



“Open Church – Open Bible”

Min. Marossa Davis



Sunday Church School

November 8, 2020

“God Confronts the Sin”

Exodus 32:15-24

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“God Confronts the Sin”
Exodus 32:15-24 (KJV)

- v. 15 “And Moses turned, and went down from the mount, and the two tables of the testimony were in his hand: the tables were written on both their sides; on the one side and on the other were they written.
- v. 16 And the tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, graven upon the tables.
- v. 17 **And when Joshua heard the noise of the people as they shouted, he said unto Moses, There is a noise of war in the camp.**
- v. 18 And he said, It is not the voice of them that shout for mastery, neither is it the voice of them that cry for being overcome: but the noise of them that sing do I hear.”

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Exodus 24:15-24

- v. 19. “And it came to pass, as soon as he came nigh unto the camp, that he saw the calf, and the dancing: and Moses' anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount.
- v. 20 And he took the calf which they had made, and burnt it in the fire, and ground it to powder, and strawed it upon the water, and made the children of Israel drink of it.
- v. 21 **And Moses said unto Aaron, What did this people unto thee, that thou hast brought so great a sin upon them?”**

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Exodus 24:15-24

v.22 **And Aaron said, Let not the anger of my lord wax hot: thou knowest the people, that they are set on mischief.**

v.23 For they said unto me, Make us gods, which shall go before us: for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.

v.24 **I said unto them, Whosoever hath any gold, let them break it off. So they gave it me: then I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf.”**

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Exodus 24:15-24

Today’s lesson discusses the breaking of the two tables (which was a significant ceremonial act and not just done in a fit of anger) , and the destruction of the idol. **Moses was angry**, and rightly so, with the people of Israel when they turned from God and bowed down in worship before a **golden calf**. His anger was motivated by his desire to honor the Lord and was directed at confronting the people with their sin so that they might **repent and be restored** to God. Israel had failed God. They had sinned against Him. We can learn much from their experience about how not to repeat their mistakes.

As we learned in last weeks lesson, the Lord had already informed Moses of the rebellion taking place in the camp while he was on the mountain in God’s presence (vs. 7-8). Moses had interceded for the people

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so that the Lord would turn His anger and not consume them (vs. 11-13).

While the Lord did not destroy them, it does not mean that He nor Moses were no longer angry at the sin on display at the foot of the mountain.

In verse 15 as Moses starts down the mountain, our text includes a very detailed description of the two tables of the testimony, which were the Ten Commandments. These tables, written on both sides by God Himself represented the covenant obligations the people had willingly accepted. These details emphasized the people’s sin in violating the law God had personally given to them. The fact that these **precious** tablets were later destroyed stresses the depths of the Hebrews sin.

Coming back down the mountain Moses met Joshua. Joshua thought that a war of some kind must be going on when he heard the noise from the camp below. Moses did not explain that the Lord had already told him what was

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going on below, but rather, corrected his mistaken assumption and said it sounded like singing to him. Moses knew it came from people reveling in unrestrained, sensual worship like that of the pagans.

Joshua must have been shocked by what he saw when he and Moses came in view of the Israelites camp. Moses had been prepared for this sight though by the Lord’s revelation, yet seeing it with his own eyes infuriated him. Our text says Moses saw the calf, and the dancing (v.19) and as a result, his “anger waxed hot.” The golden image of the calf or bull, was the center of the Israelites’ attention. While the people, and even Aaron, proclaimed their celebration “ a feast to the Lord” , the One who had brought them out of Egypt, the image in reality represented their rejection

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of the Lord and His laws. The Lord had forbidden the making of idols and the worship of them or the use of them in worship. The idol standing in the middle of the camp was an affront to the Lord and to anyone who valued His commands. The evil scene was compounded by the noisy scene of people dancing before the image. The whole scene probably describes a religious ceremony with devotees whirling ecstatically before the idol and altar. While the people tried to justify their actions by saying they were worshipping Yahweh, their worship mimicked that of their pagan neighbors who bowed down to various gods.

Though we are to have freedom in our worship services as Psalms 47:1, 150: 1-6 speaks of joyous praise, this does not mean that we are free to worship God in anyway we please. John 4:24 teaches us that we are to worship God in spirit and in truth.

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Moses was horrified by the sight in front of him. and his anger burned and was fully justified. He was not angry that they had abandoned him but that they had turned from God. His response was to throw the stone tablets that he was holding to the ground, where they shattered! Moses did this at the foot of the mountain where everyone could see. This was also where he had built an altar for the sacrifices that had inaugurated the nation’s covenant with the Lord. Breaking the tablets there seemed to be quite intentional. Moses never expressed regret for doing it and the Lord never rebuked him for it.

Instead the breaking of the tablets was an important symbolic act done carefully, deliberately and openly for the benefit of the Israelites because of the way a violation of a covenant is described in the ancient world as a ‘breaking’ of that covenant. Just as the people had broken their covenant with

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the Lord, Moses broke the tablets that represented that covenant agreement. The people understood the symbolism of Moses’s act but they had more to be concerned with than just Moses’ anger. They had offended the Holy God with whom they had a solemn covenant.

Moses had appointed Aaron, along with Hur to serve as judges and leaders of the people while he was on the mountain for forty days and 40 nights. Moses was the premier leader but , even he could not be in two places at once. While he was on the mountain with God, the people of Israel grew weak in faith, resorting to idol worship. Aaron had failed to restrain the people in Moses’ absence. Moses now did what Aaron failed to do. He boldly stood up to the rebels, condemned their sin, and ended their feast. We might wonder how Moses could get away with what he proceeded to do.

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Moses was able to do all he did because:

- 1) The people were **shocked** to see him. They thought that after 40 days and nights absence he must surely be dead.
- 2) With Moses’s appearance, the whole argument for justifying their idolatry fell apart. They had told Aaron to “make us gods... for as for **this Moses**....we know not what is become of him.” v. 1, 23
- 3) Most significantly was the **moral authority** Moses possessed. He was the one God had used to deliver the people from Egypt. His leadership had been widely vindicated in the wilderness travels. And now he had just come from being in the presence of the Lord on the mountaintop!

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Moses then took the calf which they had made, and burned it in the fire, and ground it to powder. Since the image was probably made of wood overlaid with gold, burning it would **reduce it to ashes**, and melted gold. When the gold cooled and rehardened, it could, together with the ashes, be ground into a powder. He then took the powder, which was all that was left of the idol, and spread it on the water. Moses then made the people to **drink it!** Clearly his actions were meant to convey a message.

Ingesting the remains of the golden calf probably portrayed the idea that the people would have to suffer the consequences of their sin. The complete and utter destruction of the calf showed that the calf could not save itself. It was only wood and gold and could offer the people nothing. The people were made to drink the water so they could taste the bitterness of their sin.

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The people drank the water that had become the watery grave of the idol. In this way the **thing** that they had worshipped would become a product of their own human waste, the epitome of worthlessness and impurity.

In verse 21, Moses asked his brother Aaron (who had been so faithful to him) , “ What did this people do unto thee, that thou hast brought so great a sin upon them?” Aaron was quick to make an excuse for himself. He claimed that he had collected gold jewelry and had just thrown it all into the fire, and the idol had appeared all by itself! Aaron did not own up to his sin honestly and tried to minimize his participation. He was **unrepentant**. He had allowed social pressure to influence his actions. He had helped the people to sin.

Aaron responded with the all too familiar tactic of shifting the blame to others. He asked Moses not to be angry with him as he knew the people were

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‘set on mischief’ or evil. He was trying in this way to portray himself as an **innocent bystander**. He then went on to give an account of the people’s demand for them to make gods for them **in Moses absence** (after all Moses was gone for 40 days and 40 nights) His third unbelievable and totally unconvincing suggestion was that he had thrown the gold into the fire and **amazingly the calf emerged!** In other words perhaps a **miracle** had occurred. Did he really believe God would miraculously provide an idol so that the people could sin by worshipping it? Moses did not even respond to such a notion.

By Aaron’s inability to provide a reasonable account of why he agreed to the people’s request for idolatry, he condemned himself. Idolatry is an affront to God and can never be justified.

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When Moses asked Aaron what had happened. Aaron tried to blame the people when he should have taken responsibility for his sin. When we sin, we should not make excuses. We need to confess to God and repent, trusting in God’s mercy. (1 John 1:9) Sin must be confronted and dealt with. When we sin, we should repent and face the consequences rather than try to hide what we have done.

Some Hebrew scholars contend that although Aaron made the golden calf he escaped immediate punishment due to Moses’s intercession (Deuteronomy 9:20). He, like Moses, later died in the wilderness and never entered the Promised Land. His two sons also died for offering a sacrifice or unauthorized fire before the Lord. They were **immediately** consumed by God’s fire (Lev 10:2). Because God is **just**, sin can never go unpunished by

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Him. **Thankfully**, He is also merciful, forgiving those who repent.

Our lesson today teaches us a relevant lesson in that silently going along with sin without raising objections to it is essentially an encouragement to others to sin. And that is a sin for which we will be held accountable.

Our Golden text this week is found in Exodus 32 verse 26. It asks the question Moses asked as he stood in the gate of the camp “...**Who is on the Lord’s Side? let him come unto me.**” For the Israelites, being on the Lord’s side meant worshipping Him alone rather than a pagan idol such as a golden calf. Even before the Mosaic Law had been formally delivered, the children of Israel were still responsible for what God had already revealed to them, namely, that they were a special

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people set apart unto Him and Him alone.

Today, we are accountable to the full written revelation from God, which tells us that we must place our faith in God’s Son Jesus, for salvation from our sin. Scripture calls people to a **response of faith**:

“**Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved**” (**Acts 16:31**).

Likewise the Israelites were called to a response: “Let him come unto me”. Whoever was on the Lord’s side was to join Moses in solidarity. The golden text reports that all the Levites did so. Perhaps other individuals as well.

Following Jesus is more than a simple affirmation of His existence or even His ability to save. We must follow Him and live for Him,

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dedicating ourselves to being on “His side” in all matters, whether of life, truth, morality or salvation. In the end we will find the path of truth is worth any sacrifice it requires.

Today’s Aim

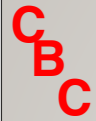
- 1) **Facts**: to examine how God confronted the sin of Israel.
- 2) **Principle**: to know that God holds all people to account for their sin.
- 3) **Application**: to strengthen our daily awareness that our thoughts and actions are seen and evaluated by God.

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Practical Points

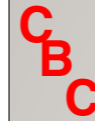
1. In God alone believers have a permanent and perfect standard of morality and holy character. Exodus 32:15-16
2. Rejecting God’s Word always causes confusion among God’s people. vs. 17-18
3. Anger can be destructive, but sometimes that is necessary. v. 19
4. Sin dismays those whose hearts and minds are intent on pleasing God. vs. 20-21
5. Leaders who fail must repent and turn to God instead of making excuses. v. 22
6. Mature leaders should stand on God’s Word to withstand public pressure. vs. 23-24



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For Further Reflection

1. Why is it emphasized that God Himself had written the law on the tablets?
2. The idolaters did not challenge Moses or prevent him from destroying the golden calf. What does this tell us about them?
3. What excuses did Aaron offer to shift responsibility from himself for this great sin? What excuses do Christians often use to justify sinful behavior today?



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Sunday School Curriculum

Union Gospel Press Adult Student Book and Bible Expositor and
Illustrator Fall Quarter 2020

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