

Help! I'm Falling Fast

4.3.2022

Message 50/4

Exodus 32:1–6 (CSB)

THE GOLD CALF

32 When the people saw that Moses delayed in coming down from the mountain, they gathered around Aaron and said to him, “Come, make gods for us who will go before us because this Moses, the man who brought us up from the land of Egypt—we don’t know what has happened to him!”

²Aaron replied to them, “Take off the gold rings that are on the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters and bring them to me.” ³So all the people took off the gold rings that were on their ears and brought them to Aaron. ⁴He took the gold from them, fashioned it with an engraving tool, and made it into an image of a calf.

Then they said, “Israel, these are your gods, who brought you up from the land of Egypt!”

⁵When Aaron saw this, he built an altar in front of it and made an announcement: “There will be a festival to the LORD tomorrow.” ⁶Early the next morning they arose, offered burnt offerings, and presented fellowship offerings. The people sat down to eat and drink, and got up to party.

1. While Moses is having an amazing time in God’s presence, the people are being stupid.

A. This is part of the human story.

1. When we are seeking God and doing things right, it seems that the people around us go crazy.

2. Our proudest moments seem to be followed by moments of abject failure.

B. 40 days before, God spoke and all of the people agreed to obey.

1. 100 days ago, they were walking on dry ground through the Red Sea.
2. Just that morning, they ate manna from heaven.
3. Yet, in the midst of what should have been their best days, they were getting ready to have the worst day in their history.

C. I want to take a moment and speak to some of you today.

1. I don't know, by name, who God is speaking to but I know He is speaking.

2. Someone here is really down because you sinned or failed recently and feel really down.

a. You are walking under condemnation, which tells you to quit, that you aren't worth saving, that you will never change.

b. That isn't the voice of the Holy Spirit:

1. The Spirit brings conviction which leads to repentance and change.

2. Where the Spirit convicts, He brings the power to change and to be changed.

c. The voice telling you to quit, to give up, to take your life, or anything like that is not the voice of God.

2. Delay doesn't have to be deadly.

A. The people panicked during God's delay.

1. They equated delay with death.
2. The "wait" sign was interpreted as a "no" sign.
3. Like most people, we panic when God says "wait".

4. What we do during the "delay" can have long-term ramifications.

B. When it appeared that Moses was delayed, Israel turned to the wrong person.

1. Aaron was the priest, not the leader.
 - a. He was the helper, not the boss.
 - b. His calling was important and significant, but his calling was not to lead the people.
 - c. It was never Aaron's calling or responsibility to lead Israel.
2. A friend of mine pointed out a difference between Aaron and Moses.
 - a. Same parents, but they were raised differently.
 - b. Aaron was raised as a slave, while Moses was raised as a prince.
 - c. Unfortunately, when the stress was on, Aaron led the people back to the only thing he knew which was slavery to idols.

C. When the stress is on, where do you turn?

1. Some of you here are in a season of delay and waiting.
 - a. Call it your Midian, or a wilderness, or a dry place.
 - b. There is nothing wrong with being in those places.
2. But in the moment, you are tempted to turn back to the only thing you've ever known.
 - a. You're stressed, so you start inching closer to the prescription meds that you DON'T Need.
 - b. You are worried, so you start asking your old friends what to do instead of leaning into Jesus and the community of believers you are part of.

c. People give advice according to their kind.

1. Sinful people will give you sinful advice.

2. But what they say sounds familiar.

a. Familiar is comfortable.

b. Comfortable is good.

3. The next thing you know, you are worshipping your old idols.

D. When it seems as if God is delayed, where does your "panic" take you back to?

1. You will fail to the level of your training is an axiom in the emergency services realm.

2. When we are under pressure, we will be tempted to go back to what was familiar.

3. This is the source of "relapse".

3. The golden calf represented something familiar.

A. Remember, I'm always talking about context.

1. Context helps us figure out why Israel and Aaron created a calf.

2. Have you ever significantly wonder "why a golden calf?"

B. Some info from some commentaries:

1. "Presumably this golden calf, as it is usually called, was made in the Egyptian style. The Egyptians worshiped any number of bovine deities. They worshiped Hathor, who was represented by the head of a cow, and Isis, the queen of the gods, who had horns on her head. Then there was Menwer, the sacred bull of Ra, whose skin was covered with gold.² But according to John Mackay,

The ultimate in bull worship was probably the Apis bull, considered to [be] the manifestation of Ptah, the creator god

worshipped at Memphis in lower Egypt. The bull lived in palatial quarters in the precincts of the temple; only the higher echelons of society were allowed to view it from special windows; its death was treated on a par with the death of pharaoh; and the remains were mummified. Images of calves or bulls were associated with the strength and power of the deity, and the idols as well as certain live animals came to be regarded as embodiments of the god.¹

C. Notice this:

1. This calf/bull was seen to be the creator.
2. The real bull, and its incarnations, was kept hidden in a secret part of the temple where only the elite of society could peak in.
3. Israel created their own Golden Calf/bull, their own god, to take the place of the One true God.
 - a. God declared Himself to be the creator.
 - b. God declared Himself to be so holy that normal people could not gaze into the Holy of Holies, but only the High Priest once a year.
 - c. But during this delay, the people gave God's glory away to another God.
4. This was not only idolatry, but also adultery.

4. How do people fail and fall so quickly?

A. First, we look to the wrong people.

"Come, make gods for us who will go before us because this Moses, the man who brought us up from the land of Egypt—we don't know what has happened to him!"

1. Notice: "the man who brought us up from Egypt."
2. Moses was God's representative.

¹ Ryken, Philip Graham, and R. Kent Hughes. 2005. *Exodus: Saved for God's Glory*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books. 972-973

a. When Moses spoke or acted, it was usually on behalf of God.

b. It was through Moses' words and actions that God did the miracles.

c. But the people couldn't look past Moses.

d. In other words, they failed to realize it was God who had done these things and Moses was the conduit.

3. But before we condemn Israel, we must recognize that we too often are guilty of the same thing.

a. We elevate people far beyond the platform that God has given them.

b. We take people's words and actions to be equivalent to the actions of God Himself, and then we lose hope when those people do peopally things.

c. Just because people are used by God, it doesn't mean they are God.

1. This is true for pastors.

2. This is true for former presidents.

3. This is true for any person regardless of how anointed or successful.

4. To quote our friend Tommy Riley, "Spiritual giftings work outside of righteousness."

B. Second, we look to the wrong things.

²Aaron replied to them, "Take off the gold rings that are on the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters and bring them to me." ³So all the people took off the gold rings that were on their ears and brought them to Aaron. ⁴He took the gold from them, fashioned it with an engraving tool, and made it into an image of a calf.

1. It is shocking that in the heat of the moment, the first High Priest of Israel immediately thought, "Give me your jewelry."

- a. He didn't pray.
- b. He didn't seek council.
- c. He immediately asked for enough jewelry to make a golden idol.

2. Interestingly, it seems that Aaron made this and not the craftsmen, Bezalel and Oholiab, the men who were anointed to create the Tabernacle furnishings.

- a. No, this was Aaron leading where he wasn't called to lead.
- b. And this was Aaron leading people to look for hope where there never was any hope to begin with.

3. When we are under-pressure, we look for hope where there was never any hope.

- a. Americans have been looking for hope in Government, but Government never was the source of our hope.
- b. People look to YouTubers, TikTok, or other elements of cultural influencers for hope, for clarity, and for guidance; but there is no hope there, only confusion.
- c. In times of trouble, we turn to old habits, old skills, and old friends for hope forgetting they were never the source of hope to begin with.

4. When we look to the wrong people and the wrong places, we fall and we fail faster than we ever can imagine.

C. Third, we cover up our sin with religion.

Exodus 32:5-6 (CSB)

⁵When Aaron saw this, he built an altar in front of it and made an announcement: "There will be a festival to the LORD tomorrow." ⁶Early the next morning they arose, offered burnt offerings, and presented fellowship offerings. The people sat down to eat and drink, and got up to party.

1. Aaron somehow believed that if they bring God's name into the situation, and declare the "party" to before the Lord, then it made everything alright.

a. Maybe Aaron honestly believed this.

b. It's possible Aaron had the best intentions: but the people didn't and the result was sin.

2. Ultimately, Aaron took something vial and used it to worship God.

a. Notice that this did not "redeem" what was evil.

b. This did not make it right or holy.

c. The Apostle Paul used the argument: Should we keep on sinning to glorify God or multiply grace? OF course not.

3. False gods and false-altars do not result in God being glorified.

a. You cannot put Christian language on Satan's thing and expect God to bless it.

b. Just because you put Jesus' name on things, doesn't mean it brings glory to God.

4. Aaron tried to cover up sin by using God's name, but God wasn't fooled.

a. The people were fooled.

b. They probably believed what they were doing was ok because their priest blessed it.

c. But just because a religious leader blesses something, that does not mean God blesses it.

5. As your pastor, may I encourage you:

a. Read the Bible for yourself.

b. Pray and commune with God yourself.

- c. Worship God, yourself.
- d. Do not place your hopes, your understanding, and your relationship upon the shoulders of others.
 - 1. The Gifts and Offices, like pastors, teachers, and prophets, are given by God to edify, to build up, and to support the people of God.
 - 2. But we are not God.
 - 3. Just like Aaron, even the best fail.
- e. In the news are the very public moral failures of men like:
 - 1. Brian Houston.
 - 2. Perry Stone.
 - 3. Bill Hybels.
 - 4. Mark Driscoll.
 - 5. Carl Lentz.
- f. Just like Aaron, their intentions may have begun as honorable, but they ended up in terrible and sinful places.
- g. This leads us to our fourth and last point:

D. Fourth, when we start falling, we go all in.

- 1. **We never sin in isolation.**
 - a. It's nigh impossible to sin in just one way, and not in many others.
 - b. Sin isn't just a downward facing hill, it's a sheer cliff.
 - 1. A person may think they are in control of their destiny and will, but sin doesn't play fair.
 - 2. The tools of the enemy are addictions, and strongholds, and increased depravity.

2. This is why Israel could go from “Oh no, where’s Moses” to, let’s get drunk, have a wild orgy, and act like there is no tomorrow.

a. “When we have no hope for the future, we are willing to make a mess of today.”

b. So we run as far and as fast as we can towards sin.

c. We forget that sin has a price-tag and that price comes do.

d. Sometimes the cost of our sin takes years or decades.

e. Sometimes, the cost of our sin shows up like a Will Smith hand across Chris Rock’s face.

f. But be sure, that your sin will find you out.

Apply: Where do we go from here?

A. If you are in a sinful place, You must first call it out.

1. I’ve been pastoring a long time:

a. I know that people what people do.

b. Although I don’t know everything that happens behind the scenes, I do know that some in this room are living or participating in sin and lifestyles that God is not happy with.

2. If that happens to be you, **the first thing you must do is confess.**

a. To confess means to say the same thing about your sin as that God does.

b. People do not go to hell because they made a mistake, so don’t call your sin a mistake.

c. Don’t “shrug” your shoulders and say, “I messed up”.

1. Before real change can happen, you have to confess your sin.

2. Scripture says, "If you confess your sin, Jesus is faithful and just to forgive."

3. After you confess, you have to burn the calf down.

- a. Throw out the porn, clean out the booze, break off the illicit affair, go tell the truth, payback the money, refuse to hate.
- b. Whatever has become your golden calf, you have to get rid of it.
- c. You have to clean your house and put it in order, whatever that might mean.
- d. You cannot let sin live, you cannot give it a second chance.

Daniel Kolenda tells the story: In January 2018 an article in National Geographic was published with the following headline: "Why an 8-Foot Pet Python May Have Killed Its Owner." It goes on to tell of how a man in England was killed by his yellow African rock python named Tiny. At one point this deadly serpent had been a cute little snake. Its coils could have easily been broken even by a child. But as it grew, fed and nurtured by the man it would eventually kill, no one realized the tragedy the man was inviting.ⁱ

- e. You cannot give the enemy a foothold, otherwise it will gain hold over you.
- f. But once you put things in order, there is one more vital step:

4. Confess, destroy the idol, and find a greater replacement:

Luke 11:24–26 (CSB)

AN UNCLEAN SPIRIT'S RETURN

²⁴"When an unclean spirit comes out of a person, it roams through waterless places looking for rest, and not finding rest, it then says, 'I'll go back to my house that I came from.'²⁵ Returning, it finds the house swept and put in

order. ²⁶Then it goes and brings seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and settle down there. As a result, that person's last condition is worse than the first."

a. Jesus taught that when a person gets clean, puts their house in order, and deals with the problems that there becomes great opportunity and a great struggle.

b. The struggle is, that if you do nothing else, you will find out that not only are your demons back but they brought friends.

1. The addiction you had comes back worse than ever.

2. The fights with the spouse is worse than ever.

3. The cravings are worse than ever.

4. Jesus taught this as a spiritual truth: An empty life will soon be filled.

5. And it won't fill up with good things, it will fill up with junk, trash, and demons.

c. That is why you must be filled with the Holy Spirit!

1. This is not optional.

2. Failure to be filled with the Holy Spirit leaves you open to be filled with spirits that are not of God.

d. We can no longer treat as optional what Jesus considered mandatory.

e. The days before us necessitate all of us to not only to receive salvation and forgiveness, but empowerment to live for Jesus.

ⁱ Kolenda, Daniel. *Slaying Dragons: A Practical Guide to Spiritual Warfare* (p. 117). Charisma House. Kindle Edition.