

Exodus 32:1-14

“Coming down the mountain (part a)”

Outline:

I.) Intro.

II.) Vs. 1-6 A crises of faith

III.) Vs. 7-14 Change your heart through prayer

Intro.

This chapter requires a brief time line so we can understand what is taking place. Israel has been out of Egypt for around a year. During that year they have seen the miracles hand of God guiding them:

- When their backs were against the Red Sea, He parted it.
- When they had no food or water He provided it.
- When they had an enemy He dealt with them.
- Finally, He brought them to this camp sight right in front of Mount Sinai and spoke to them.

God told them that out of all the nations and peoples of the earth He chose them as His special treasure. God even revealed His glory to them, then He told them how to maintain a right relationship with Him. The leadership got to sit down and have a dinner with the Lord present. It is in the 24 chapter where the events of this chapter are born. God tells Moses to come back up the mountain so that He can give the people the tablets of stone and the pattern for the tabernacle. God says that the purpose was so that He could dwell among them! As Moses and Joshua ascend the mountain the glory of the Lord was like a consuming fire upon the mountain. So they knew as long as the fire was upon the mountain the Lord was there with Moses. From chapter 24 through 31 Moses is on the mountain with the Lord. The trouble with mountain top experiences is that sooner or later you will have to come down and Moses is about to come down into the biggest mess he could have ever imagined.

II.) Vs. 1-6 A crises of faith

Vs. 1 The events of chapters 32-34 happen at some of the same time as the events of chapters 24-31. It is while Moses is hanging out with the Lord that the people gather together before Aaron. Not much time had passed before they approach Aaron. I say this because it took time to collect the gold, decide on what animal to make and then fashion the idol. It had to be less than 40 days! How could a people who had only a few days prior seen the glory of the Lord make such an about face? They had heard the conditions to maintain fellowship and clearly one of them was, *“You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them.”* What happened in such a short time that caused them to so totally forsake God? Did they have some sort of amnesia? What in the world would have caused the leadership and specifically Aaron to go along with this?

Could it be possible that what ever caused these folks to forsake God are the same things that we are prone to ourselves? I would like to look at this section with an eye to why I at times have a crises of faith. In so doing it will be necessary to look at all of the parties involved, from the ordinary person all the way up to Aaron.

- 1.) Vs. 1 *“When they **SAW** that Moses delayed coming down from the mountain”*: This crisis started at the point in time when they started determining their situation based upon what they SAW rather than God’s word. They were walking by sight and not by faith! Simply put they lost faith in God’s provision and promise because of the passage of time. They panicked when what God had told them would happen did not happen according to their time frame. The word *“delayed”* here is an interesting one. Though it is rightly translated “delayed” here it is most often translated “ashamed”. What this suggests to me is that they equated Moses delay as shame against them. When some one you know does not talk to you, you think they are mad at you or that they think they are to good for you. When we get our eyes off of the Lord and the truth we are prone to miss understanding. And miss understanding leads us into making wrong decisions based on erroneous feelings. This crises of faith, was based upon insecurity. They were using their situations and circumstances to interpret who God was instead of the other way around.

- 2.) Vs. 1 *“They gathered TOGETHER to Aaron, and said to him”*: This crisis gained momentum when they got together and talked about it. Impatience gave into fear. This led them to begin to outwardly questioning their situation. Soon it was not just one person feeling insecure it was a mob. They then in one accord approach Aaron with one voice to make their demand. Further more the words, *“gathered together”* are more accurately rendered *“gathered together **against**”*. This was no passive collection of a few men it was a mob of angry people who were being moved along by their feelings and emotions. This is further brought out in their demand. *“Come, make us gods..”*, is literally *“Get up, and make us gods..”* **They were not making a suggestion they were making a demand** and Aaron felt that if he did not do something it may have cost him his life. Having our feelings guide us is a dangerous thing, but sharing those feelings with others was caused this rebellion. *“Moses, what Moses, we need help and we need it now pal, so here is what you are going to do!”* Notice that they made this decision on what they did not know, (*we do not know what has become of him*), instead of what they did know, *“that God would never leave them or forsake them.”*
- 3.) Vs. 2-4a Here we have recorded Aaron’s response to their demand. He gave them what they wanted! The crisis of faith escalated when leadership caved in to what the people wanted instead of what God’s word said. There are many churches today that start out by going around to the community and asking what they want in a church. If the pastor or leadership give into the demands of people soon they will be building a golden calf. Aaron has stopped being a leader and started being a politician!

I find that all too often it is easier for me to trust what I see then what God’s word says. My attitude towards the Lord is, *“What have you done for me lately”* attitude! Both of which leads me down a slippery slope to trusting things rather than God.

Vs. 4b-6 Once they went down this road all restraints were off. Once we move away from trusting God to following our feelings all bets are off. Look at these verses and see what they are doing:

- a. Vs. 4b They make a “gold baby bull” and proclaim to the nation, *“Here He is the one the only God who did all those miracles in Egypt.”* Now think about it, how could something Aaron just made by his own hands be a god that delivered them? Religion is just blain dumb! Why is it people will pay 10 bucks a minute for a goofy woman with a fake accent to flip cards over and tell them what they want to hear, but they can’t trust God? Did they not just watch Aaron working on the idol? Did they not just take off their gold earrings for the material? *“Hey Aaron, how’s the god coming along we are all ready to worship it, you might want to fix his ear it’s a little crooked!”* I’ve come to the conclusion that it’s just way too much work this following my feelings instead of trusting God’s word!
- b. Vs. 5 Next, Aaron is building an altar for it. The dumb little gold idol has an altar, but not only that there is a special day just to worship it. This is what was to give

meaning, hope, purpose and direction to their lives. And it is something that they themselves have created. **So what gives meaning, hope, purpose and direction to your lives?**

- c. Vs. 6 They were eager to worship the gods of their own creation. In fact, they were ready to spend the money to do so, it says that they brought burnt offerings and peace offerings. Amazing how we have no problem spending our time and money on the things we want to worship. Look at the phrase, “*sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.*” The word “play” means to caress and is suggesting that they had an orgy. Paul uses this story in 1 Cor. 10:6-8 as an example of immorality. Folks, if you follow feeling you will soon be worshipping at the altar of pleasure where all that matters, is how you feel! These people who had just experienced the true God were now having an orgy in front of a golden calf.

Their pleasure was only temporal though, that’s always the problem with worshipping things it never lasts long.

III.) Vs. 7-14 Change your heart through prayer

Vs. 7 The first thing that I realize in reading this verse is that the secret thing that I may be worshipping is not so secret after all. The Lord knows what you are into, in fact He is the one the tells Moses. Moses is just enjoying the time he is spending with the Lord when the Lord says, “*Hey Moses we have a problem!*” Notice the way God tells Moses, “*For your people whom you brought out of the land of Egypt have corrupted themselves.*” This kind of reminds me what we parent’s do, “*Honey, have you seen what your boy did?*” But when they do good we say, “*Honey have you seen what my boy did?*” God already knew what kind of people they were and yet He still called them His special treasure. So why does He tell Moses that they are his people and problem? I think this is for Moses benefit, they never stopped being God’s people even though they broke the relationship. God is allowing Moses to identify with them as well as care for them. A good leader must always have God’s heart towards His people. With that said God does not wink at their rebellion in fact here He gives Moses a three-fold description of their sin.

- 1.) Vs. 7 **Corrupted themselves**: God describes **WHAT** they did. He use the past tense to describe this, “they have” corrupted themselves. Their sin has caused a decay it’s already happened, they are rotten. Poor Moses, he is up in the mountain fellowshiping with God when all of the sudden God says, “*You better hurry up and*

get down the hill your kids have thrown a big party and tore up the house!” Now the way God tells Moses anticipates Moses skepticism. Look at those words, *“the ones that you brought out of Egypt.”* You see, if you told me something that one of my little angels did I would naturally say, *“You must be mistaken because my child would never do that!”*

- 2.) Vs. 8 **Turned aside quickly**: This has to do with **HOW** and **WHEN** they did it, **QUICKLY!** Again I’m thinking as a parent and you tell me one of my angels have done this and I think, *“Well, ok but there must have been some circumstances that caused this!”* No, they did it right away! They wasted no time in their behavior, they jumped on the chance. I can just see Moses as a typical parent, *“God I just don’t understand I read them the rules, I had qualified people watching them.”* There is only one other question I would ask as a parent, **WHY?**
- 3.) Vs. 9 **Stiff-necked people**: There you have the reason why, they are rebellious by nature. Notice that God says, *“I have seen this people, and indeed..”*, in other words *“Moses, guess what your kids act like sinners because that is what they are!”* They are rebellious by nature as well as choice. Look at the three-fold description of their sin, they **“have”** corrupted themselves, they **“have”** turned aside. These are both in the past tense and describe their action of sin. But when you get to the reason for the action God says, *“it **IS** a stiff-necked people”*. That’s in the present tense and tells us that what they have been doing is a result of what they are. This is not a new thing, they did while they were in Egypt, and they did as they left Egypt and to no surprise they are doing it now.

Folks, you can not reform the flesh! No amount of miraculous encounters, education, experience or even threats will have any lasting effect upon the flesh. That may surprise Moses but God is not at all surprised. Guess what that light show on the mountain, the food from heaven, the word of God and even their intellectual agreement to truth had no effect upon their heart! So what will change them from rebellious sinner to worshipping saints?

Vs. 10 Before I answer this take a step back from this passage and realize that God is all knowing and if He wanted to wipe out Israel and start over He did not need to get Moses permission. The words, *“Let Me alone”* suggest that God’s desire is to give the people a chance to repent. God is inviting Moses to through intercession to see hearts change.

All of this leads me to see what will change a sinner to a saint. Look at God’s words here, *“consume them”* that is destroy them. You change a sinner to a saint by DEATH! You can’t reform them, they got to die and be made new! You see the rest of the words, *“and I will make of*

you a great nation”? There is only one thing that can permanently change a sinner to a saint death and rebirth!

Vs. 11 And how can that be accomplished? Well, look at what Moses does here, he prays! More than that he makes his appeal on three things:

1. Vs. 11 **The Lord's Love**: Moses uses the words, “Your and You” in describing God’s action towards them. In other word’s Moses says, “You rescued the people from the Egyptians with great power, which clearly shows that you love them!” Moses knows even though the people had forgotten what great lengths God went through to deliver His people. So Moses is realizing that God would not destroy those that so clearly loves.
2. Vs. 12 **The Lord's reputation**: Moses realizes that God will always be consistent to His character. So if God were to wipe out the Israelites then it would cause the Egyptians to think of God as evil.
3. Vs. 13 **The Lord is faithful**: God had made a promise to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, (Israel), so he realizes that God always keeps His promises.

What would have happened if the Jews would have remembered these same truths concerning the Lord that Moses now does? Well they would have never of made an idol! Moses uses what he knows to be true about the Lord to interpret the situation.

Vs. 14 This is what we call anthropomorphic (man centered) language. Moses is describing the actions of God as they appear to him. Moses prayer did not change God, for God already knew that the people would repent of their sins. What changed was the heart of Moses and the heart of the people.

Oh that you and I would simple trust the Lords love, character and faithfulness in our live instead of the silly little idols that we place there instead. Next week we will take up the lame excuse of Aaron as well as Moses prayer.