

"Responding to Idolatry"

Exodus 32

September 3, 2017

Recap:

Last week we learned that we will need to learn to manage our creaturely instinct toward idolatry ... that inner impulse to "look too" something/someone

"... man, by nature, is essentially a religious creature, i.e., made, originally, to pay homage to his Creator. It is this religious nature of man's which, strange as it may sound, lies at the root of all idolatry. ...Instead of worshipping God, he now serves his own lusts, and honors idols which are patterned after his lusts. Man must have his god, otherwise he would not be man, and because the "natural man"—what he now is as a fallen creature—has lost his knowledge of the true God, he turns to the resources of his own mind to fill the void." A.W. Pink, "Gleanings from Exodus"

- this week, we get a chance to learn from the responses to idolatry. ...God's Response and Moses response—***THIS is what the Bible Focuses On in Ex 32***

- Which raises This Question: *What are You Coming to the Bible to Find? Why do you read it? What do you want it to show you? What are you looking for?*

INTRO ...Learning to Learn from the Bible...

"I am not a politician, or a political activist. I am a pastor emeritus who spends much of his time trying to answer hard questions about what the Bible means and how to apply it to our lives. So after the deadly conflict in Charlottesville, Virginia, on August 11–12, 2017, I posed myself a lot of questions.

Sometimes the Bible gives direct answers to our questions. Like the question "How should we talk to each other?" Answer: "Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear" (Eph 4:29).

But that's not mainly what the Bible does. Mainly it put us on a path of transformation. It points us to Jesus Christ and the good news that he came into the world to save sinners (1 Tim 1:15). He died on the cross to bear the sins of all who believe in him (1 Pet 2:24). He absorbed the righteous anger of God (Rom 3:24-25). And now anyone — from any race, tribe, people, class, or nation — who believes in him has forgiveness of sins

(Acts 10:43), and eternal life (Jn 3:16), and the gift of the Holy Spirit who enables us to fight our own sins, like pride and selfishness and fear and greed and lust and racism (Rom 8:13).

So the message of the Bible is not mainly a social program of personal or national improvement. It is mainly a message for how to be reconciled to God, and how to become a kind of exile and sojourner in this world till Jesus comes to make all things new (1 Pet 2:11; Php 3:20; Rom 8:21). John Piper, "Charlottesville, Confederate Memorials, and Southern Culture", www.desiringgod.org

- For many in popular Christian Culture... they come to the Bible to find 'Life-insights', ideas, tips, spiritual secrets that will help them improve their journey. ... IF that's my angle... then I might not spend much time in Exodus 32-34

God's Response to the People's Idolatry

Exodus 32:7-10 ...26-28 ...33-35

- **God Responds by 'Distancing Himself'** ...v. 7 – "your people" ...Ex 33:2-3 – God will not be in their midst!
- **God Responds by Labeling Their Behavior** ...v. 7-9 – "they have corrupted themselves" ... "they have turned aside" ... "they have worshiped and sacrificed to an idol" ... "they are a stiff-necked" people" ... v. 30 [Moses] – "you have sinned a great sin"
 - *Our culture despises "NEGATIVE LABELS"*
 - *You Can't Subscribe to this "Word Game" and follow God*
- **God Responds with "WRATH"** ...v. 10

*"It may surprise us to find how frequently the Bible talks about the wrath of God. Yet if God loves all that is right and good, and all that conforms to his moral character, then it should not be surprising that he would hate everything that is opposed to his moral character. God's wrath directed against sin is therefore closely related to God's holiness and justice. God's wrath may be defined as follows: **God's wrath means that he intensely hates all sin.**"*

Wayne Grudem, "Systematic Theology", p. 206

Head on Collision with Non-preferred Info! ...Man does the wrong thing, God Responds with Anger & Withdrawal, Man is Visited with Consequences.

- If you are a 'selective reader of the Bible'... This is 'Foreign Material'!!
 - **Here in lies the Benefit of Studying Books of the Bible**, rather than 'selectively reading the Bible like it's the Whitman's Sampler Chocolate Box
- Today's culture Obligates a Pastor/Preacher to "Give Us What We Want"!!—Which is **what the Mob at Sinai did to Aaron!**

...BUT, If You Don't See 'That Kind of God', you Won't Need 'This Kind of Jesus'!! ...The kind who stands as a 'Divine Human Shield' to absorb the Wrath of God, rather than let it be poured out on man!! ...**You won't look for a SAVIOR—you'll look for an Inspiring Moral Example!**

Moses' Response to the People's Idolatry

- **Moses Responded Like the Wrath of God was REAL!!** ...v.11
- **Moses Responded with Passionate, Sober Disappointment!!** ...v. 15-20
 - He broke 2 Sacred Tablets!!! ...He was Passionately Loyal to GOD!!
- **Moses Responded with HOPE that Was Based in the Full Character of God!!** ...v. 11-14

"Let us notice now the various grounds upon which Moses pleaded before 'the Lord his God.' They are three in number: he appealed to the grace of God, the glory of God, and the faithfulness of God." A.W. Pink, "Gleanings from Exodus"

...With Full Awareness of the Wrath of God—Moses is also aware of These Other Attributes of God!!

- **Take Note of What Moses was Interceding to Save These People From!!** ...it was NOT from their Idolatry or their Self-Destructive Stiff-Necked Character ...or their Poverty or their Lack of Education or any other Mt. Sinai Social Cause ...He was Interceding to Save them From the Wrath of God!!

...THIS will make All the Difference in the World to Your Understanding of the Gospel!

- **Moses Responds with Intercession ...**

It is noteworthy that Moses did not lose himself in this moment of trial. We read at once, "And Moses besought Jehovah, his God." He was undoubtedly a man of prayer, but he must have been continually in the spirit of prayer, or else I could conceive of him, at that moment, falling on his face and lying there in silent horror! I could imagine him flying down the mountain in a passionate haste to see what had been done — but it is delightful to find that he did neither of these two things — rather he began to pray!" **Charles Spurgeon**, (Spurgeon's Sermons Complete 63V)

"Moses did not fail his people in this hour of their urgent need. Most blessed is it to behold how he conducted himself on this occasion: God had said to him, 'Let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them...and I will make of thee a great nation,' but Moses uses his place of nearness to God not on his own behalf, but for the good of the people." **A.W. Pink**, "Gleanings from Exodus", Kindle loc 10422

- *Many Are the Circumstances of Life that Call for This Response from Us*

Moses Response Provides Lessons for Those Who Lead Others

- Moses Leadership is NOT Clouded by His Own Ambitions! ...v.10
- Moses Leadership is Filled with & Motivated by Godly GRACE

Ultimately – God Responds to Intercession ...v.14

...Clearly, the focus of this passage is as much about God Responding to a Mediator's Intercession, as it is God Responding to the Idolatry of Man!

... the most important thing about this moment is NOT Moses—
but rather the ONE to whom Moses Points—The ULTIMATE
MEDIATOR who saves us from the Wrath of God!!