

Caring Enough to Pray

Exodus 32:7-14, 30-35

7 And the LORD said to Moses, "Go, get down! For your people whom you brought out of the land of Egypt have corrupted themselves. 8 They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them. They have made themselves a molded calf, and worshiped it and sacrificed to it, and said, 'This is your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt!' " 9 And the LORD said to Moses, "I have seen this people, and indeed it is a stiff-necked people! 10 Now therefore, let Me alone, that My wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them. And I will make of you a great nation." 11 Then Moses pleaded with the LORD his God, and said: "LORD, why does Your wrath burn hot against Your people whom You have brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? 12 Why should the Egyptians speak, and say, 'He brought them out to harm them, to kill them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth'? Turn from Your fierce wrath, and relent from this harm to Your people. 13 Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants, to whom You swore by Your own self, and said to them, 'I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven; and all this land that I have spoken of I give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it forever.' " 14 So the LORD relented from the harm which He said He would do to His people.

30 Now it came to pass on the next day that Moses said to the people, "You have committed a great sin. So now I will go up to the LORD; perhaps I can make atonement for your sin." 31 Then Moses returned to the LORD and said, "Oh, these people have committed a great sin, and have made for themselves a god of gold! 32 Yet now, if You will forgive their sin--but if not, I pray, blot me out of Your book which You have written." 33 And the LORD said to Moses, "Whoever has sinned against Me, I will blot him out of My book. 34 Now therefore, go, lead the people to the place of which I have spoken to you. Behold, My Angel shall go before you. Nevertheless, in the day when I visit for punishment, I will visit punishment upon them for their sin." 35 So the LORD plagued the people because of what they did with the calf which Aaron made.

Since the middle of Exodus 24 Moses has been on Mount Sinai and he has now been there for 40 days.

The children of Israel cannot wait any longer, they suppose Moses is dead although the cloud still covers the mountain.

So we find that they commit a great sin, in building an idol and worshiping before it and ascribing all the great things that God has done to it.

Psalm 106:23 (NKJV) 23 Therefore He said that He would destroy them, Had not Moses His chosen one stood before Him in the breach, To turn away His wrath, lest He destroy them.

Isaiah 59:15-16 (NKJV) 15 So truth fails, And he who departs from evil makes himself a prey.

Then the LORD saw it, and it displeased Him That there was no justice. 16 He saw that there was no man, And wondered that there was no intercessor; Therefore His own arm brought salvation for Him; And His own righteousness, it sustained Him.

Numbers 14:13-19 (NKJV) 13 And Moses said to the LORD: "Then the Egyptians will hear it, for by Your might You brought these people up from among them, 14 and they will tell it to the inhabitants of this land. They have heard that You, LORD, are among these people; that You, LORD, are seen face to face and Your cloud stands above them, and You go before them in a pillar of cloud by day and in a pillar of fire by night. 15 Now if You kill these people as one man, then the nations which have heard of Your fame will speak, saying, 16 'Because the LORD was not able to bring this people to the land which He swore to give them, therefore He killed them in the wilderness.' 17 And now, I pray, let the power of my LORD be great, just as You have spoken, saying, 18 'The LORD is longsuffering and abundant in mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression; but He by no means clears the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation.' 19 Pardon the iniquity of this people, I pray, according to the greatness of Your mercy, just as You have forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now."

11. And Moses besought the Lord his God. It is clear that this prayer sprang from faith, though in it he seems to fight against the very word of God; for God had said, Get thee down to thy people; but his answer is, Nay, it is thine. But, as I have lately stated, inasmuch as he firmly grasped the principle, that it was impossible for God's covenant to be made ineffective, he breaks through or surmounts all obstacles with closed eyes as it were. He proves them to be God's people by the benefit they had so recently received; yet he mainly relies on the covenant; nay, he mentions their deliverance as a result of it; for he proceeds afterwards to say, "Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel." We see, therefore, that the first ground of his confidence is the promise, although Moses refers first of all to the fact that the people had been delivered by the hand of God. He so expressly particularizes His "mighty hand," and "great power," to signify that the more conspicuous God's miracles had been, the more was His glory exposed to the calumnies of the ungodly; and this he immediately afterwards explains, "Wherefore should the Egyptians speak," etc.

Calvin's Commentaries.