

Introduction

- <https://www.preachingtoday.com/illustrations/2013/october/1102113.html>
- What controls your life shapes your life and what shapes your life will determine the direction of your life.
- What controls you will be what you run to when life gets hard, when you are at your wit's end, when you are stressed. What controls you is ultimately what you worship.
- Simple question this morning: what controls you? What has a hold of your heart? When life is hard what do you run to for comfort, for assurance, for hope?
- [Exodus 32](#) is a heartbreaking story that reveals what controlled the hearts of the Israelite as Moses was on Mt. Sinai receiving the Law and instructions about the tabernacle.
- In these moments, they weren't letting their hearts be controlled by God. Instead, they allowed their hearts to be controlled by idols.
- Two truths from this passage to encourage you to allow the God of all creation control your heart and shape you rather than the idols of this world.

If you go back to the gods you know, it will shape your heart in opposition to the true God.

- Moses on Mt. Sinai meeting with God - a glorious encounter - 40 days and 40 nights in the presence of God.

- The people at the base of the mountain. In [Exodus 19](#), made the decision to not ascend the mountain. That shaped them. Now, make another decision that would be detrimental to them.
- This is a defining moment for the people of God. In the absence of Moses, their earthly leader, how would they respond? Not well.
- When Moses doesn't return, the people get stressed and anxious. Had Moses abandoned them? Was God done with them? They could see Mt. Sinai - they could see the smoke on the mountain signifying the presence of God, but that wasn't enough for them to believe that God was still among them and for them.
- To Aaron: "Come make gods for us..." Aaron's opportunity to lead the people to make a right choice. After all, Aaron had been with Moses on Mt. Sinai sharing a meal in the presence of God. Aaron knew the covenant that God had made with Israel that was expressed in the sprinkling of blood. Aaron had witnessed the miracles of God.
- A bold face lie (vs. 4) - "These are the gods that brought you out of the land of Egypt." What a statement! No glory given to the true God who they had witnessed delivering them and whose powerful presence they witnessed at Mt. Sinai.
- Aaron was second in charge - the one the priestly line would come through... But... much like Adam in the garden of Eden, Aaron abdicates his spiritual responsibility as a leader.
- And much like Adam and Eve in the garden, the people do not listen to the voice of God, the people listen to the voice of the enemy and construct a calf - In some ways, [Exodus 32](#) is a repeat of the sin in the garden of Eden. Aaron even blames shifts much like Adam did (vs. 23-24).

- Why a golden calf? What they worshiped in Egypt - made of gold, perhaps the very gold that God intended to be used for the construction of the furniture in the tabernacle.
- Aaron actually made the idol and called for a worship service! (vs. 5)
- When the people were stressed about Moses' absence, and when they questioned God's care for them, instead of walking in what they knew to be true about God, they turned to what they used to know. They turned to idolatry.
- An idol is what you turn to instead of God for purpose, meaning, satisfaction, joy, hope, etc. An idol is what you give your devotion to, what you allow to control your heart. Often, we turn to idols not to replace God but to supplement God. We wouldn't say that we don't believe in God, but we might live as if God is not sufficient or enough for us.
- What do you turn to when you're stressed or anxious instead of turning to God? That could reveal your idol - what you place your hope in, what you worship...
 - Alcohol? Drugs?
 - Pornography?
 - Your bank account?
 - Your job? Work more hours to try to escape the troubles of life?
 - A hobby?
 - A relationship? "I have to have this person to be happy..."
- You allow these things to control your life thinking they will give you comfort, happiness, hope, etc. and ultimately, they don't. So your heart is shaped - you become bitter, angry, envious, an disconnected from God and His people. That's what idolatry does.

- Here's how idolatry works:
- **What you worship gets your mind.** (Constantly think about.)
- **What you worship gets your loyalty.** (You'll forsake relationships to have it.)
- **What you worship gets your time.**
- **What you worship gets your heart.** (It becomes your greatest passion.)
- When you give in to idolatry your heart is shaped by that idol and ultimately it puts you in opposition to God.

If you stay with the God who knows you, it will shape your heart to be more like His.

- What or who you worship shapes your heart. If your heart is set on God, imagine how your heart will be shaped. If in the midst of trying and difficult times you stay with God rather than turning to idols, how might that shape your heart.
- Moses in a completely different position than the Israelites. They are at the bottom of the mountain wondering why they have been abandoned. In contrast, Moses at the top of the mountain with God.
- On the mountain, God tells Moses to go down (vs. 7). Moses unaware of the idolatry at the foot of the mountain, but God wants Moses to see it.
- vs. 7 - God calls them "your people." People have chosen to break the covenant. They have chosen to live as if they were not God's people.
- "Stiff-necked" (vs. 9). Farm-animal imagery - a stubborn animal that will not be moved. Vs. 10 - God destroy His people? Make Moses a great nation? God done with Israel? Does God really want to destroy Israel? Or, was this a test to see how Moses would respond?

- Moses' response: "God, you know your promises... Remember your promise to Abraham..."
- Vs. 14 - Did God relent? God does not change His mind ([Numbers 23:19](#)). But, God does respond to Moses prayer. This passage may have been a test for Moses, and this passage is showing that Moses did act as an intercessor or mediator for God's people - pleading on their behalf.
- Moses goes down the mountain - he is overcome with righteous anger. Destroys the tablets, has people drink water where the powder fell.
- vs. 22-24 - Aaron places the blame on the people instead of taking responsibility for his failure of leadership.
- vs. 25-29 - Judgment for people who chose to stay in idolatry. Is God vindictive? God desires a holy people - removing sin from the camp to purify and as an example. But there's grace, He doesn't wipe out all the people. (only 1/2 of 1 percent destroyed). Idolatry is no joke. God takes it serious. Do you?
- Being in the presence of God was changing Moses. He's developing the character of God - forgiving, compassionate, gracious, a righteous anger, a desire for justice, a desire for God to be honored and worship, a willing to stand as an intercessor but also stand for the holiness of God. Moses far from perfect, but in the next chapter called a "friend of God" ([Exodus 33:11](#)).
- Worship shapes you - give your hearts to idol, it will shape you. Give your heart to God, it will shape you. You will become LIKE the ONE you worship.
- Why let the idols of this world control you? Why not let the God who loves you control you so that He can make you into who He wants you to be? Think about what happens in your life when you stay with God - when you keep on worshipping Him even in the hard seasons of life:

- **God transforms your mind** ([Romans 12:2](#)). You begin to think biblically. You begin to act in wisdom. You begin to think about the Kingdom of God more than you think about this world.
- **God receives your loyalty.** The more you're with God, the more you live for God.
- **God gets your time.** The more you turn to God in worship, the more you want to turn to Him. The more time you devote to knowing Him, serving Him, and blessing others for the sake of His Kingdom.
- **God gets your heart.** The more you turn to God in worship, the more passionate you become about Him.
- It really is true - what you worship profoundly shapes you.
- This morning, what has your heart? What controls you? What has your allegiance? The things of this world - or the God that knows you and loves you.
- Gospel: Notice vs. 32 - "Forgive their sin, if not erase me from the book you have written." Evidence of Moses' heart being shaped to be more like the heart of God - he wants to give his life for their lives. He wants to be a substitute. Aaron blame-shifted. Moses wants to take the blame.
- BUT... Moses can't. He's sinful too. Later, he's going to sin against God and not be allowed to enter the Promised Land. Moses is an intercessor and a savior, but he's not the ultimate Savior. Moses would ultimately let his people down.
- But, Jesus is the Leader who will never let you down, because He is the One who is not merely like God, He is God - He is the very essence of compassion, grace, mercy, forgiveness, justice, and mercy. He's also a man - the God-man who came to live for you, die for you, and rise again for you. He's the One who can save you from your sins as you believe in Him by faith and repent of your sins. He is the One who gives us a

reason to worship. Place your faith in Him today, and being to worship the One who wants to shape your heart to be like His.