

Introduction: God has given every one of His people the extraordinary privilege of prayer. We are created to be in communion with Him. Primarily we are to enjoy being in His presence so we experience His strong life-changing LOVE. While in His presence, He communicates with us by giving us His Word, showing us what it means, and helping us to do His will as we live out our lives where He has placed us. *** Finally, as we see things or hear things that stir our hearts, we may talk to Him about them. We can ask Him to do anything that agrees with the words He has spoken to us. And we can be assured He will always answer us according to His perfect character. *** We see this illustrated in our passages this morning. After Moses had been on Mt. Sinai forty days to receive the stipulations of God's covenant with His people Israel, they blasphemed the almighty God who had just set them free from slavery with a dozen miracles. They urged Aaron to create an idolatrous 'god' in the image of a calf. Then they worshiped the work of Aaron's hands as their 'savior'. Due to this grievous insult God said He would wipe them out and create another people to follow His prophet Moses. *** Moses' response is instructive and challenging to us. He stood before God and strongly petitioned on behalf of the people for God to forgive them. Moses based his prayer on two words God had spoken to Abraham. First, He said He would give Abraham a multitude of descendants; and, second, He would give them the land as an eternal inheritance. As a result, God was moved to compassion and did not destroy His people. *** Prayer in accordance with God's Word can and does change things. Let's learn from the details.

I. The people break the first two commandments, enabled by Aaron's willful work; and, Yahweh says He will destroy Moses' corrupt people. (Exodus 32:1-10)

- A. The people turn on Moses and command Aaron to make an idol 'god', he crafts a molten calf idol. (Verses 1-6)
1. When the people saw Moses delay to come down, they gather to Aaron to say: Up, make us a 'god' because we do not know what has become of the man who brought us up from Egypt. (Verse 1)
Delay: The word indicates they think Moses should be ashamed.
People and Aaron: They ask Aaron to break God's second word about idols.
 2. Aaron asks them to bring their gold jewelry and they do. (Verses 2-3)
Gold: He collects gold jewelry of about two million men, women and children. (Numbers 1:46)
 3. Aaron fashioned the gold with an engraving tool, made a calf from melted gold, and they say this is your 'god' who brought you up from Egypt. (Verse 4)
Fashioned: The calf was not made with creativity as a potter with clay, but with hostility. Did he know he was wrong?
Made: When he made the idol, the man whose name means 'light bringer' acted in darkness.
Your 'god': They break God's first word by calling the idol 'god'.
 4. Aaron saw, built an altar before it, and called a feast to Yahweh tomorrow; they rose up early, offered burnt offerings and brought peace offerings, they sat to eat and drink, then rose to sport. (Verses 5-6)
Altar: The altar was to the idol 'god'. The man who would be high priest has fallen into idolatry.

Even leaders can fall into idolatry

Feast to Yahweh: He tries to turn them to Yahweh, but no one can serve two masters. (Luke 16:13)

Offerings: The next day they make proper offerings to the covenant God.

Eat, drink, sport: Then they turn against Him in a drunken orgy. Isaac 'sported' with Rebecca (Genesis 26:8). Potiphar's wife said Joseph tried to 'sport' with her (Genesis 39:14-17). All they did was condemned by Paul. (Galatians 5:19-21)

- B. Yahweh commands Moses to go down because Moses' people are corrupt and have turned from the way He commanded them, so He will destroy them. (Verses 7-10)
1. Yahweh spoke to Moses, Go down because your people have corrupted themselves. (Verse 7)
Moses' people: Yahweh brought them out of Egypt by Moses, but now He puts them on Moses.
Corrupted: He says they are spoiled and ruined to their destruction.
 2. They have quickly turned away from the way I have commanded them, and have worshipped and sacrificed to the molten calf they made for themselves, saying this 'god' saved them. (Verse 8)
Turn away: They have departed from the way Yahweh gave Moses on Mt. Sinai.
Worship idol: He accuses them of idol worship. And Aaron their leader was with them.

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3. I have seen these people, behold they are stiff-necked; now, leave Me and My wrath will burn against them; I will consume them and make of you a great nation. (Verses 9-10)

Stiff-necked: They are so stubborn they do not bow their neck and heads to Yahweh.

Consume: He will finish them off and destroy them in death. Then He will start over.

Idolatry deserves destruction

II. Moses intercedes with Yahweh to remember the words of inheritance He spoke to their ancestors; and, He then was moved with compassion. (Exodus 32:11-14)

- A. Moses prays that Yahweh would not kill His people to whom He spoke gracious words. (Verses 11-13)
1. Then Moses beseeched Yahweh his God: Yahweh, why will your anger burn against Your people whom You have brought forth from Egypt in great power and a mighty hand? (Verse 11)
Beseech: Moses begged his God in a petitionary prayer.
Your people: Moses rightly gives Yahweh's people back to Him!
Why: Why would Yahweh be angry enough to destroy people He saved with gracious miracles?

- Why will the Egyptians say: In evil He brought them out to kill them and consume them from the earth? (*Verse 12ab*)
Egyptians: Moses is concerned that a pagan nation would misunderstand Him.
- Turn from Your burning anger and have compassion over the evil to Your people. (*Verse 12c*)
Turn anger: After two questions, Moses has two petitions. First, turn away your great anger.
Compassion: Second, they deserve punishment for idolatry, but Moses begs for gracious compassion.

Idolatry deserves destruction

- Remember the patriarchs, Your servants to whom You made an oath. (*Verse 13a*)
Remember: Moses' third petition to Yahweh is remember Abraham whom He called. (*Genesis 12:1-3*)
Oath: The two-fold oath was given after Abraham divided the animals of the covenant. (*Genesis 15*)
- You said: I will multiply your descendants as the stars in the sky, and all the land of which I spoke I will give to them to inherit forever. (*Verse 13b*)
Multiply: Yahweh asked Abraham to count the stars if he could. He could have seen almost three thousand stars and that would be hard to count. But now Abraham's descendants number two million!
Inheritance: You spoke of an eternal inheritance. So, please keep Your Word, despite the idolatry of Your people and Aaron.

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May we all be moved by the example of Moses on Mt. Sinai to be quick to petition God whenever we experience something we understand to be contrary to His Word.

- Then Yahweh was moved to compassion concerning the harmful deed. (*Verse 14*)
 - Then Yahweh had compassion over the evil. (*Verse 14a*)
Yes: This is a direct affirmative answer to Moses petition. He turned His anger to compassion!
 - Which He had spoken to do to His people. (*Verse 14b*)
Not consume: So, He did not consume them, wiping them out in death. He remembered Abraham.

III. The Messiah's example of praying in love for sinners, so we may do the same. (*Luke 23:34*)

- Messiah's example, teaching and actions.
 - Jesus was saying, 'Father, forgive them, for they have not known what they are doing'. (*Luke 23:34*)
Greater than Moses: While being crucified, Jesus continually prayed to God so all crucifying Him would be forgiven. Since all are responsible for His death, this is a greater intercessory prayer than Moses for Israel. Moses said God will raise up a prophet like him (*Deuteronomy 18:15-19*). Jesus is worthy of more glory than Moses (*Hebrews 3:1-6*).
Ignorance: Jesus bases His plea for forgiveness on the ignorance of those crucifying Him.
 - Jesus taught His disciples to pray for those spitefully abusing them. (*Luke 6:27-28*)
For enemies: This is how His people can love their enemies. (*Matthew 5:44*)
 - When Messiah was abused, He did not abuse in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten; but He gave Himself to The One judging justly. (*1 Peter 2:23*)
Trust God to Judge: By faith in God Jesus endured abuse and suffering without retaliation.
- He gives His followers grace to help people out of ignorant idolatry.
 - I was brutish and without knowledge, I have been a beast with you. (*Psalms 73:22*)
Confess our ignorance: Asaph confesses he was without knowledge and as offensive to God as the idolatrous Israelites. May we all seek God so He would reveal to us any idols we have fashioned, especially those of which we are still ignorant.
 - Israel does not know how to do right. (*Amos 3:10*)
Of justice: Later Yahweh exhorts His people to allow justice to roll down as waters. (*Amos 9:24*)
 - My people are fools and do not know Me, they are wise at doing evil. (*Jeremiah 4:22*)
Of God: All God's people are ignorant of Him, which leads to all evil, including idolatry.

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- Their hearts have become thick and fat, lest they will understand and would convert. (*Matthew 13:15*)
Hard heart: A thick, dull and hard heart keeps people ignorant.
Isaiah: Jesus quotes from His commission to Isaiah as He sent him out to His people so their hearts would be changed. May we be convicted of the tendency of our hard hearts to create idols and therefore greatly offend our Savior God.
- The Church of Jesus is commanded to endure in blessing its persecutors. (*Romans 12:14; 1 Corinthians 4:12*)
Return blessings for curses: The Church of Jesus is to become like Him.
- As Stephen was stoned, he cried on his knees: Lord, do not put on them this sin. (*Acts 7:59-60*)
Stephen is Christ-like: The apostles taught all people all that Jesus did. As one of the first seven deacons Stephen would have heard of Christ's prayer that His killers be forgiven. So Stephen died as his Lord and Savior died.

Application: We can become like Christ when we are IN Him and filled with The Holy Spirit, because He is the great High Priest who gives mercy and grace when we come boldly to His Throne. (*Hebrews 4:14-16*)

Conclusion: Yahweh is determined to destroy His people after they urge Aaron to craft a calf idol which they worship instead of Him. But, when Moses intercedes on behalf of the people, Yahweh is moved to compassion. Fifteen hundred years later, Yahweh's Son prays for His Father to forgive all the people who were killing Him out of ignorance.

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