

Message #64**Exodus 32:15-35**

One of the best moments of any believer's life is the moment he/she realizes that the sin has been forgiven and that the believer is back on track being used and blessed by God. Mr. Miles used to say when a believer gets out of fellowship with God, he is capable of doing anything.

God's people are capable of doing bizarre things. They can emotionally support what is right one minute and totally turn against it the next minute. The proof of this is the nation Israel.

GOD'S PEOPLE SO TURNED AWAY FROM THE WORD AND WILL OF GOD THAT GOD WAS ANGERED AND HE BROUGHT DISCIPLINARY PUNISHMENT AGAINST THEM; BUT WHEN THE SIN WAS FACED AND CONFESSED, HE FORGAVE THEM.

There are nine historical facts in this text:

HISTORICAL FACT #1 – Moses went down the mountain with the two tablets in his hands. **32:15-16**

Now let us keep in mind that the reason why Moses is going down the mountain is because God is angry and is threatening the destruction of His own people (32:10-11). Moses is about to descend and get angry with the people also, but what he does in his anger is not a legitimate use of anger. He takes his anger out on the written Word of God. He would have been better to have targeted some people rather than the written Word of God. These were sacred tablets.

We may observe three main realities about these sacred tablets:

- A. The tablets were written on both sides. **32:15b**
- B. The tablets were the work of God. **32:16a**
- C. The tablets were the engraved writing of God. **32:16b**

God's written Word is to be viewed as very sacred. There is a place for getting angry and there is a proper target of the anger, but never is that target to be the written Word of God.

HISTORICAL FACT #2 – Joshua tells Moses what he has been hearing. **32:17-18**

Joshua was not aware that God had told Moses what was happening with the children of Israel. When he saw Moses, he told him that he was hearing strange noise coming up the mountain. It was a noise as loud as you would hear in war, but it was not the sound of a triumph cry or a defeat cry; it was the sound of singing. There was loud singing.

HISTORICAL FACT #3 – Moses responds to what he sees with the children of Israel. **32:19-20**

When Moses went down the mountain there were two realities we learn:

Reality #1 - We learn about what Moses saw. **32:19a**

Moses saw the calf and he saw the people dancing. They were dancing around the calf. Probably there was very lewd dancing taking place. These people were, as one commentator said, having a “high old time.” I suspect it will be this way at the Rapture when Jesus Christ comes in the air. Many of His family will be living in sin and when He shows up, it will all end. We know it will be like this at Christ’s second coming—Matt. 24:37-39.

Reality #2 - We learn about what Moses did. **32:19b**

Moses got so angry that he threw the tablets from his hands and shattered them and smashed them to pieces at the foot of the mountain. Keep in mind that what he is throwing down is the sacred Word of God that has been written by God.

He had just got done appeasing the anger of God by appealing to God’s Word and promises and now he takes his anger out on the Word of God.

Now it is possible that Moses just has a temper explosion and without thinking throws down the Word of God. It is also possible that Moses’ thinking in doing this is that these people do not deserve to even have the Law and Word of God, so he smashed it on the ground. He was angry and had a right to be angry; but what he did with God’s Word was wrong.

According to **verse 20**, after Moses threw down the tablets, he took the golden calf and burned it in fire. He scattered the ashes over the water and then made the children of Israel drink it.

HISTORICAL FACT #4 – Moses confronts Aaron. **32:21**

Moses immediately went after Aaron and he called him to accountability. He said what in the world have you done? What did these people do that would prompt you to do such an evil thing? Why did you let these people affect your thinking to the point that you have brought great sin on them?

HISTORICAL FACT #5 – Aaron responds to Moses. **32:22-24**

One writer said this response of Aaron would be funny if it weren’t so sad. Aaron was scared. He said to Moses do not let your anger burn against me because you know how sinful these people are because you are the man who led them out of Egypt. Aaron is trying to blame Moses. Years ago the daughter of a family in our church went wild into sin. The parents came to my office and said if you hadn’t preached against immorality, she would not have done it. I thought you have got to be kidding me. You are blaming your daughter’s sin on me preaching God’s Word.

That is what Aaron is doing. He is blaming Moses for getting these people. What a weasel excuse. Aaron is a leader who is a disgrace.

Moses did know these people were “prone to evil.” But now Aaron says—because the people are so bent on doing evil, I made something for them to help them do the evil.

This is like saying because the people like to get drunk, I built them a bar. Because the people like immorality, I built them a brothel. Because the people like to do drugs, I built them a crack house. This is ridiculous. This is a leader of God.

In **verse 23** Aaron says that the people asked him to make some god because they did not know what had happened to Moses.

In **verse 24** Aaron says that he told them to bring him gold and that he threw it into the fire and out came the calf. What a bizarre lie this is. You throw gold in fire and it just comes out a golden calf. Does Aaron really think Moses believes this? Does he think we believe this? He is saying don't blame me, I just threw the stuff in the fire and presto out came a golden calf. What a joke this is.

This is like one charismatic preacher who said to a crowd that he learned to play the piano by just sitting down at the piano and God just took over his fingers and he could play. No lessons, no practice, he could just play. What a joke. What a lie. That is what Aaron is doing.

When people get their hand caught in the cookie jar, they can begin to blame all kinds of things. Aaron's arguments are a bunch of baloney. He wants to blame anyone but himself. He even puts the blame on Moses by saying, well they didn't know what happened to you so it is kind of your fault Moses.

HISTORICAL FACT #6 – Moses responds to the situation. **32:25-29**

When God surfaces things to leaders, He expects them to do something about it.

Action #1 - Moses saw that the people were out of control and Aaron was responsible. **32:25**

The mark of true spirituality is that God's people are very self-controlled, not out of control. Moses saw the people out of control, and notice carefully what is said: “Aaron let them get that way.”

Leaders are to blame. When you have a church that is running totally out of control, leaders are responsible. They have let it get that way.

Action #2 - Moses called God's loyal people to destroy the idolaters. **32:26-28**

When you have a deadly cancer in the body, you need to remove it. This sin was a deadly cancer. You cannot be soft, silly or sentimental. The cancer needs to be removed.

Now it appears as though Moses put out a general invitation to the people to carry out a punishment against those who were doing evil. It seems that most people were not sorry for their idolatry; in fact, they were continuing to worship the idol so Moses called any who were on God's side to take their sword and kill them. It did not matter if they were relatives, friends or neighbors. They were to be killed. The only people who stepped forward from all of Israel were the sons of Levi. "All the sons of Levi" rallied around Moses and killed 3000 men.

Now of course we live in the Grace Age and we do not have the power or legal right to do this. This was something God gave Moses the right to do in the O.T. economy when He was working with the nation Israel.

But there certainly is a principle here and that is the church needs to keep itself pure and sometimes that means it must take a disciplinary stand against relatives, friends and neighbors who are in the church. Leadership is needed to keep the flock under control and sometimes that means to take disciplinary action. The idea that we just tolerate anyone doing anything is not found in Scripture; either the O.T. or the N.T..

HISTORICAL FACT #7 – Moses called the Levites to dedicate themselves to the Lord.
32:29

The Levites stood to be greatly blessed by God because they took a stand for what was right. As these people dedicated themselves to the Word and will of God, they would receive the blessings of God. There are times when we need to regroup in our relationship with God.

HISTORICAL FACT #8 – Moses intercedes in behalf of the people. **32:30-32**

Moses told the people that they had committed a great sin against God and that he would go up and intercede for them.

Moses went before God and called it straight. He specifically confessed sin in a way that we should confess sin. He does not sugar coat this in any way. If you want to have a relationship with God that is powerful, there needs to be confession. Honest confession. There are four key parts to this confession:

(Part #1) - Moses classified the sin as a great sin. **32:31a**

Moses does not start by minimizing the sin, he maximizes it. He does not start off saying you know God, everybody makes mistakes. He starts "we have committed great" sin.

(Part #2) - Moses specifically named what the sin was—they made a god of gold for themselves.
32:31b

Moses does not just confess in generalities here. He doesn't just pray "forgive us for our sins." He names it. Here is what the sin is. If you want God to forgive you, name the sin.

Call it straight in the same language His Word calls it. You will never get anywhere with God trying to cover stuff.

(Part #3) - Moses specifically asked God to forgive the sin. **32:32a**

This is not some name it and claim it mentality. Moses is completely humble—"If you will, forgive their sin." I think one of the best things we can do in confession is to acknowledge to God that we do not deserve or merit His forgiveness. We go to God and confess our sin and it is true when we do, God will always be faithful and just to forgive our sin. The cross of Jesus Christ guarantees that. But there is great value in acknowledging our dependency on God's grace for forgiveness.

(Part #4) - Moses specifically asked God to blot himself from the book of God. **32:32b**

We may recall that earlier God had told Moses that he was going to put an end to the nation and make a new nation (32:10), starting with Moses.

Moses is totally identifying himself with the nation and he says if you are going to end the story with Israel, then end it with me, too. If you are blotting the nation out of the book, which means you are taking all of the Promises you made to Israel away, then blot me out with them.

HISTORICAL FACT #9 – God responds to Moses. **32:33-35**

God responds to Moses in four ways:

(Response #1) - God says He will blot those who sinned against Him out of His book. **32:33**

God deals individually and personally with sin in each person. Just because there are some bad apples in the organization, He will deal with the bad apples and then bless the organization.

(Response #2) - God says Moses is to lead the people where He tells him and he would have His angel go along. **32:34a**

Israel will always have the presence of God. This particular angel is none other than a pre-incarnate Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ continually watches out for Israel. God's plan to take Israel to the land was still operative and it is to this very hour.

(Response #3) - God says He will punish the people for their sin. **32:34b**

If God's people do not deal with sin, they will be punished for their sin. Just because God decided to keep His program with Israel does not mean He is sanctioning a free-for-all mindset that tolerates sin.

(Response #4) - God says He will smite the people because of what they did in making the calf.
32:35

The 3000 that were killed for their pursuit of immoral idolatry was just the beginning. God will always analyze His people and He will smite those immoral and idolatrous.

God keeps track of individuals. He knows who has a heart right with Him and who doesn't.