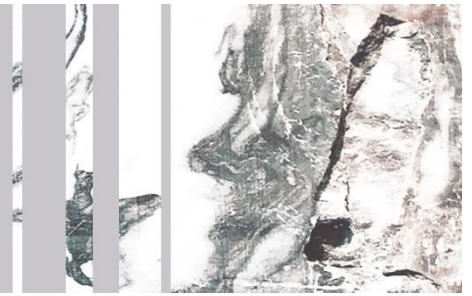


EXODUS

Daily Devotions Week 15



DAY ONE

Read Exodus 32:10.

Last week we read the first portion of Exodus 32 where the Israelites grew impatient waiting for Moses to come down from the mountain (**Exodus 32:1**), so they took matters into their own hands because they wanted to worship. The people of God came to Aaron and had him fashion an image of God out of their gold. God was not happy (**Exodus 32:7-10**) because God's people had broken their covenant with him by worshipping other gods.

God's response to Israel's unfaithfulness is wrath. God says to Moses in **Exodus 32:10**, "Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them, in order that I may make a great nation of you." God's anger and wrath aren't our favorite aspects of God to discuss in church, right?

In theological circles, scholars talk about two aspects of God's judgment: (1) his active judgment and (2) his passive judgment. Today, we'll focus on God's active judgment and later in the week we'll talk more about God's passive judgment.

God's *active* judgment is what we read about in **Exodus 32:7-14**.

God is holy. In him there is no evil, no sin, and no corruption. Because of his holiness, he must punish sin in order for justice to be had. Whenever Israel gives themselves over to idolatry, God's intention to punish is his way of allowing them to experience the hellish results of their choice to *not* be in right relationship with him.

God's wrath isn't so much a feeling, but rather an attitude. His wrath isn't whimsically incoherent but could be explained as God's established disposition towards all that is evil. The wrath we see here in Exodus 32 and the wrath and judgment we see taking place all over the Old Testament is the real-time, historical demonstration of that reality.

As one scholar writes, "When Israel decides to cheat on God with the idols, his active judgment through the nations is the historical manifestation of the spiritual reality they've chosen. All of the blessings of protection, life, beauty, and goodness are connected with relational wholeness with Yahweh. Reject Yahweh's covenant and you've essentially rejected these things. When you reject God, he gives you not-God, and that is a terrifying, but just judgment."

However, in the midst of this moment where it seems like all hope is lost for the Israelites, a "savior" steps in. Like a good friend going to bat on your behalf, Moses goes to bat on behalf of Israel. He

reminds God of his work in bringing Israel out of slavery and tells God to remember his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Because of Moses' mediation on behalf of the Israelite people, God relents from consuming the Israelites.

Moses's action and God's mercy ultimately points us forward to Jesus. Jesus, like Moses, is our mediator (**see 1 Tim. 2:5-6**) and the one who bears the wrath of God on our behalf as our atonement (**1 John 4:10**). The only difference is Jesus is actually God himself, and he came down to mediate on our behalf. God is holy and thus has an established disposition of hatred towards all that is evil (including sin). But God is also love. In his love, God puts on flesh to bear the wrath of God in our place. Only in the Triune God – that is, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit - are we able to have *one* God who can simultaneously take on the wrath he is required by his nature to dole out, and also extend us the mercy and grace and forgiveness of our sins. In God, we can have both.

- What thoughts/feelings do you have when you think about God's wrath? What questions does this raise for you?
- Do you think it was fair of God to initially want to "consume" the Israelites because of their disobedience? Why or why not?
- In what ways does knowing about God's wrath and God's love inform how you view what Jesus accomplished on the cross for you personally?

How can you see the Old Testament and the New Testament working together to show you truth about salvation?

DAY TWO

As we take a deep dive into **Exodus 32** this week, we want to acknowledge sometimes we can rush into a devotion or a spiritual text without first really letting the Word of God soak into our hearts. This week, we want to avoid that common trap. We're going to start today with an exercise we utilized last week. Before you read any words from any human author, spend time reading all of **Exodus 32** and note anything specific you feel God might be challenging you to hear or to learn.

Just like last week, we are going to use a special practice to help us out. The practice is called, *Lectio Divina*, which simply means "divine reading." It's a practice of praying with Scripture, allowing God to speak through his word. There are five movements to the reading: *Silencio* (silence), *Lectio* (reading), *Meditatio* (meditation), *Oratio* (speech or response), and *Contemplatio* (contemplate). These movements allow us to sit with a passage several times so it can saturate our minds and hearts.

Let's spend time in **Exodus 32**.

Silencio. As you begin, put yourself in the presence of God. Find a quiet space and allow your mind to be still. Offer yourself to God and invite him to speak to you through his Word.

Lectio. Read **Exodus 32:1-35** out loud, slowly allowing the words to resonate and settle in your heart. Linger on the word or phrase that catches your attention; look for parts of the text that light up for you. Sit with the word or phrase and savor it as a Word of God that was written and chosen specifically for you. Write the word or phrase below:

Meditatio. Read **Exodus 32:1-35** again and listen for areas where the word connects with your life right now. Imagination is a God-given gift. Envision being in this story. Enter into the scene in your imagination. What would it have been like to be an Israelite during this time – waiting for Moses, leaving the life of slavery behind and heading into the unknown, which was the Promised Land? What would it have been like to be in Moses' shoes – God was ready to destroy the entire nation because of their sin, and because Moses was brave and pleaded for mercy, God obliged and spared them? How would you feel if you were God? What sights do you see? What smells would you smell? What would you hear if you were there in the camp?

Oratio. Read the passage one more time, listening attentively. Has God addressed you in this Word and invited you to respond? Allow the Scripture to lead you into a prayer response. Do not censor your thoughts or requests. Let them flow out spontaneously and freely before the Lord who loves you. Hold nothing back. Respond to God's invitation to you.

Contemplatio. Deeply receive God's Word and rest in his presence and love. Give yourself some time to wait and be still before you reenter life as usual. How can you take this encounter with God's Word with you throughout this day? Return to it and remember it all day long. Stay with God until you feel prompted to leave.

DAY THREE

On day one of this week, we talked about God's *active judgment* occurring in **Exodus 32**. Today, we want to spend a little more time on God's *passive judgment*.

Read Exodus 32:10-20.

God's *passive judgment* is, as one theologian writes, "Understood as divine consent to our own self-destructive defiance." This is the kind of judgment we read about in **Romans 1:18-32**.

Go ahead and stop for a moment to read the entire passage. Here is Romans 1:28-32: "Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done. They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless. Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them."

Repeatedly, God gave up or handed humanity over to their own "destructive defiance." God judges people in this passage in Romans by allowing the natural outcome of their decisions to come to fruition. It's almost as if this passage is saying, "Choose a way of life apart from God, and you will reap the outcome of life without God."

This is perhaps a side to the judgement of God that we can more easily wrap our minds around. It seems just and fair to us that God would simply allow us to suffer whatever the consequences are for our own decisions. Plus, we see this play out all the time in life. Commit adultery? Suffer divorce. Embezzle money? Lose your job. Cheat on an exam? Receive a failing grade. Choose pride and self-centeredness? Reap loneliness and anger. Lie to your parents? Expect them to not trust you quite as easily next time. The list goes on. What injustice is there in giving someone the natural outcome of what they've chosen?

This is a terrifying reality when you think about it because we each have seen seeds of evil in our own hearts and souls. For example, you may have experienced times when you have lashed out in anger, times when you have made wrong decisions, times when you have repeatedly given in to addictions, times when you've pursued things in life (job, money, etc.) that led to consequences in other areas of life (loss of familial relationships, health issues, etc.)

This is, perhaps, what we see coming to fruition in **Exodus 32:20**. At this point in the text, God is not the one inflicting judgement; instead, Moses is. This judgment could be seen as the *natural result* of Israel's disobedience. It's as if Moses comes back down the mountain of God and says, "Oh, you want to pour yourself a little glass of idolatry? Well, now you're going to have to drink it – literally."

When we understand God's passive judgment, it helps us to think about his active judgment. God isn't some cosmic judge passing out irrational judgment willy-nilly. God has an established disposition towards evil – God hates evil. We see God's *active judgment* frequently throughout the Old Testament.

And we know the Old Testament always points us to Jesus and the New Testament. We see God's active judgement carry through into the present day and the future reality when we see examples of God's judgment in our life and the lives of those around us.

- What new thoughts about God's judgment does this raise for you?
- In what ways have you seen natural consequences result from decisions you – or others - have made in life?
- What are common idols you struggle with? What negative consequences do you believe are associated with those idols?
- What are some other examples from the Bible of God's judgment? Do you see examples today of God's judgment because of the way his people act?

DAY FOUR

Today, re-read **Exodus 32:1-20**. In the space below, take some time to list or draw out a timeline of your life. On your timeline, indicate places or times in your life where you have made idols and what the consequences from those experiences have been.

When you are finished with your timeline, read **Psalm 103**. This Psalm was written by King David and talks about God's great love for us. In Psalm 103:7, King David talks about Moses and how God's law was first given to Moses and the Israelites. What are some phrases in this Psalm that stand out to you? Write a prayer in response to this Psalm. Think about your personal timeline when writing this prayer and be sure to thank God for this truth: because of the sacrifice of his son, Jesus, we have been given the gift of forgiveness of our sins!

DAY FIVE

There is a lot jam-packed into this chapter of Exodus, and we've covered a lot of ground this week. One thing to note about this chapter is how there are many similarities to **Genesis 3**. Once again, we see similarities between the Old Testament and the New Testament.

The Bible is a work of literary genius. One of the things that happens all throughout the Scriptures is the biblical writers tell stories with language and imagery that hyperlink us to other Bible stories and passages. In some Bibles, you can see references to other books of Scripture beside the current text. And when you visit that new "address" you may find another one taking you somewhere else in the Bible! Sometimes it's hard to see all the connections in our English translations. But in Hebrew, it's much clearer.

Read Genesis 3:1-24 (the story of the Fall of Man) and Exodus 32:15-33:1. While you're reading, try to identify the similarities you can find between these two books.

Did you catch all of the similarities? Let's look at them together.

In both accounts, we "see" a sinful rebellion...

"When the woman saw..." (**Gen. 3:6**)

"When the people saw..." (**Ex. 32:1**)

In both accounts, those who sin are looked for...

The Lord looks for Adam and Eve (**Gen. 3:9**)

Joshua and Moses look for the people of Israel (**Ex. 32:17**)

In both accounts, blame gets spread around...

Adam blames Eve (**Gen. 3:12**)

Aaron blames the people of Israel (**Ex. 32:22-23**)

In both accounts, nakedness abounds...

Adam and Eve are naked in the Garden (**Gen. 3:10-11**)

The people of Israel had "broken loose" or literally were "naked" (**Ex. 32:25**)

In both accounts, a sacrifice is made...

God makes the first sacrifice to cover Adam and Eve's nakedness (**Gen. 3:21**)

Moses makes sacrifices to cover the sin of Israel (**Ex. 32:30**)

In both accounts, people are told to depart from where they are...

Adam and Eve are banished from the Garden (**Gen. 3:23-24**)

The Israelites are told to leave Mt. Sinai (**Ex. 33:1**)

So, what do we make of all these similarities? There are a few things to note...

1. Many times, sin or idolatry happen because something we "see" is appealing to us. That's why it's always good to check our desires against Scripture to find out if they're godly or not.

2. Our tendency when we sin is to cast blame on other people or our circumstances rather than taking responsibility for our actions.
 3. When we sin, we need to realize there may be consequences for our sin. Of course, with Christ, Romans 8:1 tells us there is now no condemnation. However, do you think our sin can impact the way we relate to God? Does our sin turn our hearts inwards away from him? I tend to think so. And while this may not change our *status* before God, it does impact our *intimacy* with God. When we sin, we feel naked before God since we know he knows. We often feel shame because of what we have done (**see again Gen. 3:10-11**). Before the golden calf incident, God's personal presence guided the Israelites. Now, as God says to the Israelites in **Exodus 33:2**, he is sending an angel to guide the Israelites. That's a HUGE difference in the way they related to God, and a similar spiritual reality works in our lives as well when we sin and distance ourselves from God. Just as relational issues arise when a friend demonstrates they're not trustworthy, our sin against God causes us to relate to God differently. It's not that his disposition towards us changes (God loves us no matter what!), but our attitude changes towards him.
- Do you see any other patterns stemming from these similar passages from the Bible?
 - When has "seeing" and "desiring" something been the root of your sin?
 - Describe a time in your life where you allowed Scripture to reorder your desires.
 - How have you experienced your intimacy with God changing as a result of your sinfulness?