

**Men's Sunday Night**  
**A Study in The Book of Exodus**  
**Lesson 14 – Exodus 32-33:6**  
**Journey to Freedom**  
**Idolatry and Intersession**

While Moses was having a “mountaintop” experience with the Lord, the people were sinning in the valley below. No matter how you look at this sin, it was a great offense against God. The Jews were God’s people, chosen by His grace and redeemed from Egypt by His power. He had led them, fed them, protected them from the enemy, and made them a part of His covenant. He had given them His holy laws and the people had agreed to obey. Here at Sinai, the people had seen the awesome display of God’s glory and had trembled at His power. Yet, in spite of all these marvelous experiences, they disobeyed the Lord and lapsed into idolatry and immorality.

The Lord knew what was going on in the camp of Israel. Note how God seemed to “blame” Moses for what had happened, but Moses was quick to remind the Lord that Israel was His people. It was God’s glory that was at stake and not Moses’ reputation, so Moses reminded the Lord of His promises. Twice during Moses’ lifetime, God offered to destroy Israel and use Moses to start a new nation, but he refused. The Jews never knew the price Moses paid to be their leader. How much they owed to him, and yet how little they showed their appreciation.

In His grace, God forgave their sins, but in His sovereignty, He had to discipline the people. Moses had a right to be angry and to humble Aaron and the people. By breaking the two tables of the Law, written by God, Moses dramatically showed the people the greatness of their sin. Instead of confessing his sins, Aaron made excuses. He blamed the people for their depravity and Moses for his delay. After dealing with the people, Moses returned to the Lord on the mountain and offered to give up his own life that the people might be spared.

As intercessor, Moses stood between the nation and their past sins. As mediator, he stood between the nation and their future blessings. Moses was not content just to have the nation forgiven; he wanted to be sure that God would go with them as they continued their march to the Promised Land. When the people heard that God would not go with them, they humbled themselves and mourned. It is one thing to mourn because of God’s discipline of our sins and quite something else to mourn because of God’s distance resulting from our pride.

## **Read Exodus 32:1-35 and Answer the Following Questions**

1. What happened down in the Israelite camp when Moses was up on the mountain? What do you think the people were thinking by doing this?
2. Why do you think Aaron would even consider this request? Why did the people think they needed a “god” made out of gold?
3. What happened next? What did this gathering turn into? (See vv. 7-8)
4. When Moses came back down from the mountain what was the first thing he did?
5. Who joined Moses on the trip down the mountain? Where had Joshua been all this time? What does that tell you about him? (See vv. 15-18; 24:13)
6. What are eight things Moses did when he arrived back at camp and saw what they had done? (See vv. 19, 20, 21, 26, 29)
7. What did Moses do next?

8. What was Moses willing to lose in order to save God's people? Can you think of anyone else in the bible who was willing to do the very same thing?  
(See 1 Peter 2:24; Romans 9:1-3)

9. In Exodus 15:26 the Lord made a promise to His people: If they would live by His laws, He would make sure none of the diseases of Egypt would be part of their lives. What had these people just done to themselves?

### **Read Exodus 33:1-6 and Answer the Following Questions**

10. Is the Lord still going to keep His promise of a land for the children of Israel? What is going to change?

11. How do God's instructions in the next few verses show His righteousness and holiness? How does this compare to His mercy shown later in this section? (Mercy: Getting what you don't deserve)

12. Why did the people take off their jewelry? What does this represent?

## **I Would Believe in God if Only I Could See Him**

### **Exodus 32:1-4**

How many times have you heard people say words to the effect of, “I would believe in God if only I could see Him.”? According to this common excuse, a person’s unwillingness to put wholehearted trust in God is actually His fault: He hasn’t revealed Himself plainly. If He would, such people would instantly believe in God and start following Him.

In truth, the experience of the people of Israel at Mount Sinai refutes this sort of reasoning. If ever there was an occasion on which God revealed Himself to human beings, it was at Mount Sinai. For many days, God’s presence descended on the mountain, producing a spectacular display of thunder, lighting, trumpet sounds, and smoke. In fact, the signs were so overwhelming that the people trembled with fear. Clearly, they were convinced that they were standing before God Himself.

Yet, did that cause them to believe in Him? No, it may have verified His existence for them, but it did not change their hearts. In fact, while the Lord’s presence was still hovering over the mountain, the Israelites fashioned an idol (golden calf) and began worshipping it. What an incredible rejection of God.

History contains plenty of evidence of God’s revelation of Himself to humanity. The creation reveals His existence, The Bible reveals His will, and Jesus has revealed His person. If these and countless other signs are not enough to persuade someone to turn to the Lord in faith and obedience, probably nothing else will.