



Message Transcript

The Appetite for Idolatry

Jeff Schwarzentraub

Pastor Jeff:

Father in heaven, we give you all the glory, honor and praise for who you are. We thank you for the gift of your son, Jesus Christ, who died for our sins and rose from the dead and for the gift of your Holy Spirit who indwells all of us who believe. We ask you today to do a work among us that can only be attributed to you. Lord, we want to hear you and we want to be obedient to you in any way that you show us. Now for all those who have gathered, who desire to hear the Lord speak directly to you, who will believe what He says and who will by faith put into practice what He shows you? Will you agree with me very loudly this morning by saying the word amen?

Congregation:

Amen,

Pastor Jeff:

Amen. Well, we've been in an exciting series in the book of Exodus, and if you've been journeying with us, we've seen God do so many amazing things, haven't we? We've seen God's love for His people, the nation of Israel and His plan to deliver the people. God raises up Moses in the house of Pharaoh, only to years later have Moses go back to his people and deliver the word Pharaoh, "Let my people go." When Pharaoh wouldn't have anything to do with what God wanted, God sent not only one plague, but He sent 10 plagues on the nation. Finally, the ultimate plague led Pharaoh to release Israel. Israel gets released. They find their way out of Egypt. They get to the Red Sea. They can't cross their hemmed in on both sides. Yet our awesome God

opens the Red Sea, lets Israel cross and right after Israel crosses and Egypt goes to follow them, crushes the largest army in the world. Israel rejoices. They need food. God provides food. They need drink. God provides drink.

They need help with their enemies because they don't know how to battle. God wins the battles for them. God brings them all the way to Mount Sinai where He shows them who He is and He appears as a consuming fire. The people are so terrified that they say, "Moses, you go talk to him instead of us." God is big. He's terrifying. He's huge. God gives them the 10 commandments. Then if you've been with us, you realize chapter upon chapter upon chapter, as Moses goes back up to be with God and spend about 40 days with Him, God begins to tell him about worship. This is how I want my people to worship. Why? Because the worship of God is central to everything we were created to do and to be. God goes into great lengths about the tabernacle that needs to get built and the way that priests need to wear garments.

We've studied them in detail to show that God cares about His worship. In the New Testament, we see this. "We're to love the Lord your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength." What does God want? God wants us to worship Him completely because He knows when we do, He gets the greatest joy and we get the greatest glory. Yet for Israel and for us, there's this appetite that can spring up in us, this proclivity in us that gets us to want to worship our own God in our own way and ask that God to bless us. Even for those of us that would say, "No, no, no, I'm a Christian. I'm only going after God. I'm all in with God." There's this desire inside of us, this hunger, this appetite that can creep up, that can say, "You

don't need to worship them like that. You can worship them any way that you want.

What we're going to read about in Exodus 32 today is exactly how that happens. As we're reading about them, it's easy to read about forming a golden calf and worshiping a golden calf. You'll say, "That has nothing to do with me. I'm never going to form a calf and worship a calf," but if you understand the principles behind it, you may see what the Holy Spirit shows you about how you fall in prey to the same form of idolatry that Israel did then. I want to invite you to take a look in your Bible today in Exodus chapter 32, we're going to be in Exodus 32. God has just been speaking to Moses about all the wonderful things He wants for worship and is telling Moses what that is going to look like.

That is where our story picks up. As we highlight this appetite for idolatry, I'm going to give you three truths about it that will help you in understanding where you're at. Here's what He says in Exodus chapter 32 in verse one, it says this. "Now, when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people assembled about Aaron and said to him, 'Come make us a God who will go before us. As for this Moses, the man who brought us out from the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.'" The first truth about an appetite for idolatry is this, the culture. I want to talk about the culture that is ripe for idolatry. I want to talk about the culture that is ripe for idolatry. There's a culture that helps facilitate idolatry.

Now, what is idolatry? Idolatry can be giving your ultimate allegiance to that which isn't ultimate. It can be a full rejection of God and worshiping something else. Here's why, all of you, every single person that's ever created was created to worship

the true God, and you'll never find peace in your life until you are truly worshiping Him. Now, for many of you, you'd say, "Yeah, I worship God," but there's a form of idolatry that sneaks in theologically the word's called syncretism. It's when we take truths of our culture and we mix it with truths of the Bible, and then we come up with an aberration of who God is and we worship that God. We come up with cultural things like God helps those who help themselves, and I like the Bible, so we'll put all that together and that's who my God is and He's got to bless me if I'm working hard.

Or we come up with truths that say, "You know what? I love sports and I love sports so much, and I love the Bible, so I'm going to have a sports kind of theology, and as long as I'm doing well in sports, then I know that God is on His throne." We have a theology that says this, "I'm an American and I like the Bible, so I'm going to mix all that together and I'm going to be American Christian, and then that's really what I'm going to worship." We come up with all these aberrations rather than the true unadulterated word of God which says there is God and Him alone, and there is no other. God says in Isaiah 42, "I am the Lord that is my name. I will not share my glory with others nor give my praise to idols." Here's the problem. We can't see God. We walk by faith and not by sight.

Sometimes we want to create things so we can have a kind of picture as to what He's doing. If we can't come up with a picture or an ideal, then we'll come up with ways in which we think that God is alive in our life. Some of us call it prosperity. If God's given me things, if He's given me stuff, then I know that God is really blessing

me and He's with me. We come up with all these ways and all these false ideas as to who God is. In this story, notice what happens. The people go and assemble around Moses's older brother Aaron who's been put in charge, and it says that they assembled around him. The Hebrew language makes it more like this. They were convincing him. They were like a mob around him. They were like, "Come on Aaron, we don't know what's happened to Moses. We don't even know if he's coming back. I mean, we want to experience all the things we've experienced, and Moses may not be here, so let's make a God that will do those things for us."

It's when we decide we want the blessing of God, but we want God in our way. That's what was going on here and is just as ripe today in our culture as it was then. We want God to do what we want Him to do when we need Him to do it, and we decide who our gods are going to be and we decide what it is we're going to value and we decide what it is that's going to benefit us. Then we want to see miracles happen in our society and we call that worship. Now, worship is giving your full allegiance to the one true God that is revealed throughout the scriptures and notice what happens.

Aaron doesn't wait long. These people put a mob around him and say, "Come on, make us a God. Make us a God. We'll worship him. We want to see God do what we've seen him do. Make us a God." Notice what Aaron does, Aaron said to them in verse two, "Tear off the gold rings, which are in your ears of your wives, your sons and your daughters, and bring them to me." Then all the people tore off the gold rings, which were in their ears and they brought them to Aaron. He took this from their hand and fashioned it with a graving tool and made it into a molten calf. They said, "This is

your God, oh Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt." Now, when Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it, and Aaron made a proclamation and said, "Tomorrow shall be a feast to the Lord."

The next day they rose early and offered burnt offerings and brought peace offerings, and the people sat down to eat and to drink and rose up to play. What happens? "Come on, Aaron, make us a God." He's like, "Okay, bring me the most valuable stuff you have." Well, Israel had been slaves. Where did they get all the gold? Well, when they plundered Egypt and they left, they had all these gold earrings. Said, "Bring me the best of what you have." They'd bring them. He throws them into a fire. They fashioned a molten calf. Now, why a calf? We don't know exactly why, but we know that there were multiple gods in Egypt. One of them was a bull that was Apis and this Apis, this God was the God. That was the God of prosperity. This was the God that provided for them.

What were they thinking about? They were thinking about where they had come from. God's going to talk about how they're stiff-necked and how they're obstinate. It means that their head is on backwards. It means that they're looking backwards. Just because God delivered all of Israel out of Egypt did not mean that all Egypt had been delivered out of them. It's kind of like this. Just because God has delivered you from sin does not mean that all sin has been delivered out of you. Israel didn't want sin to be delivered out of them. Israel is wanting to look back. Many times this happens to us when we come to Christ, we think that the only truth of the gospel is that Jesus is God. He died on the cross. He rose from the dead. I guess I'll believe that in my head, but I

have no desire of turning from my sin.

I want to just get fire insurance. I want to just go to heaven, but all of the time, even after I come to Christ, I'm still looking back over my shoulder saying, "This is the way I live. These are the things I trust. These are the idols in my life," and that's what was going on. They bring that which is valuable to them because anything you're going to worship or anyone you're going to worship is going to cost you your time and your money, because anything that's worthy of your worship is extended that way, and that's what we see Israel do. Now, for many of us, we read this and we're like, "I would never worship a golden calf. I wouldn't give one earring to that," but idolatry extends beyond the worship of idols and images and false gods, and there are so many modern examples of idolatry in our culture, isn't there?

Let me just give you a few. This is not an exhaustive list, but can I talk about one. There are a few. How about materialism? Another word for materialism is stuff. How many of you that have been married for a couple decades or about 40 or 50 have some stuff lying around your house stuff? Now, the stuff that you have that you want to get rid of and the stuff that you don't want was once upon the time valuable, but now that stuff is no good, so you got to get rid of that stuff so you can get new stuff to fit in your things that go along. It's stuff. We swim in materialism. Materialism is the idea, I don't have enough stuff. I need more stuff because if I have more stuff, then I'm going to be fulfilled and it can come in the form of anything.

It can come in the form of cars and houses and clothes and tickets and any

number of things that I got to have. I got to have this stuff and I'm not content until I get more stuff. That's a form of idolatry. That's a form of idolatry, or how about this one? How about pride and ego? Pride and ego, the internal idolatry, the idolatry of the heart, which says, "I'm working really, really hard. I'll work 60, 80 hours a week, but really what I'm doing it for so that you'll think I'm special." Really what I'm doing it for is so I'll have more influence. Really what I'm doing it for is so people will see just how valuable I am. I don't do anything without posting it on Instagram or other social media, so other people will know just how hardworking and how special I am.

It's pride and ego. I mean, have you ever noticed that social media stuff? Nobody ever posts anything bad about their depravity. It's always good and here's what's going on, and then everybody's like, "Oh yeah, you're so awesome," and that's why I got off of social media because it was a waste. There's materialism, there's pride and ego, and then there's the fulfillment. I got to be fulfilled. Every commercial that you see, every advertisement that you see is all about how you can be filled, how your life is about you, how it's what you need. In our culture, you can fill yourself with food. You can be a glutton. You can fill yourself with drugs. You can fill yourself with illicit sex or money or vacation or any other form of hedonism that supposedly is going to fill you, but it never ultimately fills. There's always got to be more of whatever you're looking for because you're filling yourself.

They say, "Well, how's that idolatry?" Because when you consider that part of your worship, then God has to bless that. There are whole idolatrous churches in our culture that teach, if you're doing the right things, God will give you more stuff. God will

give you more influence. God will give you more blessing. It's all idolatry. You may go after God with everything you have and have none of that stuff. You may go after God and face tribulation and persecution. There's no guarantee that getting stuff is a blessing. If it is and God prospers you, you won't hold onto it because you know, "Hey, God's running it through my fingers. It's temporary. He's just giving it to me to be generous with it and enjoy for a season, but I'm not grabbing this because that's not my ultimate goal."

See, when the people left Egypt, the goal wasn't to get to the wilderness. The goal was to get to the promised land. As a believer, when you leave your life of sin, the goal is not to get to the "wilderness of existence" here in the world and then prosper. The goal is the promised land where you're going. Friends, the promised land does not exist until Jesus Christ arrives. If your whole focus is on, "What can God do for me here," that's a form of idolatry. It's how does God want to work through me here while I'm on my way to what my ultimate goal is, which is meeting Jesus Christ face-to-face and being transformed into His glorious image.

That's the goal of my faith. That's what God's taking him to. That's where God is going. We see all this. We see materialism, pride, fulfillment, and then what about our cultural values in our country? I mean, I had to cut this off first service because I mean, think about the cultural values of our day, the wokeness. People that will tell you outside that aren't following the God of the Bible what you need to believe in, why you need to believe it. Remember in 2020 watching churches fold like a lawn chair because some political leader that doesn't love God said, "You can't meet and you're not

essential." What a joke. God says, "Do not give up the habit of meeting together as is the habit of some, but continue to meet."

Then there's this thing, I saw this the other day about a week ago, trigger words. You know what trigger word is? I didn't know what it was. Apparently I'm trigger happy because there's these words you can't say in our culture anymore because it offends people. If you offend somebody by saying something, then you're wrong, which is crazy. I mean, here's a couple. I think you'll get a kick out of these. Stanford University put these together. They've kind of back-pedaled a little bit since putting this out, but you can't use the word standup meeting. Did you know that? That's a trigger language, standup meeting. It's ableist language. It doesn't consider those with disabilities.

I'm serious. Consider using quick meeting. That's what they said. I still have standup meetings, but can't use the word American. Consider using the word US citizen because to use the word American insinuates, that we are the most important of all the 42 American countries. That's crazy too, but this is my favorite. I got to share, this is why I'm sharing this with you. There was one word that had, and they didn't have a substitute for it. "There's no way. Just don't use this word under any circumstance." You know what the word was? Brave. Somebody asked me, "Are we going to change the name of our church?" I'm like, "No. We're just going to put it on more things."

For some of you, don't write me a letter and say, "Jeff's getting all political. Why don't you just preach the gospel? Why don't you just tell people that Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead? Because every time you get into this political stuff, you

offend people and you make them mad and just make it about Jesus and make it about heaven. That's it. Why don't you say that?" Let me tell you why I don't say that.

Because that's not the gospel. It's not the gospel. The gospel is not how do you get fire insurance so that you can go to heaven and sit here in the buy and buy and not say a dadgum thing to anything that's wrong in our culture? The gospel is challenging brave warriors for courageous kingdom advancement. If you are a Christian, you talk like a Christian, you speak like a Christian, you act like a Christian, and you call the culture that's antithetical to the gospel to repent and come to Christ. That's your job.

For what purpose? Because our desire is to transform our culture for Christ.

Congregation:

That's right.

Pastor Jeff:

That's why we started the church. That's why we're starting Brave Academy. That's why we're expanding our media. Why? Because we're a mouthpiece for God. We are a people for God not to sit idly by while the world says, "Be quiet. Don't say that. Keep that in church." No, we're telling you you change your ways and get right with God because we love you enough to know that if you don't, there are eternal consequences to your bad behavior.

Congregation:

Amen.

Pastor Jeff:

Right? That's the gospel, right? That's why we talk about those things. Not being political. I'm being scriptural here. I'm telling you about what idolatry is. Idolatry shuts up in the face of tyranny and says, "Well, as long as I'm going to heaven, I guess I'm a good Christian." No, you're not. If you're not going to stand up, speak up and live it. You can call yourself whatever you want, but you're not a disciple of Jesus Christ like He defines in the New Testament. Amen.

We have this culture that's ripe for idolatry. Notice what happens. I mean, it says the next day they rose up. I mean, they're going to worship this calf, and when Aaron sees it, they're going to worship it. They put an altar in front of the calf, right? They're going to give homage. They're going to give allegiance. They're going to give worship, but now all the time they're calling it the Lord. See, idolatry is so insidious that you wouldn't say you worship your house. You wouldn't say you worship your car. You wouldn't say you worship your influence. You wouldn't say you worship your clothes. You wouldn't say you worship your boyfriend or girlfriend. You wouldn't say you worship your family. You would say you worship the Lord, but in your heart level, you care more about those things of this world than you do about God.

That's idolatry. God wants your full allegiance. God wants all of it. He wants 100% of it, and it says, "When they rose early, they offered burnt offerings and peace offerings, and the people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play." What were they offering? They're offering burnt offerings and peace offers. They're going through all the religious motions. Friends, you know that you can come to Brave and go through

all the religious motions. You can be here every Sunday. You can be here every first Tuesday. You can join a cadre and still not be born again and still not be worshipping the Lord and in your heart still be filled with all sorts of idols, but you're experiencing the goodness of God all around you, but you're not going in and pressing into the God all around you. Just because all of Israel was delivered didn't mean all of Israel was of God.

Just because you go to Brave doesn't automatically get you into the kingdom. Exhibit A is in First Corinthians chapter 10 verses one to 11. I won't read them all, but I'll read you the first part of it. Paul writes about Israel says, "For I not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the seas." Like everybody in Israel, all of our ancestors went through the Red Sea and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and all ate the same spiritual food that God provided and all drank the same spiritual drink that God provided, for they were all drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them, and the rock was Christ. It was Jesus leading them all along. Nevertheless, with most of them, God was not well pleased for they were laid low in the wilderness.

Now, these things happened as examples for us that we would not crave evil like the things that they also craved. Then he says, "Do not be idolators," as some of them were. As it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink and they stood up to play." When they got up the next morning, they're going through all their religious motions. They're doing all the right things. They're offering their offerings. They're doing their stuff. They're eating, they're drinking. "Oh, God is good. Isn't God good? He's

going to do great things for us," and then they rose up to play. Now, play does not mean they were throwing the football or the Frisbee at a picnic. Play is wild living. They were acting sexually immoral. They were doing everything against God, but with their lips, they were giving Him praise with their heart and their behavior, they were living for themselves.

Do you know the same thing happens in our culture? There are people that go to church week after week, month after month, year after year. They can quote passages of scripture. They can get along in a worship service. They can pretend that they're doing well. Most people in the world would say, "What a good person," but in their heart, it is so filled with idolatry that they've never repented and trusted the Lord and falsely think that they are saved. That's our culture and our culture would like to teach you. God loves you. He loves you no matter what. Keep living your sinful life and when you die, you'll go to heaven. I love you enough to tell you that's so untrue that God is a great God of love, but He's also holy. If you don't repent of your sin and trust Him personally for your forgiveness, you will go to hell for all eternity.

That's what the Bible teaches. I love you enough to tell you that. We have a culture that is filled with idols where we have all sorts of people on TV that talk about our thoughts and prayers are with you. Good. I want to hear you pray out loud then. What are you praying for? Who do you pray to? What are you praying about? I don't believe you pray, right? That's the culture that we live in. It's ripe for idolatry. As all this wildness is going on, after God has spent time saying, "This is what worship looks like, this is how the priests dress. This is what I demand. This is what I expect."

Then He says to Moses to this in verse seven, "Then the Lord spoke to Moses, 'Go down at once, for your people whom you brought up from the land of Egypt have corrupted themselves.'" They've acted corruptly. Notice what God says. He doesn't say, "My people that I brought up out of the land." He says, "Your people that you brought up out of the land." It's kind of like when a parent says, "You go talk to your son," right? I mean, he's not identifying with the people. He's not identifying in their sin. He's saying He knows He's the one that brought them out. He knows He's the one that led Him, but He's like, "Moses, you better go down and deal with this." Verse eight, "They have quickly turned aside from the way I commanded them." I mean I've done all this great stuff for them. I've showed them the 10 Commandments how they need to be, and they've turned aside. "They have made for themselves a molten calf and have worshiped it and have sacrificed to it and said, 'This is your God, oh Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt.'"

"The Lord said to Moses, 'I have seen this people and behold, they are an obstinate people.'" They're a stiff-necked people. They're a people that are unwilling to change and unwilling to be molded by God's word and always looking backwards to where they came from and remembering how great Egypt was rather than how wonderful the promised land is going to be. Then God says to Moses, "Now let me alone that my anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them and I will make a view a great nation." Here's what God says. I'm furious about this. Why? Because God demands 100% allegiance and worship from His people. For those that have been called according to His name, that's what He wants, and it angers God

when He doesn't get that, why should He get that? Because He's worthy of it all.

There's nothing in your life that's more worthy than the Lord. There's nothing in your life that's more glorious than God. Anytime that we tell the Lord, "Yeah, but I love this more. My attention goes here and my thought life goes there and my time goes here and my money goes there, but God, you're still pretty good," it angers Him. He's so angry with the people of Israel. He is like, "Let me alone. Let me burn with my anger. I'll destroy all those people. Then I'll make another nation out of you and we'll take them into the promised land." That's what He says, and it's really we see the heart of God because for some of us, we think, "Well, God's merciful, He is kind." He is merciful, He is kind, but He's also righteous and He's also holy, and He's also true, and it angers Him when people sin because it's such a big deal, because it takes our focus off of Him who is the only one that's worthy of our praise, and that's when a culture's ripe for idolatry.

A culture's ripe for idolatry when it begins to look at itself and it begins to look at its world around them, and it begins to think about how can we experience the blessings of God here rather than how can we honor God now because of where He is taking us, and our friends, our culture is ripe for idolatry. The enemy is acting in your ears and on your heart all the time to get you to take your focus off where your true rest is found, which is in the Lord, Jesus Christ. That's when the culture's ripe for idolatry. That's how our appetite begins to grow. Then he tells us this. "Well, if that's true, then what's the cure that is required for idolatry?" Let's talk about the cure that is

required for idolatry.

You say, "I don't want to go down that way. I mean, I feel it in my heart. I mean, I say I'm all in with Jesus, but seven out of every eight weeks, I can't be here 'cause my kids have sports or I have a vacation or I got all these things going on, or I got to make a living or I got to do all the, but I'm all in." No, you're not. Your behavior would say, I'm not all in, so just say you're not all in, rather than lie and sin, right? What's the cure for this? Here's what Moses says. Now, if you're Moses, what would you do? I mean, you're leading the group of people and there's 2 million of them, and the majority of them have all turned their backs and God's like, "I'll kill them all and start over." I mean, if you're, Moses may be like, "Okay, I'll see them when I get down there." That's not what Moses does.

Notice what verse 11 says, "Then Moses then treated the Lord his God," means he prayed and he said, "Oh Lord, why does your anger burn against your people whom you have brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and a mighty hand?" Lord, they're your people. Why are you so angry? What does Moses do? What's the cure for idolatry? Pray, pray, pray, pray, pray, and when you're done, keep on praying. How do we change our culture? Pray. What's that going to do? It changes God's heart. It changes your heart. Prayer is the most essential ingredient to see change in the culture. That's why first Tuesday will always be the most important meeting of the month. Why? Because when God sees His people gather and God sees His people say, "Lord, we want what you want and we want to entreat you to do what you want to do in our culture," God responds to that.

Moses is calling on God. He's saying, "These are your people. They're not my people. They're your people. Lord, why would you want to do that to your people? They belong to you. You've said, our nation's going to be the nations through which all the other peoples of the world will be blessed." He's entreating God, he's praying to God, he's seeking God. God wants to hear from you and notice the two ways that he prays. He makes two different appeals. The first is this, he makes an appeal to God's glory. He makes an appeal to God's glory. Verse 12, "Why should the Egyptians speak saying with evil intent, he brought them out to kill them in the mountains and to destroy them from the face of the earth, turn from your burning anger and change your mind about doing harm to your people."

He says this, "God, why would you want to do that? I mean, you've shown yourself faithful. You've shown yourself powerful. All of Egypt knows what an awesome God you are. If you kill all your people out here, Egypt will laugh and say, you're a mean God. You're a horrible God. You just tried to get all your people out here so you could kill him. God, this is going to make you look bad." What's he appealing to? God's glory. When we pray we should be appealing to God's glory. We should be appealing to the things that make God look good. We should be praying for the things that make God look good. You say, "Well, what is it that makes God look good?" The scriptures replete with things that make God look good. Would it make God look good if our nation turn and bowed their knee and worshiped the Lord and made all the decisions for our nation according to how Jesus was Lord? Yes it would.

Can I pray that way? Absolutely. God, this will make you look good. Lord, if

people make decisions for you, it'll make you look good. Lord, until they do, I want to make decisions that make you look good. If you abide in me and my words abide and you ask whatever you wish and it will be done for you, that means as I'm abiding in and relying upon and remaining in Jesus, I want to give God the most glory. I'm not praying about a new job, so I make more money. I'm not praying for a spouse so I can be fulfilled. I'm not praying for a kid because that's what the culture says that I need. I'm praying because Lord, here's how I believe this will give you the most glory if you come through with this, and either A God will answer that or B, he'll change your heart.

Because when we start praying and say, "God, I want what you want," then God begins to hear and God begins to listen. Moses is entreating him saying, "I want you to look good for all the nations. You said Israel was to bless all the nations. I want you to look good." Second, he not only appeals to God's glory, he appeals to God's promises. He appeals to God's promises and what God has spoken that he will fulfill. Notice verse 13. "Remember Abraham and Isaac in Israel, Abraham and Isaac and Jacob? Remember our patriarchs, our forefathers, your servants to whom you swore by yourself and said, I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heavens and all this and all this land of which I have spoken. I will give it to your descendants and they shall inherit it forever. Lord, I'm holding you to your word."

"Here's what you said. You said you were going to do this. You said this is what you were going to do. You spoke this. You're always true to your word, Lord, do what your word says." Well, what has God said? Anybody want to know what God said?

You should read this from Genesis one, one through Revelation 22, 21. This is what God said. You want to pray what God says, pray this book, pray this word, pray His kingdom. Come like this. Start saying, "Lord, this is what we want to see in our nation. This is what we want to see in our city. This is what I want to see in my family. This is what we want see in our group. This is what we want to see. Lord, you do this." God is always true to His word. That's why biblical illiteracy hurts your prayer life.

The more you can pray the word, the more you're praying in alignment with who God is and what God wants and what God promises to do. Even when the world says He doesn't do that, if He says he does, let me tell you something, He does. Hold Him to it. That's what Moses is doing. Moses is entreating God. Moses is like, "I'm going to pray. I'm going to seek the face of the Lord. I'm going to appeal to His glory and what makes Him look good and I'm going to appeal to what He's already spoken because He'll want to be true to what He says," and notice this, verse 14, I love this, I love this. Get all your theology and clutter out of your mind to hear this verses take it at face value. "The Lord changed his mind about the harm, which He said He would do to His people."

Wait a second, I thought you said God is sovereign and nothing happens. He is. He's 100% sovereign and He 100% of the time responds to the prayers of His people. You say, "Well, how can both of those coexist?" Because He's God. Here's what I want you to see from the scriptures here in many other places, God responds to the prayers of His people. God relents, God changes His mind. God hears the heart of His people, "Okay, you want what I want? You want me to be true to my word? I'll do

what you say." Please don't tell me that God doesn't answer prayer. God answers prayer. God's heart is moved by prayer when it's for His glory and it's true to His word. He moves. First Tuesday is not a clever thing that we do just to say, "Well, we pray every Tues- ..." First Tuesday's the most important thing we can ever do as a congregation.

The more people collectively gather that say, "God, we want what you want, and God, we want to be true to your word and we want to live it in our life and we want to see it in our land," the more God is moved by your heart and the more God will do. That's just fact. It's everywhere throughout scripture. It does not change His sovereignty and it does not change who He truly is to know that He answers prayer. Notice what Moses does. He does what any good leader does. God changes His mind. Verse 15, "Then Moses turned and went down the mountain with the two tablets of testimony in his hand, tablets, which were written on both sides. They were written on one side and on the other." Many of us have seen diagrams or monikers of the 10 commandments. There's like a tablet here and a tablet here, and there's first five on this and the second five on this.

That's not what the Bible says. The Bible says it was written on both sides. There were two copies. There was not internet, there were not computers, there were not copy machines. This was the covenant. God says, "Here's my copy, here's your copy. You can hold me to the truth of this, and I'm holding you to the truth of this. It's written on both sides, the 10 Commandments." Moses was bringing down this covenant from the mountain. That's what he was doing. He was bringing the law that

God had required of His people. Notice this, the tablets were God's work. God's the one that decides what worship looks like. God's the one that decides what obedience looks like and the writing was God's writing engraved on the tablets. Now, Joshua heard the sound of the people. Remember Joshua? Joshua's not the war hero yet.

Joshua's not the one that's leading them in the promised land yet. Joshua is Moses' aide. He's his executive assistant. He's his towel boy. He's just Joshua. He's going to go everywhere Moses goes. He's going to listen to what Moses says. He's about halfway up the mountain as Moses goes all the way up to talk to God. When Moses comes down, he sees Joshua, and Joshua heard the sound of the people as they shouted from the camp. He said to Moses, "There's a sound of war in the camp," but he said, "It's not the sound of the cry of triumph, nor is it the sound of the cry of defeat, but it is the sound of singing I hear." Moses comes down. Joshua was like, "Moses, I don't know what to tell you. There's a war going on down there."

He is like, "Nah, it's not the cry of triumph, and it's not the cry of defeat. That's not what you're hearing. It's the cry of singing. The people are running wild, that's what's going on." Moses does what any good leader does. He goes and confronts his people because he cares about his people and he loves his people and he wants his people to respond to God the way God wants them to respond. He's coming down the mountain with the law. Keep that in your mind because you're going to see Christ do that in the future. Notice this, if that's the cure that's required, go down among your people, bring the law to your people. Isn't that what Jesus did? He left His father's throne and he came down and he brought the law to us. He showed us exactly what

was required.

He showed exactly how to live it. He said, "This is what it looks like to be a follower of me," and then, but we got to see this too, because not only is there a culture that builds idolatry and there's a cure that's required, which we intercede to the Lord, which Jesus also did on our behalf as He continues to intercede, but you need to know this about idolatry. There are consequences that are resultant for idolatry. We want to talk about the consequences that's resultant for idolatry. You can't live an idolatrous life without consequences. There will be consequences to your life. If Jesus Christ is not the Lord of your life, there will be consequences. Now, notice how these consequences play out. Moses is going to do this in five easy steps. Notice verse 19. "It came about as soon as Moses came down near the camp that he saw the calf and the dancing and Moses's anger burned and he threw the tablets from his hands and shattered them at the foot of the mountain."

He comes down. Now, Moses was pleading to God, "Don't be mad. It's going to be okay. Don't hurt them." Moses comes down and watches the depravity of the land. Now what happens? Moses is incited. Moses is angry. These are Moses's fellow people. He knows them. He's lived among them. He knows them as mothers and fathers and brothers and sisters. He knows all these people and he's furious because they've seen God's work. They've seen His hand, and now he's watching them run wild and he's watching them worship a molten calf and he's going crazy. Many of us get the picture that Moses came down and just got really mad and he was like, "I'm so mad at

you guys," and threw this down. No, that's not what he did it. It was very calculated. It was very thoughtful in terms of what he did.

He was saying, "This covenant that God's made with us and the covenant you're required to keep, y'all have just broken it. Like this is no good anymore because you're not willing to do what God says. You just honor Him with your lips, but your hearts are far from Him," and he throws them to the ground as if to say, "You've broken everything that God's established and you think just because you're part of this camp that you're in and you're not." He communicates the law that has been broken. That's what any good leader does. Communicate the law that's been broken. Moses communicates to them by his actions. You've broken God's law. Second thing he does is he completely destroys the cultural idols. He gets rid of them. You can't continue to worship the Lord and have idols. Something's got to give. Notice what happens next. Verse 20, "He took the calf that they had made and burned it with fire and ground it into powder and scattered it over the surface of the water and made the sons of Israel drink it."

It wasn't enough just that he burned it. It wasn't enough that they just got ground to powder. He put it in their water and made them drink it. Why? I don't know, but here's my thought. Because when it went through their digestive system and came out the other end, that's how good an idol is worth. Amen.

That way they could have a physical example as to how disgusting an idol is. Get rid of the idols. You can't worship the Lord and your idol. You can't worship the Lord and worship money or worship the Lord and worship sex or worship the Lord and

worship your family or worship ... You can only worship the Lord. Get rid of idols, communicate the law's been broken, and then completely destroy the idols. Get rid of them. Get rid of them. Then notice the third thing he does, Moses is going to go down. He's going to start inquiring. I love this part. I mean, it's like a parent with your children. Listen to this. I mean, I love the Bible. I love this. "Then Moses said to Aaron," who's his older brother, ""What did this people do to you that you have brought such a great sin upon them?" Bro, what happened? What are you doing? How in the world did this happen? Aaron says to his younger brother, ""Do not let the anger of my Lord," meaning you, Moses, ""Do not let your anger burn the people yourself that they're prone to evil.""

It's not my fault. I mean, the people you left me with, it was them. You know how these people are. I wouldn't have done it. They made me do it. God, the reason I sin at work is because you know the culture that I'm in and nobody there is a Christian. That's why I do what I do. You know why I do what I do at school? That's just the culture of how everybody acts in high school. You know why I do what I do at college? Everybody parties at college. Lord, you know why I do what I do? I mean, I live among all these sinners. I mean, I'm better than most of them. That's what he's saying. Then I love this, "For they said to me, 'Make a God for us, who will go before us. For this Moses, this man who brought us up out of the hand of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.'" Moses, I mean, you took too long. It's really your fault. If you had been here, this wouldn't have happened. I said to them, whoever has any gold, let them tear it off, so they gave it to me. Now listen to this. This is the best part. I mean,

this is how God wrote the book and not man. They gave it to me and I threw it into the fire, and out came this calf.

I mean, you love the sin nature in that? I mean, they gave me their earrings. They gave me the gold. I just threw it in the fire and it was a calf. I mean, it's amazing, isn't it? I mean, do you see the sin nature there? Out came this calf. After Moses communicated, the law has been broken and completely destroyed, the culture idols. Now he's going to call the people to repent because now he knows what's going on. He knows their hearts. Now, when Moses saw that the people were out of control for Aaron had let them get out of control to be a derision among their enemies, then Moses stood in the gate of the camp and said, "Whoever is for the Lord come to me," and all the sons of Levi gathered to him, here's what repentance is. Who wants to repent?

Who wants to turn from their sin? Who wants to leave the life that you are once in? Repentance is not saying something with your lips. It's doing something with your life. It's I'm done with this and I'm coming over here. Christianity is not fire insurance for those who want to continue to live in sin. Christianity is not God's love, I'll believe that Jesus died for me and rose because I got nothing else to believe. I guess if that makes me go to heaven, I'll pray this magical prayer, but I'm going to continue to live my life of sin. That's not Christianity. That's idolatry. Christianity is I know I need to repent. I know I'm wrong. I know I'm turning from my sin and I'm getting on team God right now through the person of Jesus, because a line's been drawn in the sand, so Moses calls them to repent.

Get over here. If you're really going to follow God, this is the way to follow God. He makes it clear. This is what it looks like to be a follower of God, and guess what? All the Levites come to him who are eventually going to be the ones that serve the temple and the tabernacle. They come. You got to call people to repent. Any good pastor's going to call people to repent. I'm calling you to repent. There's some here today. You come here because you think you're part of the family of God because you go to Brave and you like worship music and the preaching of God's word makes you fill your heart, but like during the week you have no desire to live for God. You haven't turned from your sin. You haven't turned to Christ. You haven't forsaken your idols. You're basically in your same sin saying, "I feel different because I'm around good people."

You need to repent. You need to forsake your sin. You need to come to Christ. That's what Moses was saying. Notice what he does next. Then he challenges the people to stand on the truth. Because if you come to Christ, then there's a way you need to live that looks differently than what it was before you came to Christ. Because notice what he's going to ask him to do. In verse 27, he said to them, "Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel," so God's going to speak to you. "Every man of you, put his [inaudible 00:41:33] upon his [inaudible 00:41:34] and go back and forth from the gate to gate in the camp and kill every man, his brother and every man, his friend, and every man his neighbor, so the sons of Levi did as Moses instructed, and about 3,000 of men of the people fell that day."

Okay, you're with us? Put your sword on. Why? See, we read this and we're like, "Oh, that's so Old Testament. Remember when that God was so mean because the God today would just forgive." Have you ever read the New Testament? Have you ever read what Jesus is going to do when He comes back? Like there's an eternal hell, and then there's a lake of fire that will be created where everybody who has not repented will spend eternity, not just an instant death where you burn, but you'll be an unquenchable fire for all eternity. I mean, that's the God of the Bible. Why? Because sin deserves death. The wages of sin is death. He tells all those, "Hey, you've come to me. Now here's what you get to do. You go get to kill your friend, your family, your neighbors. Go," and what do the men do? They're faithful with what God told them.

3,000 men died. They're not just killing random men. They're not just killing another nation of people. They're killing their own sons, their own fathers, their own uncles, their own granddad's. Why? Because they didn't stand with the Lord. Now, fortunately, through the New Testament, through Jesus's death and the cross and resurrection from the dead and the dispensation we live in, we don't have to go around killing people that don't agree with us. We need to warn them that a second death is coming if they don't repent. Why? Because sin is that serious to God and it has not changed. Can you imagine what that day would've been like? I mean, it wasn't like they finished the task and we're victorious like, "All right," but they were saying God's holiness and His glory is even more important than my family, and what did Gia say in the New Testament?

Anyone who comes to me and does not hate his own mother, his brother, his

own family, cannot be my disciple. I mean, if you're going to worship someone other than me, you're not worthy of me. Said, well, that that's silent in here. That feels kind of hard because God is the only one that's worthy of all your allegiance. That's what he was saying. Those Levite boys, those Levite men were like, "Yeah, we're with you. We're with Jesus." They were challenged to stand upon the truth, and they stood upon the truth. After they did that, then notice what Moses did next. He's communicated the law. He's destroyed the idols. He's called people to repent. He's challenged people to stand. Now he's going to consecrate the people to God. Notice verse 29. Then Moses said, "Dedicate yourselves today to the Lord." Notice that consecrate yourselves when? Not tomorrow.

You know what, Pastor Jeff, I'm listening to what you're saying this week. I'm going to think about that. No, no, no. Today, right now. If this is what you need to do, get right with the Lord right now today. Immediately. Consecrate yourself today to the Lord. "For every man has been against his son and against his brother in order that he made bestow a blessing on today. On the next day, Moses said to the people, 'You yourselves committed a great sin, and now I am going up to the Lord. Perhaps I can make atonement for your sin.' Then Moses returned to the Lord and said, 'Alas, this people has committed a great sin and they have made a God for themselves but now, if you will forgive, if you will forgive their sin, and if not, please blot me out of your book, which you have written.'"

Moses is a type of what Christ is going to be in the New Testament. Isn't it true

that Jesus came into our culture which was filled with sin? Isn't it true that He brought the law? Isn't it true that He fulfilled the law? Isn't it true that after He died on the cross and rose from the dead, He went back to the Father to intercede on our behalf? Isn't it true that that's what Jesus has done to get us right in a culture that is far from God? That's what Moses was doing. Moses goes back and he intercedes. He starts praying. He's like, "Hey, Lord, forgive their sins, but if you're not going to forgive them, then blot me out too, 'cause I don't want to be a part of this." It's the same heart that you get from the Apostle Paul in the New Testament.

Oh, that I would be a cursed for all Israel so that they would know who you are. I mean, when you have a heart for God and you see people running around wildly that aren't living for God, there's part of you that will be like, "Lord, I'll give up my life if you'll save more." That was the heart of Moses. That was the heart of Paul. Jesus Christ's heart was so good that He laid down His life on a cross and gave up His very life so that others could live, right? That's what he was saying. "Blot me out. I don't want to go. I don't want to be there. I don't want eternity without these people." Why? "Because I love these people, and you love these people and you want to be with these people," and that's the gospel. Is it not? How is God going to answer?

God answers that sin must be forgiven or eternal life won't happen. Notice what he says, Lord says, "Whoever his sin against me, I will blot him out of my book." Where was the mercy? I thought that God was going to forgive everybody. No, you die in unrepentant sin. You will get blotted out of the book, not just now, but for all eternity. I mean, I had a vision this week or a thought this week when I was preparing this

message that one day when it all separates and there's this massive chasm and there's all that know the Lord on one side and they're all that don't know the Lord on the other side, that when you're on the other side and you realize you've never repented of your sin and you thought you could be cavalier about it and keep living sin and it's not a big deal and God's loving, and all of a sudden you see the holiness and righteousness of God and there's no way you can cross that chasm and you see all those people that love God and you're not part of it and you know you're punished for all eternity in the lake of fire. How tragic is that going to be?

It's so tragic that I'm pleading with every single one of you here today. If you've not repented of your sin and trusted Christ, make this very moment that time because there's nothing worse than dying of death only to realize death is just getting started. There's a second one to come and that's going to last an eternity. It means this, if you're not a Christian, your worst day on this planet, your most painful day on this planet, your most traumatic day on this planet would be the greatest blessing in hell. That's how bad it is, but God loved you enough. He didn't want you to live like that, but He's telling the people, "If you sinned against me, if you're unrepentant, I'm blotting you out of my book. You can't be a part of me," but notice what he says in verse 34.

"But now you go ahead, lead the people where I told you." Like we're not done with this journey yet you keep journeying on, like don't stay in the wilderness. I'm taking you to the promise land. I'm taking you where I promise you, my angel will, she'll go before you. Nevertheless, in the day when I punish, I will punish them for their sin. I'm righteous and I'm just, that's who I am. Don't forget that part about my nature. I will

punish people for unrepentant sin. God does as Israel continues to journey. When they go through seasons where they're in rebellion and adultery, God punishes them, God punishes them. Then the Lord smote the people. It means he brought a plague on the people. We don't know exactly what the plague was. It could have been that they were eating all the powder of that calf because of what they did with the calf which Aaron had made.

God doesn't let sin go unpunished. Even when you have the idea. Nobody's going to find me out. Nobody's going to know about that. My parents don't know, my friends don't know. My teachers don't know. My pastor doesn't know, God's up in heaven with a megaphone that says, "I know, I watched the whole thing. I'm calling you to repent. I've seen your whole life and I love you enough to not leave you in your sin. Will you please repent and come to me?" That's what he's saying. You know why that's so important to even preach in the church? Because sometimes in the church, like, "Well, people in the church, they already know this, Pastor." Friends, there are scores of people that go to Brave church that don't know this, and they may know it in their heart, but they don't live it out. How tragic it would be to attend a church like Brave Church where you hear the word faithfully and accurately proclaimed where people are worshiping the one true God, where God is doing a work among people where you sense all of that, but in your heart, you falsely believed you were converted just because you were near God.

How tragic is that? I mean, we heard from baptisms in the first service. You'll hear from them in this time, people that have come to Brave from other churches who

thought they were saved and then they got here, started hearing the word, started being challenged and realized, "I'm not saved. I'm just religious. I've never gone all in with Jesus. I thought I could just dip my toe in the water and then he would save me and I can still live my same sin life and God has now changed who I am." That's why I'm here to tell you today, I'm pleading with you because I love you. Don't let idols get in the way of your eternity. If there's idols in your heart, here's what you're going to do. Repent of them now. Give your full allegiance to Christ now. Let Him grow you now.

Put off your old self now, put on your new self now. Keep your heart and mind focused on where Jesus Christ is taking you now. Make today the day of salvation. If you've heard the Lord today, do not harden your heart. You're going to hear from several people on both campuses now as you see baptisms, and you're going to watch a video here in a minute, and then we'll bring our team up to do baptisms, but I'm here to tell you that God is at work doing an amazing story, be part of the story. He loved you so much that He sent Jesus Christ to do for you what you couldn't do. He sent Jesus Christ to die on the cross for your sins and rise from the dead. He sent Jesus Christ to destroy the idolatry in your heart. The question is not, are you religious?

The question is not, did you pray a prayer? The question is, do you belong to Christ because He's your God? If not, I just want to pray with you right now. Would you pray with me? Father in heaven, we thank you for the truth of your word. Lord, I don't know that there's one of us here that would think about even bowing down to a golden calf and yet, Lord, there's all sorts of other idols in our heart that keep us from

the fullness of you. Father, I know there are people here today that are listening to my voice that would say, "I know if I died today, I would stand before God with all sorts of idols and unrepentance in my heart," and if that's you, you should feel terrified, but you should also feel the love of God right now too.

He loved you so much. He sent Jesus to die for you who was crucified in your place, who took all of the wrath for you, who rose from the dead and said, "If you'll trust me, I'll give you life," and if that's you here today and you want a relationship with God, here's how you can pray. Lord Jesus, I know I'm a sinner, but I believe you died for me. I also believe you rose from the dead. Right now, I want to turn for my sin and I want to trust you completely to be the Lord of my life. Come into my life and save me in Jesus name. Father, for those of us who are Christians who still feel the idolatry bubbling, let today be the day that we forsake the idols and allow you to come in and be our God. We give you all glory, honor and praise. In Jesus name we pray. Amen and amen. Can we give God some praise this morning?