, Moses' anger burned hot, and he threw the tablets out of his hands and broke them at the foot of the mountain. He took the calf that they had made and burned it with fire and ground it to powder and scattered it on the water and made the people of Israel drink it.*
 - b. On the mountain it seemed like maybe Moses wasn't so sure about being mad at the Israelites, but when he gets down to the camp and sees what they have done, he imitates God and is full of anger
 - c. He destroys their idol, he even desecrates their idol, grinding it into dust and making them drink it
4. God's people are indignant at idolatry in their midst
 - a. Exodus 32:26-28 - *then Moses stood in the gate of the camp and said, "Who is on the LORD's side? Come to me." And all the sons of Levi gathered around him. And he said to them, "Thus says the LORD God of Israel, 'Put your sword on your side each of you, and go to and fro from gate to gate throughout the camp, and each of you kill his brother and his companion and his neighbor.'" And the sons of Levi did according to the word of Moses. And that day about three thousand men of the people fell.*
 - b. Moses, as God's mediator, called on the remnant of God's people to be indignant at the idolatry in their midst, to purge the people of idolatry, even slaughtering those who were devoting themselves to the idol
 - c. The remnant of God's people imitated God's mediator and in turn God Himself - they were filled with anger at the idolatry in their midst and they devoted themselves to destroying it
5. God's people cannot be devoted to something other than God, so those who are devoted to God will be full of righteous anger, holy indignation at the idols in the midst of God's people

C. Idolatry invariably leads to death

1. If Exodus 32 tells us what idolatry looks like and how we should react to idolatry, it also tells us what the end of idolatry is, what ultimately is going to happen to idolaters, and it's not pretty - ultimately idolaters are cut off from God's people, they are sentenced to death
2. God declares that idolaters should be cut off
 - a. God declares in verse 10 that He wants to completely destroy idolaters - *Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them, in order that I may make a great nation of you."*
 - b. God's hatred of idolatry is complete, He wants to consume idolaters from the face of the earth
3. And so, idolaters should be cut off by man
 - a. We see this in the actions of the Levites in verses 27-28, they answered the call of Moses and they slaughtered (!) those who were serving the idol
 - b. Those who had given themselves over to idolatry were destroyed by those who were zealous for God's name, and this doesn't happen only once, think about the later story of Phinehas in Numbers 25:7-8 - *When Phinehas the son of Eleazar, son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he rose and left the congregation and took a spear in his hand and went after the man of Israel into the chamber and pierced both of them, the man of Israel and the woman through her belly. Thus the plague on the people of Israel was stopped.*
 - c. And afterward God commends him for this action, idolatry must be destroyed, even at the cost of idolaters
4. Idolaters will be cut off by God
 - a. This is where the passage ends in verse 35 - *Then the LORD sent a plague on the people, because they made the calf, the one that Aaron made.*
 - b. The chapter ends with God destroying the idolaters, He sends a plague among the people to punish them for the sin that they had committed by turning aside to other gods
 - c. Idolatry invariably leads to death, there is no hope in idolatry, no final pleasure, no lasting joy
 - d. As Paul said, Ephesians 5:5 - *For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a man is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.*

D. We could just end there, and this would be a gloriously true message, but thankfully this isn't the whole story - there is mercy for penitent idolaters because there is a merciful intercessor

1. As we've gone through the passage this morning, we've seen Moses do a few things, but mostly we've skipped his activities in chapter 32, but Moses' activities actually make up the bulk of chapter 32
2. And Moses' activity is to intensely intercede for the people before God
 - a. We see Moses pleading with God in verses 11-14, and then again he goes to God in verses 30-34 to make intercession for the people of God, the mediator of the covenant placed Himself before God to find mercy for God's people, to turn aside God's wrath and to save a remnant of God's people
 - b. Moses made intense intercession before God for God's people, in fact we might not see how intense this intercession was, but we see in the repeated passage in Deuteronomy 9:17-19 - *So I took hold of the two tablets and threw them out of my two hands and broke them before your eyes. Then I lay prostrate before the LORD as before, forty days and forty nights. I neither ate bread nor drank water, because of all the sin that you had committed, in doing what was evil in the sight of the LORD to provoke him to anger. For I was afraid of the anger and hot displeasure that the LORD bore against you, so that he was ready to destroy you.*
 - c. Moses had been on the mountain 40 days, but when he saw God's wrath he went back up for 40 more days to intercede for the people of God, to find mercy and grace to cover their sin
 - d. And Moses' intercession was effective, in verse 14 it says - *And the LORD relented from the disaster that he had spoken of bringing on his people*
 - e. So, before we move on from our passage, I want to look at how Moses intercedes for the people of God
3. Moses intercedes by calling God to act for the sake of His glory before all nations
 - a. Exodus 32:11-12 - *But Moses implored the LORD his God and said, "O 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? Why should the Egyptians say, 'With evil intent did he bring them out, to kill them in the mountains and to consume them from the face of the earth'? Turn from your burning anger and relent from this disaster against your people.*
 - b. Moses pleaded with God to remember the power that He shown before the nations and to act, not necessarily for His people but for His name - He needs to save His people to make His glory known
4. Moses intercedes by calling God to act for the sake of His promise
 - a. Exodus 32:13-14 - *Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, your servants, to whom you swore by your own self, and said to them, 'I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have promised I will give to your offspring, and they shall inherit it forever.'*
 - b. God had not only shown His power before the nations, but He had made a promise to His people, and Moses calls on God to save His people by keeping His promise thereby showing His faithfulness
5. Moses intercedes by offering himself in the place of God's people
 - a. God had offered to destroy His people and be satisfied in Moses alone in verse 10 - *Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them, in order that I may make a great nation of you."*
 - b. But Moses, in his intercession, offers the exact opposite, in Exodus 32:31-32 - *So Moses returned to the LORD and said, "Alas, this people has sinned a great sin. They have made for themselves gods of gold. But now, if you will forgive their sin---but if not, please blot me out of your book that you have written."*
 - c. God offered to raise up Moses in the place of His people, but Moses offers to be destroyed in the place of His people, Moses stood before God and offered up Himself to be the guarantor of the covenant, saying, 'if you will not forgive them, then take me instead.'
 - d. Moses called on God to act for the sake of His love toward Moses, His people didn't deserve His love, but somehow Moses did, not perfectly, as we know, but God's favor rested on Moses and Moses stood before God to offer to take His favor and put it on the people and to bear God's wrath in their place
 - e. Which calls us directly to our second point this morning:

III. There is a better mediator of a new covenant that lives to make intercession for us

A. In the midst of idolatry, God's people needed a mediator to intercede for them, and we can rejoice in that because Christ is our better mediator making intercession for us

1. The author of Hebrews says this clearly in Hebrews 7:25 - *Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.*
 - a. Christ is able to save us to the uttermost, save us completely without fear of destruction, without fear of being consumed, because He always lives to make intercession for us!
2. Paul makes the same point in Romans 8:34 - *Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died---more than that, who was raised---who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.*
 - a. We do not need to fear any condemnation because we have an intercessor that is interceding for us based on His death and glorious resurrection, an intercessor who is sitting at the right hand of the throne of God!
3. And John tells us in I John 2:1 - *My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.*
 - a. When we fail, when we are mired in idolatry, when we show that God's work of sanctification is not finished in us, we do have an advocate, one who stands before God for us, and His name is Jesus Christ
4. Moses interceded for the people of God as a picture of the One who intercedes perfectly, and we are the beneficiaries of His intercession, the ones who are saved from God's wrath because He stood in the gap
 - a. So we should see that Jesus fills up the picture of Moses' intercession, that He completes the type

B. So, like Moses, Christ calls God to act for the sake of His glory before all nations

1. Shortly before the last supper, Jesus says in John 12:27-32 - *"Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? But for this purpose I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name." Then a voice came from heaven: "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again." The crowd that stood there and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, "An angel has spoken to him." Jesus answered, "This voice has come for your sake, not mine. Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself."*
2. Moses called on God to act for the sake of His glory, because Christ would stand before God and call, "Father, glorify your name!"; "Father, save Your people so that the whole world will see how great You are!"

C. And, like Moses, Christ calls God to act for the sake of His promise

1. Romans 15:8 - *For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God's truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs,*
2. Moses called on God to remember His promise to the patriarch's because Christ would come to remind God of His promise - and not only to remind God of the promise, but to fulfill the promise, to be God's faithfulness

D. But perhaps most importantly, like Moses, Christ offers Himself in the place of God's people

1. Moses offered himself in the place of God's people, and God gently turns aside his offer, the time was not yet and Moses was only a type, but when the time was fulfilled, another stood up and offered Himself in the place of His people, and God did not turn away His request, but cut Him off so that His people could be forgiven
2. So, we turn to the Gospels and see that Jesus came to offer Himself as a ransom in the place of His people, Matt. 20:28 - *even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.*
3. And His sacrifice was accepted, He suffered in our place, as Peter says in I Peter 3:18 - *For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God*
4. And Paul tells us that in His sacrifice, Christ gave us His favor and took our wrath, II Corinthians 5:21 - *For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*
5. Moses offered Himself in the place of His people because Christ would offer Himself in our place, He would offer to be blotted out of the book of life to secure our forgiveness and our place before God

E. So, as we look at Exodus 32, the thing that should strike us the most is how great our advocate is - we should be awed by Moses work of intercession, but then we should be doubly and triply awed at Christ's fulfillment

1. This is our intercessor, this is our great high priest, this is our advocate who is representing us before God
2. We have no need to fear because we have a perfect advocate, in fact we have great reason to rejoice - we are eternally secure because we have a better advocate than the people of Israel could ever envision, Moses was such a small picture of our great intercessor

IV. All too often, we are the idolaters, exchanging the glory of God for created things

And so I want to call us to two things this morning, in response to Exodus 32

A. We need to carefully identify idols in our lives so that we can grind them up into dust

1. As we see God's people having been delivered from Egypt by God's mighty hand, having seen God's terrifying glory displayed on the mountain and having entered into covenant with God, falling so quickly into idolatry, we ought to realize that idolatry is a continuing danger among the people of God
 - a. We need to be on the lookout for idolatry, we need to take these things that mark idolatry and carefully examine our lives to see if these things mark anything in our life, we need to seek out idolatry to destroy it
 - b. But, all too often, we aren't searching out idolatry - maybe we aren't convinced that it really is a problem for us, maybe we're convinced that everything in our lives is going just fine, maybe we're unsure what idolatry is since we don't worship graven images, maybe we've just thrown in the towel and don't care, but none of these states is ok, we need to search out idols and destroy them
2. So, instead of overlooking idolatry we need to diligently identify the idols that our hearts are drawn after
 - a. We need to privately identify idols in our heart
 - i. What I mean is that we need to take these things seriously
 - ii. When we study a passage like Exodus 32, it calls for earnest prayer that God would convict us of idols that are in our life, diligent study of Scripture to help us identify what idols are like, and honest evaluation of our lives in the tenor of II Corinthians 13:5 - *Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves.*
 - iii. We ought to take lists like the one we have identified out of Exodus 32, and examine our hearts before God to search out where we are in danger of idolatry, to search out where these things are true of us
 - iv. This isn't going to be easy or simple because, as Jeremiah tells us, our hearts can be extremely deceptive, or as Exodus 32 teaches us, we can be self-deceived
 - v. But, we need to continue the search in prayer before God because we may be self-deceived but God is never self-deceived and He can reveal the idols of our heart
 - vi. And, let me tell you, Calvin got something right when he said that our hearts were idol factories - so don't do this glibly or shortly and assume that you don't have any idols - if you can't identify idols that your heart is drawn after, not necessarily idols that you are actively worshipping, but idols that you have to guard yourself against and fight against to seek joy in Christ, idols that your heart wants to worship when you aren't carefully seeking after the things of Christ - then you probably haven't examined yourself and found yourself good, you've probably just not examined yourself well enough
 - vii. So, let's examine ourselves before God with Scripture and identify the idols that we must fight against
 - b. We don't only need to privately identify idols, though, we need to publicly identify the idols of our heart
 - i. Now, I don't mean that I want people to stand up after the message and share all the things you struggle with, but there is a way that I think we ought to encourage and exhort and admonish one another in the area of idolatry
 - ii. And, I think it looks a lot like what James tells us in James 5:16 - *Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.*
 - iii. As we identify idols in our heart, as we identify things that our hearts are drawn after instead of Christ, when we identify things that we are tempted to devote ourselves to instead of Christ, when we identify things that we want to take pleasure in instead of Christ, we ought to share that with brothers or sisters in Christ
 - iv. So, men, you ought to share your heart with other men in the church, both the good and the bad in your heart so that we can pray for each other, so we can exhort one another and encourage one another in the fight, you should share with your elders, because we want to pray for you, to exhort you and encourage you in the fight - we won't judge each other (or at least, we shouldn't be judging each other), to come to the point of identifying and desiring to reject idolatry is a great good, we will pray for you, rejoice with you, encourage you
 - v. And women, the same thing, you ought to share your heart with your husband, you ought to share with other women in the church, not hiding behind a façade of everything's always ok, but honestly sharing your struggles and temptations so that you can pray for each other
 - vi. By publicly sharing our struggles with idolatry with each other, we prevent each other from failing to identify idols or failing to fight against idols, we keep each other from losing the battle to idolatry

- c. By publicly identifying idolatry we testify to the great truths of the gospel:
 - i. To the sad truths of continuing sin - we testify that sin is real and that we are full of sin - yes, we have been redeemed and yes, we are being sanctified, but that work is not complete - when we portray ourselves to each other as having everything right in our lives we deny the truth of sin and we lie about God's work in us, but when we humbly confess our sins to each other, like James calls us to, we tell the truth about sin
 - ii. To the great grace of Christ - we testify that we are sinners, but that Christ's grace is greater, we testify that we are full of sin, but that we believe that there is mercy and grace in time of need, we testify that we are not completely sanctified yet but we believe the promise that we will be completely sanctified in Christ - when we confess our sins to each other we tell the truth about salvation
 - iii. To the necessity of obedience - we testify that we are sinners and that Christ's grace is greater, but we also testify that we don't want to stay mired in idolatry, we testify that obedience is possible, we testify that we are identifying idols in order to fight them and put them to death - when we confess our sins to each other we tell the truth about obedience in Christ
 - iv. To the purpose of the church - the church is called to teach and admonish one another, so when we confess our sins to each other we show the purpose of the church, to bear each other's burdens in love, to pray for healing for each other, to exhort each other as the day draws nearer, by publicly identifying the idols of our heart, we show why God has put us in a local church in a band of brothers and sisters in Christ - to destroy idolatry to free us to worship Christ completely
- d. So, let's not be ashamed to identify the idols of our heart - we aren't identifying them because we want to continue in them or rejoice in them, we share our hearts with each other because we know we need help to win the battle and we want to win the battle, we want to be supremely satisfied in Christ

B. And then we must seek forgiveness through the intercessor so that God's presence can go with us

1. As we set ourselves to the task of identifying idols in our lives, the only thing that our task can lead us to is Christ
2. As we identify idols in our lives, the only thing we can do is throw ourselves on the mercy of Christ - God is no less mad at our idolatry than He was at the Israelite's idolatry, and so apart from Christ, we are without hope
3. But, as we have seen, we have an even better hope in our mediator, and so we ought to seek His face and seek His mercy when we identify idols in our hearts - we need to go to the throne of grace to obtain mercy and grace in our times of need
4. And this goes for each other as well - when we share the idolatrous temptations of our heart with each other, we ought to imitate Christ and intercede for each other, to bring each other before the throne of Christ to seek mercy and grace for each other, to seek the mercy that washes away sin and the grace that enables us to put away sin, the mercy of redemption and the grace of sanctification
5. In the end, the battle against idolatry is not ours, it will involve us being hands on in the battle, it will involve us getting dirty and beat up as we fight, it will involve us winning battles and losing battles, but in the end it's not our battle - the battle belongs to Christ, and so our only winning move is to bring it to Him and seek His intercession to forgive the idols of our hearts and to defeat the idols of our hearts
6. I think John put's it nicely in I John 1:6-9 - *If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*
7. If we refuse to identify the idols of our hearts, we lie and do not practice the truth, but if we confess our sins, identify our idols, bring them penitently into the light of God's presence, then Christ blood covers our sin and then cleanses us from unrighteousness
8. So, in the fight against idolatry, let our first move and our last move be to seek our intercessor, to seek His intercession on our behalf and to seek His glory in the destruction of our idols!