A Bunch of Bull
Exodus 32
November 8, 2026

Did you hear about the bull that got dishonorably discharged from the Animal Military? He had acted cow-ardly on the field of battle. That's a bunch of bull as is what we see today. Please open your Bibles today to Exodus 32. Pew Bible. We return one last time this morning to the book of Exodus for a very sad story which is very timely for us today. Two weeks ago when we were walking with the Israelites, we gathered with them at the base of Mt. Sinai as God met with Moses up yonder. We then heard Him declare His Ten Commandments after which Moses received the rest of the Law. At the end of it all, he sealed their covenant with God with a sacrifice and the sprinkling of blood. The people agreed to be God's people and to have Him as their God. All that He has said, that we will do, they said. How fickle they were, we are.

After the covenant is sealed, God begins to download to Moses all the detailed blueprints for the Ark of the Covenant, the altar, the Tabernacle, and all that will go in and around it. I wish we had time to examine it in more detail this morning as we did in 2010 but every piece is a very visible and tangible prophecy of Jesus. It's really quite amazing. Remember how God told the Israelites to ask the Egyptians for articles of gold and silver, precious stones, and expensive fabrics and how they gladly gave them if they would just leave? All of that will now be needed for construction of this portable worship center.

In Exodus 28, God lays out the patterns for them to sew the holy garments that Aaron and the priests will wear when they minister in the Tabernacle. In addition to the robe, turban, and underwear, God describes the ephod or vest that contained 12 precious stones each with the name of an Israelite tribe as well as two onyx stones on his shoulders also engraved with the names of the twelve tribes. The priest would carry these on his person reminding him of his responsibility to represent this people before the Lord. In Ex 29, God also told Moses how to consecrate, or set apart and dedicate the priests for their sacred service. Sadly, that would have to wait, but since we are all now priests of God's holy nation, it benefits us to read and study all these passages in greater detail.

In Ex 30, God lays out the plans for the incense altar and the recipe for the incense to be burned on it. In addition to His goodness, His grace, His justice, His power, God is also a god of great detail, of great specificity, of great beauty. And in Ex 31, God even identifies who is to do the fancy artwork. Two men, Bezalel and Oholiab who had great skill in all these areas would oversee the work. They had likely been trained in Egypt and done similar work for Pharaoh. Now they had a higher calling! If God has given you a

gift, and He has, use it for His glory and honor! I'm thankful for those who decorate our sanctuary, for the artists, for those who do the construction, building and repair, and for all who play a part.

At the end of Ex 31, God tells Moses to remind the people about keeping His Holy Sabbath as part of His Holy Covenant and then the chapter ends with these words in vs 18 "When the Lord finished speaking to Moses on Mount Sinai, he gave him the two tablets of the Testimony, the tablets of stone inscribed by the finger of God." I would love to see God's handwriting.

So Moses has been up on Mt. Sinai for quite some time receiving all this from the Lord while his brother Aaron is overseeing things down below. If you are able, please stand as we read Ex 32:1-6 When the people saw that Moses was so long in coming down from the mountain, they gathered around Aaron and said, "Come, make us gods who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who brought us up out of Egypt, we don't know what has happened to him." 2 Aaron answered them, "Take off the gold earrings that your wives, your sons and your daughters are wearing, and bring them to me." 3 So all the people took off their earrings and brought them to Aaron. 4 He took what they handed him and made it into an idol cast in the shape of a calf, fashioning it with a tool. Then they said, "These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt." 5 When Aaron saw this, he built an altar in front of the calf and announced, "Tomorrow there will be a festival to the Lord." 6 So the next day the people rose early and sacrificed burnt offerings and presented fellowship offerings. Afterward they sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in revelry.

Say impatient. Oh how impatient they were, how impatient we are. We want it now. Yes, I'll wait upon the Lord as long as He comes now. The people grew weary of waiting for Moses. They had plenty to eat and plenty to drink but they grew restless waiting for him to come back down. He must have fallen into a volcano or gotten mauled by a lion. And so they go to number 2 in charge and demand that he make them some idols.

What was Aaron's response? Sure. Give me your earrings and I'll see what I can do. Shame on him! Like the discharged bull, he had no backbone! No courage. No guts to stand up to them and say never! How could you? Those of you whom God has put in authority over others sometimes have to say no! We want to say yes, we want everyone to like us, we don't like to be the heavy, but someone has to be the parent and say NO! I talked with a man this week who is breaking God's law. He didn't like what I had to say and I didn't want him to think less of me, but I have to speak God's Word! This was a direct violation of the first 2 commands. The command not to make any graven image is still ringing in their ears, and the command to have no other gods before or beside Yahweh is still fresh from the mountain. Less than two months ago they promised, "All you have said, Oh God, that we will do." Until we don't want to anymore. Sometimes

people who accept Jesus one month, leave Him the next. Or the next year, or even 20 years later. Oh God, help us be faithful!

Aaron, of all people, cast it and then fashioned it with a tool. The Egyptians that God just destroyed worshipped calf idols such as this Apis bull. (s) Most all the surrounding nations did so as well. The Israelites couldn't see that God had more power than these lifeless idols. But notice the nuance, the cleverness that Aaron uses. Tomorrow will be a festival **to the Lord**, to **Yahweh**. He mixes idolatry with the Great I Am. What a bunch of bull! Syncretism is the blending of religious practices, the holy with the profane and it's still happening today whenever someone tries to blend Jesus with Voodoo or Hinduism or whatever else. A thousand times NO!

Aaron didn't intend to replace God, just embody Him. The idol would be a physical representation of Yahweh. NO! Here we are back to our love affair with things-amulets, trinkets, crystals, even crosses that we look to as if they had some special power. No! When Aaron did this, God was immediately degraded, limited in space and time. He could now only be one place at one time instead of everywhere all the time. He can't possibly see what's going on in my tent, much less my heart. Anytime we set up an idol we immediately limit God and degrade Him. And we degrade ourselves as well for Ps 106:20 says, "They exchanged their Glory for an image of a bull, which eats grass." Their glory was their God. What a bad trade. And Jer 2:5 tells us, "They followed worthless idols and became worthless themselves." So do we.

They wanted something they could touch and see, instead of someone who could touch and see them. They didn't like the way God came across in thunder and lightning so they made one they liked better. We'll create God in an image we prefer. They rejected the God of Mt Sinai for a golden calf that they could control, that they could shape, that didn't frighten them, that couldn't hurt them, that didn't make any demands of them. God is who He is! He is whom He has revealed Himself to be in the Bible! Don't try to change Him into something that suits your own ideas or sensibilities. And don't mix Him with anything else!

As we've mentioned before, the Israelites probably crossed the Red Sea about here and journeyed into what is now Saudi Arabia. Much evidence lines up and God promised Moses when he was still over in Midian, that he and his people would meet God at that same mountain. Not on the Sinai Peninsula which wasn't named that until 2000 years later. Researchers at Jebel el Lawz in modern Saudia Arabia have found what appears to be the ruins of an altar at the base of the mountain with these inscriptions. In the same area there is this split rock which lines up with the description of God bringing water from one in Ex 17.

But with Aaron's permission and his cow--ardly leadership, the people sacrificed, feasted and then rose up to indulge in revelry. The KJV says to play. Perhaps with an

adulterous orgy. They're not out of Egypt but about 3 months at most and they're already in the outhouse. Like from August till now.

Vs 7 Then the Lord said to Moses, "Go down, because your people, whom you brought up out of Egypt, have become corrupt. 8 They have been quick to turn away from what I commanded them and have made themselves an idol cast in the shape of a calf. They have bowed down to it and sacrificed to it and have said, 'These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt.' 9 "I have seen these people," the Lord said to Moses, "and they are a stiff-necked people. 10 Now leave me alone so that my anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them. Then I will make **you** into a great nation." The God on the mountain had seen what was going on down on the plain. And He didn't like it. He sent Moses down to straighten these crooked people out. They are stiff-necked, God said. Say stiff-necked. That means they refused to bow, to humble, to submit to the Lord God their Maker, their Redeemer. And God is about to wipe them out and offers to make Moses into a great nation instead to fulfill all His promises in their place.

Moses, not knowing how bad it is, pleads with God to spare them. He gives up his privilege to be the great patriarch of God's people. Ps 106:23 says Moses stood in the breach, in the gap before God. He asked God to turn from His anger and God did. Moses intervened to save his people. Are you standing in the breach, the gap for anyone today? Pleading for God to spare them that they might repent and seek Him? Your prayers through Jesus are as powerful as Moses'. Then, as Moses carries the two tablets down the mountain, he and Joshua hear loud noise coming from the camp below. Joshua thinks it's war. Moses says, no, it's singing. Vs 19 When Moses approached the camp and saw the calf and the dancing, **his** anger burned and he threw the tablets out of his hands, breaking them to pieces at the foot of the mountain.

When Moses sees for himself how wicked the people have become, he loses his temper and shatters the tablets. How prophetic that God's first covenant would be broken from the very beginning. Perhaps it was an angry response or maybe Moses did it deliberately indicating that the people already broke God's covenant. The Hebrew actually says something like, "He hurled them." Either way, it was highly symbolic of man's innate inability to live up to God's holy standards and of our own desperate need for a Savior.

Moses burned the calf and ground it to powder, put it in the water and made the people drink it. You think microplastics are bad, how about gold dust? You think colonoscopy prep is bad. And when they saw their glittery poop, it showed them how idols are nothing but worthless dung. Friends, as soon as you recognize an idol in your life, do whatever you have to do destroy it. Take desperate action. In the movie Fireproof the man took a baseball bat to his computer where he viewed porn. We can live without cell phones, we have for 6000 years. If it's an unholy relationship, cut it off! Maybe it's gambling, drugs or alcohol. Get help before you become as worthless as your idol.

Vs 21 [Moses] said to Aaron, "What did these people do to you, that you led them into such great sin?" 22 "Do not be angry, my lord," Aaron answered. "You know how prone these people are to evil. 23 They said to me, 'Make us gods who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who brought us up out of Egypt, we don't know what has happened to him.' 24 So I told them, 'Whoever has any gold jewelry, take it off.' Then they gave me the gold, and I threw it into the fire, and out came this calf!" You big liar! Do you expect me to believe that? All by itself, it just came out? The Bible doesn't tell us but I'm sure Moses had a long talk with his brother that included something like, "I leave you alone for 10 minutes and look what you do."

But see how we excuse our sin? It's not my fault. It just happened. It was their fault, they told me to do it. What did you expect me to do? Say no! for crying out loud! Grow a spine! Take responsibility for your own sin. Sometimes deacons, pastors, SS teachers, and parents have to say hard things. The price of leadership. Sometimes CBC elders have to intervene and upset people by saying no. But not doing so causes us to end up where we were in the COB. I'm not badmouthing anyone, but things were happening and still are that are abominations to God. Aaron should have had the guts to say, "Not on my watch." Instead of, "I had to give the people what they wanted. I just couldn't help it." Yes we can and we must help it!

Now Moses has to clean up the mess. Vs 25 Moses saw that the people were running wild and that Aaron had let them get out of control and so become a laughingstock to their enemies. 26 So he stood at the entrance to the camp and said, "Whoever is for the Lord, come to me." And all the Levites rallied to him.
27 Then he said to them, "This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: 'Each man strap a sword to his side. Go back and forth through the camp from one end to the other, each killing his brother and friend and neighbor.'" 28 The Levites did as Moses commanded, and that day about three thousand of the people died. 29 Then Moses said, "You have been set apart to the Lord today, for you were against your own sons and brothers, and he has blessed you this day." Drastic sin calls for drastic action. Praise God for those who were willing to stand up for God even at the cost of striking down their own relatives. Thankfully God does not call us to do that today but sometimes He does call us to speak truth even to our friends, our neighbors, our relatives. It's easier not to, but it has to be done. In love and compassion. In the next few verses, Moses asked God to forgive the people and to blot his name out of God's book if He won't. God listens to him and spares the Israelites although He did send a plague for a time. Sin always carries a cost. It always does.

In spite of their unfaithfulness, God remained faithful and merciful. In Ex 34:10 the Lord said: "I am making a covenant with you. Before all your people I will do wonders never before done in any nation in all the world. The people you live among will see how awesome is the work that I, the Lord, will do for you." And after the Israelites finished

making and setting up the Tabernacle and all the items God told Moses to make, at the very end of Exodus, 40:34-35 says, “Then the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. 35 Moses could not enter the Tent of Meeting because the cloud had settled upon it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.” Oh that our bodies, our temples of the Holy Spirit might be so full of God that there’s no room for us! That we might be so filled with His glory. That cannot happen as long as we cling to worthless idols that make us worthless.

Thankfully, we don’t have any idols today. Oh we know others do. We can see the cars they worship, the sports, the careers, the houses, the investments. We can all look at others and say, “Look at the golden calves they’ve built. Look at the idols they’ve made! Look at the false gods they’re worshipping!” without ever seeing our own. This is OUR story! Oh God show us our idols. Show us anything we look to save us, anything we kiss towards, love, worship, or pray to in place of or beside God. Show us Oh God and may we repent before your wrath is unleashed. Maybe it’s a political party. “This is what God sent to save you.” What a bunch of bull. Maybe that’s what we thought in this election and it was ground to dust so that we wouldn’t look to one man or to one party as our Savior. Or artificial Intelligence that will solve all our problems, heal all our diseases, prevent all our wars, etc. Many are worshipping at its altar today. What a bunch of bull! I’m not saying don’t ever use it. I’m saying it won’t save us. Only Jesus will. Don’t put your faith in anything or anyone but Him! You may have just been saved, you may have been saved for a long time, you may have come down from a spiritual mountaintop. Beware of idols!

Sadly, we’ve all made idols and we’ve all worshipped them. Some as God Himself with trinkets or charms or whatever, some instead of God. Something to suit us, to make us happy. We’ve made God in our image. And we deserve His judgment as did these Israelites. Thankfully, we’ve got One who stood in the gap for us. One who, having been tempted in the desert 40 days as were these people, did not give in to the Devil, but stood up as Aaron should have stood up, and said no. Even at great personal cost. That One is Jesus and He paid our price in the gap that we can be forgiven for our gross idolatries. Worship Him and serve Him only.